

N Street Cohousing Community Open Space Project

Introduction

The purpose of this project is to provide you with experience in identifying, understanding, and integrating social design principles into your design work. You will be learning techniques for analyzing the social elements (i.e. behavior patterns, activities, etc.), the personal motivations and meanings attached to place, and the community desires and expectations for a given project. In particular, we will focus on how “life stage” (how old you are) can influence the needs and wants of users.

A tentative schedule for the project has been prepared, although much of the project will be determined and directed by the community’s desires, therefore, expect changes to the schedule along the way.

Project Description

During this quarter you will apply these principles to the design of a community open space system for the N Street Cohousing project in Davis. The N Street project is different from many cohousing projects because it grew out of an existing traditional neighborhood. In 1986, neighbors began taking down fences and opening up their backyards to a common space. (You should check with Steve Greco, but I believe he was living in one of the houses at the time and was part of the original fence removal.) Since that time, this “intentional” community has continued to grow including the recent expansion of their common house. For more on the community, you should look at their website at <http://www.nstreetcohousing.org/>.

The community open space system consists primarily of the outdoor spaces at the rear of the homes, but we will include the public face (the street front) of the community as well. With the residents we will determine which private “back yards” will be included as community space and where private spaces are desired. Much of the analysis phase of this project will be conducted in small groups. Based upon what we learn through our site analysis and discussions with the community, we will determine whether the design phase will be conducted by individuals or groups and whether everyone will be involved in designing the entire site or a defined portion of the site. For example, someone in the class may want to be solely responsible for the design of the streetscape along N Street and someone else may design the patio area at the common house. Alternatively, we may decide to have four or five projects teams that will each develop a design for the entire site.

Our community contact, Marisa Alcorta, will be contacting community members to determine what the protocol should be for your site visits. We are hoping that the community will be open to having you visit the site often and getting to know them

individually. I think that you will probably be asked to check in with one of the residents when you get there and before you start wandering around their backyard. Please don't go to the site until we have the go-ahead from the community.

Studio – DAY 1

Much of your initial work will be getting to know the community, both the physical space and the residents. One of the things that you will be doing is interviewing the residents, therefore we need to determine whether or not they would like to offer their opinions and the best way to reach them. During the first studio class, you will need to divide into three teams; each team should have six members. Team 1 will write a "letter of introduction" that will be distributed to all the residents. Team 2 will design a poster to be displayed in the common house and will include space for residents to sign up for interviews and tell us how to contact them. Team 3 will generate a first draft of interview questions.

Team 1 - Letter of Introduction

Imagine you are a resident at N Street Cohousing. What would you like to know about this project? The following is a list of possible topics, but discuss and add others.

- Who are we
- What will we be doing
- What will they get out of it
- What will we need from them
- When will this happen
- How can they get involved
- How can they get in touch with us

Team 2 – Common House Poster

Design a lively, informative poster for display in the common house. The poster should have information about who we are, this project, and how we can get in touch with them (i.e. spaces to sign up with their email addresses or phone numbers).

Team 3 – Interview Questions

Your team should think about what information you will need to complete this project. Generate a list of general questions (things that we can probably get answered by one or two people) and a list of questions that we will want to ask each resident. For example, their personal desires for the space. Do not try to finalize the survey. We will discuss survey design during the second week of class and will finish it at that time.

**N Street Co-Housing
 TENTATIVE SCHEDULE**

Week	Date	Project Phase	Tasks
1	M 10/2	Inventory & Analysis	Prepare introduction letter to community, project poster with sign-up sheet, and community questions
	W 10/4	Behavior Observations	site visit – N Street Co-Housing project N Street & Colgate, Davis
2	M 10/9	“Listening to the Community”	Design survey instrument
	W 10/11		Continue observations & analysis; pre-test survey
3	M 10/16		conduct and summarize surveys
	W 10/18		Document inventory & analysis; document survey results
4	M 10/23	“Reporting Back to the Community”	Prepare for workshop
	W 10/25		Prepare for workshop
5	M 10/30	Community Meal & Workshop 6:30 – 8:30 @ Common House (Students should arrive at 5:30)	
	W 11/1	Workshop de-brief	Document workshop findings
6	M 11/6	Generating ideas with community members	Establish “age-based” teams
	W 11/8		Conduct design sessions with teams
7	M 11/13		Conduct design sessions with teams
	W 11/15	Design generation	Develop design alternatives
8	M 11/20	Community Feedback	Prepare display for comment & questions “Cost & benefit analysis of plans”
	W 11/22		Class evaluations of designs
9	M 11/27	Final Design	Retrieve & review community comments

	W 11/29		Design – graphic & written documentation
10	M 12/4		Design – graphic & written documentation
	W 12/6	Community Meeting	Meeting Preparation