

ESLARP Annual Report – January 2005

The Neighborhood Technical Assistance Center completed the move to smaller (and less expensive) accommodations in the First Illinois Bank Building in East St. Louis.

Personnel losses at NTAC over the last few years have significantly reduced the number of active projects in the office and the capacity to actively participate in community partner events, for example neighborhood meetings. Much of the work previously assigned to the NTAC staff has shifted to 11 graduate assistants supported by the non-recurring funds provided by the Provost's office. Over the last quarter the number of active projects has increased and communications between those partners and campus have improved. The grad assistants have met for 1 to 1-1/2 hours every other week on Tuesday evenings in a seminar on service learning for course credit. The primary purpose of the seminar was to process their assignments and activities in East St. Louis in a critical and reflective manner and develop new skills for working with student volunteers and neighborhood partners. In the Spring Term, graduate assistants will continue to meet regularly to discuss their work, meet with local community development experts and pursue funding possibilities identified during the fall term.

ESLARP had 3 very successful outreach weekends this past fall with excellent student turnout and good resident/community partner participation. The OCT 15-16 weekend had 90 participants from courses in 8 units along with a handful of at-large volunteers. The final outreach weekend of the fall term was NOV 5-6. A small group of volunteers wrapped up worked previously begun on earlier weekends. Four outreach weekends are scheduled for the spring term. The first is will be held February 11-12, 2005 and will provide orientation for course-related projects (Architecture, Landscape Architecture, Urban Planning, Social Work, Library and Information Science, and Leisure Studies.) Course-related projects from the departments of Theatre and Music and based in East St. Louis schools are coordinating with ESLARP but operating autonomously.

During the fall term, ESLARP was engaged in 21 projects involving 18 community partners. Some highlights from the Fall Term:

- The Village Theatre held a grand re-opening on November 20, 2004. The first new production will open in early February 2005. Architecture studios will assist with exterior improvements and seating areas during the April 2005 outreach weekends.
- The construction work for the Eagle's Nest Joseph Center for Homeless Veterans has resumed. Most of the credit for this turn around belongs to Doug Sturgeon (PhD student in Architecture) and Jennifer Forbes (student in Law). The work will be completed in phases with the first stage expected to be complete by Veterans Day 2005.
- Architecture students under the supervision of Professor (s) Mike Andrejasich and Lynne Dearborn completed assessments of six properties named in a predatory lending suit by the Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance Center. This process will be used as a standard for gathering evidence in over 80 such cases.
- Professor Bruce Wicks and Sunny (Seonhee) Jeong, Ph.D. Student in Recreation, Sport and Tourism completed the proposal for "Freedom Trails: Legacy of Hope". The project is designed to highlight the historic and culture significance locations in the metro-east area and encourage tourism.
- Paul Adams, Martin Wolski along with GSLIS students Elizabeth Ruane and Mary Katherine Akers conducted "Train-the Trainers" workshops for six new organizations in East St. Louis, expanding the effectiveness and independence of the CTC network in East St. Louis.
- Professor Stacy Harwood and graduate student Laura Knutson completed the first stage of a strategic planning process for Emerson Park Development Corporation (EPDC). EPDC is the

oldest and most successful of ESLARP's community partners. EPDC is preparing to expand to include cultural programming and revisit its neighborhood re-development plan. The work will continue in the spring term.

- Professor Gary Kesler and graduate student Sangjun Kang conducted a design charette with the 41st Street Homeowners to develop ideas for a neighborhood park on a tract of vacant land. The charette was followed by a design proposal. The work will continue in the spring term.

The first and most critical priority is to maintain a quality level of service. The success of ESLARP in East St. Louis has brought with it requests for assistance from other communities in the state of Illinois seeking similar help, most notably, Rockford and Champaign-Urbana. Expanding the model beyond East St. Louis presents many new opportunities, research questions, partners and funding sources. A major challenge remains limited resources, both human and financial. Collaboration and consolidation with other public engagement units in the college, the university and other institutions presents an opportunity to diversify and expand.

- Cross-Campus Initiatives such as Family Resiliency provide opportunities to strengthen ESLARP's relationship with Social Work and Vet Med as well as develop new initiatives with Human Family and Community Development and Education. Community Health and School achievement are important issues in East St. Louis and project interests overlap with work in the College of Education.
- CIVITAS and The Exchange Center have similar goals as ESLARP but different approaches. Through combinations of the diverse talents of each project, the collective may be better able to address economic development in East St. Louis and local community needs.
- New HUD-COPC partnerships with Rockford College, Judson College and Northern Illinois University.
- Collaborative projects, courses and research efforts with SIU-Edwardsville

The Pyramid Development Corporation is proposing to build 50 new homes in Centerville. They wish to contract technical assistance from ESLARP.

The Office of Public Engagement and Outreach is interested in provided technical assistance to the Madison County Housing Authority.

Graduate students have identified several external funding sources for community partners that would permit some funded participation from ESLARP. Some have completed pre-proposals that will be developed further in the Spring Term 2005.