

'Eco-architect' looks forward to working with Albion community

If the details can be worked out, a young internationally known "eco-architect" from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln said he would like to form a relationship with the Albion community and possibly work on projects here.

Martin Despang, a native of Germany and associate professor at the UNL School of Architecture, has developed a friendship with Paul and Lori Horsford of Albion over the past several weeks.

Because of this friendship, Martin and his friend Petra Kleinlein, also a native of Germany, visited Albion last Friday and spent some time looking at the Boone County Museum and the community.

Martin said he liked both the people and the prospects for projects here. He said he would like to form a relationship between the community and the School of Architecture for possible future projects.

A chance meeting between Paul and a renowned Australian architect, Chris Abel, in Lincoln last December led to the connection with Despang.

As a member of the Boone County Historical Society Board of Directors, Paul and others on the board had been talking about museum improvements that could create a controlled environment in a portion of the building to prevent deterioration of artifacts there.

Because the museum budget presently does not include funds for the cost of heating and cooling the building, Paul was exploring the possibility of a new design that could reduce or eliminate energy costs and still produce a controlled environment.

Possible development of a small art gallery in downtown Albion has also been under discussion,

and energy efficient design would be needed for this project as well.

That type of work lines up with Martin's expertise, and he is enthusiastic about the possibilities.

Despang said he is also interested in Albion's comprehensive planning process and the possibility that "green" projects, aimed at reducing energy costs, could result from this process.

Martin and his father, Guenther, are partners in Despang Architekten, an architecture firm in Hannover, Germany. Many of their projects in Germany have incorporated "green" technologies such as passive solar in various types of buildings ranging from homes and coffee shops to schools and grocery stores.

Several of their designs are award-winning. One of those projects, a kindergarten school building in Hannover, is included in the prestigious Phaidon Atlas of 21st Century Architecture.

A primary interest for Martin is called "postfossil" design. This architectural design uses as little fossil fuel as possible. For example, the previously mentioned kindergarten building design is "off the grid," which means that all energy for heating and cooling is provided only through passive solar and other design concepts that use the building to assist in heating and cooling.

A UNL biography of Despang states: "He is practicing what he was taught and what he continues to teach -- that the consistency of architectural quality in concept, development and execution, can make life better."

Perspectives

By Paul Hosford

Painting tomorrows

My grandfather's twin brother Raymond was a successful artist and illustrator. His talent appeared early in his life -- in grade school a teacher asked him to draw a horse on the chalkboard. The accuracy of his depiction astonished her. When she asked how he did it, he replied "The horse was already there -- all I had to do was draw around it."

In my last column, I mentioned my wife Lori had commented that despite all the problems we currently face, there's "so much potential" for building a better future here. I closed that column by saying "the road to the future always begins with a vision of the potential it holds."

Allowing ourselves to see that potential, though, is often the hardest part." Visions of the future are very much like artists' visions; both are recognitions of potential, things which are there but for the effort to make them seen by others, like the horse on the board. The challenge to all visionaries is how to "draw around" their vision, how to make their vision's potential real.

There is great freedom in being an artist. An artist can create whatever he wants. And there is a similar freedom in creating upon the canvas of the future. We can, like the artist, shape our futures however we want. But just as the artist must work within the constraints of his medium, we have to navigate the constraints of the future. And while many of those will appear unexpectedly, some can be foreseen.

We can see, for example, that our climate is changing. We can see that our energy costs are only going to rise -- it isn't a question of "if" we'll run out of fossil fuels, it's a question of "when." So as we paint upon the canvas of the future, our designs will have to adapt to the challenges and constraints woven into that canvas' texture.

Albion is currently working on its ten-year planning process, a process that requires us to take stock of our potential and envision ways to realize it. Like my uncle Raymond at the chalkboard, we are literally outlining what we wish to create -- a prosperous, sustainable future.

The most fundamental factor in our sustainability may well be our relationship to our environment, an environment that can either help us or hurt us depending upon how we interact with it. When properly managed, the environment of the Great Plains, though harsh and extreme, can provide an incredible bounty of crops and livestock, underpinning our economy. Improper management of the land has for eons, however, been a contributing factor in the death of civilizations around the globe.

