

1. Architecture and Urban Design



Research Team:

Regional heritage in architecture and urban design

Grand Challenge:

Sustainable Design of Buildings and Urban-Ecological Landscapes

Key Terms:

Open space, local preservation, city branding, sense of community, sense of place

Student Leader: Jaime Intervalo

Student Members:

- Emma Feeney - Is San Diego's History Preservation Really Historic?
- Chang Liu - Branding City or Region as a Product: Adopting Successful Strategies and Experience from the Business
- Nathaniel Kwak - The effects of the built environment, architecture, and landscape design on local heritages in a community
- Jaime Intervalo - A look at the historical evolutionary design consciousness of open spaces on UCSD campus

Mentor(s) Leader:

- Brad Werdick
- Teddy Cruz

Team Narrative:

Edited by Brad Werdick, Acting Director of UCSD Physical Planning

The four projects in this research group focus on a common theme that is challenging today's planners. This is the concept of "place-making." Specifically, the projects explore

our understanding of the factors that make the physical environment that we inhabit memorable. Since everyone is a stakeholder in such a process, place-making becomes all the more relevant. The objective of this research group was to explore how place-making manifests itself through many forms including the creation of active, community open spaces; the inclusion of historical buildings into the growing and evolving urban fabric; the acknowledgement that cultural history and diversity create dynamic communities; and the marketing and branding a community, city, or region to foster community pride. These four research projects are an excellent cross section of planners' ongoing work in this area of practice and study.

Jamie Intervalo begins her research by questioning the significance of open space. Is it merely a place to sit, somewhere to eat lunch, or more? She asserts that the design of open spaces goes beyond merely creating a plaza where one can sit and eat. Open spaces, she argues, create and foster a special type of community environment for interaction, relaxation, and importantly, their contribution to a sense of community. The 2005 Undergraduate Student Experience and Satisfaction Report (USES) shows that students at UCSD feel that the campus is often 'cold' and 'uninviting' which results in a loss of a sense of community and sense of place. Intervalo's research focused on deconstructing the open space design process over the entire historical period of UCSD to consider how changes in administration and community participation have made significant impacts on the UCSD campus.

Intervalo explains that over the years the design process at UCSD has become more collaborative by including students and faculty through the creation of various committees and departments. This process should have helped to meet community needs and create more satisfaction in open space, but the USES report still found a level of deficiency. Intervalo's most significant finding revealed that funding for open space is the primary issue. There are in fact extensive plans for discrete and natural open space throughout the campus, with schematic design and concepts that would create appealing open spaces; but the problem lies in the fact that state-funded buildings only received funds for landscape and open space improvements within a fifteen foot perimeter around approved projects. Intervalo contends that this is not nearly enough to truly create useable space. She reports that the UCSD administration is aggressively looking for ways to resolve this issue.

Open spaces on a university campus are important because in addition to their acknowledged uses, they also serve as catalysts for creating a sense of place and sense of community. Intervalo found that the design process at UCSD is rich and intricate with a large set of checks and balances provided by committees and departments that ensure that community opinions are heard. She contends that this type of collaboration between planners, administrators, students, and campus residents leads to successful place-making on college campuses.

Complementing Intervalo's research, Emma Feeney examines the institutional architecture of preservation in the City of San Diego. Through a case study of the El Cortez Hotel restoration and an examination of the Historic Preservation Element of the city of San Diego's General Plan update, Feeney's paper tells a story of the development and implementation of the criteria set forth by the City. Feeney's research revealed the power relations between the City's constituents of planners, architects, and community

based organizations. These findings have led Feeney to a deeper understanding of San Diego's accountability for the implementation criteria of preservation and its mediation between conflicting parties, which maintains equity and consensus within the somewhat fragmented system. She found that the historic preservation system in San Diego is distributed somewhat disproportionately, that it is dynamic, and that no single criterion may be used to determine what constitutes a historic structure worthy of preservation.

