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Community Participation & Design Projects

PATSY EUBANKS OWENS

Knights Landing Community Park

This project is actually five projects that Professor Owens conducted between 1999 and 2005. This project illustrates the importance and power of building long-lasting partnerships with communities. The efforts in Knights Landing, a small rural community, began with a large-scale **community goal setting** process. School children, senior citizens and others participated in identifying the issues in their community that they wanted to address. Owens and UC Davis students developed photographic surveys, participated in community walks and facilitated community meetings.

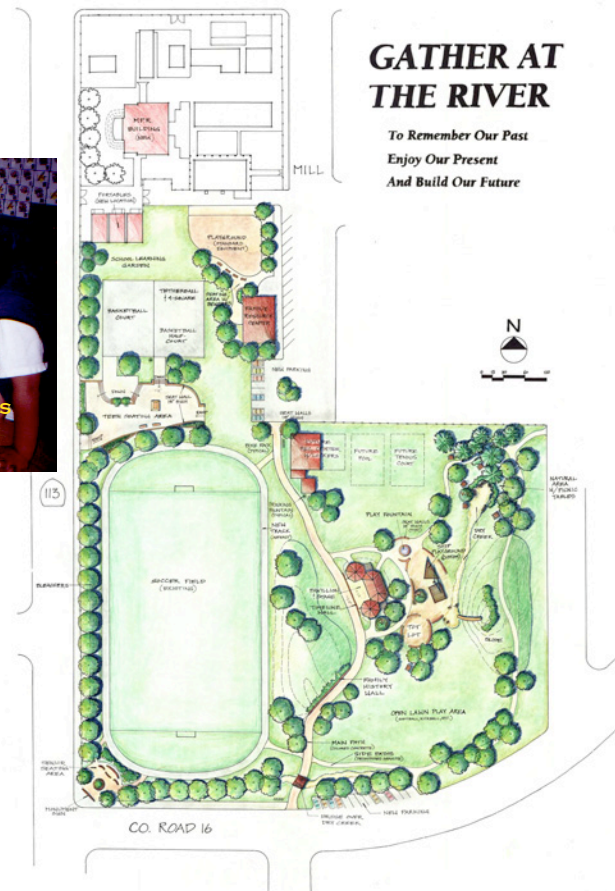
The need for a **park master plan** was identified in this process. Community members wanted to reclaim a large parcel of land that was centrally located and adjacent to the elementary school for community use. Local school children had already collected 60,000 pennies for a new playground. Professor Owens led design workshops at the school as well as at other community events. The resulting plan, "Gather at the River," seeks to make a place for the white and Latino community members and the younger and older residents to come together.



KNIGHTS LANDING COMMUNITY PARK

GATHER AT THE RIVER

To Remember Our Past
Enjoy Our Present
And Build Our Future



Knights Landing Community Park

EVOLUTION OF A COMMUNITY GATHERING PLACE



The “Gather at the River” master plan represented a vision for the park that would be used to make decisions and obtain funding for the actual construction of its elements. The **children’s playground** was the first priority. Professor Owens and Marlies Nagl, a senior in the landscape architecture program and one of the master plan designers, were responsible for this design effort. After site visits to other playgrounds and discussing what they like to do, it was clear that the children wanted a “store bought” playground and that they didn’t want their parents to construct the playground. They wanted modern equipment with a space-age feel.



PLAYGROUND TOURS



FINAL PLAN REVIEW



THE NEW PLAYGROUND

Grounds to celebrate

Dream of a new playground swings into reality for kids

By Christina Jewett
SACRAMENTO WRITER

Knight's Landing residents have been accustomed to setbacks. The working-class town of 1,500 residents northeast of Woodland lost its only bank branch in the 1980s, saw its only medical clinic depart in the '90s and had its only community playground demolished nearly two years ago.

Hope seemed lost until 1999, when a Grifton Elementary School teacher asked her students to dream.

Two weeks ago, new playground equipment was installed. Before school Friday, it came to life.

"For 15 minutes, (Grifton Principal David) Neave and I watched packs of students arrive at school, scream with surprise, drop their backpacks and run for the playground," Mark Roman wrote in an e-mail to school leaders. Roman is coordinator for Healthy Start, which offers social services to underserved areas.

