Academic and Community Collaborations: More than Just a Studio

Silicon Valley as a Laboratory for Community-Engaged Learning:
Spartan-Keyes Collaborative Neighborhood Planning
SJSU: A Little Background

- Graduate planning program est. 1970
- ~100-120 students, FT & PT
- Located in downtown San José, 10th largest city in the U.S., “Capital of Silicon Valley”
- Long history of community-based planning work ➔ lower-income, minority/new immigrant neighborhoods
- In 2005, establishment of CommUniverCity
CommUniverCity San José

- SJSU, City of San José, local community
- Place-based, long-term, multi-sector, community-driven, campus-wide
- Historically, close partnership with Redevelopment Agency & Strong Neighborhoods Initiative
Spartan-Keyes & Collaborative Neighborhood Planning

- 2011-2012 ➞ preliminary engagement work with 13 downtown neighborhoods
- 2012-2013 ➞ in-depth CNP in Spartan-Keyes, just south of SJSU

Spartan/Keyes SNI Planning Area

Collaborative Neighborhood Planning Model

1. Community Assessment
2. Community Building
3. Implementation Bridges
Community Assessment

Application of traditional community assessment tools and techniques (mapping, quant. analysis, field surveys, etc.)

CommUniverCity San José: Social Capital Survey

INTRO: Good morning/afternoon. I’m from San José State University and we’re conducting research about your neighborhood. We are not selling anything and your responses are completely confidential. We just want to include your opinions in this important survey. You have just been randomly selected. We have an accurate representation of your neighborhood and your responses are anonymous. It will take about 15 minutes of your time to be sure that your views are included.

[ASKED] “The sponsor of this survey is the CommUniverCity Project – a joint effort of San José State University and the City of San José.”

[NO]: Thank you for your time.

[YES]: Great. This survey is completely voluntary and you can decline the survey at any time. If you are not willing to answer any question, just hold the survey and we’ll move on.

To make our survey as representative as possible, are you at least 18 years in age?

Q1: To begin with, I’d like to ask you: Generally speaking, how would you rate San José as a place to live? Is it an excellent place to live, a good place to live, average, poor, or an extremely poor place to live?

1. Excellent
2. Good
3. Average
4. Poor
5. Extremely poor
6. Don’t know/Refused to answer

Q2: Generally speaking, how would you rate your neighborhood as a place to live? Is it an excellent, good, average, poor, or extremely poor place to live?

1. Excellent
2. Good
3. Average
4. Poor
5. Extremely poor
6. Don’t know/Refused to answer

Q3: I’d like you to think about the overall physical condition of your neighborhood. Thinking about the houses, sidewalks, the streets, the parks, the shops, malls, and the like, would you say the overall physical conditions of your neighborhood in general are excellent, good, average, poor, or extremely poor?

1. Excellent
2. Good
3. Average
4. Poor
5. Extremely poor
6. Don’t know/Refused to answer

Social Capital Survey

Community Conditions (Photo Essays)

Census Data Analysis

Resident-led walking tours
Community Identity/Priorities Conversations
Community Building

Promote community building through outreach, workshops, engagement in the planning process

Multi-Generational Community Workshops

Traditional Community Meetings

Word Cloud from Neighborhood Perception Survey
7 Key Planning Priorities

1. Improve neighborhood alleyways
2. Make S-K a greener community
3. More public open space
4. Build a distinct community identity
5. Resident access to SJSU South Campus facilities
6. Improve services/mentoring for youth
7. Safer and more complete streets
Implementation Bridges

- Comprehensive planning report with action items
- Community events
- Alleyway improvements/Traffic calming
- Arts District
- Ongoing community engagement work
Benefits for Students

- Exposure to real-world planning concepts & principles
- Direct & real involvement in public participation process
- Essential skill development
- Direct & regular feedback from faculty, community leaders, planners
- Connections to professional planners, elected officials, local community
Benefits for Communities

❖ Community building using an asset-based approach
❖ Unified community goals conveyed through a professional plan
❖ Advocacy tools for fundraising and lobbying
❖ Connections and mentorship to/with professional planners & elected officials
Benefits for the University

❖ Fosters positive relationships with public officials and surrounding communities
❖ Attracts potential students seeking meaningful educational experiences
❖ Attracts outside funding and recognition for faculty and students
Benefits for Local Planning Agency

- Bridge-building with communities
- Training and recruiting ground
- Cost-effective use of time and financial resources