Minorities get city planning experience

By Becky Yerak

Minority students in the Department of City and Regional Planning are learning about inner-city rehabilitation, getting professional work experience and receiving financial aid through a minority work-study program.

Raymond Mills, professor of city and regional planning, said the students, selected on the basis of financial need and academic record, take the same courses as other planning students but are given seminars that address the concerns of minorities.

Seminar topics include inner-city rehabilitation, housing improvements and continuation of low- and moderately-priced housing.

Besides attending these seminars, the students work 15 hours per week with the cities of Columbus and Upper Arlington and with the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission.

The students' work responsibilities depend on the needs of the employer, Mills said.

"Upper Arlington, for example, lets our interns prepare site reports, and eventually lets them make a public presentation of the report. Presenting the report is an important part of the planning process," Mills said.

Six students are now involved in the program and Mills said he'd like to see more students involved.

"The federal government requires that a local planning agency, in our case the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission, makes the funding request. The planning agency also has the final decision over where to place the student," Mills said.

Two-thirds of the funding comes from federal sources and one-third comes from local sources, including OSU, he said.

Students receive full tuition payments, $4.48 per hour in wages, and $300 per year for book expenses.
Group picks student plan

By Andrew Coffey
Lantern staff writer

A proposal by OSU city and regional planning students to charge developers a fee for the right to build was adopted last week by the Northwest Columbus Development Task Force.

The proposal, presented winter quarter of 1986, was developed as a student group-project for city and regional planning 852, a course in city planning policy.

The Northwest Columbus Development Task Force used the proposal, and others, in its recommendations to change 11 zoning-related policies in the northwest Columbus area.

City and regional planning Professor Dale Bertsch said his students are regularly involved with projects that require them to assess the needs of local communities, and to propose realistic options for consideration by planning committees.

“Historically we’ve entered into client-staff relationships in the community. It’s important that the student learn to work with the trade-offs one encounters in the field,” Bertsch said.

The most important proposal adopted by the task force suggests charging developers an “impact fee,” before they are allowed to develop businesses that would affect the environment. Money collected from the developers would be used by the community for improving roads, sewers, street lighting, sidewalks, and parks.

The task force used several other suggestions from the OSU project, including issuing public hearing notices to landowners affected by re-zoning changes.

The proposal also suggests that statements be required from developers, outlining the effect their developments would have on roads and sewers.

Robert Craig, now the community development planner with the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission, was one of five students working on the project.

“That was a really good project for us,” Craig said. “Usually you read texts and write papers, a that’s about it. You always wonder how this stuff really goes to work.”

Craig, who had some planning experience going into the project, is proud of the students’ suggestions that were adopted.

“That impact fee is a hard one to get if it’s not already in use,” Craig said. “Sometimes they want to use it because it puts some restrictions on the development, but in this case they knew they could use it.”
Homes have way to say who you are

By Jeff Grabmiller

With just a glance at the exterior of a house, many people may make judgments about the kind of people who live inside.

Researchers from Ohio State found that people who were shown black and white drawings of six different houses had no difficulty choosing where they thought the business leaders and the friendliest people lived.

"What struck us the most was that people responded almost immediately to the drawings and our questions. They looked at the house and had no trouble making assumptions about the people who would live inside," says Jack Nasar, associate professor of city and regional planning and leader of the study.

Nasar and his associates interviewed 118 adults at several Columbus-area supermarkets, chosen by their location in demographically different neighborhoods.

The participants were given six index cards, each with a drawing of a house representing Farm, Tudor, Spanish, Saltbox, Colonial and Contemporary architectural styles.

Each person was then asked three questions relating to his or her feelings about the houses and who might live in them.

In one question, the respondents were asked which house they would feel most comfortable approaching if they had a flat tire and needed help.

The Farm style house, with its large front porch and dormer windows, was the first choice of 44 percent of the respondents. Following, in order, were Saltbox, Tudor, Spanish, Colonial and Contemporary.

Another question asked for the respondents' opinions about the leadership qualities of the residents. The participants were asked to assume that the residents of the houses worked together, and to place the homes in order of the degree to which the residents "take charge" or "lead" the group.

The respondents were most likely to say the leader lived in the Colonial house, which featured large, stately columns. Colonial was the first choice of 41 percent of those surveyed, followed by Tudor, Contemporary, Farm, Spanish and Saltbox.

In another question, the participants were asked which house they would choose if they won a "dream house lottery." The Farm and Tudor styles tied for first, with a combined 51 percent of the first place votes. The Contemporary, Colonial, Spanish and Saltbox styles followed in popularity.

Overall, Nasar says, the most consistently favorable ratings went to the Tudor house, which featured exposed beams on the exterior and diamond-pane windows. It was rated first for desirability, second for leadership and third for friendliness.