At 9:30 a.m. today, the community will gather for the ribbon cutting. How the school acquired the equipment is a sidebar. Like the nearby Sacramento River, winds its way to Sacramento.

□ □ □

Maria Martinez was born in Mexico, grew up in Knight's Landing and now

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Knight's Landing Community Park

EVOLUTION OF A COMMUNITY GATHERING PLACE

The next phase of park implementation revolved around a new **Family Resource Center** - a place where residents could see a dentist, receive job training or other community services not currently available. Owens and three independent study students helped to site the new building, and design the surrounding circulation and landscape.

Community members helped with constructing walkways, an entry seat wall and the irrigation system, as well as planting native and drought-resistant vegetation. Student Matt Strader oversaw the construction while classmate Kathleen Coleman guided elementary students in making tile mosaics for the seat wall.

Two years later a public official helping the community received funding for a **community garden** to be located in the park. The master plan had not included a community garden because residents had said they were not interested in one since many of them work in agriculture. Since funding had already been obtained, Professor Owens sought to include the community in determining where this new garden should be located, who was interested in participating and what it should look like. This process eventually revealed that indeed there was not the support needed to make a community garden successful.



Knights Landing Community Park

EVOLUTION OF A COMMUNITY GATHERING PLACE

White Rock Community Park

A \$2.5 million state grant funded this collaborative park planning process between the Cordova Parks & Recreation District, the design firm - Moore, Iacafano & Goltsman, Kinney and Cordova high school students, and UC Davis landscape architecture students. The 12-acre White Rock Park was in serious disrepair, suffered from misuse and no longer met the needs of nearby residents.

Professor Owens and undergraduate landscape architecture students sought to involve the culturally-diverse community in the master planning process. Working closely with high school students, the team documented the existing conditions of the park and obtained community opinions. Owens and her students taught the teenaged team members introductory site analysis, mapping, community assessment, design generation and public presentation skills.



White Rock Community Park

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION & COLLABORATION

In addition to gaining valuable information, this working relationship offered the local youth exposure to a potential career opportunity. Working alongside the professional consultants provided the UC Davis students with a valuable hands-on learning experience.

This project presented many valuable lessons for all those involved and included:

- Youth partners are an excellent way to open the door into a community. They have valuable information to share and they can readily obtain the opinions of other community residents (especially those that may be unwilling to share with outside consultants).
- University students provide excellent role models and mentors to youth and they typically have fewer preconceptions regarding park problems than professional consultants.
- Open and frequent lines of communication are needed between all the players in collaborative projects.



White Rock Community Park

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION & COLLABORATION

Cesar Chavez Elementary School Murals

These two mural projects were conducted by Professor Owens in 2005 and 2008 with the sixth grade classes at Cesar Chavez Elementary School. The intent of this project was for the students to leave behind an artistic expression of their time at the school and to beautify the school grounds. The projects included guided workshops to identify design concepts and develop the mural content. Several alternatives were developed by the students for each of the murals and the selected design was chosen by class vote.

With the assistance and instruction of Owens, the students also painted the mural. Students were provided with sketches and given instruction on various painting techniques. The California School Memories mural emerged from the students' desire to represent things they had learned about California and places they had visited while in elementary school. The Sunrise-Sunset mural represents the end of their elementary education and the move to junior high.



