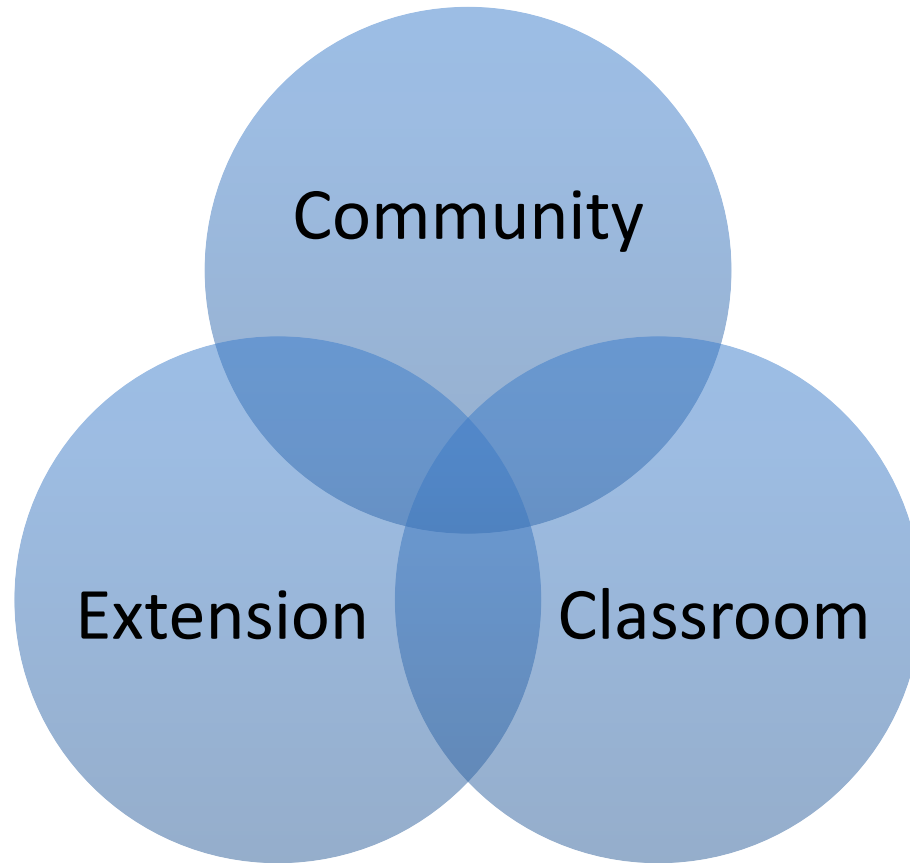


**Small Town Retail + Cultural
Diversity + Extension +
University Design Students =
New Solutions to New Challenges**

2015 Community Development Society
Meeting
Creativity and Culture



Old Problems

- Aging population
- Small towns becoming smaller
- Rural retail can't compete
- New residents/immigrants
- Changing ethnic profile



New Challenges

- Shifting ethnic demographics of retail owners
- Increased visual presence of ethnic retail in downtown districts
- Need for adaptive reuse of aging building stock
- On-line shopping
- Brain drain



PLACE: Partnering Learning and Community Engagement

- Outreach program for College of Design
- Aims to enhance and promote the quality and character of Iowa's communities
- 7 academic depts.
- Provided by EXT CED



Goals of PLACE program

Meet Community needs while finding studio projects which:



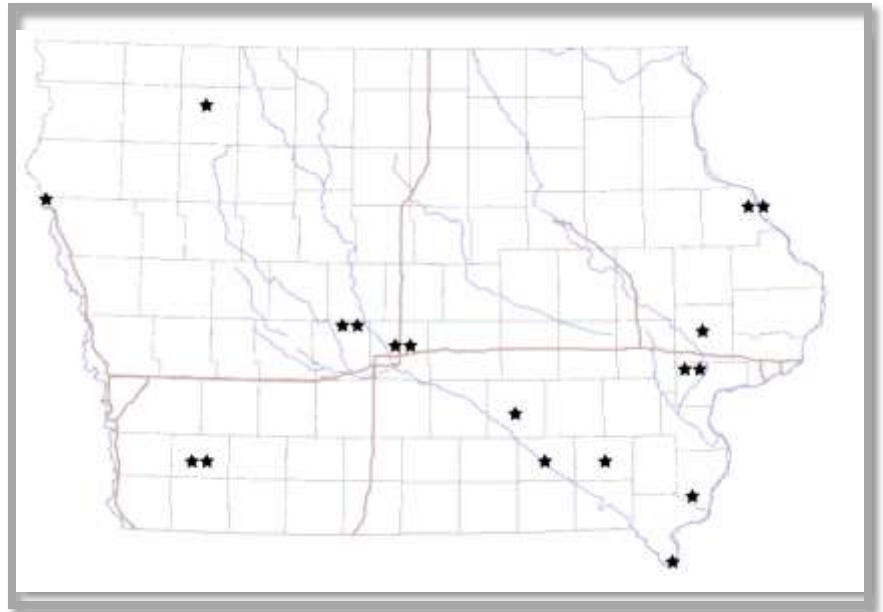
- Meet academic needs of students
- Offer an adequate level of complexity
- Relate topically to offered courses
- Meet professors' needs for research, teaching