The environment offers other benefits as well, benefits we tend to take for granted. As we approach Spring, who hasn't felt a strong urge to stop working and just go outside and enjoy the warm weather, listen to the returning birds sing? No matter how far removed our daily lives become from the outdoors, human nature needs time spent in Nature.

Both the quality of our economy and the quality of our lives depends on a sustainable relationship with our environment.

Lori and I have recently become acquainted with eco-architect and UNL professor Martin Despang. Martin is a remarkably creative and visionary person, a person who understands that for communities to be truly sustainable they must adapt to their environment. Martin and his students are designing homes, businesses and public buildings that work with Nature to both improve the health of their occupants and drastically reduce energy costs.

Just as our understanding of the soil allows us to sustain our communities through agriculture, a better understanding of our environment, the potential of the sun to warm and the wind to cool, will help us sustain our communities in times of dramatically rising energy costs. Martin and the University are a good reminder that as we seek to realize a vision of a greener community, there are a lot of wonderful resources available to assist us.

Unlike the artist's canvas which will remain blank unless acted upon, the future will paint itself without concern for our wants and needs if we don't take an active role in setting our course to tomorrow. As we do pick up our brushes and begin to create, let's remember that our canvas already has a landscape painted upon it and envision ways we can fit our contributions into the "bigger picture" -- our environment.

Perspectives

By Paul Hosford

Looking at the big picture

In April, I visited the Boone Central Entrepreneur class to discuss several community projects. Since entrepreneurs are focused on starting and growing their own businesses, I wanted to remind them that businesses don't exist in a vacuum. Communities are complex and interrelated; all aspects of a community have an impact on the success or failure of its businesses.

So I asked them to imagine that instead of starting a business they were starting a town. What would they need? It was no surprise that "businesses" was first on their list, but so were houses and streets -- things that may not contribute directly to a business but do provide a place for its customers to live and ways to reach the business. By the time we were finished businesses were only one item on a long list -- a town needs fire rescue and police, health care, a good school system, churches and meeting places, parks and a swimming pool. Even a cemetery for those who pass away.

Business provides the economic engine that sustains these other things. And these other things create the necessary conditions for business to prosper. Business and community need each other. Yet sometimes in looking for ways to help our communities we overlook the fact that we must focus on all aspects of community life -- not just business.

In my last column I described an innovative design for a subdivision in Cambridge. The work of Stacey Groshong Hagaman, a graduate student at UNL, the subdivision incorporates state-of-the-art design techniques to minimize energy costs while at the same time is laid out in such a manner as to encourage a sense of community among its residents.

In her proposal for this project, Mrs. Hagaman enumerated her goals, goals which have application to all communities and focus on things beyond "chasing smokestacks," as "old-school" economic development plans have come to be called. Among her goals are:

- 1) Maintain and Improve the Quality of Life and Sense of Community for Residents of All Ages and Incomes
- 2) Foster the Value of Community and Encourage Local Action to Preserve and Strengthen the City
- 3) Preserve and Enhance the Physical Character of the Community
- 4) Provide All Residents with Choices for a Variety of Housing Types that Meet Their Respective Needs
- 5) Maintain Sufficient Open Spaces and Park Land to Provide Both Passive and Active Outdoor Recreation Opportunities
- 6) Stabilize and Diversify the Economic Base to Increase Employment Opportunities for All Age Categories
- 7) Reverse the Decline of the Population in the Community

Of her goals, the last, reversing the decline in population, is perhaps the most pressing, and many of her other goals would seem to offer promise in helping stem out-migration. It is people Mrs. Hagaman's age -- young people with professional training -- that small towns need most. Rural areas hemorrhage their 'best and brightest' leading to the proverbial "brain drain" -- educated professionals leaving for areas that offer more opportunities.

Fortunately, efforts are underway to engage our young people and encourage them to return after college. We have surveyed our Middle School students and plan to survey High School students. We're looking for ways to make Albion and the other communities in Boone County more attractive to young people. My wife Lori and I had the opportunity to visit with a very thoughtful young lady in Omaha last week. She is also a grad student at UNL and just embarking on a rural project as innovative as Mrs. Hagaman's in Cambridge.

Her name is Yaravi Lopez-Wilson and she is remarkably intelligent and perceptive. We discussed a range of rural problems including finding suitable employment for newcomers. I mentioned that small communities have a higher percentage of entrepreneurs and we agreed that small towns need people who can devise their own means of employment.