Nathaniel Kwak considers the relationship between place-making and diversity. He argues that incorrectly encouraging the continuance and development of a given heritage in a specific community creates divides, barriers, and animosity towards other groups of the population. He questions how a city can best use architecture, landscape design, and urban design to promote a healthy sense of sharing the local heritage while also acknowledging and encouraging diversity. Towards this end, Kwak studied the City Heights neighborhood in San Diego to look at the influence of identity in maintaining strong, cohesive communities.

In his research Kwak utilized a variety of sources including case studies and stakeholder interviews. He also used demographic data to track the movement of different ethnic groups in and out of the city along with identifying areas of gang violence and ethnic turf wars. This was enhanced by the use of mapping techniques.

Kwak found that based on his research in City Heights, successful community planning relies on participation. In order for diverse neighborhoods to maintain their heterogeneity, cultural identities must be moderated. They must be encouraged and maintained, but this must also occur concurrently with a respect for others. Kwak identifies programs and efforts that can make a difference. For example, he notes that basic efforts such as increased police enforcement have helped the youth population. He also argues that after school programs and cultural awareness celebrations must continue as a way to celebrate and share differences. This, he maintains, will foster community pride and neighborhood satisfaction. Furthermore, he argues that efforts must be put in place to resist the removal of local businesses and institutions that further reflect the rich tapestry of neighborhood diversity.

Looking at placemaking from an entirely different perspective, Charles Liu argues that in the current climate of competition, in order for any city to stand out from the rest, a successful city brand is necessary. The concept of branding is very familiar and widely implemented in the business world; however, this concept is still a relatively new and immature idea within the field of urban planning. The purpose of Liu's project is to determine a set of branding strategies that have been previously used by major corporations and apply them to the field of city branding. This evaluation process required an in-depth study on both product branding and city branding. The goal was to identify those corporate branding strategies that work best and to create a series method to transform these strategies into a city branding model.

Liu argues that urban planners should realize the benefits of city branding. City branding, he contends, yields positive results for the city, its businesses, and its residents. For the local residents, city branding can accomplish several things including a sense of pride in their city, increased employment opportunities, a greater sense of belonging, and a more vibrant place to live. For local businesses, city branding offers the potential of more

business opportunities and a strong local workforce. As for the city and region, city branding may provide an advantage in international competition and improve the economy by increasing profits from the tourist industry. To this end, Liu believes that a consistent logo and message can help cities with their branding efforts. These logos depend on city leaders understanding the strengths and unique attributes of their city. Branding, he argues, works well as part of a broader promotion method that succinctly captures and promotes the city's special characteristics. Liu concludes by arguing that city branding should be seen as a mandatory requirement for every city worldwide.

As described in these four research projects, investing in place-making and developing successful communities isn't easy and planners confront numerous obstacles in their efforts. Financial limitations and differing views on how an area is branded or marketed are important factors to consider. However, the researchers argue that the largest challenge is to collect input from public stakeholders and constituents and then to reach consensus. There are infinite points of view on many of these topics and most are divergent. The research team believes that a planner's primary obligation is to serve the public interest and engage the public early in the process, collect input, and make an informed, balanced decision. This is not an easy task, but its importance cannot be denied if we wish to see the continued development and maintenance of diverse, vibrant, accessible, and unique spaces in the built environment.

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Links:

San Diego Historical Society El Cortez Hotel Preservation Page - <http://www.sandiegohistory.org/collections/elcortez/elcortez.htm>

UCSD Physical Planning Page - <http://physicalplanning.ucsd.edu/Default.htm>

Article entitled "Orienting Planning to Sustainability in Curitiba, Brazil" by Kirsten MacLeod - <http://www3.iclei.org/localstrategies/summary/curitiba2.html>

Article entitled "Social Responsibility Pays Off: Century Furniture's Governor's Award and a Booming" by Judy Piazza - <http://newsblaze.com/story/20071024115605tsop.nb/newsblaze/NEWSWIRE/NewsBlaze-Wire.html>

Multimedia Archive:

Available presentations for this group can be found on the Senior Sequence website at: http://seniorsequence.net/?page_id=440