

Sustainable City Year Program University of Oregon

City of Gresham 2009-2010 Press Book



SCI in the News – Fall 2009

Students wow Gresham leaders – *Portland Tribune* – January 14, 2010
http://www.oregoncitynewsonline.com/sustainable/story.php?story_id=126300225000952600

Students wow Rockwood with ideas - *Gresham Outlook* - December 29, 2009
http://www.theoutlookonline.com/news/story.php?story_id=126213403836079600

Students will bring fresh ideas to Gresham - *Gresham Outlook* - December 5, 2009
http://www.theoutlookonline.com/opinion/story.php?story_id=125997872953740000

UO students get busy on sustainability - *Gresham Outlook* - December 1, 2009
http://www.theoutlookonline.com/news/story.php?story_id=125972337423336600

Gresham 101: A series of UO classes targets city's growth - *Oregonian* - November 13, 2009
http://www.oregonlive.com/gresham/index.ssf/2009/11/gresham_101_a_series_of_uo_cla.html

Green Briefs • UO class puts Gresham under microscope - *Beaverton Valley Times* - November 12, 2009
http://www.beavertonvalleytimes.com/sustainable/story.php?story_id=125754829380258000

Students and faculty begin Sustainable Cities Year-Gresham project - *InsideOregon* - November 9, 2009
<http://insideoregon.uoregon.edu/students-and-faculty-begin-sustainable-cities-year-gresham-project/>

Student program revitalizes Gresham - *Oregon Daily Emerald* - November 5, 2009
<http://www.dailyemerald.com/news/student-program-revitalizes-gresham-1.861972>

University of Oregon program joins Gresham to look at a more sustainable future - *Oregonian* - October 27, 2009
http://www.oregonlive.com/environment/index.ssf/2009/10/university_of_oregon_program_j.html

Gresham and the University of Oregon Team Up for Sustainability - *The Portlander* - October 27, 2009
<http://theportlander.com/gresham-and-the-university-of-oregon-team-up-for-sustainability/>

U of O students explore one city's move toward sustainable future - *North Coast Oregon* - October 27, 2009
http://northcoastoregon.com/print_this_story.asp?smenu=1&sdetail=1727

PortlandTribune

Green Briefs

The Portland Tribune, Jan 14, 2010

Students wow Gresham leaders

The University of Oregon's inaugural Sustainable Cities Initiative is off to a good start in Gresham.

Participating U of O students, in a yearlong collaboration to help the sprawling suburb shift to a more sustainable urban form, won raves for submitting ideas to revitalize the downtrodden Rockwood district.

One proposal for the Rockwood Triangle calls for moving an underutilized park-and-ride lot to the corner of 188th Avenue and Burnside Street, and adding an open-air market, plus retail and commercial space. The proposal for the 6.5-acre property also would incorporate a new Multnomah County courthouse, a grocery store and studios where people could live and work.

"If you hadn't known they were students, well, you wouldn't have known they were students," says Lori Stegmann, a local insurance agent and a member of the redevelopment commission's advisory committee. "I was really amazed by their work."

Several months ago, Gresham parted ways with Williams & Dame Development, a top Portland developer that initially beat out five other firms to refashion the Rockwood site. After the company proposed anchoring the development with a YWCA, city officials severed ties with the company and went back to the drawing board.

About 18 students spent an estimated 5,400 hours creating six scenarios for the Rockwood site, also known as the Cultural Marketplace.

"I was just impressed how they came back with so much," says Richard Strathern, a Gresham city councilor and liaison to the redevelopment commission's advisory board. "You just saw so many possibilities, your brain was spinning."

Strathern called the UO students' ideas fresh, innovative and better than anything he'd seen from the six developers who made pitches for the project.

— *Mara Stine*

Forum on energy financing

Several environmental and faith-based groups host a community forum this month on renewable energy development and how to pay for it.

The event takes place from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 16, at downtown Portland's First Unitarian Church, Southwest 12th Avenue and Salmon Street.

Presenters will discuss Business Energy Tax Credits, one of the state's main ways of subsidizing renewable energy; and renewable energy payments, also known as a Feed-in-Tariff, a system deployed in Europe and Asia and approved in trial form for Oregon by the 2009 Legislature.

For more information, call David Delk at 503-232-5495, or by e-mail, davidafd@msn.com

Building trails with lower impact

Single Track LLC, a North Plains company that makes a machine designed to build nature trails with minimal environmental impact, has scored its first buyer.

The Black Hills National Forest in South Dakota will be the first to use the company's Single Track ST 240, which can cut trails two to three feet wide and be operated with remote controls.

“That allows you to fit the trail into nature, rather than altering nature for the trail,” says Barrett Brown, who started Single Track with his wife, Susan Brown, and spent three years coming up with the prototype.

Narrow trails are easier to build and maintain, and afford hikers, cross-country skiers and mountain bikers a more intimate experience with nature.

For more information: www.SingleTrackTools.com.

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Students wow Rockwood with ideas

Gresham residents, leaders amazed by UO proposal

BY MARA STINE

The Gresham Outlook, Dec 29, 2009, Updated Dec 30, 2009

About half a year ago, Gresham urban renewal leaders parted ways with a promising developer whose vision for Rockwood didn't agree with theirs.

Now, some of those same leaders are wide-eyed in amazement and awe at what a group of college students have proposed for the same area.

The students from University of Oregon professor Nico Larco's class unveiled six development plans for the urban renewal district's Catalyst Project, also called the Cultural Marketplace, during a meeting Wednesday, Dec. 9.

