

SIUE Successful Communities Collaborative Helps Revitalize Venice, Brooklyn And Madison Townships

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EDWARDSVILLE - The problems are longstanding, but the mission is clear. The current situation is bleak, but the commitment to the future is hopeful. The resources are threadbare, but the partnerships are secure. After decades of historical disinvestment and systematic disparities, the Illinois communities of Venice, Brooklyn, and Madison (VBM) are targeted to be the recipients of community and economic development, thanks in part to the [Southern Illinois University Edwardsville Successful Communities Collaborative \(SSCC\)](#).

The SSCC, along with Southern Illinois University Carbondale (SIUC), SIU Board of Trustees Vice Chair Ed Hightower, EdD, [Madison County Leadership Council](#), and [Western Illinois University](#) (WIU) with Innovation Network's (IIN) Sustaining Illinois Seed Funding, is engaged in community-led strategic planning to revive and set in motion a prosperous design for VBM. Other challenges that the communities face include the deindustrialization that led to rapid population decline.

The collaborative team has hosted two community planning workshops that included community leaders, regional architects and planners, environmental and disaster assessment experts, economic advisors, and university representatives.



Leading teams of graduate students on strategic planning and design development proposals are SIUC School of Architecture Professors Craig Anz, PhD; and Rolando Gonzales, PhD. The proposals include a focus on flood prevention methods, such as rain gardens, storage tanks, and additional greenery.

“This work aligns with our School of Architecture mission to serve our communities,” said Anz, “to better our greater socio-environmental conditions, and prepare future architects to make real-world impacts in the 21st century.”

Connie Frey Spurlock, PhD, associate professor in the Department of Sociology and SSCC director, and Breanna Booker, SSCC graduate assistant, are researching and documenting social and economic aspects needed to inform the overall project and directly engage community members in the planning.

“We are working to put the needs of the community first, by developing plans centering around the people who live there,” explained Booker. “The community members are going to be part of every step of the process, and I am looking forward to seeing what they have in mind.”

WIU faculty are working with community leaders and stakeholders to build local grocery facilities in the Venice township, in correspondence with strategic planning proposals.

“The VBM project is an extremely exciting one and is like no other I have worked on before,” said Sean Park, WIU program manager, and outreach specialist. “With improvements planned in housing, food access, job training, transportation access, and other areas, the possibility of improving the quality of life increases greatly.”

The project involves site visits, community workshops, architectural design sessions, and presentations to leaders and stakeholders. The proposals will include township and neighborhood layouts with new community facilities and amenities, and proposed environmental resilient development.

For more information visit siucarchitecture.wixsite.com/siu-community.

[SIUE Successful Communities Collaborative \(SSCC\)](#) is a cross-disciplinary program that supports one-year partnerships between the University and communities in Illinois to advance local resilience and sustainability based on community-identified environmental, social, and economic issues and needs. Our mission is to connect Illinois communities with the dynamic resources of SIUE students and faculty.