



The IISC – Muscatine Partnership

The IISC chose Muscatine as one of its three community partners for the 2013 – 2014 academic year after receiving requests from and interviewing numerous communities throughout eastern Iowa. The IISC – Muscatine partnership consists of students and faculty at the University of Iowa partnering with the city, community organizations, businesses and individuals in Muscatine to identify, design and implement sustainability-focused projects. The purpose of this partnership is to enhance the capacity of Muscatine to address the economic, social and cultural and environmental issues it faces today and build a more vibrant and sustainable future. In doing so, the IISC not only seeks to transform the Muscatine community, but also teaching and learning at the University of Iowa.

Muscatine was chosen for the IISC partnership because of the strong collaborative spirit that exists between all sectors of the community and its enthusiasm and desire to become a more sustainable community. The Community Improvement Action Team, a mayoral-appointment group of civic, non-profit, governmental and business leaders, acts as the IISC's main partner and point of contact with the community. Rich Dwyer and Gary Carlson, the co-chairs of the CIAT, are the IISC's project partner leads. Many of the IISC projects also compliment or directly impact Muscatine's effort to become a designated Blue Zones Community, part of the Blue Zones Project.

The partnership between the IISC and Muscatine encompasses both the Fall 2013 and Spring 2014 semesters. Project development is still occurring, but all told, at the end of the academic-year long partnership, 10 – 13 projects will be completed, with 100 – 150 students spending a total of 15,000 – 30,000 hours of work on these projects. Most projects are semester-long, although two urban planning projects, the Mississippi riverfront redevelopment project and Connectivity master plan and wayfinding projects will be two-semester long.

IISC Projects in Muscatine (2013 – 2014)

Urban and Regional Planning – Field Problems

Project 1: Connectivity master plan and wayfinding

Muscatine is seeking to improve the connectivity of its transportation and recreation infrastructure, including biking and walking trails, sidewalks, roads and bus routes. This coincides with Muscatine's recent designation as a Blue Zones Project™ demonstration site, a state-wide initiative that seeks to improve health and wellness of individuals through changes to the build environment. Students will

develop a connectivity master plan that evaluates current transportation and recreation routes and creates a plan for better connectivity between walking and biking trails, sidewalks, streets, bus routes and major points of interest in Muscatine. The connectivity master plan will promote the use of alternative transportation modes in Muscatine, including, walking, biking and Muscatine's public transit system, MuscaBus. A second part of this project will be the development of a better way-finding system for Muscatine. Students will produce a map of ideal locations for way-finding signs based on the location of major points of interest in Muscatine, and provide examples of best practices for way-finding.

Project 2: Mississippi riverfront redevelopment

The Mississippi River is one of Muscatine's greatest assets, but currently the land along the river is underutilized. New initiatives, such as a Façade Improvement Program for buildings downtown facing the river as well as a Mississippi Drive Corridor Project seek to improve the aesthetics of the area, but a redevelopment plan is needed to guide strategic growth along the riverfront. Students will survey best practices of similar communities' riverfront redevelopment efforts and solicit community input to identify the best uses for the land, ultimately producing a redevelopment plan for the riverfront. Potential pieces of the redevelopment plan could include opening up the riverfront to vendors, public art, a new outdoor entertainment venue, relocation of the farmers market, and promoting the riverfront as a recreational amenity. The redevelopment plan will set forth action steps for the community to take to enhance the riverfront, while paying particular attention to the history of Muscatine as a community.

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences – Honors Rhetoric

Project 3: Digital media storytelling

Students will utilize digital media to tell the story and make the case for the two urban planning projects occurring in Muscatine – the Mississippi Riverfront redevelopment and the Connectivity master plan. Students will also work closely with the urban planning graduate students to effectively message their projects to target audiences.

College of Business – Field Immersion Projects, The Marketing Institute

Project 4: Population/Workforce survey and analysis

Muscatine has a strong employment base with major industry looking to attract top talent. However the perception and feedback from employers is that many employees, especially young professionals, may be working in Muscatine but choosing to live in larger cities nearby, such as Iowa City or the Quad Cities. The Chamber of Commerce is looking to identify why this may be the case and how to change these perceptions. Students will be conducting a survey of the workforce and community as a whole to identify existing perceptions of Muscatine. From this survey and other data analysis, students will provide

recommendations on how Muscatine can begin to grow its population and keep workers living in Muscatine.

Project 5: Branding of Muscatine

Based on the findings of the workforce and community survey and analysis, students will work with the Chamber and other leaders to identify and develop a “branding” campaign for the City of Muscatine, including the development of marketing materials for the campaign.

Project 6: Historic downtown Muscatine – investment; Real Estate Process/Topics in Advanced Finance/ Sustainability Marketing

Muscatine has a beautiful downtown situated along the Mississippi river with a large stock of historic buildings. However some of the store fronts are vacant or need façade renovations. Muscatine is looking for ways to encourage business owners to locate downtown, and to market the downtown as a vibrant, walkable, livable area of the community where people can live, work and play/shop/dine. Students will help create innovative marketing strategies for the downtown district, and develop investment proposals for a couple selected properties downtown. Students will also provide sustainable financing strategies for façade renovation programs and training/coaching sessions for downtown businesses.

College of Engineering – Senior Design, Civil and Environmental Engineering

Project 7: Transportation engineering for the new development planned to occur on the northeast side of town between Highway 61 and Highway 38.

Project 8: Water/drainage/sustainability engineering for the new development planned to occur on the northeast side of town between Highway 61 and Highway 38

Project 9: Mechanical engineering for the new development planned to occur on the northeast side of town between Highway 61 and Highway 38

College of Public Health – Nutrition Intervention Clinical Trials

Project 10: Motivational interviewing health interventions:

Conduct community health interventions for individuals and small groups using motivational interviewing, based on a study completed by Dr. Linda Snetselaar and her colleague from U of Michigan that seeks to empower individuals in making healthier choices.

University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics Dietetic Internship Program – Community Outreach

Project 11: Blue Zones Project Restaurant Certification

Muscatine was designated as a Blue Zones Project demonstration site in January 2013. The Blue Zones Project seeks to make individuals and communities healthier and happier through physical and environmental changes to a community. Part of the Blue Zones Project focuses on local restaurants and

making healthy improvements to menus and the overall eating environment. Interns with the Dietetic Internship Program will be assisting local Muscatine restaurants in making these changes.

School of Art and Art History/ ArtShare

Project 12: Public art project(s)

Students will develop public art utilizing recycled goods from Muscatine's Recycling Center and Transfer Station; other potential public art projects (this is still in development). Potentially a window display competition for downtown Muscatine.

ISU College of Design in partnership with the IISC

Project 13: Sustainable Dog Park

Muscatine is interested in developing its first dog park as a community amenity. Students will first survey best practices for dog parks in communities similar to Muscatine and identify all recommended amenities (water and water features, ground covering, benches, pavilions, fencing, walking paths, how to handle waste, etc.). Students will also work with Iowa urban planning students in the Connectivity master plan to ensure that the location is connected with the trails network. Students will then do preliminary designs for the dog park, including potential planned phases where restrooms and water features are added later.