Approximately 75 people attended the meeting, during which the students' work was unveiled as part of a pilot program called the Sustainable Cities Initiative. The program teams University of Oregon graduate students with Gresham to help shape a more sustainable future for the city.

A total of 250 students from the university's School of Architecture and Allied Arts are taking part in the yearlong collaboration. One of fall term's 11 classes centered on the Rockwood neighborhood and called for students to propose six development schemes for a 6.5-acre parcel at the heart of the urban renewal district.

Larco – an assistant professor of architecture who co-directs the initiative with professors Robert Young and Marc Schlossberg – estimates the 18 students in his design studio spent a combined 5,400 hours creating the six scenarios.

Judging from the community's reaction at the meeting, all that hard work paid off.

"It went extremely well," Larco said. "I was thrilled. We wanted to push the conversation forward and provide a range of scenarios and options for people to consider."

Mission accomplished, said Richard Strathern, a Gresham redevelopment commissioner, city councilor and liaison to the redevelopment commission's advisory board.

"I was just impressed how they came back with so much," he said. "You just saw so many possibilities, your brain was spinning."

"From a citizen engagement point of view, it's the best thing I've seen in the three years I've been on the City Council."

Rockwood urban renewal

Gresham residents in 2003 created the city's first urban renewal district in the city's western neighborhood in hopes of improving the low-income, high-crime area. After a grocery store closed in the district, urban renewal commissioners bought the property on the northeast corner of Southeast 185th and Stark Street in 2006 and demolished the store.

The plan: Build a multi-phase mixed-use development including for-sale condos and townhouses, commercial and retail space, plus an area for the community to gather.



GRAPHIC COURTESY OF THE CITY OF GRESHAM
University of Oregon students designed this plan for redeveloping a wedge of property in the heart of the West Gresham-Rockwood Urban Renewal District. Residents and city leaders say the plan is a drastic improvement over those envisioned by professionals.

After six developers bid on the project, the commission selected Williams & Dame Development, a prestigious Portland firm credited with the renaissance of Portland's Pearl District and the city's tony South Waterfront area.

But when the economy nosedived, Williams & Dame proposed anchoring the development with a YWCA. In May, urban renewal commissioners severed ties with the firm and all but went back to the drawing board, promising more community involvement.

Strathern called the UO students' ideas fresh, innovative and better than anything he'd seen from the six developers who made pitches for the project.

"There was nothing so stimulating as this," he said, adding that he heard a few others at the meeting say the same thing. "It was way beyond anything that's been presented before. They've done much more with that 6-and-a-half acres than I've seen."

Impressive ideas

Strathern was especially impressed with two concepts.

The first one lays out the future of the Rockwood Triangle in three phases. Phase I between 185th and 188th calls for moving an under-used park-and-ride lot to the corner of 188th and Burnside. The lot includes space for an open-air market and is surrounded by retail and commercial space to the south, a grocery store to the southwest and housing and live/work studio space to the west.

Phase II includes Multnomah County's new courthouse on the southwest corner of 185th and Stark, but really focuses on the wedge of land between 188th, Burnside and Stark. It is slated for Mt. Hood Community College's expansion and commercial use along 188th.

Phase III also has commercial space on the northwest corner of 185th and Stark. Housing is clustered between Burnside and Pine just west of 185th.

The other design that wowed Strathern was for a plaza on the southwest corner of 188th and Burnside. During the workweek, it can function as parking for the nearby courthouse. But on the weekend, it becomes space for vendors and merchants when the plaza morphs into an open-air marketplace.

Lori Stegmann – a local insurance agent, vice chair of the Rockwood Business Coalition and a member of the redevelopment commission's advisory committee – also was blown away by the presentations.

"If you hadn't had known they were students, well, you wouldn't have known they were students," she said. "I was really amazed by their work."

One of her favorite ideas was the Rockwood Boulevard concept: A plan to create a curving Main Street out of a jagged road now linking 188th Avenue north of Burnside to 187th south of Stark.

It calls for two large anchor stores on either side of the street lined with small unique storefronts. The plan also includes a park with covered pavilion, seating and a community center.

Stegmann marveled at the student's ability to create non-pie-in-the-sky ideas that could actually get off the ground, and that resonated with the community, and the research they did interviewing residents and studying the area and its challenges.

"They did their homework," she said, adding that she led them on a walking tour of Rockwood to give them a lay of the land and some history. "They interviewed pastors, business owners, residents. They interviewed anybody they possibly could about the Rockwood community."

Win-win

Nico said his students benefited from the collaboration just as much as the city. They're getting valuable real-world experience and honest feedback on their concepts.

"It was very rewarding as a student to see the reaction of the people your design will ultimately affect," said Lauren Schwartz, a grad student who worked on the Rockwood Boulevard concept. "The community members were very insightful as to the perceived needs of their community and how our urban design schemes would help build their community."

Meanwhile, Strathern is eager to see what students in the other Gresham-based classes have come up with.

Students studied Gresham's downtown, Civic Neighborhood and Springwater areas; considered four sites to determine the best place for a new City Hall building in downtown Gresham; examined how walkability, crime and neighborhood affect housing prices; analyzed the Multnomah-County owned rock quarry known as Vance Pit for potential development; designed a MAX station in Civic Neighborhood to maximize the use of daylight; studied how to make schools more sustainable; developed an action plan to deal with climate change; and integrated ecology into a mixed-use transit-oriented development at the "Crossings Site," where the MAX tracks cross Civic Drive in the Civic Neighborhood.