Yaravi pointed out that central to the young professional entrepreneur's worldview is a concern for health. Not only do they want a good hospital in their community, they want to avoid using it. We may not fully appreciate the importance of "wellness" to younger people today -- they place a high premium on having places like a fitness center and recreational trails as well as having healthy, locally-produced food to eat.

So as we seek ways to make our community more attractive to young people, let's continue to listen to them; by understanding their values and concerns we can build on our strengths to make our area ever-more attractive to people their age.

Perspectives

By Paul Hosford

Scaling the face of tomorrow

How often in life do we find ourselves in trouble of our own making?

On a trip to Minnesota this past weekend we stopped in a little park called the Palisades. It's a beautiful gorge cut deep into the ruddy quartzite bedrock, revealing a geologic wonderland one would never suspect lies just beneath corn and soybean fields.

Tom Dickey had told us about it once, mentioning that two large escarpments known as the "King and Queen" could be climbed without ropes. So I decided to do so.

Just because such towers of rock can be climbed without ropes doesn't mean an inexperienced middle-aged guy with a bum knee should. But the slightly lower of the two didn't prove too challenging. And that gave me confidence to try the other.

Lori kept trying to stop me, reminding me of my age. But I couldn't just walk away -- I had to try.

Getting started was the hardest part.

There was no easy way evident so I had to take time to get to know the rock. But once I'd made it up to the first little ledge there was no turning back -- I scrambled and bit and clawed my way to the top -- and loved every moment of it.

For the first time in a long time I was a boy again, taking on a perfectly pointless adventure. And while it was a sad reminder of how far behind me my childhood lies,

I'll savor the joy it gave me for a long time to come.

The view was great, too...

Hopefully as we get older we don't get ourselves into as much trouble. Past experience teaches us to be cautious, instills in us a healthy respect for unexpected difficulties. We learn that even though something looks appealing there's usually a hidden downside. And we grow to fear that the expected downside outweighs the potential benefits of trying something new and different.

But while this may keep us safer and less sorry, it can also close us off to change. Change can be frightening -- it too carries unseen risks. But when we let those risks -- real or imagined -- stop us from moving forward, from confronting new challenges, we've lost something important. We've lost the optimism and enthusiasm, and most of all, a faith in the future that fuels our youth.

Where once we saw only the potential gains challenges offer, as we grow older, we see only their risks. And then we stop growing. Then it's all downhill...

Next week a group of fifth year students from the UNL College of Architecture will be coming to join our community, to become a part of it for a semester. They will get to know us as I got to know that imposing rock. And by getting to know us they will be better able to identify challenges to our growth and help us find solutions.

They will naturally see things differently than we do. Where we see massive stone ramparts blocking our advance -- the myriad problems rural areas face -- they will see opportunities to excel. And just as an echo of my youth led me to overcome both the imposing Queen and King of the Palisades, the youthful energy and enthusiasm of the UNL students will, in the words of their professor Martin Despain, "lead them to accomplish the impossible."

At this point, we can only imagine the view they'll help us to see -- a view of a sustainable, innovative future where our buildings, like those constructed by the pioneers, express not only who we are but who we can become.

For while we seldom think about it, our architecture -- especially buildings which draw us together -- express in tangible form who we are and what we believe in. Buildings aren't easy to create; we have to be committed to undertake their construction. They are meant to endure, meant for both the present and the future.

Each new construction, like each new child, is an expression of faith in tomorrow.

As we "re-pioneer" our area to reap the bounty of the 21st Century, we know there will be challenges. But instead of fearing these challenges, we need to confront them -- only then can we overcome them. By joining forces with the university, by welcoming their students and professors into our area so they can better understand us and our needs, we can scale the face of tomorrow with -- unlike my solo weekend efforts -- guidance, skill and support.

UNL architecture students coming to Albion today

As many as 14 architecture students from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln are visiting Albion today, Aug. 26, with their professor, Martin Despang. Their purpose will be to get to know Albion area residents, and to view local buildings and architecture.

Despang visited the Albion community several months ago, and he is interested in having his students work on architectural design here as a “studio” project during the coming semester.

