The Design Charrette: An Innovative Service-Learning Course in Community Planning and Urban Design
HIPR 6680/4680

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This service-learning course provides students with a real-world opportunity to work side-by-side with faculty and stakeholders to address community design through a multi-day collaborative planning event called a charrette. Each charrette will be a 2-4-day experience in a small Georgia town, coastal community, watershed, corridor, or a neighborhood in an urban area.

Charrettes emphasize collaboration, multi-disciplinary work, compressed work sessions, stakeholder input, and regular feedback loops. Students will learn facilitation and presentation skills, employ smart growth principles, use design to achieve a shared vision, and learn to solve complex problems in a compressed time period. Students will learn how to summarize charrette results and produce a professional report from their findings. The course will require quick work and group decision making. Students will need to be unafraid of new ideas. Students will interact with the public and be representatives of UGA and the College of Environment and Design.

All students will be required to conduct pre-charrette preparation and orientation, full charrette participation in 2 charrettes sponsored by or approved through the course instructor. Students will also be involved in learning new techniques for post-charrette product refinement, as all students will be involved in post-charrette final document production.

Graduate students taking the charrette course will conduct additional pre- and post-charrette work. Prior to the charrette, this may include inventory and analysis to provide accurate base maps for the field work, building counts, zoning classifications and/or natural and cultural resource distribution. Follow-up work from the charrette may include: PowerPoint presentations; written and printed report production using Adobe Creative Suite Programs; scanning, laminating and mounting drawings; booklet making; model building; and map manipulation.

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Charrette is a design workshop that involves rapid, intensive, and creative work sessions, usually lasting several days, in which a design team focuses on a particular problem and arrives at a collaborative solution. Charrettes are product-oriented. The public charrette is fast becoming a preferred way to face the planning challenges confronting American cities.

The University of Georgia’s College of Environment and Design has been using the charrette process to help communities for many decades. Charrette teams usually range in size from 10 - 15 participants and include members of the charrette course HIPR 4680/6680, as well as additional students and faculty. As part of the College of Environment and Design, our core Team comes from the disciplines of Landscape Architecture, Historic Preservation and Environmental Planning, but we often draw on the greater UGA community and other disciplines.

The format of individual charrettes remains flexible to satisfy unique community needs and to respond to the local strength and opportunities. Charrettes can result in a wide array of final products, such as:

- Conceptual community master plans
- Design guidelines
- Building typology and facade recommendations
- Roadway and corridor planning recommendations
- Open space & recreation master plan concepts
- Downtown revitalization strategies
- Environmental management guiding principles

Our charrettes are high-energy, new vision, community improvement events! They result in concepts that leverage implementation funds. Nearly all of the communities where charrettes were done have gone on to receive grants or local funds to implement our recommendations. In short, charrettes WORK!

What is Service-Learning?

Academic service-learning is a method of teaching and learning which integrates relevant community service with academic coursework to enhance learning, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities.

If school students collect trash out of an urban streambed, they are providing a service to the community as volunteers; a service that is highly valued and important. On the other hand, when school students collect trash from an urban streambed, then analyze what they found and possible sources so they can share the results with residents of the neighborhood along with suggestions for reducing pollution, they are engaging in service-learning.

To learn more, visit the UGA Office of Service-Learning at: http://www.servicelearning.uga.edu/blog/

Web resources

The Efficacy of the Design Charrette As A Tool for Community Planning, MLA thesis by Julia Reed
www.ced.uga.edu/index.php/services_outreach/detail/what_is_a_charrette/

CCDP past charrette reports
www.ced.uga.edu/index.php/services_outreach/detail/charrette_reports

National Charrette Institute
www.charretteinstitute.org

Charrette Center, Incorporated
www.charretteceneter.net