The projects are conceptual in nature, but Gresham will take the students' ideas and consider them for future use.

And who knows. Maybe they'll serve as the foundation for upcoming projects, Stegmann said.

"I hope a developer can incorporate the ideas into something really amazing," she said.

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EDITORIAL

Students will bring fresh ideas to Gresham

The Gresham Outlook, Dec 5, 2009

Gresham is getting an infusion of new thinking from a group of 250 University of Oregon graduate students, and about all we can say to that is: great idea.

The UO architecture students are working with Gresham thanks in large part to the city government's top Duck, City Manager Erik Kvarsten. They are examining a number of stubborn problems that could use a fresh set of eyes. Among those is the question of how best to develop the old Fred Meyer site in the heart of Rockwood. The city redevelopment agency now owns this 6-acre parcel, but has been unable to move forward with an innovative development at the site.

The UO students have been studying a variety of possibilities and will present their ideas on Wednesday at a Gresham Redevelopment Advisory Committee meeting at City Hall. We look forward to seeing what approaches the students have identified for putting the property to good use and for spurring additional redevelopment in Rockwood.

The Rockwood project is just one of many the students have tackled. They also are considering new locations for a City Hall, and all of their work is being done under the umbrella of a pilot program called the Sustainable Cities Initiative.

Gresham benefits from this collaboration in multiple ways. The city is getting free advice – the kind of work that would cost hundreds of thousands of dollars if done by consultants. It also is boosting its green credentials and will have another “sustainable” initiative to brag about as it tries to recruit alternative-energy companies and other environmentally friendly industries.

We're sure the students are gaining value from this endeavor too, especially from the experience of working on real-world problems. They also are learning about budget constraints, as they look at these issues from the standpoint of a city that doesn't have much extra cash on hand.

Yet, by arranging for this impressive level of cooperation, Gresham and the university are maximizing the use of those precious public resources. Gresham is getting ideas it couldn't afford to generate otherwise – and the students are getting training they wouldn't find anywhere else.

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UO students get busy on sustainability

Project pairs courses with city planning to create wise growth

BY MARA STINE

The Gresham Outlook, Dec 1, 2009, Updated Dec 2, 2009

Rena Schlachter grew up in Gresham and has watched the city change for better and for worse. Now the University of Oregon graduate student is taking part in shaping the city's more sustainable future.

She's one of approximately 250 students in the UO's School of Architecture and Allied Arts, taking part in a groundbreaking collaboration between the university and Gresham.

As part of a pilot program called the Sustainable Cities Initiative, graduate students are spending a year putting their studies in architecture, landscape architecture and planning to real-world use, researching a variety of Gresham developments, programs and initiatives.

In the Rockwood neighborhood, students are proposing six development schemes for the urban renewal district's Catalist Project, also called the Cultural Marketplace.

Meanwhile, the city – which has reduced its staffing to bare bones because of budget shortfalls – benefits from cutting edge study and research for free, said Gresham City Manager Erik Kvarsten.

For years, students have performed projects for individual cities and agencies, said Nico Larco, assistant professor of architecture who co-directs the initiative with professors Robert Young and Marc Schlossberg.

But professors and students alike craved a larger-scale endeavor – a yearlong project for students of multiple academic disciplines to take part in. A project that tackles the larger varied issues of sustainable design that growing communities face.

University teams with Gresham

Last year, the university's School of Architecture and Allied Arts approached Kvarsten, a UO alum who still has ties to the university, with the idea of a yearlong curriculum based on sustainability that revolves around a single city.

"Erik ran with it," Larco said. "There's a tremendous need out there for cutting-edge research into sustainable communities. All city governments across the country are limited by budget cuts."

The university chose Gresham as its first yearlong subject for many reasons, Larco said.

The city of 100,000 is the fourth largest in the state, so it's not too big to benefit or too small to have the kind of projects professors and students had in mind.

"It's also a city in transition," Larco said.

Once renowned for its strawberry fields, Gresham has grown away from its agricultural roots and is considered by some a bedroom community to its larger neighbor to the west, Portland. Now Gresham is positioning itself as a magnet for green industry and highly values the environment and sustainability.

"At first we were thinking of maybe four or five courses," Larco said. But Kvarsten and his staff just kept coming up with more projects, development areas and issues perfect for the kind of focused attention the Sustainable Cities Initiative was designed to provide. "We ended up with something like 20 courses," Larco said.

The collaboration is a huge benefit to the city, Kvarsten added.

Not only are students bringing fresh, innovative ideas to the table, they're saving Gresham taxpayers

big bucks by doing it all for free.

“They’re like consultants,” Kvarsten said. For example, Larco’s 18 students who are studying the Catalyst Site in the Rockwood Triangle will spend an estimated total of 5,400 hours creating six scenarios for the 6-acre parcel.

“You’d never be able to get a consultant to do that,” Larco said. “It’d be too expensive.”

Focus on Rockwood

The initiative kicked off this fall with 11 classes and high-intensity courses called studios, many of which focus on the city’s low-income, high-crime Rockwood neighborhood.

Three planning courses, a demographics study and a design studio will all focus on the area.

Of particular interest is an issue city leaders and residents have wrestled with for years – how to develop vacant parcels next to the light-rail line, specifically 6 acres owned by the city’s urban renewal agency that are earmarked for a future mixed-use development.

