Transit Oriented Projects

Clients:

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1. Gorilla Planning Project – What are gorilla planning projects? Who designs these and what do they look like. Gorilla planning projects are projects that happen in a wave or overnight by people in the community who want to make planning happen, but don't want to go through a formal planning process. A gorilla planning project can be a mini case study that is designed to count pedestrian foot traffic in a given location, it can be a sticker campaign designed to raise awareness about the benefits of biking to work and/or it can be a Bus shelter that arrives overnight to protect people choosing to ride the bus from rain, snow or sun.

   Timing Transit with Google Latitude with Zach – Our Gorilla Project - The RTA claims that its street cars have a 94% on-time performance rate. While we all know that this is stretching the truth a bit, we don't yet have data that show that street car on-time performance is abysmal. Can the students help? Can the students study the on-time performance on a given day in New Orleans using smart phones and the Google Latitude App?

   Here's the challenge: Get 5 or 6 people together to sit on busses and or street cars with smart phones. Do a small study to gauge the on-time performance of the transit system. What is the schedule. How close to the schedule is the streetcar or the bus? Can you track the timing, can you count the number people on the car? What can we learn?

   Could do a comparative analysis with the Green line in Brookline. Use the data from Alex's project as a way to start. Also, analyze the way the Greenline runs down the center of Beacon street. Also, analyze Beacon street (Alex's project). Here you can see how you can add a new line of service and still have a pedestrian friendly street.

2. New Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance (CZO) – a transit focus. The new Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance is in the process of being drafted and is expected to be released this Spring. As it stands, the CZO is focused more on accommodating the car than on accommodating public transportation needs. Specifically, the CZO includes too much parking. We would like the new CZO to reflect ideas about transit oriented development (TOD). In other words, we think that the City of New Orleans needs to think about how to use public transit to move people around, instead of assuming that people will rely on cars. Can we limit the amount of parking spaces required as part of building a project? Can we provide incentives for businesses to share or limit parking on their sites? Can we encourage new developments to include bike racks, zip cars, and other types of TOD mechanisms? Do transit oriented overlay districts need to be added to the new CZO? If so, what would these overlay districts look like? How would they be designed?

3. Curriculum Development for neighborhoods in collaboration with the Neighborhood Partnership Network– Capacity College – how can neighborhood groups negotiate with RTA? How can neighborhood groups organize? Explain – How does a street car get funded and built? See the street vendor project created by Candy at her website: http://candychang.com/street-vendor-guide/

   RTA may be releasing data – historic data, maps, geodata. Also, LSU has a very good data base that is hard to get permission to use.

Blight Project in New Orleans

Clients:

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Blight is defined as when a part of a neighborhood or a section of a city falls into disrepair or decrepitude. Blight can be traced to many circumstances including deindustrialization, depopulation or a changing population without the means to care fore properties. Blight can manifest as abandoned buildings, houses, desolate or inhospitable landscapes. Solutions to blight include a number of different interventions including re-zoning, creating transportation hubs, investing in critical retail or commercial zones, among other types of programs.   Blight continues to be the most pressing issue in New Orleans and is associated with security problems, graffiti, and can prevent neighborhoods from rebounding. Prior to Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans counted approximately 40,000 blighted properties. Since the storm, that number has surged to approximately 60,000 blighted properties.

This Spring the City of New Orleans has requested that students help tackle the blight problem in New Orleans. Here are two strategies that the City would like help on in New Orleans:

o Turning a Corner: The City of New Orleans is requesting that students work with the City to survey, interview and analyze data on pivotal growth corners in neighborhoods in New Orleans, a follow on project started by DUSP grad students over IAP. In addition, we hope to guide students to develop and test a survey methodology to track blighted properties in Neighborhoods throughout New Orleans using remotely sensed data and landscape level terrain modeling.

o School Zone Redevelopment: FEMA has allocated $2 billion for school rebuilding in New Orleans. How can neighborhoods within a 5 block radius of these new schools, leverage investment in schools to redevelop blighted neighborhoods. Students will work for the City of New Orleans to inventory, track and propose ideas for redevelopment.

