Recent Project Awards

Each issue of the CURA Reporter features a few capsule descriptions of new projects under way at CURA. The projects highlighted in this issue were made possible through one of CURA’s community-based research programs, which provide graduate-student assistance for community-based applied research projects, program planning and development, program evaluation, and other short-term projects. These projects represent only a portion of those that will receive support from CURA and its partners during the coming year.

■ Vacant-Land Assessment for Urban Agriculture Project
AfroEco exists to organize a new relationship between blacks and the land and is involved in environmental justice and food sovereignty. This project was needed to assess and develop plans for the use of 400 food-bearing parcels owned by the City of Minneapolis. Data were needed to understand the availability of the lots, their capacity, and their best possible uses in order to help Minneapolis citizens put them to good use. Emily Goellner, a student in the Master of Urban and Regional Planning program, generated maps, compiled an analysis of the data, helped develop a community development plan, and participated in community sustainable food groups, all of which she documented in a final report and presentation to AfroEco. Her work will help the organization create better sustainable-food options for the people of Minneapolis and put vacant land to more efficient use.
Program: Kris Nelson Community-Based Research Program

■ What About People? Measuring the Social Impacts of Creative Place Making
The Pillsbury House Theatre in Minneapolis exists to create challenging theater that inspires choice, change, and connection in viewers and performers. This project was focused on researching and evaluating the impacts of creative place making in certain neighborhoods to help create positive outcomes in communities. In their 2010 report, Creative Placemaking, Ann Markusen and Anne Gadwa describe creative placemaking as a situation in which “partners from public, private, non-profit, and community sectors strategically shape the physical and social character of a neighborhood, town, city, or region around arts and cultural activities. Creative placemaking animates public and private spaces, rejuvenates structures and streetscapes, improves local business viability and public safety, and brings diverse people together to celebrate, inspire, and be inspired.” Brittany Edwards, a Masters of Public Policy graduate student, analyzed existing local data, identified missing or unavailable data, and compiled the research into a report for the community. The report will be used as a resource for understanding creative place making, and the results will be reflected back to the community for better knowledge and implementation of creative place making.
Program: Community Assistantship Program (CAP)

■ Southeastern Minnesota Cover-Crop Use
The Hiawatha Valley Resource Conservation and Development Council supports local people in balancing land use with environmental preservation. This project gathered information about the use of cover crops in the region to produce crop-tracking information. Cover crops are crops planted primarily to increase soil fertility or improve soil quality. Because farmer-to-farmer communication has been the most efficient way to adopt and successfully use cover crops, educational materials for farmers to use together are needed. Cadence Peterson, an Urban and Regional Planning graduate student, conducted research, interviewed cover-crop representatives, met with farmers to understand success and barriers, and assembled all gathered information into a final report. The results will be used to educate farmers on the successful use of cover crops.
Program: Community Assistantship Program (CAP)