But the city’s downtown, Civic Neighborhood and Springwater areas also are being studied. Students are considering four sites to determine the best place for a new City Hall building in downtown Gresham.

There’s a class on data analysis that examines how walkability, crime and neighborhood affect housing prices. Another seminar is studying the Multnomah County- owned rock quarry known as Vance Pit and will propose “urban design ideas” for the site. The “Green Cities” course looks at creating “net zero” development in Springwater – developments that are so sustainable, they eliminate the need for costly traditional infrastructure.

Other projects include designing a MAX station in Civic Neighborhood to maximize the use of daylight, studying how to make schools more sustainable and developing an action plan to deal with climate change.

Big boon for students

Aside from Gresham benefiting from free brainpower, students benefit just as much.

“From the UO side, the students get a chance to work hands-on in the trenches with issues that cities are dealing with,” complete with politics and the harsh reality of budget constraints, Larco said. “They get to see that the things they are doing can make a difference.”

Schlachter, the homegrown grad student in landscape architecture, couldn’t agree more. She is part of a studio working to integrate ecology into a mixed-use transit-oriented development at the “Crossings Site,” where the MAX tracks cross Civic Drive in the Civic Neighborhood.

“We’re looking at the site as a key place for housing geared toward people who want to live near mass transit, all the while enriching the natural habitat. ... I’ve never done a studio like this before,” she said, adding that it requires architecture and landscape architecture students to work in teams. “This is definitely putting that emphasis on cross disciplines into finer focus.”

It also showcases the importance of knowing an area’s history when working on such projects.

Schlachter attended Portland Lutheran School through middle school before graduating from Gresham High School in 1998. Back then, Rockwood’s Hispanic and Slavic populations were booming and gang violence was gaining a foothold in the area.

As for Gresham Station, it included a street that locals dubbed the Road to Nowhere.

“There’s been huge changes in Gresham since I was a kid there,” Schlachter said, adding that she’s been able to tell other students about her hometown’s evolution while hearing about the projects they’re working on.

“It’s really exciting to be able to share with them what I know,” she said. “Now we can make Gresham better as we grow even more.”



OregonLive.com

Everything Oregon

Gresham 101: A series of UO classes targets city's growth

By James Mayer, The Oregonian

November 13, 2009, 4: 31PM

Take 250 University of Oregon students and their 14 teachers, then turn them loose on the state's fourth largest city and you have a project that might be called Gresham 101.

The university picked the east Multnomah County city of 100,000 for its first subject in an initiative to apply the specialties of architecture, planning, design, law, business and geography in an in-depth study of one city.

Students then help the city develop a sustainable future, said Nico Larco, assistant professor of architecture and a director of the initiative.

"Let them see how the real world works, see how the skills they have can make a difference," Larco said

Sustainability is the buzzword of the day, but governments may not be clear about what it means or how to get there. The United Nations defines sustainable development as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

Gresham is a city in transition, Larco said. "It has been a commuter suburb, but it's now looking for its own identity," he said. "The city is very much interested in sustainability."

There are 10 different projects in 12 classes, with another seven projects next term. The group is paying special attention to Rockwood, with three planning courses, a demographic study and a design studio looking at the redevelopment area with vacant parcels next to light rail.

"The classes let the city investigate a range of options it might not be able to do fully on its own," Larco said.

Erik Kvarsten, Gresham city manager, welcomes the interest.

"I think it's a unique opportunity to bring the eclectic talents of the faculty and students of the University of Oregon to bear on the breadth of issues Gresham confronts," Kvarsten said. "It gives an opportunity for students to be involved in government in a realistic context."

He said the city will seriously consider the results of the students' work.

The Rockwood project will look at six different development schemes for the hardscrabble neighborhood that abuts East Portland. "It would not be economically or politically feasible for the city to invest in six different schemes," Larco said.

The result will be images of what a sustainable development could look like on a regional scale, using the specifics of the site, he said.

That's rare in a suburban setting. "You get one development only paying attention to itself and its arterial. Then next one and the next one. Pretty soon the area is filled out," he said.

Other projects include: design of a new city hall in historic downtown; design of a mixed-use development at the "Crossing" site along Civic Drive; analysis of how walkability, crime and neighborhood predict housing prices; a landscape study of the Gresham quarry site; an analysis of sustainable development in the Springwater area; design for a light rail station that enhances use of daylight; and an action plan to deal with climate change.

In the end, the initiative will harness hundreds of thousands of hours of student and faculty time directed toward Gresham, Larco said. "It's the magic of focusing on a community," he said.

-- James Mayer

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Green Briefs • UO class puts Gresham under microscope

Pamplin Media Group, Nov 12, 2009

University of Oregon students will get hands-on training in how to make a city more sustainable, in a one-year collaboration with the city of Gresham.

Fourteen university professors and 250 students from UO's School of Architecture and Allied Arts will participate in the innovative program, called Sustainable Cities Year-Gresham.

Students will analyze suburban development and craft possible designs and locations for future buildings in Gresham, including looking at a polluted brownfield site.

Students also will explore how to incorporate natural light into transit hubs and how to make schools more sustainable. The projects are conceptual in nature but will provide ideas for Gresham's future development.

In the fall term alone, students will enroll in 11 classes for the project, plus additional courses during the winter and spring terms.

— *Steve Law*

Heat pumps now used to heat water

Rheem Manufacturing Co. has unveiled its new heat pump for home water heating, a super-efficient system that could cut PGE customers' annual electric bills by \$200 to \$250. Heat pumps have long been used for home heating, air conditioning and other power, but this is the first mass-produced heat pump for water heating, says John Karasaki, PGE energy specialist.