Urban Design Standards for the City of New Orleans

Client: Seth Knudson
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Senior Planner at New Orleans City Planning Commission

The City of New Orleans adopted its first comprehensive plan, the *Plan for the 21st Century*, in June 2010. The master plan integrates and builds upon the various post-Katrina planning efforts and provides a comprehensive, community supported vision for the next twenty years. The master plan provides a policy and strategic framework to support the unique history and culture of New Orleans and guide future physical development. For the first time in the history of the city, there is an agreed-upon vision to guide decision makers as well as allow the public to hold them accountable.

While the new comprehensive plan is promising, the New Orleans City Planning Commission must overhaul the current Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance, which dates from 1970. While the comprehensive plan provides the city's goals and aspirations in general terms, the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance is the primary regulatory tool used to control land use and physical development. For instance, while the comprehensive plan may designate an area of the city for "Mixed-Use High Density" development, the comprehensive zoning ordinance will spell out exactly what uses (residential, commercial, industrial, etc.) will be permitted in that area and what physical form (height, floor area ratio, open space ratio, setbacks, etc.) those uses will be allowed to take. Not surprisingly, the community's vision expressed in the comprehensive plan from 2010 does not match up well with the comprehensive zoning ordinance from 1970. Now that we have a new plan and new vision, we need a new zoning ordinance to begin implementing the future land use and urban design character that is envisioned in the comprehensive plan.

The City Planning Commission is working with Camiros, Ltd. of Chicago, a planning consulting firm that specializes in writing code, due to their expertise and ability to supplement staff capacity.   We expect that the first draft of the new CZO will be presented to the public this spring. At present, revisions are ongoing and the Commission expects that formal adoption of the new zoning ordinance will occur in 2012.

One of the key differences between the existing Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance and the new CZO will be its approach to the regulation of urban design. The existing CZO was conceived in 1970, without any design regulations or standards. To complicate matters, over the years, overlay districts and interim zoning districts have been added to the document to provide for limited design standards and review, especially on commercial corridors in areas of the city that were largely developed after World War II, including the lake area, New Orleans East, and a large portion of the westbank of the Mississippi River. These zoning districts include the Urban Corridor ("UC ")Overlay District, the Inner City Urban Corridor ("ICUC ") Overlay District, the Lake Area Design Corridor ("LADC"), and the Eastern New Orleans Renaissance Corridor ("ENORC") Interim Zoning District.

These overlay districts have been a popular regulatory tools with the City Council and have been quickly expanded to cover most corridors in non-historic areas of the city since 2005, largely as a reaction to all the new post-Katrina development. However, these overlay districts were not conceived as part of a comprehensive framework for design in the city and, as a result, the additional layers of regulation have proven to be both confusing to developers and zoning administrators alike.

Mayor Mitch Landrieu is keenly aware of, and interested in, urban design. He recently hired William Gilchrist, FAIA (SB '77, SM '82, MAR '82), an architect and planner, to work with the City Planning Commission to ensure development in New Orleans is consistent with strong urban design principles. We request your help with the development of a comparison table or matrix to inform our decision making as we incorporate urban design policies, goals and procedures into the new Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance. While the City of New Orleans has a strong tradition of design

regulation in historic neighborhoods through the Vieux Carré Commission and Historic District Landmark Commission, the majority of properties, and development activity, in the city fall outside the jurisdictions of either of those bodies.   Therefore, the city seeks to establish goals, adopt policies, and implement procedures to bring design review to other areas of aesthetic and economic concern.

Here are some questions for you to consider and guide your research:

1. Which cities should New Orleans compare itself to for examples of the most robust design regulation procedure? (i.e. what characteristics are relevant – size, history, demographics, etc.)

