The Beltline District Storefront:

Your Neighborhood Your Future

A Real-time University Engagement Program in Fairmont, WV

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CDS 46th Annual International Conference July 19-22, 2015 Hilton Lexington Downtown Lexington, Kentucky
Design Studio Goals: Landscape Architecture

- Accomplish Service-Learning – Land Grant Mission
- Create Community / University Partnerships
- Facilitate Authentic Student Experience with ‘Client’
- Facilitate Meaningful Community Experience – towards Action
- Demonstrate Innovation in Redevelopment – Visioning and Best Practices
- Serve the ‘Underserved’
- Generate Positive Impacts towards Project Development
Models Service Learning / Outreach Work

- Community Design Team
- Sophomore Design Studio - Small Town Park Design (Build)
- Design/Build Course - Kyber
- Senior Capstone Project
- MLA Projects
- Funded Projects - Capacity Development and Participatory Planning
- Facilitators for Diverse Projects
A New Model of Service Learning / Outreach Work

• The ‘Storefront’ Concept- Hester, Sanoff, Paxson, Doble, Horrigan, Bose, Angiotti, Rios, EDRA

• Immersive Multi-Layer Approach
  - Sophomore Studio – Monongah Park (Butler)
  - Junior Studio- Beltline Neighborhood/Site Design (Yuill)
  - Senior Studio Capstone Project – Box Factory (Yuill and Hasenmyer)
  - Graduate Studio – Beltline Neighborhood/Site Design (Kyber)
Fairmont, West Virginia

Map of Fairmont in WV

Map of Beltline neighborhood in Fairmont
Mission: to revitalize the Beltline neighborhood of Fairmont, WV through resident leadership with a strong sense of community.

Purpose: to facilitate engagement with neighborhood residents to mobilize efforts that enhance physical, cultural, economic, and social assets in the Beltline community.

Academic goal: to generate place-based and project-based research and service learning to address locally identified needs.
Why Fairmont? Why the Beltline?

Value to the Community

• Former ‘rust belt’ community built on coal and railroad industry
• Renters now occupy most homes
  • Decline in property upkeep
  • Local businesses shuttered
  • Negative perception of safety
  • Surplus of blighted buildings and industrial brownfields
Value to the Community

• Adjacent to Monongahela River
• Convenient access + connectivity to city
• Features 8th Street Confectionary, East West Stadium, West Fairmont Middle School
• Potential for business development to catalyze economic transition of Fairmont
• Residents are forming a neighborhood association
• Target of past planning efforts → planning fatigue
Why Fairmont? Why the Beltline?

Value to university students
• Easily accessible, 20 miles from WVU and 1 mile from FSU
• Engage directly with neighborhood residents – hands on learning opportunity
• Place-based
• Project-based research
• Service learning
About the Beltline

• Mix of modest and low-income homes, local businesses, and industrial properties.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>2,673*</td>
<td>18,815*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of Households</td>
<td>1,208*</td>
<td>7,690*</td>
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<td>Median Family Income</td>
<td>$24,875**</td>
<td>$36,917*</td>
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<td>Owner Occupied Units</td>
<td>414** (15% vs population)</td>
<td>4,570** (24% of population)</td>
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* U.S. Census (2010-2013)
** Fairmont Community Development Partnership (2013)
Beltline Neighborhood

Located between 3rd and 14th streets and between Fairmont Avenue and the Monongahela river.
The YNYF Model

- Transdisciplinary approach:
  - Collaboration between residents, city, and university students and professors
  - Physical place where residents and partners meet to collaborate on neighborhood enhancements
  - Integrated university service to fulfill land-grant mission

- Partnership team addresses alternative future visioning citywide, at the scale of the district, and site.

- Pilot initiative will be a model for similar towns throughout WV
Successes Spring 2015

- Rented a “Storefront” space in the neighborhood
- Landscape Architecture and Strategic Communication students worked out of the space
  - Spoke to residents and designed plans for neighborhood enhancements
  - Created YNYF name and logo; updates and events through Facebook
- Grand opening and community fair, featuring local performances and presentations of student work
Student work
Community garden

- The space continues to be used for meetings held by neighborhood action teams, Main Street Fairmont, the BAD Buildings team, and other local groups

- Planning intern – catalogue of student work. Present to residents for input on what concepts to prioritize and implement

- City supports neighborhood association as needed with technical assistance, facilitate meetings
  - Organize to prioritize “BAD buildings”
  - List of property maintenance issues
  - Speak together as a group
  - Review student work to prioritize changes they want to see
  - Main Street – ABC grant – Neighborhood platform
Moving Forward: Summer and Fall 2015

• WVU Office of State, Local & Corporate Relations will work with University administration to promote faculty-community relationships.
• City of Fairmont and WVRC will continue to work with new and existing faculty partners to provide service learning and research opportunities using the Storefront - or new location - as a home base.
Your Neighborhood Your Future

https://youtu.be/EmpnpRgAwX0
Reflections on “Storefront” Model

• High level of Interdisciplinary Engagement
• Meaningful/Authentic Communications with Community
• Community Voice visible in Design Decision-making
• Occupancy creates the Base, Presence creates an Identity
• High level of Interaction with Local Government/Main Street Program
• Impacts? Students? Neighborhood Associations?