"It's going to be twice as efficient as any water heater they have right now," Karasaki says.

The Rheem product initially will be available only through plumbing contractors for around \$1,400. Total installed price to homeowners is estimated at \$2,000 to \$2,500, Karasaki says. However, subsidies can effectively lower the ultimate price to \$1,000.

At that price, customers can recoup their purchase price in four years of energy-bill savings, Karasaki says.

Reduced energy use translates into lower greenhouse gas emissions.

Rheem demonstrated its new system locally on Oct. 28 to contractors and other interested parties. PGE will promote the product to its customers starting in January.

Heat pumps should help PGE and other electric utilities compete more effectively with Northwest Natural, which promotes tankless water heaters as an efficient way to heat water using natural gas.

"I think it will forestall a lot of gas conversions," Karasaki says.

— *Steve Law*

Wind turbines to be made locally

Portland lost its bid to lure Danish-based Vestas to build a wind turbine manufacturing plant here, but a Tigard business has decided to make smaller wind turbines in Tualatin.

Tigard-based Powin Corp. recently broke ground on a site on Tualatin-Sherwood Road near 115th Avenue, where it expects to build a 70,000-square-foot plant to make 20-kilowatt wind turbines.

The new plant likely will employ 95 people, says Joseph Lu, Powin owner.

Powin makes more than 2,000 products and parts for other companies, ranging from cookware to exercise equipment. It employs 3,500 workers in nine plants, including sites in China and Tualatin.

Powin expects to start construction once it clears architectural review, but has begun clearing the 7.5-acre site.

— *Nick Peterson*

Plastic stays local

A new Oregon business partnership plans to build a \$10 million state-of-the-art plastic bottle recycling plant on Port of St. Helens-owned property, promising to create 50 jobs when it begins operation next year.

The plant will be able to process up to 25 million pounds of plastic bottles made from polyethylene terephthalate, or PET. The “ORPET” bottle recycling plant is a collaboration between Tom Leaptrott, president of Quantum Leap in Vancouver, Wash., a plastic packaging material company; Dennis Denton, president of Denton Plastics in Portland; and the Oregon Beverage Recycling Cooperative, which helps administer the state bottle bill.

Most plastic bottles recycled in Oregon are compacted and sold to the highest bidder, usually from China.

Having a local recycling facility in the area will save on shipping costs and reduce the environmental impact, says John Anderson, president of the beverage recycling cooperative. Recycled plastic from the plant will be used to make more bottles, plus other products used in clothing and carpet.

— *Stover Harger III*

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Inside Oregon

November 9th, 2009

Students and faculty begin Sustainable Cities Year-Gresham project

Students and faculty from four departments and institutes have descended on the City of Gresham to apply their collective abilities to assist the city become more sustainable. The program called, “Sustainable Cities Year – Gresham,” is led by the School of Architecture and Allied Arts’ Nico Larco, Robert Young and Marc Schlossberg. This academic year, 250 UO students and 14 professors are collaborating with Gresham to further sustainable design and planning. The program provides students with real-world experience to apply their training and serve a city that is ready to transition to a more sustainable and accessible future.

“Real world projects like Sustainable Cities Year involve client interaction, political issues and other complex situations that are impossible to simulate and lead to a higher quality of work,” said Larco, professor of architecture and co-director for Sustainable Cities Initiative.

Sustainable Cities Initiative (SCI) is one of the five Big Ideas that are shaping the future academic priorities at UO. Started at the UO School of Architecture and Allied Arts, SCI now extends across disciplines into other schools and colleges on campus. The goal is to promote research, education, service and public outreach related to the development of sustainable cities.

The Gresham projects will be conceptual in principle, but the work will provide insight to the city for its future development. Classes will analyze suburban development, possible designs and locations for future buildings, including a brownfield site, how to incorporate natural light into transit hubs and how to make schools more sustainable. Gresham was selected for the first year of the program for its size and situation as a city in transition from a Portland commuter suburb to a city developing its own identity. The program will build from efforts already underway with the broad support of Gresham leaders.

“Every city is in transition now in terms of sustainability. We no longer have the luxury of 50 years to get our act together and Gresham is moving forward in this process,” said Young, whose expertise is in Green Cities and environmental and economic policy and planning.

The curriculum, including 12 courses during fall term, integrates architecture and landscape

architectural design, planning, ecology and public policy education to encourage an understanding of sustainability issues that cuts across disciplines. In addition, there may be courses in law and business as the program continues in winter and spring term.

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Student program revitalizes Gresham

Sustainable Cities Initiative offers unique opportunity to gain real-world experience

By Jill Kimball | News editor

Published: Thursday, November 5, 2009

Updated: Thursday, November 5, 2009

For many students, college represents the last years of freedom before they're launched into the real world.

For planning, public policy and management and architecture students working on the Sustainable Cities Initiative, college is the real world.

Ten classes at the University and two others at the University's Portland campus are helping revitalize the city of Gresham, a suburb of Portland, with guidance from professors and encouragement from Gresham city officials in what University architecture professor Nico Larco called a "win-win situation."

In the year-long program, born from three professors' ideas 18 months ago and approved for funding as a Big Idea by the University Provost's Office, professors present students with vacant or underdeveloped spaces in Gresham. Students then work together to find solutions, and when they finish brainstorming, they pitch their ideas to city planners. Later in the year, the students and the city will work together to bring some of those ideas to life.

