

Investigating and Evaluating Contemporary Housing and Neighborhood Environments

ARCH 576LD fall 2009

Professor Lynne M. Dearborn

3-credit Graduate Seminar, limit 15 students

Enrollment by consent of instructor (email: dearborn@illinois.edu)

This seminar will focus on investigation and evaluation of contemporary housing and neighborhood environments in St. Clair County, Illinois.

Housing and neighborhoods play a central role in the lives of all people. As the primary environment of humans, housing offers a foundation for personal health and safety, security of tenure, effective education, employment opportunities, economic security, and successful social networks. The 1949 United States Housing Act set a national housing goal of a decent home and suitable living environment for every American Family. Despite the fact that this goal has been reaffirmed and acted upon at Federal, State and local levels numerous times since 1949, the United States continues to have a serious shortage of habitable, code-compliant, affordable housing units.

This seminar will provide students with background and actual experience in collecting information about the built environment. The goal of this seminar is to collect and bring together various types of community and regional housing data and to create a web-based tool that will make these data easily accessible and useful for housing advocates and service providers in St. Clair County. This course will be conducted through the East St. Louis Action Research Project (ESLARP). Student will work with ESLARP's community housing partners and respond to specific information needs of these organizations. We will collect and facilitate access to current data and analysis in order to help our partners address pressing questions about conditions of housing in the area.

By employing GIS Mapping, we will create a web-based tool that will make these data easily accessible and useful for these organizations. By accessing and analyzing existing housing data sets and by collecting and analyzing additional data from the physical environment, service providers, and residents, we will work with our community partners to address existing housing problems. The data assembled will include both existing data and new collection focused on the physical housing stock, affordability issues, and lending practices. In order to create GIS databases, we will join existing data with spatial reference information.

Community partners also have valuable data that in many cases is unknown outside of their organization. We will assemble information on their activities and programs, making it accessible across organizations for better understanding of community resources. We will collect data that can speak to the community's most pressing issues. We will work with our community partners to identify data needs, design survey tools, collect information, and share data, maps, and analysis. We expect to create a rich database of information that includes quantitative data, qualitative information about residents' and providers' assessments and needs, photographs of structures and blocks, which we will link together through mapping to provide a comprehensive picture of housing needs.

This is an active seminar that will expect students to maintain contact with community housing partners, identify existing information and collect new needed information on the ground in St. Clair County. Students will be expected to take part in class field trips to St. Clair County, collect information, enter that information into a database, spatially identify that information, and create web-based reports of the information.

Proposed Assignment Weighting:

Preparation and participation in seminar and field trips 30%

Identification and collection of needed information 20%

Enter information into database 20%

Final Report 30%