



The Niehoff Urban Studio

The Over-the-Rhine Project





Neihoff Urban Studio 2004-2006

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Niehoff Urban Studio

Mission

The Niehoff Urban Studio is a place for the university led, but community driven investigation of urban issues for the benefit of Cincinnati and other urban centers. It is a place where University and non-university participants can come to participate in educational classes, events, symposia, and exhibits that explore these urban issues.

The Niehoff Urban Studio is a unique and innovative off-campus classroom in which an interdisciplinary group of university students and faculty can interact with community stakeholders to study and experience, first-hand all aspects of the urban issues relevant to the center city.

The work of the Niehoff Urban Studio is intended to have a tangible impact on the urban problems under consideration and will contribute to the body of knowledge of research in this area.

Objectives and Outcomes

Research on Urban Issues: Students and faculty engage in academic research on specific urban issues and topics.

Applied Research for Design Projects: Interdisciplinary teams of students explore, develop, and recommend strategies and design solutions to address specific urban problems.

Community Development and Service Learning: Faculty and students work with community groups and stakeholders to collaborate on strategies and design proposals that have a timely and tangible impact.

Public Education: Public symposia, presentations and exhibits are sponsored to provide a forum for public discussion of urban planning, design, and quality of life issues for the urban center.

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Studio Content and Structure

In 2004-06 the Niehoff Urban Studio examined the economic, social, and physical issues affecting the viability of the Over-The-Rhine neighborhood of Cincinnati. This neighborhood is located between the two major employment centers of the Cincinnati Central Business District and the "Uptown" area neighborhoods which are anchored by the University of Cincinnati and several medical campuses. Over-the-Rhine has suffered over the last five decades from substantial disinvestment that has left its residents in poverty (79%) and its physical and functional form in disarray. Yet significant assets remain in the area despite a dwindling population (11,914 -1980, 7,422 -2000) and these include distinctive historical architecture in pedestrian friendly mixed-use districts as well as an active commitment by the city and community leaders to revitalize the neighborhood. Interventions in this area are seen by many as an important opportunity to create a vibrant community that improves conditions for existing stakeholders while encouraging new residential and commercial activity.

The Niehoff Urban Studio provides opportunities for faculty and students of Urban Planning, Architecture, and related disciplines to address these issues in problem solving exercises conducted with the participation of community stakeholders. The Studio is structured as a joint lecture/lab course offering by the School of Architecture and Interior Design and the School of Planning with interdisciplinary participation by faculty and students from other UC colleges. Up to 30 graduate-level and advanced undergraduate students will participate each quarter. The Studio is team-taught by a group of faculty, one from Architecture, one from Planning, and the Director of the Community Design Center (who teaches and coordinates the overall Studio program), and includes, on a rotating basis, participating faculty from other colleges and disciplines. The Studio is located off-campus in the first floor of the Emery Building in Over-the-Rhine and allows space for faculty and student design and research, meetings and events, and permanent exhibits. Studio content is based on community development priorities

and community stakeholders visit the studio and interact with students and faculty throughout the quarter.

Through this academic outreach studio and related research and technical assistance, the University of Cincinnati Niehoff Urban Studio shares the expertise and talents of its students and faculty with community stakeholders to address, together, problematic urban issues in a neighborhood of need. The Studio functions to do this on many levels. Through **service learning activities**, it introduced more than 150 students to these issues and the community stakeholders that struggle with them. The studio provides a resource for applied research for design projects that address problems and advance solutions for fourteen community based organizations as described in the quarter activities attached. Studio projects are connected to and lead to funded technical outreach work with eight community based organizations conducted by the UC Community Design Center that provides tangible **community development** outcomes for the community, e.g. Imagination Alley, Venice Pizza, Drop-Inn Center Mural. Studio projects are connected to and lead to funded data services projects that facilitate future community development, e.g. Washington Park District Housing Inventory and Mapping Project conducted for Cincinnati Center City Development Corporation and Findlay Market District - OTR Development Mapping conducted for the Corporation for Findlay Market. Studio projects are connected to and complement funded **research on urban issues** that contributes to the body of knowledge, e.g. Planning Support System for transit oriented development and residential development in Over-the-Rhine. And finally, studio work is the inspiration or backdrop to a valuable **Community Education Program** that in eleven events involved almost fifty community based organizations and more than 600 community stakeholders who benefited from presentations, forums, and workshops on community asset building, urban design and community development issues timely and relevant to the city.

Collaborating Entities - Academic:

UC Community Design Center, UC School of Planning, UC DAAP School of Planning-the Joint Center for Geographic Information System and Spatial Analysis, UC School of Architecture and Interior Design, UC School of Art, UC Economics Department-McMicken College of Arts and Sciences, Miami University Center for Community Engagement, UC Institute for Community Partnerships, UC Department of Transportation Engineering, UC College of Medicine

Collaborating Entities - Community:

Cincinnati Black Theater, The OTR Brewery District Development Group, The Central Vine Business Association, Cincinnati Recreation Commission, OTR Housing Network, Corporation for Findlay Market, ReStoc Housing Cooperative, Cincinnati Center City Development Corporation. Cincinnati Public Schools- Entrepreneurial High School and the High School for Creative and Performing Arts, Power inspires Progress, Art Academy of Cincinnati, Peaslee Neighborhood Center, Friends of Findlay Market, Findlay Market Merchants Association, City of Cincinnati, OTR Chamber of Commerce, Cincinnati Public Schools, Greater Cincinnati Arts and Education Center, Drop Inn Center, Cincinnati Park Board, Model Management, Pendleton Community Council, The Gathering, Franciscan Home Development/Mercy Housing, Smart Money, Cincinnati Development Fund, Memorial/Impact, Cornerstone Loan Fund/Cornerstone Corp for Shared Equity, Cincinnati Preservation Association, Volunteers of America, Madco/yoOTR, Emmanuel Center, Ensemble Theater, Boys and Girl's Club of OTR, Media Bridges, Over-the-Rhine School Talk, Greater Cincinnati Coalition For the Homeless, Day Labor Organizing Project, InkTank, Keep Cincinnati Beautiful, Mill Creek Restoration Project, Hillside Trust, Cincinnati American Institute of Architects, Alliance for Regional Transit, Hamilton County Local Alliance for Nature and Development, US Green Building Council, IMAGO, the Urbanists