Larco's students have been assigned a forlorn concrete path near a MAX Light Rail stop in Gresham's economically-challenged Rockwood neighborhood. The area is home to the second-highest Latino concentration in the state and also houses a substantial Slavic population. Based on a visit to the light rail stop and the surrounding neighborhood, students have drawn up a diverse pool of ideas to pitch to Gresham planners.

"One group is creating Rockwood Boulevard," Larco said, a thoroughfare lined with local shops and startup businesses.

Another group's plan is to anchor the street with large tenants that attract more people. A third group is "looking at a community center to be the anchor of the place, adding high-density housing to bring vitality to the area."

Another class in architectural programming, taught by adjunct professor Jean von Bargaen, has taken a look at four different vacant sites in Gresham's downtown area and will decide this term which site is best to build a new city hall.

"They had an experiential moment in the (old) city hall, documenting how they felt about the place," von Bargaen said.

Then, students interviewed every department in the building, asking city employees what they liked and disliked about the building and what they're looking for in a new building.

They've organized all their research into diagrams and after a presentation to city planners Thursday, they'll find the right site and design a new city hall based on their findings.

Von Bargaen agreed the program is a win-win situation.

"Typically, (planners) write a plan hoping for someone to execute it," she said. "Now, the students are coming up with a plan for them."

A city the size of Gresham typically can't afford to hire dozens of planners, but with von Bargaen's group of students, the city may as well have hired 27 planners for free.

And students, unlike seasoned professionals, bring fresh, uninhibited ideas to the table.

"Students can stretch, be creative and generate ideas we might not think of to get the discussion going," said Brian Martin, an associate planner for the city of Gresham. "We want to take advantage of that brainpower."

University students also benefit greatly from the program.

"They get a chance to deal with real-world constraints" such as space limits and tight budgets, Martin said, giving them an edge over the competition in the post-college job market.

But one of the most exciting things about the year-long program, Sustainable Cities Initiative Project Coordinator Nick Fleury said, is its infinite possibilities.

"We ultimately don't expect that the Sustainable Cities Yearprogram is just going to be one year," he said. "We want to make sure the classes really have some use and utility for the city itself."

As long as the program continues to grow, Fleury said, it will become increasingly more interdisciplinary. Fleury hopes to add geography, journalism and law classes to the program.

"The program used to be so separated into classes, but it's becoming much more overlapping," he said. "It's really given students the opportunity to discuss something across disciplinary lines."

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WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 04, 2009

Oregon City Becomes Lab for Sustainability

Now [this program](#) -- created by the University of Oregon -- is cool:



Students will gain real-world experience as the yearlong program analyzes suburban development, possible designs and locations for new buildings, development of a brownfield site, incorporating natural light into transit hubs and ways to make schools more sustainable.

The fall curriculum includes 11 courses that integrate architecture and landscape architectural design, planning, ecology and public policy education in a broad approach to sustainability. Future courses may include law and business.

The program is part of the [Sustainable Cities Initiative](#), which is one of five interdisciplinary themes -- coined "[Big Ideas](#)" -- that are shaping the future academic priorities at the UO. The goal of the initiative is to promote research, education, service and public outreach related to the development of sustainable cities.

We'll keep you posted on the progress of this initiative...

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...



Posted by Jon Gelbard, Ph.D. at [12:35 AM](#)

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Beyond the classroom: University of Oregon students explore one city's move toward sustainable future

Eighteen courses will analyze sites and develop conceptual designs, plans for Gresham, Ore. EUGENE, Ore. -- (Oct. 26, 2009) - Improving the sustainability and livability of a city isn't enough for University of Oregon professors Robert Young, Nico Larco and Marc Schlossberg. They intend to revolutionize higher education with a new program that provides opportunities for community engagement, interdisciplinary collaboration and sustainability study.

The innovative program is called, "Sustainable Cities Year - Gresham." This academic year, 250 UO students and 14 professors are collaborating with the City of Gresham, Ore. in a unique way to further sustainable design and planning. The program provides students with real-world experience to apply their training and serve a city that is ready to transition to a more sustainable and accessible future.

According to faculty leaders, students are inspired by cross-disciplinary experiences that have real significance. "Real world projects like Sustainable Cities Year involve client interaction, political issues and other complex situations that are impossible to simulate and lead to a higher quality of work," said Larco, professor of architecture and co-director for Sustainable Cities Initiative.



[Sustainable Cities Initiative](#) [1] (SCI) is one of five interdisciplinary themes, coined "Big Ideas," that are shaping the future academic priorities at the UO as a result of a campus-wide discussion and selection process. Started at the UO School of Architecture and Allied Arts, SCI now extends across disciplines into other schools and colleges on campus. The goal is to promote research, education, service and public outreach related to the development of sustainable cities.

The Gresham projects will be conceptual in principle, but the work will provide insight to the city for its future development. Classes will analyze suburban development, possible designs and locations for future buildings, including a brownfield site, how to incorporate natural light into transit hubs and how to make schools more sustainable.

SCI synthesizes faculty research from professors and instructors, representing four departments and institutes, under a single theme and serves as a catalyst for expanded research and teaching endeavors. The curriculum, including 11 courses during fall term, integrates architecture and landscape architectural design, planning, ecology and public policy education to encourage an understanding of sustainability issues that cuts across disciplines. In addition, there may be courses in law and business as the program continues in winter and spring term.