The students will be interested in visiting with as many Albion area residents as possible during their time here. They will be learning about architecture and design needs of the community.

If there is sufficient interest, the students will likely develop projects and return to the community on a regular basis during the semester to discuss design ideas with property owners.

UNL architecture students visit Albion, begin 'studio' here for fall semester

Albion and Boone County will be a "studio" this semester for UNL professor Martin Despang and 14 of his architecture graduate students.

The students made their first visit to the area last Wednesday, Aug. 26, and will be coming back often for "on site" work in the coming months.

The area will be a case study for student research in several areas, including learning about the area's history.

"Students will be challenged to think about the future of the community, as if they were actually living here and viewed this as their home," said professor Despang. "We like this community and hope to make it better because we were here."

Returning approximately once every two weeks, the students will be headquartered in the annex of Albion City Hall. Despang said the students will be seeking local mentors to work with in design projects.

The studio syllabus notes that students will be asked to consider future needs of the community and the people of Albion in living through a variety of changes in the availability of fossil fuels, general environmental limitations and the rural-urban lifestyles of residents.

Despang is considered an "eco-architect." He incorporates design elements and ecologically friendly materials in his projects, using elements of nature to help heat and

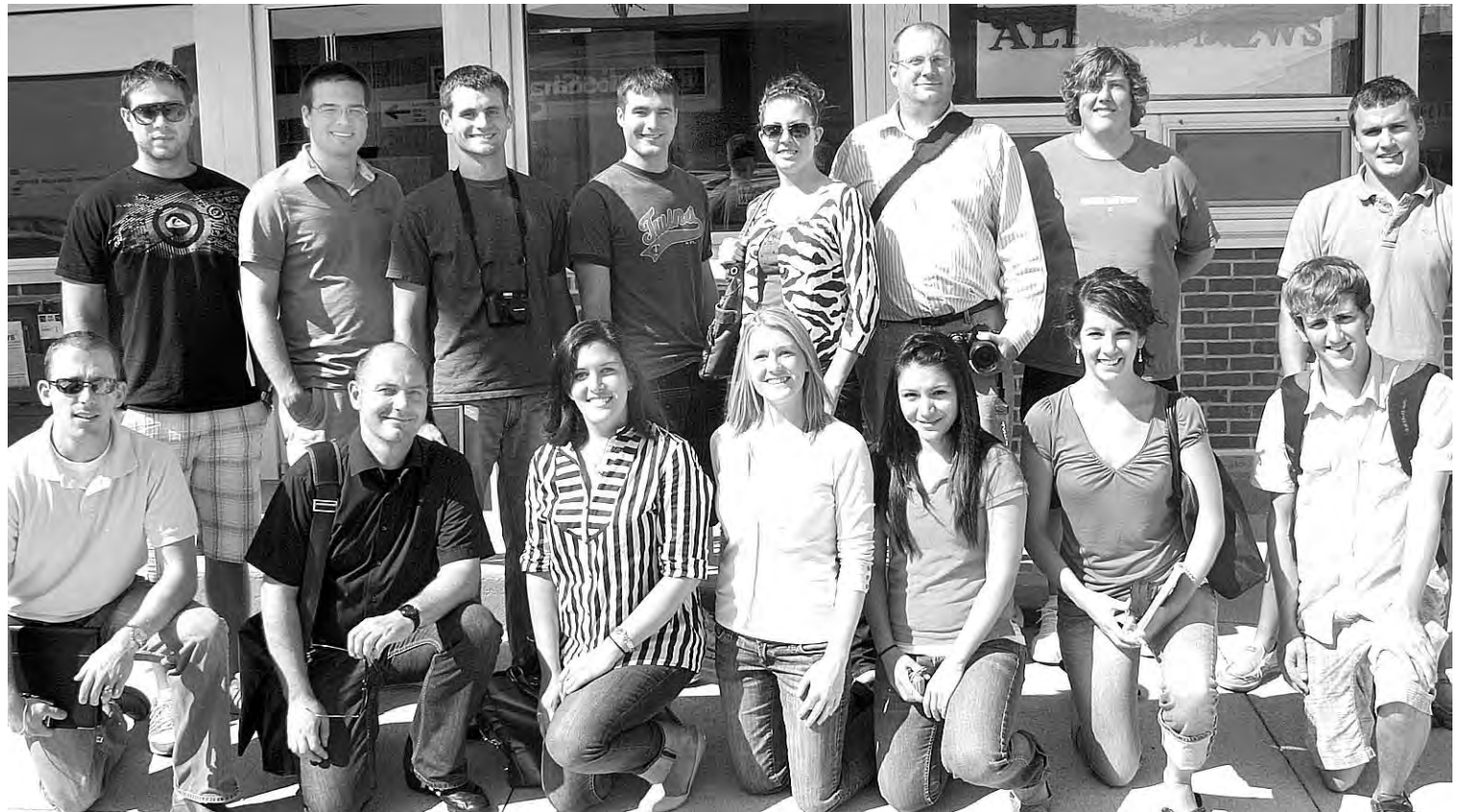
cool buildings.

