

For Immediate Release

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USU landscape architecture students to present recommendations from 2011 Charrette to Cedar City Council, Planning Commission

CEDAR CITY — A two-month effort to conduct research, compile results and provide recommendations for future development in Cedar City will culminate Tuesday night when a team headed by Utah State University Landscape Architecture & Environmental Planning faculty and students presents results of its 2011 Charrette to the Cedar City Planning Commission and the City Council.

The presentation, scheduled for 5:15 p.m. at the City Office Building, is the final step in a joint project of Utah State's landscape architecture program, Southern Utah University's Office of Government Relations & Regional Services, and Cedar City.

The project was designed to identify and research potential and future opportunities for Cedar City. It focused on all areas of the community, including the downtown district and its relationship to SUU and the Utah Shakespeare Festival.

Other areas receiving attention were roads and corridors in and out of the city; Coal Creek waterfront development; urban parks, trails and open spaces; Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah reservation lands and community relationships; mixed land-use possibilities; and the overall community landscape.

Working closely with Cedar City Economic Development Director Brennan Wood, the Utah State team "identified opportunities to create things in the downtown area that could really make Cedar City spectacular," said David L. Bell, USU associate professor and charrette director.

Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary defines a *charrette* as "a final, intensive effort to finish a project — especially an architectural design project — before a deadline," and this project fit the definition.

Over a week-long stretch in January, Bell and a team of some 100 Utah State students joined a smaller group of SUU engineering students for an intense research marathon in Cedar City.

Working in 15 teams, each of which included a faculty adviser and an advanced student serving as team leader, the students were assigned specific topics and goals. They gathered data, tested ideas, proposed designs and formed the basis for their recommendations.

They met with Wood, Cedar City Mayor Joe Burgess, and members of the City Council and the Planning Commission. They walked the streets, talking to pedestrians and shoppers. They even interviewed SUU students.

"It's an amazing process," Bell said. "A week is not a long time, but during that week, the students turned out a tremendous amount of work. It gave them an incredible opportunity; they learned first-hand what the planning-and-design process is all about."

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The students are not the only ones who will benefit.

“I don’t want to steal the students’ thunder, but they have come up with a lot of nice thoughts and ideas, and it will be fun to see their presentation,” Bell said.

One major recommendation will be to improve walkways and landscape architecture between the downtown area and SUU.

“One of the wonderful things about Cedar City is that the university and the Utah Shakespeare Festival are so close to downtown that the distance is walkable,” Bell said. “However, if the walk from the university to downtown isn’t enjoyable, it won’t matter. No one will want to walk it.”

Recommendations to improve the pedestrian experience include improving the sidewalks and installing benches along the way, planting trees for shade along University Boulevard, and opening new shops and restaurants along the route to entice tourists and SUU students.

“Anything that will make the walk between the university and downtown more pleasant just makes good sense,” Bell said.

After he and his students returned to Logan, Bell said each team has reviewed its findings and added “things they think might be important for the presentation in Cedar City.”

Teams prepared 24- x 36-inch display posters highlighting their recommendations, as well as PowerPoint presentations describing their work. The posters and PowerPoint presentations include exemplars of recommended logos, exhibits, and landscape designs that the city is free to adopt.

Bell said the 15 PowerPoint presentations have been combined into a single 30-minute production that will be part of Tuesday night’s presentation.

In addition, the students compiled a comprehensive report that includes the research findings, statistics and recommendations.

The city will receive a hard copy of each poster, digital copies of each poster and each PowerPoint presentation, and 10 bound copies of the report.

The charrette cost approximately \$6,000 for travel and related costs, materials, multi-media design, and editing and printing of the report. Cedar City paid \$2,000 up front, while SUU’s Office of Government Relations & Regional Services paid \$2,000. The city will pay the balance after Tuesday’s presentation.

“The charrette is the type of project that we should help facilitate and be involved with,” said Brian Cottam, interim director of SUU Regional Services. “It is a good example of the university using its resources to facilitate positive growth and development that improves the quality of life for the people in the regions we serve.”

Cottam noted that Regional Services has worked previously with Bell and his students in communities across southwest Utah, always with positive results.

“It has been an exciting project to bring this program to Cedar City, as well as to include our SUU students in the process,” he said. “With the attention Cedar City has recently been giving to downtown development, the design concepts and products provided by the students should be of great value to the city as decisions are made about the future of downtown.”