Strengths of PLACE

- Driven by community needs, casts wide net
- Links to Extension-CED
- Students' academic experience
 - More engaged learning
 - Immersion into Iowa
- Entrée for faculty into communities

PLACE as boundary spanner

- Integrating CED field staff
 - Project recruitment
 - Local organizer, recruiter
 - Ground-truthing
 - Project follow-up



Retail Design Project

Typical project:

- Engaging with local rural retail owners
 - Students address
 - Storefronts and entrances
 - Planning and circulation
 - Merchandising
 - Materials and finishes
 - Lighting
 - Graphics
 - Behind the scenes



Retail Design Project

- The Innovation: Storm Lake
 - PLACE becomes cross-cultural mediator to bring together multiple communities in a non-threatening environment
 - Having outside student experts provide interventions to address common retail design issues
 - Students help draw the focus to the educational process and not on the community conflict
 - PLACE creates a neutral space





IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
Extension and Outreach



IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
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Storm Lake Goals

- Address aesthetic differences through design principles that incorporated cultural elements and economic constraints
- Create a common space of interaction between Latino retailers and Anglo business community
- Provide technical assistance to a large number of retailers (using student work to amplify outreach)

Recipe for Success?

- Providing a service viewed as valuable by all partners (Latino and Anglo retailers, community leaders, and ISU)
- Project resonated with concerns of the Anglo community
- Chamber was open, willing and recognized the need
- On-going relationships and outreach prior to and after implementation by ISUEO

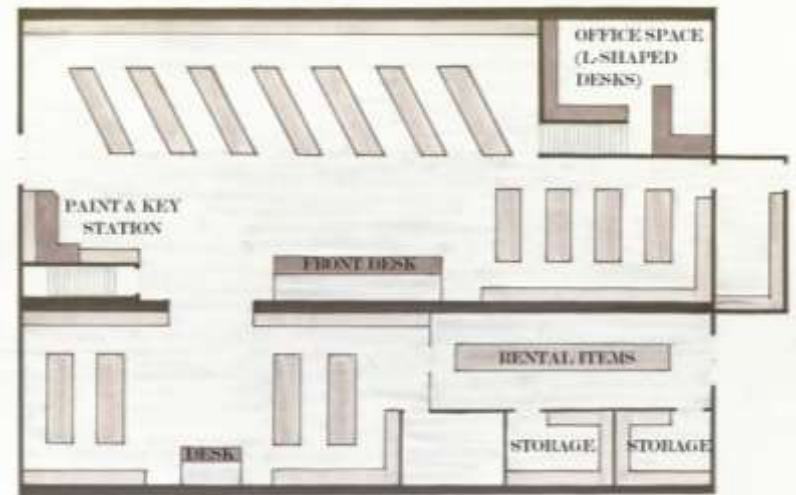
Lessons learned

- Have to have trusted contacts for this to work
- Language was not a barrier because we utilized local resources
- Willingness of Latino businesses to participate and genuine openness to ideas
- Many immigrant business owners feel stuck in the retail space they rent – the project ideas reinforced this sentiment



Project Results

- Three of the seven Latino businesses implemented parts of the students' suggestions within 1 year (zero of the Anglo businesses have)
- Two of the participating seven businesses are Chamber members
- One of the seven Latino businesses has since closed



Next steps

- Using purposeful engagement strategies to encourage more interaction between Anglo and Latino store owners
- Additional engaged courses to address other retail needs
- Addressing culturally specific retail design, especially around window displays



Why is it Worth the Extra Effort?

- PLACE:
 - Include a new project dimension
 - Reach out to ethnic retailers is key to future
- University Academic Departments:
 - Enhanced student learning
 - Knowledge exchange between local communities, students, and faculty
 - Raise awareness of discipline



Why is it Worth the Extra Effort?

- Field Staff:
 - As a bridge to get in the door, yielding an opportunity to bring services to local businesses.
 - Amplify reach of technical assistance
 - Laid the foundation for future projects with Latino business owners to offer other kinds of business assistance
 - Local press (English and Spanish) for the project raised the profile of Latino businesses and Chamber of Commerce



Questions?

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