"Sustainable Cities Initiative creates opportunities to educate students and educate a city with service learning and teaching," said Larco. "The need is immense with cities around the state of Oregon and the U.S. eager to understand what sustainability and livability mean and how to advance."

As part of the Sustainable City Year, one city in Oregon is "adopted" per year by the UO program and students work with that city through a variety of studio projects and service learning.

The first year of the program focuses on Gresham, Oregon's fourth largest city with 100,000 residents. Over the last 20 years, Gresham has experienced rapid growth from a rural, farming community to a burgeoning urban area that provides a high quality of life for its residents and business community.

"Every city is in transition now in terms of sustainability. We no longer have the luxury of 50 years to get our act together and Gresham is moving forward in this process," said Young, whose expertise is in Green Cities and environmental and economic policy and planning.

Gresham was selected for the first year of the program for its size and situation as a city in transition from a Portland commuter suburb to a city developing its own identity. The program will build from efforts already underway with the broad support of Gresham leaders.

"The program and its curriculum will build on the innovative work in sustainability the city has done to date while providing us with new ideas around sustainable communities," said Gresham City Manager Erik Kvarsten. "Additionally this partnership will give students first-hand knowledge of what it is like to do this type of work given some of the challenges local governments in Oregon face today."

About the University of Oregon

The University of Oregon is a world-class teaching and research institution and Oregon's flagship public university. The UO is a member of the Association of American Universities (AAU), an organization made up of the 62 leading public and private research institutions in the United States and Canada. The University of Oregon is one of only two AAU members in the Pacific Northwest.

Contacts: Julie Brown, UO media relations, 541-346-3185, julbrown@uoregon.edu; Laura Bridges-Shepard, Gresham communications, 503-618-2247, Laura.Bridges@greshamoregon.gov [2]

Links: UO Sustainable Cities Initiative, <http://sci.uoregon.edu>; [3] City of Gresham, <http://greshamoregon.gov/> [4]

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- [1] <http://sci.uoregon.edu>
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[3] <http://sci.uoregon.edu>;
[4] <http://greshamoregon.gov/>



Public and Government Affairs Update

October 2009

Issue No. 40

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Community welcomes UO students

The leaders from the City of Eugene, the University of Oregon and local neighborhoods went door to door in the South and West University neighborhoods on September 29, the first day of classes, to encourage neighborly behavior and demonstrate collaboration.

UO and community leaders welcomed students living off campus back to school and to the City of Eugene. The intent of the event, called "Community Welcome," was to build and strengthen relationships between long-term residents and students.

"University of Oregon students are important members of our community and can have a huge impact in their neighborhoods and the community as a whole," said Mayor Kitty Piercy. "The city warmly welcomes UO students to Eugene. We are happy to help them learn more about the community, and we are very pleased to take this step in partnership with

the university."

The university and the City of Eugene participated in the event to demonstrate how each person plays a part in creating neighborhoods that are respectful of everyone.



UO President Richard Lariviere teams up with Eugene Mayor Kitty Piercy and City Manager Jon Ruiz to welcome students to the community.

"Meeting students where they live off campus is a great way to start the academic year," said UO President Richard Lariviere. "As new neighbors ourselves, my wife, Jan, and I appreciate the active participation and support of the City of Eugene and other community partners."

Mayor Piercy and President Lariviere were joined by *(Continued on page 5)*

FEDERAL AFFAIRS

UO researcher to testify again in D.C.



Cassandra Moseley, University of Oregon director of the Ecosystem Workforce Program and associate director of the Institute for a Sustainable Environment, is headed to Washington, D.C. to testify on October 29. She will appear before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources committee to provide some analysis of a bill that would change the ways the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management can contract for forest management activities. Moseley is making her fourth appearance testifying before congressional committees since her arrival at the University of Oregon.

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For more information about this newsletter, please contact Eric Stillwell in Government and Community Relations at (541) 346-5381 or email to eas@uoregon.edu.

If you are interested in inviting government officials to a UO event, please contact us first. We can help! Give us a call or send an email to gcr@uoregon.edu.

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The Ducks need you!



New web page launched for UO Advocates

The University of Oregon Alumni Association's website has a new look and some new features, including an advocacy page where individuals

can volunteer to become advocates for the University of Oregon. Check it out at: <http://uoalumni.com/advocates>.

The new advocacy page leads to an online registration form where interested people can [sign up](#). Advocates will be notified from time to time when advocacy opportunities arise — from writing letters-to-the-editor to contacting policymakers, or participating in events. [Sign up today!](#)

You can also become a fan of the UO Advocates Facebook page at: www.facebook.com/UOAdvocates.

Community welcomes UO students

(Continued from page 1)

many other leaders for the walking tour including: Associated Students of the University of Oregon (ASUO) President Emma Kallaway, Eugene City Councilor Alan Zelenka, City Manager John Ruiz and Assistant City Manager Sarah Medary, Eugene Police Department Chief Pete Kerns, UO Department of Public Safety Chief Doug Tripp, UO Vice President for Student Affairs Robin Holmes, UO Dean of Students Paul Shang, UO Assistant Dean of Students Sheryl Eyster, and neighborhood association leaders.

Student involvement was an important aspect of the event. "As residents of the near-campus neighborhood, my roommates and I are happy to know our city leaders and university decision makers are supportive of the safety concerns, neighbor relationships and general well-being of students outside of the classroom," said Kallaway.

FEDERAL AFFAIRS

Sustainable Cities faculty visit D.C.

