

OUTREACH INCENTIVE GRANT FUNDING: END-OF-YEAR PROJECT REPORT

Title of Proposal: **Odd Fellows Cemetery Demarcation Studies**

Your Name: **Katherine Ambroziak**

Project Date: **January 11 – April 30, 2012**

(follow-up documentation on-going)

Additional project support received from other university or external sources:

Source	Amount	Title
UT CoAD	\$800	James Musgraves Faculty Development Fund

Assessment and Partnership/Reciprocity: The Odd Fellows Cemetery Demarcations Studies, an academic initiative to study the detailing and prototype construction of a cemetery wall for Odd Fellows Cemetery and Potters Field, was an integral component of the Odd Fellows Cemetery and Potters Field Rehabilitation Project, a larger, long-term proposal for the development of a memorial landscape. This project is a collaborative initiative between the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, College of Architecture and Design, the City of Knoxville, and the Knoxville Re-Animation Coalition (KRC), a grass roots community organization in East Knoxville. The Demarcation Studies were undertaken as course work in Arc 425: Special Topics in Architecture, Methods and Tactics for Materials and Construction, taught by Professor Matt Hall. During the design development of these studies, several open reviews were held at the Art and Architecture Building during which members of the KRC and the City offered feedback. Students took notes from these critiques and addressed comments in subsequent studies.

At the conclusion of the study, students built two mock-up walls in Dr. Walter Hardy Memorial Park, a public park located adjacent to the cemeteries. I scheduled a public meeting (marking the fourth public meeting for the Rehabilitation Project) where collaborator Professor Hall presented objectives of the study and students presented information relating to the two design proposals. Approximately 70 persons (students and residents) were in attendance, with 53 persons registering on the sign-in sheet and asking to be notified for future events. Comment cards were distributed and several returned with specific comments regarding preferences. We received the majority of our feedback orally during a 30-minute question-answer-comment session following the presentation. The public meeting was covered by several local press agencies.

Shared Decision-Making: The community has been involved in the development of the overall Rehabilitation Project and has given feedback throughout the process. I have worked with community members one-on-one, in small group sessions, and in open public meetings where there has been open discussion and opportunity to give written feedback. Questionnaires distributed early on in the project helped to form the basis for the focus of the project as a whole. Prior to the initiation of the Demarcation Studies, the community gave feedback on conceptual ideas for the cemetery wall. These comments formed the basis for some of the performance criteria of the studies.

The students developed four initial designs. As the project progressed, and in reaction to critique by the KRC and the City, this number was reduced to two. Both strategies met the performance criteria, but offered different options for aesthetics, construction methods, materials employment, signage, and estimated cost. They both also provided ideas about how the community could be involved in some sort of “marking” to signify contemporary engagement. By providing these different models with various options, community members who attended the meeting were involved in the process and understood that their opinions would help to guide the decision making.

Because the wall prototypes were built in a public space, there is ongoing opportunity for the community to learn about the project and give feedback. We placed signage adjacent to the walls describing the project and providing contact information for further comments or questions. We have received several follow-up comments about the project in general.

As a result of the community feedback, we are developing a set of construction documents for the cemetery wall. The final proposed design is based on the publicly preferred option, modified to include several details that received strong approval from the other.

Benefits: The Demarcation Wall Studies produced a tangible product presented in a public space. Their visibility publically announces the work that the University is doing with the community and indicates a promise to improve the social and physical base of the neighborhood. Since construction of these wall segments, several additional public groups have stepped forward, indicating their own desire to work in this area on neighborhood improvements and to work collaboratively. Previously these groups have been working independently – the project has become a catalyst for better communication. For the most part, these groups are focused on the maintenance and improvement of amenities in the park, but they are open to extending their scope to the cemeteries once stabilization has occurred.

Feedback from the community further informs the rehabilitation design project as a whole. Conversations with the community about the constructed walls resulted in the most specific feedback to date. By making informed decisions, we are more assured that the space, as it develops, will be used by and appreciated by the residents. It is relevant to their use of the site. This collaboration serves as a “good faith” model for how residents can expect their voices to be addressed in the future and gives the University clout as a partner working with, not for, the community.

Scholarship: The project and collaborative process provides a unique model for how historic sites may be readapted or rehabilitated, not just “preserved,” with a focus on cultural identity and community involvement. I have shared such scholarship with organizations such as the Engagement Scholarship Consortium, responsible for the National Outreach Scholarship Conference, the Forum for Architecture, Culture and Spirituality, and the Mid-Atlantic Popular | American Culture Association. This current study offers additional opportunities specific to construction methodology and student/community engagement. Scholarship material gained from this study is being assembled and will be submitted for consideration to the *Journal of Architectural Education*, the *Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture*, and *PRISM: A Journal of Regional Engagement*, all peer-reviewed journals.

Conclusions: Throughout the process of the rehabilitation project, I continue to work closely with persons from the KRC. We are always together in public meetings and we adamantly represent our work as collaborative. By establishing this working model, I believe community residents feel more comfortable and speak more openly. I also make sure we solicit questions and offer responses in subsequent meetings as a follow-up, reinforcing the responsibility we take to address community concerns. The Demarcation Study followed that model.

Our presence on site has also proved to be a great indicator of our commitment to the project and the community. Over the past several years, students, volunteers, and I have been working on site and engaging with neighborhood residents. However, the tangible presence of the walls has made the project even more impressionable. No longer is the project seen as a vision or abstract promise. As a first act of “doing,” we bring it perceptually closer to reality. I have experienced a demonstrated growth in interest for the rehabilitation project as a whole since the development and installation of the cemetery wall studies.

Future Plans: The Odd Fellows Cemetery Demarcation Studies is one step in a larger, long-term plan to rehabilitate Odd Fellows Cemetery and Potters Field and to reintegrate them into the lives of a contemporary community. In the immediate future, I plan to work with the KRC and the City to seek grants and funding to begin construction of portions of the wall in more public perimeter areas of the cemetery. This work will be done concurrently with other ongoing stabilizing efforts performed as research and creative activities, both public and academic. In the extended future, I see opportunities to involve a greater number of community organizations and local businesses as construction of the memorial landscape begins and we start to address issues of ongoing maintenance and use.