

The Impact(s) of Legacy

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Over the past 45 years, USU's Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning (LAEP) department and Extension specialists have engaged Utah's rural communities through a variety of design-based activities. While these projects have contributed to the reputation of USU LAEP as a leader in design-based community engagement, the impacts of these endeavors had not been formally documented, evaluated, or widely disseminated. Over the past year Dr. Ole Sleipness, Professors David Anderson, David Evans, Jake Powell and Ros McCann and MLA student Jason Parkinson have been working to research the results of over four decades of community focused service. The results highlight the far reaching impacts of LAEP Extension on the communities, people, landscapes, and ecosystems of the state of Utah. The study has become a catalyst for understanding the state of Extension landscape architecture at a national scale and is guiding future design-based community engagement activities at USU and other land-grant institutions.

The study assessed over 300 LAEP Extension projects through inventorying, characterizing, and cataloging these projects according to project typology, site scale, geographic setting, decade initiated, and level of engagement with departmental faculty, students, community members, and others. From these projects, 22 projects were selected for further investigation, which included on-site observation and documentation, semi-structured interviews of key project informants, and examination of project impacts within their local and regional contexts. Additionally, LAEP's alumni and current students were also surveyed to determine the impact design-based community engagement had on professional values, career development, and ongoing relationships with the university.

The study found that the results of LAEP Extension projects varied significantly from tangible built works to no evidence of the project being implemented. Along this continuum, the study illuminated the synergistic quality of projects that were clustered within proximity of each other in achieving regional impacts. Another insight the study quantified is the role the department's vertically-integrated, annual charrettes had in catalyzing additional work for both the department and professional design firms. The

department's annual vertically integrated charrettes were found to result in ripple effects and initiation of additional projects, akin to sparks of opportunity cast from a fire. One example of this effect uncovered through this research was the 2007 departmental charrette held in Sanpete County, Utah. The charrette focused on the U.S. 89 corridor within the county and generated content that was used in the application to the National Park Service for this area to be included as part of the Mormon Pioneer National Heritage Area (MPNHA) designation proposed by Senator Bennett. The charrette sparked USU LAEP Extension working on downtown revitalization plans in Manti, Ephraim, and Mount Pleasant. USU LAEP Extension's impact on Sanpete County can be seen at the Central Utah Pioneer Heritage Park in Manti where LAEP Extension created a site plan for the park, and the master plan for the Sanpete County's Contoy equestrian center built in 2008. The project also resulted in connecting USU Extension with Wasatch Academy, a private school located in Mt. Pleasant to generate a master plan which provided a vision that resulted in over \$13 million of construction fees across 13 buildings and over \$450,000 in professional design fees. Wasatch Academy was voted Utah's most beautiful school in 2018 by Business Insider Magazine.

The study begins to quantify the breadth of work completed over the past 45 years and the impact LAEP faculty, students, and USU Extension have had on Utah's communities. It also brings further clarifies the value community engagement through LAEP Extension brings to students, communities, and landscape architecture professionals.

The results of this study have already been presented in the 2019 Annual USU Extension Conference, the 2019 Council for Educators in Landscape Architecture Conference, and will be presented this summer at the 2019 North American College Teachers of Agriculture Conference.

If you have any questions about the study please feel free to contact Dr. Ole Sleipness (ole.sleipness@usu.edu) or Jake Powell (jake.powell@usu.edu).

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