BACKGROUND
PREPARATION



WORK DAY



SELECTING
A DESIGN



WORK DAY



Cesar Chavez Elementary School Murals

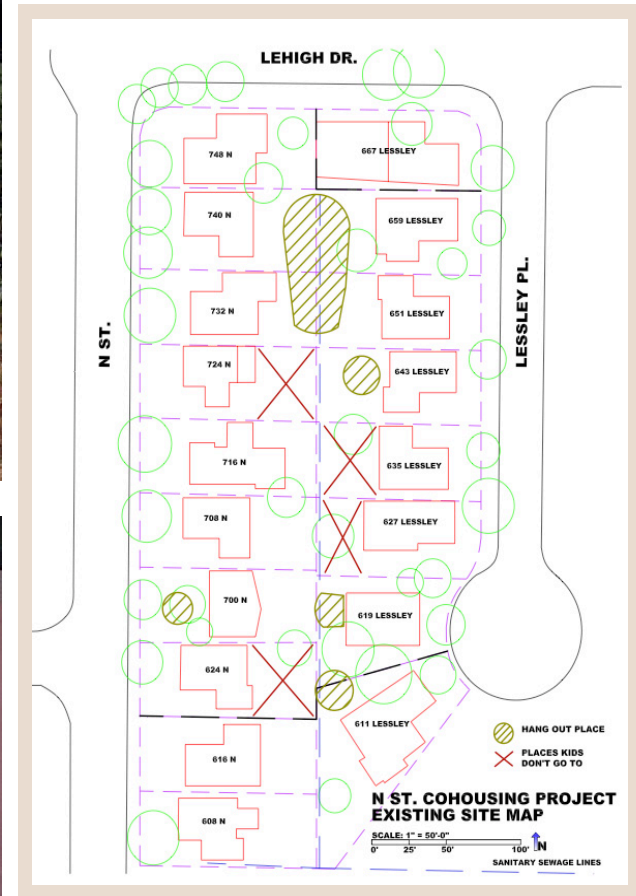
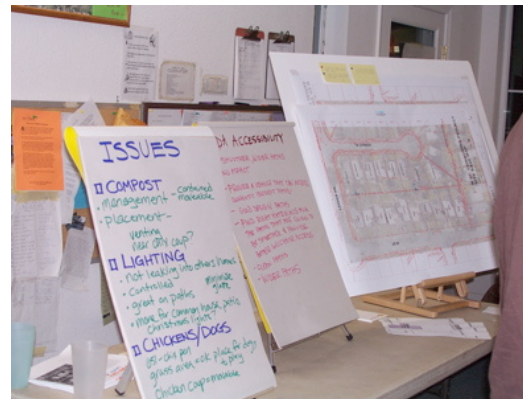
CLASS MEMORIES ON DISPLAY

N Street Co-Housing Community Space

Residents wanted a common outdoor space that reflected their diverse interests and desires. The community has evolved from a typical city block with individually- owned private lots and fences to shared gardens, gathering areas and a common dining house.

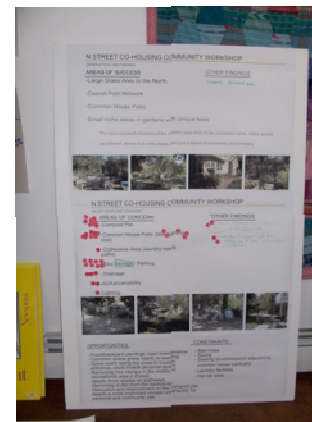
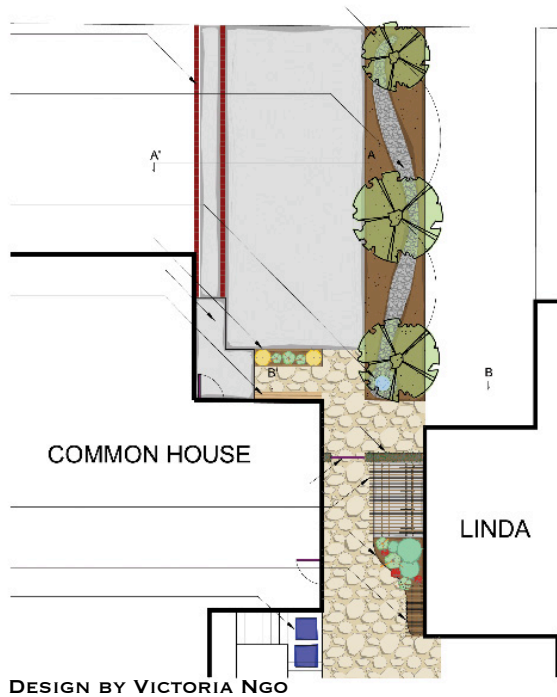
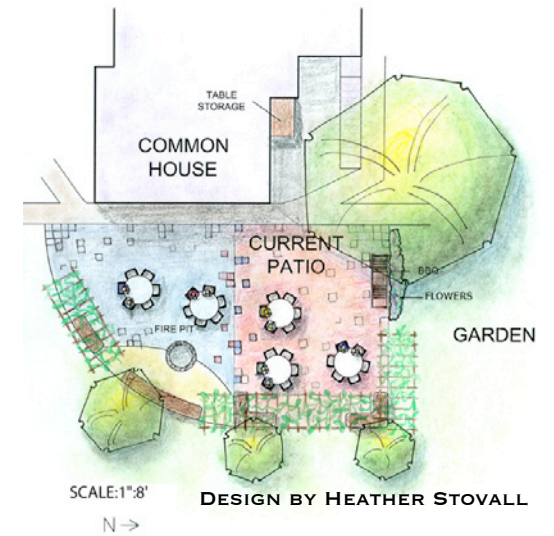
Professor Owens and students in her design studio worked with community members to understand the issues impacting the design of this area and to develop design recommendations. Interviews with residents and behavior observations were conducted and intergenerational workshops helped to clarify common goals, address conflicts and reach consensus on future plans.

