Downtown Revitalization (URBS 435/535)
Spring 2010
Thursdays 11am-1:45pm
Morris Hall 112

Instructor:
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Text:

Periodically, students will also be required to read additional related articles to the course. Many times, the instructor will provide the articles in the form of a handout.

Course Overview: This course will provide students a comprehensive overview of downtown revitalization and its impact on the overall community. America’s urban areas, large and small, are conglomerations of contradictions; there are pockets of extreme wealth, and extreme poverty. Sometimes these extremes are just blocks away from each other. Sometimes the areas of extreme wealth are abandoned and neglected, and becomes areas of extreme poverty. The question is: What are the tools and strategies available to planners, administrators, stakeholders and leaders to mitigate or solve these problems? This question will be addressed throughout the course.

When municipalities identify areas that need help, whether they are residential, commercial, or industrial, they have two options – let it go and continue its downward spiral, or try and to fix the problems. The methodology and strategies needed to do this vary by community and degree of downgrade, but one thing is clear; it takes a cooperative effort between local government, the private sector, and area residents. Revitalization does not happen in a vacuum; involving stakeholders is the critical component to successful revitalization.

Urban Studies 435/535 will examine the tools, strategies, and practical application of the academic ideas presented in class. Students will be expected to apply theory to practice and produce recommendations to their everyday environment.

Instructional Methodology and Teaching Strategies:
A variety of instructional methods and teaching strategies will be employed throughout this course. Above all, my instructional style is based on an “adult-centered” model wherein students are active participants responsible for their own learning. Student motivation is a key factor in learning. You will notice that my role will be as a facilitator and resource person who will help you engage in meaningful involvement by investing your time and energy in the academic enterprise.

Class Attendance/Participation:
Students play an important role in educating and challenging each other, which can only happen with consistent attendance. Class attendance is expected; however, if by some means you are not able to attend... please notify the instructor via email. All assignments are due on the dates shown below; late submissions are at the discretion of the instructor and if accepted will result in significant point deductions.

Grading:
Grades will be based on a variety of instructional methods such as assignments, quizzes, exams, papers, presentations, and class participation. There will be a possible 200 points for the class (undergraduates) and 250 points (graduates). Grades will be based upon the total number of points accumulated as follows for
undergraduates: A (180-200), B (160-179), C (140-169), F (Below 139). For graduates: A (225-250), B (200-224), C (180-199), F (Below 179). There are no Ds given in my courses.

**Grading System/Undergraduates:**
- Attendance/Participation 10
- Article/Issue Review #1 10
- Article/Issue Review #2 10
- Case Study 20
- Project #1 20
- Project #2 20
- Project #3 20
- Project #4/Presentation 30
- Quizzes (4 @ 5/each) 20
- Midterm Exam 20
- Final Exam 20
- Total 200

**Grading System/Graduates:**
- Attendance/Participation 10
- Article/Issue Review #1 10
- Article/Issue Review #2 10
- Case Study 25
- Project #1 25
- Project #2 25
- Project #3 25
- Project #4/Presentation 35
- Quizzes (4 @ 5/each) 25
- Midterm Exam 30
- Final Exam 30
- Total 250

**Cheating/Plagiarism/Academic Fraud:**
Not acceptable, period. If you are going to insert others’ ideas into your work, just make sure you provide them credit. If you are found to have been cheating, you will receive an automatic “F” for the course and your case will be handled according to University Policy/Academic Affairs.

**American Disabilities Act (ADA):**
ADA requires that the university provide services for persons with disabilities. For more information regarding the services that are available to you, please contact the MSU Disability Services Office at (507) 389-2825 (V) or 1-800-627-3529 (MRS/TTY). If you are a person with a disability, please discuss your special needs with this instructor within the first week of class. This will allow you and the instructor ample opportunities to make arrangement for taking notes, completion of assignments, and examinations.

**COURSE WORK:**

**Article/Issue Reviews:**
To enhance the topic of downtown revitalization, students will be required to prepare two reviews of news articles reflecting downtown/urban revitalization topics of their choice. Topics may include the expansion or relocation of a business, new private sector developments, public sector financing programs, public improvements, etc. All article/issue reviews must be from cities/communities outside of Greater Mankato. The purpose of this exercise is to expand our minds and knowledge to other parts of the country. There are endless sources of information regarding downtown revitalization including newspapers, trade magazines, websites, etc. All topics must be current…within the last 12 months.

Prior to the article/issue reviews being submitted, each student will be required to briefly discuss their review. This opportunity allows students to interact and create unique learning opportunities. The due dates are listed below. Each review must be submitted in a format consisting of a one-page, typed, double spaced, 12 point font (please make sure you include your name). A copy of each article must be attached to the review. When reviewing the article, attempt to address the following:
- Explain the issue and its impact on the community.
- Utilizing what you have learned in other Urban Studies courses, provide a professional analysis of the subject (i.e. critically evaluate the issue).

