### Title: UMass Amherst Design Center in Springfield

**Project Leader: Michael DiPasquale**

## Project Overview

## In fall 2010, the University of Massachusetts Amherst Design Center in Springfield opened as a key component in our Chancellor’s “Greater Springfield Partnership” initiative. The Design Center provides a physical space in the city's Metro Center for UMass Extension staff, and faculty and students from academic programs (Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning, Art and Architecture, and Building Technology) to interact with Springfield residents. The Center is the base of operations for these groups to collaborate with community members, organizations and other stakeholders on extension, urban planning, design projects and initiatives that will revitalize the cultural and commercial heart of the city.

## Activity Summary – 2012

* Assistance to UMass undergraduate students working in Springfield (1)
* Design Center Exhibits showing student work and impact of sustainable development plans (1)
* Serve on thesis committees for graduate students working in Springfield (1)

### *Educational contacts*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Adult Contacts | Youth Contacts |
| In Person | 80 | 0 |
| Indirect Contacts (Print, Web, etc…) | 90 | 0 |

## Narrative Summary – 2012

## The UMass Amherst Design Center in Springfield has assisted Springfield residents and UMass students in addressing real life planning and design projects through workshops and presentations resulting in policy and local planning decisions that are helping to make Springfield neighborhoods more sustainable. During the last year, UMass students in the Art and Architecture program and the Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning used the Design Center in Springfield to conduct classes, and make presentations to Springfield residents and stakeholders.

## Springfield recently experienced several major natural disasters, including flooding, a minor earthquake, and most seriously, a tornado that damaged several older neighborhoods. UMass students and faculty from the Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning were well positioned to provide planning assistance to the city and individual neighborhoods due to their recent experience working in the effected neighborhoods, as part of outreach work sponsored by the Design Center. UMass students, assisted by Design Center Director Michael DiPasquale spent the fall 2011 and spring 2012 semesters working with residents in a community-based planning process to revitalize the Old Hill - Six Corners neighborhood in ways that directly address the needs and concerns of individual residents.

## Several aspects of the Old Hill – Six Corners plan are now being implemented. These include preliminary design of a plan to "calm" traffic at the Six Corners intersection. The plans under consideration are based on UMass student work showing the creation of a landscaped round-about, which will also serve as a gateway to the Alden Street neighborhood. Another aspect of the student's plan that is being implemented is a bike path and new road configurations to create a landscaped entryway to the "Watershops Pond"/Springfield College area. Finally, and perhaps most important for neighborhood residents, is the database that UMass student Pedro Soto created to assess the physical conditions and historic significance of properties damaged by the tornado. The database is being used to rank the properties based on extent of damage and historic value in order to help residents prioritize which properties should be rehabilitated and which properties should be demolished.

### Collaborating Organizations

### City of Springfield