The plainly-styled Saltbox house was the lowest in both desirability and leadership, but second highest in friendliness. The Colonial was the highest for leadership, but second lowest in friendliness. It was third in desirability.

The researchers found differences among varying demographic groups in how they viewed the houses.

The Contemporary style house was more likely to be preferred by the better educated, higher social class, younger and suburban residents. The Colonial style had more appeal to the less educated, lower social class, older, urban and rural residents.

Nasar concluded that a person's home style may send a message to others.

"It was striking that we got very clear differences in our responses, depending on the style of home," Nasar says. "Style really does carry meaning."

Although he has not studied the question, Nasar suggests that the public might share common images about homes styles because of the influence of the mass media, as well as local customs and conventions.

"Our beliefs about home styles are stereotypes, and somehow these are being communicated to all of us," Nasar says.

For example, he cited television and magazine ads for expensive cars that show the autos parked in front of Tudor or Colonial style homes. That may help explain why the respondents in the study believed leaders were more likely to live in these style of houses.

Nasar says he will repeat the study in Los Angeles to test the effect of local preferences on the findings.

The results of the research could serve as a guide to architects and planners, he says. "When architects design buildings, they need to be certain that they choose styles that will communicate the messages that they intend."

Nasar presented the results to the American Psychological Association in August. He conducted the study with four graduate students from Ohio State.
CITY AND REGIONAL planning graduates will face significant challenges in planning the restoration of the aging northeast and in guiding the growth of the booming southwest, reports Dr. Kenneth Pearlman, chair of the Ohio State department of city and regional planning.

"Some parts of the country are developing really fast, like the south and west," he says. "Other parts of the country, like the northeast, have greater concern for revitalizing their urban areas or preserving their historical heritage."

"A lot of cities have decaying infrastructures—roads, sewers, utilities, bridges—and these have to be dealt with. Certain parts of the country will probably continue to grow rapidly, although eventually I suppose they will be faced with some of the same kinds of problems the northeast cities have."

Pearlman says there is no lack of students eager to tackle the challenges of such jobs. Last year's significant increase in new master's students raised enrollment in the department to about 80. And the doctoral program, in only its third year, now boasts 11 students. With 11 professors, Pearlman hopes to expand to about 100 master and 16 doctoral candidates. The department does not grant undergraduate degrees, although it does offer undergraduate minors.

"There are loads of jobs out there, especially in Florida and other parts of the south and west," Pearlman reports. While graduates traditionally find jobs at state, local and regional regulatory and planning commissions, jobs are becoming increasingly available with banks, utilities and other private sector companies.

Pearlman says that restoration will be an important item on planners' agendas. "As cities get older and have to be redeveloped, a lot of people become interested in preservation and restoration," he says. The automatic "demolish and start over" trend that marred some urban renewal efforts has been tempered, if not replaced, by a tendency toward preserving the historical character of the urban northeast.

A recent curriculum change allows students to substitute specialized electives for up to two core courses. "This change allows more flexibility for students who have already identified their areas of interest," he says. It also allows foreign students, many of whom return home after graduating, to take classes more relevant to their home nations in place of required classes emphasizing American examples of planning administration, regulation, and financing.

Recent departmental activities include the publication of the sixth issue of the national "Journal of Planning Literature," edited by Pearlman, containing refereed articles, research listings and abstracts, and student notes. Also, the department co-sponsored the second American City Planning History Conference, which was so successful it resulted in the foundation of the Society for American City and Regional Planning History.

New equipment in the department includes a computer system that allows planners to convert photographs of urban landscapes into digital images, which can be manipulated to visualize design options by enlarging, or shrinking, or altering individual elements of the picture.

Faculty members are researching urban mass transit, the effectiveness of signage on Ohio State's campus, the role of venture capital in planning, energy pricing, international development, and environmental impact. Several faculty members also performed land use analysis for Ohio's Superconducting Super Collider proposal.
Housing surveys revealing

By Susan Tuck
Lantern staff writer

Researchers from Ohio State found that people make assumptions about others based on the architectural styles of their homes.

"I was surprised at the instantaneous judgments people made about the people inside the homes. No one said they could not make a judgment," said Jack Nasar, associate professor of city and regional planning and leader of the survey.

The participants of the survey were shown six different drawings that represented farm, Tudor, Spanish, saltbox, colonial and contemporary architectural styles.

Each person was then asked three questions about the houses and the residents who might live in them.

The first question asked participants to choose the house they would feel most comfortable approaching if they had a flat tire.

The farm-style house was the first choice of 44 percent of the respondents, followed by the saltbox, Tudor, Spanish, colonial and contemporary, respectively.

Another question asked for the participants to assume the residents of the six style homes worked together. They were asked to make judgments about the leadership qualities of the residents.

The participants were asked to place the homes in the order in which the residents "take charge" or "lead" the group.

The colonial style house was the first choice of 41 percent of the respondents, followed by Tudor, contemporary, farm, Spanish and saltbox styles.