2. Over what parts of the city are urban-design regulations best applied as a new component in development regulations (i.e. commercial, industrial, residential areas; historic and non-historic neighborhoods; urban and suburban neighborhoods; nodes and corridors)

3. How is urban design regulated through zoning ordinances? (i.e. base district design standards, overlay districts) Is there another administrative system means to implement design regulation?

4. What triggers design review (i.e. location, size, type of development)?

5. What are the stated goals concerning urban design?

6. Who reviews urban design cases? (i.e. neighborhood organizations, planning department staff, design review committee, City Council, etc.)

7. What is the typical time that design review should add to a permitting schedule?

8. Are public sector projects (i.e. schools, libraries, etc.) regulated differently from private sector projects for design content? If so, how?

9. Are exceptions or exemptions made for the reuse of existing, non-conforming structures? If so, what kind and under what circumstances?

10. What are the salient design characteristics that can be effectively regulated by the zoning ordinance (i.e. overall architectural design, materials, massing, landscaping, screening, signage, building orientation, etc.) and what are the regulations?

Community Engagement Projects with Neighborhoods Partnership Network

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What is Neighborhood Partnership Network?

The Neighborhoods Partnership Network (NPN) is a nonprofit, 501c3 organization consisting of a citywide network of neighborhoods that was established after the Hurricane Katrina disaster to facilitate neighborhood collaboration, increase access to government and information, and strengthen the voices of individuals and communities across New Orleans. NPN**'s mission is to improve the quality of life by engaging New Orleanians in neighborhood revitalization and civic processes.** NPN consists of a board

of community leaders reflective of neighborhoods throughout the city and a diverse staff immersed in coalition building, public and government relations. NPN envisions a New Orleans where all neighborhoods are great places to live.

Blight: This continues to be the most pressing issue among NPN's member organizations. Students can work with NPN's advocacy task force that has already organized around code enforcement with the city to advance their advocacy to the next level on this issue. They can help neighborhoods understand code enforcement policy, collect data on blight in their neighborhoods, and interface with city government and related public institutions to address this issue.

Diabetes Type II: NPN has one staff entirely dedicated to working on Diabetes Type II health outreach in New Orleans neighborhoods. We work with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta and the Louisiana Public Health Institute (LPHI) on this project. LPHI has launched a Healthy New Orleans Neighborhood website that enables community members to map health indicators in their neighborhoods and offers tools to help address them. The website has not launched yet, but publicizing the website and helping neighborhoods use it effectively will be important. Reach Core, a project of the CDC, is requesting proposals from neighborhoods for Diabetes Type II technical assistance grants at $15,000 each. Neighborhoods selected will work with LPHI to plan and implement initiatives to prevent and treat Diabetes Type II. Students can help explain and distribute the grant request for information and assist neighborhoods in completing the necessary information.

Open Governance: NPN is part of the New Orleans Coalition on Open Governance. Our main project currently is pushing for an open budgeting process starting with the sheriff's budget. Although we formally requested the city council to extend the public review period for the budget from one day to two weeks, this request was not granted this year. However, we do have a commitment from city council that they will meaningfully involve citizen participation in future budgeting processes. We are working to "plain language" the 2011 budget and budget process so citizens will be mobilized as various parts of the budget come up for approval throughout the year.

Multi-Neighborhood Economic Development Planning: NPN is working with Neighborworks to distribute mini challenge grants of up to $5,000 to neighborhood associations that come together to work on shared issues. One target area for this currently is the St. Claude corridor. City to City students could build on the previous work of Karl Seidman's 2009 Mainstreets Class that produced an economic development planning report for St. Claude Ave. titled "St. Claude in Common." NPN will work with Citizens United for Economic Equity, The St. Claude Mainstreets Association, and surrounding neighborhood associations to mobilize citizens to plan for the economic development along this corridor with the forthcoming construction of a streetcar line through it.