University of Oregon faculty Marc Schlossberg, Robert Young and Nico Larco were in Washington, D.C., in early October for conferences related to transportation planning and livable communities.



Pictured (l-r) Casual Friday: Marc Schlossberg, Robert Young, Congressman Peter DeFazio and Nico Larco in Washington, D.C.

During their visit to the nation's capitol, Schlossberg, Young and Larco also met with congressional staff from the Oregon delegation and committee staff from House Science and House Transportation and Infrastructure committees. They were accompanied by Betsy Boyd, the UO's Associate Vice President of Public and Government Affairs. The purpose of the meetings was to talk about opportunities associated with the research portion of the surface transportation authorization now up for its five year reauthorization.

The Obama Administration and Congress share a common interest in new investments in federally funded research, including effective evaluation of initiatives involving transportation, planning and climate change. The University of Oregon seeks reauthorization of the [Oregon Transportation Research and Education Consortium](#) (OTREC) as well as technical assistance programs or other programs that will support research related to sustainable cities.

The [Sustainable Cities Initiative](#) (SCI) at the University of Oregon is a cross-disciplinary organization that seeks to promote research, education, service, and public outreach related to the development of sustainable cities.

UO Government and Community Relations



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SEARCH



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Evolution of Cities

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Evolution of Cities

One of the biggest areas where the influences of the green movement can be seen is in university architecture and urban planning departments. The last few decades have seen big shifts in how designers and planners think about their jobs. Now, the University of Oregon is launching a project called the **Sustainable Cities Initiative**, intended to help communities in Oregon transition into a new approach to city planning and design. We talk with architecture professor Nico Larco about the evolution of urban planning and building design.

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Everything Oregon

University of Oregon program joins Gresham to look at a more sustainable future

By **Abby Haight**, *The Oregonian*

October 27, 2009, 12:07PM

Gresham's development will get help from University of Oregon students and professors.

The city was chosen as the subject for the first "**Sustainable Cities Year**," a collaboration with an interdisciplinary team of 250 students and 14 professors, working toward a more sustainable, livable city.

Students will gain real-world experience as the yearlong program analyzes suburban development, possible designs and locations for new buildings, development of a brownfield site, incorporating natural light into transit hubs and ways to make schools more sustainable.

The fall curriculum includes 11 courses that integrate architecture and landscape architectural design, planning, ecology and public policy education in a broad approach to sustainability. Future courses may include law and business.

The program is part of the **Sustainable Cities Initiative**, which is one of five interdisciplinary themes -- coined "**Big Ideas**" -- that are shaping the future academic priorities at the UO. The goal of the initiative is to promote research, education, service and public outreach related to the development of sustainable cities.

The Gresham project will only be conceptual, but city manager Erik Kvarsten said it will help provide new ideas for sustainable development, while giving students exposure to real-world challenges facing local governments.

"Sustainable Cities Initiative creates opportunities to educate students and educate a city with service learning and teaching," said Nico Larco, professor of architecture and co-director for the Sustainable Cities Initiative. "The need is immense with cities around the state of Oregon and the U.S. eager to understand what sustainability and livability mean and how to advance."

-- **Abby Haight**

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Gresham and the University of Oregon Team Up for Sustainability



Posted by [Staff Writer](#) on Oct 27th, 2009 and filed under [Living Green](#). You can follow any responses to this entry through the [RSS 2.0](#). You can leave a response or trackback to this entry

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On Oct. 30, the University of Oregon and the City of Gresham will gather as part of a new and innovative program called, “Sustainable Cities Year – Gresham.” The Sustainable Cities Year Initiative will provide 250 UO students and 14 professors an opportunity to collaborate with the City over the academic year in a unique way to further sustainable design and planning. The program provides students with real-world experience to apply their training and serve a city that is ready to transition to a more sustainable and accessible future.

“Sustainable Cities Initiative creates opportunities to educate students and to help a city with service learning and teaching,” said UO professor Nico Larco. “The need is immense with cities around the state of Oregon and the U.S. eager to understand what sustainability and livability mean and how to advance it.”

The projects are conceptual in principle, but the work will provide insight to the City of Gresham for its future development. Classes will analyze suburban development, possible designs and locations for future buildings, including a brownfield site, how to incorporate natural light into transit hubs and how to make schools more sustainable. The fall term includes 11 courses. Additional courses will occur in winter and spring terms.

“The program and its curriculum will build on the innovative work in sustainability the City has done to date while providing us with new ideas around sustainable communities,” said Gresham City Manager Erik Kvarsten. “Additionally this partnership will give students first-hand knowledge of what it is like to do this type of work given some of the challenges local governments in Oregon face today.”

Sustainable Cities Initiative (SCI) is an interdisciplinary approach to learning and teaching within the UO School of Architecture and Allied Arts. The goal of the group is to promote research, education, service and public outreach related to the development of sustainable cities.

As part of the Sustainable City Year, one city in Oregon per year is “adopted” by the UO program and students work with that city through a variety of studio projects and service learning.

“Every city is in transition now in terms of sustainability. We no longer have the luxury of 50 years to get our act together and Gresham is moving forward in this process,” said University of Oregon professor Robert Young whose expertise is in Green Cities and environmental and economic policy and planning.

According to UO faculty leaders, Gresham was selected for the first year of the program for its size and situation as a city in transition from a commuter suburb to a city developing its own identity. The program will build from efforts already underway with the broad support of Gresham leaders.

U of O students explore one city's move toward sustainable future

University News -- 10/27/2009

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