The reviews will be graded on their content and writing. For the first article, the instructor must approve the issue/topic. This may be done by sending the instructor a .pdf of the file or attaching a link to an email containing the article (pre-approvals may only be made by using email).

**Case Study:**
Students will select and sign-up for a case study from the textbook and describe the tools and strategies of the project, the successes and what can be learned from the case. Please make sure you use critical analysis and don’t be afraid to utilize additional resources or knowledge from other urban studies courses to create your paper.
This paper should be between 2-3 pages, typed, double spaced, 12 point font. As always, ensure your paper is grammatically correct as it will be graded on both content and correctness. This case study will also be presented to the class for discussion.

**Project 1 – Assessing Your City:**
It is assumed that if you are taking this course you most likely have a passion or desire to learn more about downtowns and how they are the “heart of the community.” This assignment allows students to select a city and create an economic assessment study and make the case for revitalization efforts based on the community data. If you are able to visit the city during the course that would be beneficial, but not required. Students will sign up for cities to avoid duplication and the cities of Mankato and North Mankato are not eligible.

When due, this paper/project should include a variety of components such as written material, charts, pictures, data, etc. Please ensure your project is grammatically correct as it will be graded on both content and correctness.

**Project 2 – Letter to the Editor:**
Throughout this course, the term stakeholder will continue to be discussed. People become very passionate about their downtowns for many different reasons. For this paper, choose a downtown revitalization topic that you have interest in and write an editorial suitable for a local newspaper. Challenge yourself to write in a manner that grabs the readers’ attention and wants them to take action and support your case. This takes some time to craft this, but can be done. It is suggested that you may want to read some of the more notable editorial writers and understand editorial style. However, do create your own style as you develop your own work.

This paper should be between 3-4 pages, typed, double spaced, 12 point font. As always, ensure your paper is grammatically correct as it will be graded on both content and correctness.

**Project 3 – Downtown Organizations and Their Impact:**
In the 1980s and 1990s, a renaissance emerged regarding the issue of downtowns. At the forefront of this renaissance was the National Trust for Historic Preservation which developed the National Main Street program. The Main Street approach may not always work for every community, but it does provide some general framework for communities interested in revitalizing their downtowns. Main Street follows a four-point approach: organization, promotion, design and economic restructuring.

For this project, choose a downtown organization and provide an analysis of its operation. Today’s downtown revitalization efforts are typically a private/public partnership led by many individuals with a passion for improving their city centers. Take a look at a community’s revitalization organization. How is it funded? Who controls it? What have they accomplished? What is their business plan/budget? Do they have full-time paid staff or is it volunteer driven? What are its shortcomings? Essentially, use your urban studies knowledge to evaluate the organization and inform the class about this organization.

This paper should be between 5-6 pages, typed, double spaced, 12 point font. You might do more than just submit a written analysis…you may want to consider submitting some supporting materials to enhance your assignment. As always, ensure your paper is grammatically correct as it will be graded on both content and correctness.

**Project 4/Presentation – Revitalization Strategy:**
The Revitalization Strategy is based on the findings from the Assessing Your City project, which students will detail recommended strategies for the revitalization of their community’s downtown. This strategy should be comprehensive and include many of the approaches that communities may use when they revitalize their city centers such as organization, design, marketing, economic development, etc. More information and a detailed assignment will be provided during the semester.

There is no amount of pages or format required for this project. It is assumed that at this point in the semester and based on the content of the course, each student should understand what is needed to achieve a positive outcome.
Quizzes:
The reinforcement of material is critical especially in a course of this nature. In addition to the midterm and final exams, there will be four quizzes throughout the semester. The quizzes may be short answer, multiple choice, true/false, etc…essentially designed to reinforce major topics and concepts. If you attend class, read the material and participate, these quizzes will not be difficult.

Midterm and Final Exams:
Students will be required to complete a mid-term and final exam that will “test” their understanding of the course material presented. Exams will likely be in a short-answer and essay format. Graduate students will be required to complete a slightly longer exam. The dates for the midterm and final are outlined below. Exams are not meant to create anxiety, but as a method to reinforce concepts. This testing format provides students an opportunity to intertwine concepts and examples with perspective. In addition, economic development, planning and urban studies professionals are more apt to write and present concepts than simply fill in a true or false oval. More will be discussed as the semester progresses.

