

## Visualizing the Future of New York's Southern Tier: Engaging Students to Help Create Sustainable Communities

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**Abstract :** In the pedagogical sequence of the four- and five-year architectural programs at Alfred State, the fourth-year Urban Design Studio constitutes the first course where students directly explore design issues in the urban context. It is the first large-scale, community-based service learning project for most of the participating students. The students learn key lessons that include the benefits of working both individually and in groups of different sizes toward a common goal, accepting - and responding creatively too - criticism from stakeholders at different points in the project, and recognizing the role that local politics and activism can play in planning for community development. Above all, students are exposed to the importance of good planning in relation to preservation and community revitalization. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the use of community-based service-learning projects in undergraduate architectural education to promote student civic engagement as a means of helping communities visualize potential solutions for revitalizing their neighborhoods and business districts. A series of case studies will be presented in terms of challenges that were encountered, opportunities for student engagement and leadership, and the feasibility of sustainable community development resulting from those projects. The reader will be encouraged to consider how they can recognize needs within their own communities that could benefit from the assistance of architecture students and faculty.

**Keywords :** urban design, service-learning, civic engagement, community revitalization

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