The resulting design plan was developed with an incremental-implementation approach in mind. Discreet design areas were identified and stand-alone solutions were conveyed through drawings and writing.



N Street Co-Housing Community Space

USER NEEDS INFLUENCING DESIGN



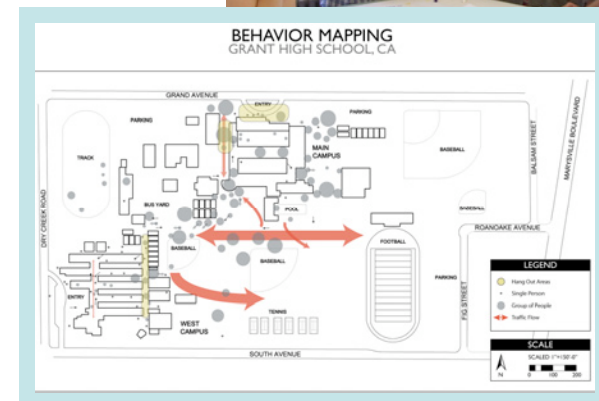
N Street Co-Housing Community Space

USER NEEDS INFLUENCING DESIGN

Grant High School Landscape Master Plan

Professor Owens and UCD alumnus and high school teacher Daniela Tavares collaborated to bring together their students in this mutually-beneficial project. For three months, the Grant High Environmental Science Academy students and UCD landscape architecture students worked together to develop ideas for improving the high school's landscape.

After introductory tours of campus led by Grant High students, the UCD students provided instruction to them on conducting site analysis and behavior observations. These behavior maps along with photographic surveys completed by the high school students provided valuable information on the current use patterns and student perceptions of campus. The UCD students conducted their own site analysis, developed a student photo survey and interviewed teachers and other staff members.

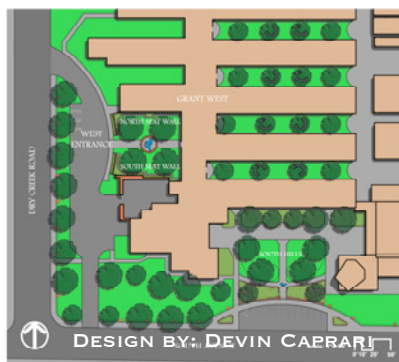


Grant High School Landscape Master Plan

PLANTING SEEDS...DEVELOPING A VISION

During the design development phase, the high school and university students worked together to generate design ideas. Student teams were responsible for particular areas on campus. These designs were refined and included in the final document, "Planting Seeds." In addition, the project process was documented through a video, "GHS campus design project," and can be viewed at youtube.com. The film has served as a useful tool to engage other partners in the effort to transform the Grant High campus into a healthy, supportive and sustainable campus.

Upon completion of the design master plan, Professor Owens and UCD student Daniel Leninger have continued to work with the school staff and students to make this project a reality. Presentations to the school board, potential funding agencies and others have generated enthusiastic support. Phase one will consist of improving the West Campus entry through seating and shade. Professor Owens will continue to involve UC Davis students on the next phases of the campus plan design and implementation.



Grant High School Landscape Master Plan

PLANTING SEEDS...DEVELOPING A VISION