Course Dates, Topics and Assignments

Week 1 – January 14, 2010:
Topic(s): Course Introduction
What is Downtown Revitalization?
100 Key Themes Related to Downtown Revitalization
Reading: Articles/Handouts
Assignment: Downtown Revitalization Pre-Test

Week 2 – January 21, 2010:
Topic(s): General Revitalization Topics:
The State of Small Cities
Overview of Local Economic Development
Trends and Practices in Local Economic Development
Issues Facing Small Business
Guest Speaker: Mike Nolan, Director, Small Business Development Center
Reading(s): Kemp, Chapters 1-4
Assignment: Article/Issue Review 1 Approval (via email)
Debate: “Is Downtown Revitalization Economic Development?”
Participants:
City Council: Group A
Downtown Association: Group B
Anti-Tax Association: Group C
Suburbia Business Association: Group D

Week 3 – January 28, 2010:
Topic(s): Organization/Management and Business Policies:
Business Policies and their Relationship to Business Operation
Local Economic Development Practices
How to Get Started
Guest Speaker: Bill Blazar, Senior Vice-President, Minnesota Chamber of Commerce
Reading(s): Kemp, Chapters 5-6
Assignment(s): Article/Issue Review 1 DUE
Debate: “Zoning and Land Use Controls”
Participants:
City Council: Group A
Downtown Association: Group B
Anti-Tax Association: Group C
Suburbia Business Association: Group D

Week 4 – February 4, 2010:
Topic(s): Downtown Case Study: Las Vegas
Week 5 – February 11, 2010:
Topic(s): Organization/Management:
Municipal Government’s Role
Creating Small Business Partnerships

Guest Instructor: Shannon Gullickson, Director of Business Development, Coldwell Banker Commercial Fisher Group
Guest Speaker: Curt Fisher, Founder, Fisher Group
Reading(s): Kemp, Chapters 7-8
Assignment(s): Project 1: Assessing Your City DUE
Debate: “Eminent Domain”
Participants:
City Council: Group A
Historic Preservation: Group B
Private Developer: Group C
Concerned Citizens: Group D

Week 6 – February 18, 2010:
Topic(s): Organization/Management:
Conducting a Community Self-Evaluation
Managing Development and Growth

Guest Speaker: Tony Frentz, Partner, Neubau Holdings
Reading(s): Kemp, Chapters 9-10
Assignment: Quiz 2
Debate: “Public Spaces”
Participants:
City Council: Group A
Business Owners (Pro): Group B
Business Owners (Con): Group C
Chamber of Commerce: Group D

Week 7 – February 25, 2010:
Topic(s): Downtown Revitalization Resources I and Marketing/Promotion
National Trust for Historic Preservation: Main Street Program
International Downtown Association
Urban Land Institute
American Planning Association

Guest Speaker: Stacey Straka, Owner, Red Door Creative
Reading(s): Websites from above groups/cities
Assignment: Project 2: Researched Websites/Letter to the Editor Due
Debate: “Historical Properties”
Participants:
City Council: Group A
Historic Preservation: Group B
Private Developer: Group C
Concerned Citizens: Group D

Week 8 – March 4, 2010:
MIDTERM EXAM

Week 9 – March 11, 2010:
NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK

Week 10 – March 18, 2010:
Topic(s): Downtown Revitalization Resources II:
Assessing Development Potential
Community Reinvestment Act
Week 11 – March 25, 2010:
Topic(s): Downtown Revitalization Resources III and Legal
          Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit
          Keeping Retailers on Main Street
Guest Speaker: Michael Jacobs, Attorney, Leonard Street and Deinard
Reading(s): Kemp, Chapters 15-16
Assignment(s): Article/Issue 2 DUE
Debate: “Adult Entertainment within Downtows”
Participants:
  City Council: Group A
  Club Owners: Group B
  Convention & Visitors Bureau: Group C
  Church Association: Group D

Week 12 – April 1, 2010:
Topic(s): Downtown Revitalization Resources IV and Financing:
          Parking Facility Management
          Rural Banks and Economic Growth
          Small Business Tools
Guest Speaker: David Wittenberg, Director of Private Banking, United Prairie Bank
Reading(s): Kemp, Chapters 17-19
Assignment: Quiz 3/Case Study DUE
Debate: “Public Money for Private Projects”
Participants:
  City Council: Group A
  Tax Watchdog Group: Group B
  Private Developer: Group C
  Downtown Association: Group D

Week 13 – April 8, 2010:
Topic(s): Case Study: Boston
Guest Speaker: None
Reading(s): None
Assignment: Case Study Presentations

Week 14 – April 15, 2010:
Topic(s): Downtown Revitalization Resources V:
          Case Study: City in Pyramid
          Design and Downtowns
Guest Speaker: Bryan Paulsen, President, Paulsen Architects
Reading(s): Kemp, Chapters 20-21
Assignment: Project 3 DUE
Debate: “Parking”
Participants:
  City Council: Group A
  Employees: Group B
  Customers/Visitors: Group C
  City Planners: Group D
Week 15 – April 22, 2010:
Topic(s): Case Study: Tokyo Sky City
Concluding Thoughts:
Rethinking Local Economic Development
When to Use Incentives
Ten Myths About Downtown Revitalization
Community Agendas for the Future: A Corporate View
Reading(s): Kemp, Chapters 40-44
Assignment: Quiz 4
Debate: “Growth Management: A New Retail Development”
Participants:
City Council: Group A
Downtown Association: Group B
Developer: Group C
Environmentalists: Group D

Week 16 – April 29, 2010:
REVITALIZATION STRATEGY PRESENTATIONS

Week 17 – May 6, 2010:
FINAL EXAM