Program and Staff Updates

The Community GIS (CGIS) program partnered with the U-Spatial (uspatial.umn.edu) office at the University of Minnesota this fall to offer trainings in web mapping to community residents and program staff at the Urban Research Outreach and Engagement Center (UROC) in North Minneapolis. The first two trainings were held in November, and CGIS anticipates conducting more sessions in January and February of 2013. The trainings are first-come, first-served, and each session has room for 15 participants. Contact CGIS staff at jmatson@umn.edu for more information. CGIS Program Director Jeff Matson was recently elected to serve on the National Neighborhood Indicators Project (NNIP) Executive Committee for 2013–2015. NNIP is a collaboration of the Urban Institute and local partners in 37 cities to further the development and use of neighborhood-level information systems for community building and local decision-making. In November, Matson was invited to teach two workshops titled Online Resources for Employment and Economic Development Data at the Knowledge for Equity conference held November 13–14 in Silver Spring, MD. Following the conference, Matson gave a presentation on his foreclosure research and the North Minneapolis Housing Market Index at the Community Indicators Consortium Impact Summit held November 15–16 in College Park, MD. Matson will be teaching a course in Urban GIS and Analysis at the University of Minnesota during spring semester 2013 and is currently seeking community-based mapping projects for his students. Projects begin in early February and will be completed by mid-May. Contact Matson (jmatson@umn.edu, 612-625-0081) if you have a proposal for a project.

In December, the Minnesota Center for Neighborhood Organizing (MCNO) kicked off a training for AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer Brooke Henderson, who left critical support to MCNO’s communications and neighborhood organizing efforts during the last year. She returns to her native Ohio to pursue future endeavors. With training assistance from MCNO, student members of the Food Justice Coalition at St. Catherine University organized a Second Annual Food Week November 26–30. Intended to mobilize students, staff, and faculty to promote food justice and increased access to local food, the week’s events included a presentation from Minnesota Secretary of State Mark Ritchie, as well as a gathering of student leaders from other campus across the Twin Cities. As a result of the week’s activities, organizers hoped to gain momentum in demanding a university-wide commitment to 30% local, affordable, fair trade, humane, and racially equitable food on campus.

The CURA Housing Forum sponsored three programs this fall. In September, CURA co-sponsored an event with the Sabo Center for Citizenship and Learning at Augsburg College that featured George Galster, Clarence Hilberry Distinguished Professor of Urban Affairs at Wayne State University in Detroit, talking about his most recent publication, “Neighborhood Social Mix: Theory, Evidence, and Implications for Policy and Planning.” In October, Josh Dye and Dan Hylton discussed what is happening in the Twin Cities rental market based on data in HousingLink’s award-winning quarterly report Twin Cities Rental Revue. In December, William Weber and Dan Handeen from the University of Minnesota’s Center for Sustainable Building Research discussed the development of the Minnesota Sustainable Housing Initiative’s Upstream curriculum, a set of tools and training that build the capacity of housing developers to assess and optimize potential building sites. Learn about upcoming CURA Housing Forums, view summaries and materials from these and other past forums, or sign up to receive announcements of future forums at www.cura.umn.edu/housing-forum.

In December, Resilient Communities Project (RCP) Program Director Mike Greco provided an overview of RCP’s 2012–2013 pilot partnership with the City of Minnetonka at a brownbag event sponsored by the Minnesota Chapter of the American Planning Association. The partnership will continue into the spring 2013 semester. By the end of the academic year, RCP will have matched 24 courses and 300+ students across 7 colleges at the University of Minnesota with more than a dozen sustainability-related projects proposed by Minnetonka city staff. RCP recently issued a request for proposals from municipalities interested in being the 2013–2014 community partner. See the announcement on page 37 or visit rcp.umn.edu for more information.

The Hennepin-University Partnership (HUP) is working with a committee of Hennepin County middle managers on a number of initiatives to streamline the connections between Hennepin County and the University. One initiative involves Hennepin County’s Human Resources Department, working with CURA, to advise County staff about how to hire and effectively work with students. The initiative will help County staff sort through the options in hiring a student and optimize chances for a good fit for both the County and the student. HUP is also working with County and University staff to select themes for 2013 HUP-sponsored events. The group is currently considering three possible event themes: environmental justice issues in Twin Cities; what human services staff need to know about infant brain development; and bridging the “digital divide” in an era of E-Government. HUP staff will be working with County and University contacts to organize and sponsor events on these topics during the next several months.

CURA Associate Director Will Craig was recently inducted into the University YMCA Hall of Fame. He was honored for many years of service including chairing the U-YMCA Board of Management and founding the Legacy Committee for planned giving. The U-YMCA engages University of Minnesota students with the community in many ways, including tutoring children in the Minneapolis Public Schools. As part of the Urban and Regional Information Systems Association’s (URISA) 50th annual conference, Craig (a past president of URISA) contributed a chapter to an e-book, Foundations of Urban and Regional Information Systems and Science (www.urisa.org/files/Foundations_FINAL2.pdf), which illustrates the many contributions the organization has made to GIS.

Esther Wattenberg, CURA’s policy and program coordinator in family and child welfare, has completed the sixth in a series of reflective seminars for child-welfare supervisors and practitioners. “Codes of Silence, Confidentiality, and Secrets: Implications for the Child Welfare System,” was held on December 14th, 2012. Professor Wattenberg’s spring seminar will focus on “Defining Excellence for School-Lined Services.” Summaries and other materials from all reflective seminars are available at www.cehd.umn.edu/ssw/cascsw/events/past_events/.