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FROM: John Trelawney Hoal PhD, AICP, R.ARCH(SA), NCI, FBCI, CNU-A  
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RE: 2012 MO APA St. Louis Metro Section Planning Awards Nomination  
 Statement for the student project *Public Realm & Public Life Research and  
 Proposals*.

DATE: 2 March 2012

We are pleased to present the *Public Realm & Public Life Research and Proposals*, the work of urban design, architecture, art and landscape architecture students from the Sam Fox School of Design and Visual Arts at Washington University in St. Louis. Work was completed in the Spring and Summer of 2011 in three individual contexts: a semester-long seminar course, a weekend-long masterclass, and a month-long internship. The research and design proposals all focus on the neighborhood of Parkview Gardens and the Delmar Loop in University City and the City of St. Louis, Missouri.

The first section of the submission is the work of a graduate level urban design seminar taught by Associate Professor and Chair of the Urban Design Department John Hoal titled *ARCH 454: Public Space and City Life: Contemporary Discourses on Public Space*. In the seminar students completed two assignments to explore public life and public space as a design process. Historical and theoretical research combined with field research helped students work in an evidence-based design process to create a master plan for Ackert Walkway in the Delmar Loop. Students used unique survey methods to document existing pedestrian life while completing field surveys of actual public space conditions. Then they used this information to inform their design process and proposals for Ackert Walkway. Students engaged with the public during their design process to practice collaborative design and holistic design.

The second section presents the work of a weekend-long masterclass taught by Oliver Schulze of Gehl Architects in Copenhagen, Denmark. Titled *A46 4102: Masterclass in Urban Design*, students learned the techniques of behavioral analysis, public realm analysis, and the design process created by Gehl Architects called "Life, Space, Buildings". It puts people and their needs at the heart of the creative process of re-imagining and transforming cities. Students practiced their skills in the Delmar Loop completing Urban Quality Criteria Assessment and user group analysis. Students worked in small groups and then individually to document their "life, space, buildings" design process and then create a design proposal for a specific location along the Loop, such as Ackert Walkway.

The third section is student work that was completed as part of an appendix for the Delmar Loop Retail Study done for Washington University in St. Louis. Again, the work is a detailed public life and public space analysis focused on the future Loop trolley route, particularly at the Delmar Metrolink station and the Forest Park/DeBaliviere Metrolink station. Students completed a 14 hour street life survey, collecting data on pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicles. Detailed public realm analysis was completed for the Metrolink sites as well, and partnered with the behavioral analysis data, the students were able to draw and write conclusions about the impacts of the public realm conditions on streetlife, pedestrian safety and comfort, public transit use, retail conditions, and future possibilities.

As a whole, the objective of this student work is to begin to create a foundation for detailed teaching and practice of new public space design and planning methods based in behavioral analysis, public life surveys, and public realm analysis. The process of evidence based design is becoming more and more important in urban design, planning, and architecture as it allows for exact data on existing conditions to become the basis for high quality public space design that best serves the needs of people.

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### Explanation of Nomination (Item #3)

Student work presented in the *Public Realm & Public Life Research and Proposals* is the culmination of three opportunities for students to gain hand-on experience practicing evidence-based urban research and design. As cities continue to grow in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, urban design and planning as a profession is beginning to require new perspectives and skills that put people and their needs at the heart of the creative process of re-imagining and transforming cities. This focus on 'urban life' is a direct reaction to the urban realities created in the 20th Century, where increases in our standards of living and the associated city building processes have created areas in which large and increasing numbers of people have become isolated from each other, socially and geographically. And with our new awareness for the need for improved public space and public life experiences, comes the need for refined design processes to achieve the goal of a lively and sustainable city. This work is the product of providing students with opportunities for practical experience in researching and designing for livability and liveliness and should be recognized as innovative in the urban design and planning education process.

The process of evidence based design is two-fold. It requires documentation of both public life and the physical public realm that is the stage for that activity. In the case of the seminar *ARCH 454: Public Space and City Life: Contemporary Discourses on Public Space*, students worked together to create a behavioral analysis process and schedule that suited their design needs. For behavioral analysis, they counted pedestrians and mapped their walking patterns to create real life data about how people use the public space of the Delmar Loop. Then, to understand the physical characteristics of the public space, they chose to map the physical conditions that had the most impact on public space and public behavior. By creating their own survey and database of public space research, students were armed with concrete evidence to support their design decisions when creating a masterplan for the Ackert Walkway.

In the *Public Realm & Public Life Analysis: Delmar & DeBaliviere Metrolink Stations*, the students formulated a unique and appropriate public life survey and a detailed public realm analysis to collect the necessary data to begin making conclusions about the relationships between public life and public space. Students got hands-on experience in developing research techniques, completing behavioral surveys, documenting physical conditions, and creating clear and accessible public space and public life mappings. This process is unique in urban design education and provided students with practical real world skills and work experience.

During the weekend-long masterclass titled *The Lively City: Behavioral Studies and Public Space Design in St. Louis*, students worked with Oliver Schulze, the Design Director of the foremost practitioners of Public Life Analysis: Gehl Architects of Copenhagen, Denmark. Students learned the basic techniques of behavioral analysis and public realm analysis, and then adapted the process to the Delmar Loop.

During the weekend charrette, students learned the design process of “Life, Space, Buildings” and applied it to their own design process. After completing an Urban Quality Criteria Assessment about the physical attributes of the Loop, students analyzed the space from the viewpoint of a particular user group. Either families, teens, seniors, active athletes, or young and beautiful. The process put people and their needs at the heart of the creative process as students imagined the public amenities needed to encourage and support active streetlife. From there, students worked in small groups and then individually to document their “life, space, buildings” design process and then create a design proposal for a specific location along the Loop, such as Ackert Walkway. The experience allowed students to assess a familiar space with new perspectives which in turn generated new and innovative urban design solutions, all within a fast paced weekend charrette.

Students also worked with professionals, design colleagues, and the public during their design processes. In the *Public Space and City Life* seminar, urban design students collaborated closely with architecture, landscape architecture, and art students, both graduate and undergraduate to develop analysis and design techniques. Their final work was presented to the public and made available to the for comment. Their design proposals have begun to generate interest in Ackert Walkway and its future prospects. For the *Public Realm & Public Life Analysis: Delmar & DeBaliviere Metrolink Stations*, the students worked closely with practicing professionals to get guidance and input on the survey process and for the development of drawings and publications. And of course with the *Lively City* Masterclass, students worked with world renowned designers to learn and adapt survey processes to create interesting design solutions.

This culmination of student work expresses an evolution of the urban design and planning education process and is a unique attempt to create a new process for learning how to design lively and sustainable cities for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Public life surveys and public realm analysis are at the core of this work, and the results are a body of work that shows the implementation of a unique process and the innovative research and design outcomes generated from it.