Nasar’s associates then asked the participants which house they would choose if they won a "dream house lottery."

The farm and Tudor style houses tied for first, followed by contemporary, colonial, Spanish and saltbox styles.

The purpose of the survey was to find "if style carries meaning to the public," Nasar said.

Architects, planners and realtors could benefit from the results of the survey, he said.

Joe Walker, owner of the Dublin-Granville Road Century 21, was surprised at the survey’s results.

"I would have guessed that the contemporary-style home would have been most popular," Walker said.

Clients would be interested in the results of the survey, he said.

Nasar also researched to find if architects really know what the public wants when it comes to design.

"When architects design buildings, they need to be certain that they choose styles that will communicate the message that they intend," Nasar said.

Architects were asked to answer how they thought the public responded to the three survey questions.

Although Nasar has not completed the study on the architects, he has found they generally answered differently than the public.

Nasar plans to survey the public’s response to the appearances of office buildings.

The survey will ask participants what type of business they think is in the building and how well they think the service will be inside.
A good move

Program helps single moms find nicer homes, learn valuable life skills

By Mark Ferenchik

The Columbus Dispatch

Bessie Jackson and her sons, Darius Boggs Jr., left, and Braylon Walker, are feeling right at home in their new apartment at The Vista at Rocky Fork in Gahanna. [SAMANTHA MADAR/DISPATCH]
Bessie Jackson looks on as her sons Darius Boggs Jr., 6, left, and Braylon Walker, 10, play Connect4. Move to PROSPER allowed Jackson to relocate to a better neighborhood and is teaching her valuable life skills to help her raise her boys. [SAMANTHA MADAR/DISPATCH PHOTOS]
Darius is overjoyed after beating his older brother in Connect4. The boys are doing much better since they started attending Jefferson Elementary School in Gahanna.

Bessie Jackson moved from the East Side to Gahanna in August, figuring it would be better for her 10- and 6-year-old sons.

Jackson felt that they weren’t getting a good-enough education at the schools they were attending, plus they were being bullied.

They now attend Jefferson Elementary School. So far, so good, she said.

“Overall, it’s fantastic,” she said. “You can see the love and care the teachers have for the kids.”

Jackson and her sons were able to move through a pilot program called Move to PROSPER, aimed at providing low-income mothers and their children with better and more stable housing through temporary rent subsidies and life coaching. The monthly rent for Jackson’s two-bedroom apartment is $1,000; she pays $665 and the program pays the rest.

Move to PROSPER is an initiative of the Ohio State University City and Regional Planning program and other partners. Ten families were chosen and placed in apartment communities in the Olentangy, Gahanna, Dublin and Hilliard school districts, where they will live for three years.

The families wouldn’t have been able to move otherwise, because rents in many communities have skyrocketed. According to the real estate website Zillow, median rents in the past five years have jumped 34 percent in Bexley, to an average $2,155; 26 percent in Grandview Heights to $1,822; and 14 percent in Upper Arlington to $2,439, all places with higher-rated school districts. Even in Columbus, median rents have risen almost 22 percent, forcing some tenants out of their homes in certain neighborhoods.

In Dublin, the median monthly rent is $2,397; in Hilliard it’s $1,678.

The families have been in their new homes just a few months, but they seem to be settling in, said Rachel Kleit, Ohio State’s associate dean for faculty affairs in the City and Regional Planning Section and Move to PROSPER’s steering committee chairwoman.

“One of the sentiments that I’ve been hearing from them, because they’re not stressed out and worried, is that they’re able to take care of their families,” Kleit said. Before, many of them were overcome by day-to-day emergencies.

The program provides a coach to teach them financial and problem-solving skills.

“They don’t have the aunts or parents to ask for advice, or a financial adviser,” Kleit said.

Amy Klaben, an affordable-housing consultant and Move to PROSPER’s project facilitator, said one of the women in the program paid her rent late all the time. That cost her $50 a month in fees, or $600 a year.

Sometimes, good parenting is as simple as showing up for parent-teacher conferences.

“If you’re not used to doing that, you may not do it,” Klaben said.
The coaching revolves around housing stability, financial capacity and stability, improving physical and mental health, and teaching career and education goals. Because of the coaching, one parent has signed up for classes at Columbus State, Klaben said.

So far, Move to PROSPER has raised $458,000 for the three-year program from the Columbus Foundation, the United Way of Central Ohio, the Columbus Realtors Foundation, Fifth Third Bank and a number of individuals.

Bridgette Mariea lives in the Dublin school district in Delaware County and volunteers with the program. She discovered the program through the Columbus Foundation, and she and her husband already had been looking to find a rental property to buy in the school district to rent to a low-income family so they could benefit from Dublin schools.

“The advantage of being in our neighborhood is tremendous,” she said. mferenchik@dispatch.com
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