The professor developed this studio concept after discussions with Paul and Lori Hosford of Albion about possibly incorporating eco-architecture into future

building projects, such as a new museum or arts center.

On Aug. 26, the students and several area residents used a school bus to tour various locations in Albion, including the

Boone County Historical Museum and the Albion downtown area. Their visit concluded with more community residents joining the students for an evening meal at the Albion Country Club.



ARCHITECTURE STUDIO -- UNL architecture graduate students visiting Albion last Wednesday were (front, l. to r.) A. J. Campbell, Professor Martin Despang, Whitney Polt, Meghan Deharty, Cinthia Barragan, Katie Johnston and Andy Sorensen; (back row) Aaron Nohrenberg, Kyle Miller, Brian Akert, Kory Randa, Kati Eitzman, Archie Carpenter, Jacob Smith and Jared Carda.

Boone County Development Agency

Newsletter

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UNL Architecture Students Extending Classroom to Boone County

On August 26, a group of UNL architecture students, along with Professor Martin Despang, made a trip to Boone County. The students will be spending the Fall semester learning about Boone county from the past to the present and will be designing structures based on community need, using an eco-friendly, energy efficient approach. Students have been asked to spend time getting to know the community, and design from the perspective of a resident, using their youthful ideas and history-based inspiration.

The University's College of Architecture has a long tradition of working with communities and were among the first to be asked to assist with the redevelopment of New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. In just six weeks they completely redesigned one of the hardest hit areas, developing

plans for housing, retail centers, a fire and police station, schools, and churches.



Professor Despang is from Germany and is internationally respected for his innovative designs. He had studied architecture at UNL himself, making the decision to relocate to Nebraska an easy one. Students will continue to visit Boone County, as well as hosting residents of Boone County in their classroom in Lincoln.

Plans are currently underway for a second professor, Erhard Schutz, to conduct a studio in this area as well.

Work with the students has inspired conversations around the rich Native American history of Boone County. Many volunteers from throughout Boone County spent time meeting with the students and sharing stories and perspectives.



Perspectives

By Paul Hosford

Bar Talk

Like many adventures, it started in a bar. You have a drink or two, get to talking, and one thing leads to another.

Lori and I were staying at the Cornhusker Hotel in Lincoln when I befriended a gentleman dining in the lounge. It turned out he was a visiting teacher and critic of architecture from Australia, Chris Abel. He was in Lincoln as a guest professor at UNL and was focusing on ways to help the Haymarket go green. We had an interesting conversation and he gave me his contact info as we parted.

Over the next several months as our museum searched for ways to improve its climate control methods, my thoughts returned to my conversation with Professor Abel. One of the most significant challenges the museum is facing is energy costs. Housed in a large metal building, conventional heating and cooling methods are simply too expensive for a non-profit organization sustained by donations to meet. And from talking to people with buildings in the downtown, it appears that many of the older buildings are likewise very expensive to heat and cool. Going “green” seemed like a possible way to help both the museum and local businesses with energy costs.

But how do you start? I thought about the Haymarket project in Lincoln. If there were people that close working on ways to decrease the heating and cooling costs of buildings, maybe we could access their expertise.

So I emailed professor Abel in Australia, explaining the situation and asking if he could recommend someone in Lincoln who might be willing to talk to me about applying green technology to help meet energy needs. He responded immediately, recommending a German eco-architect who teaches at UNL, Martin Despang. He even sent Martin an introductory email on my behalf.

Lori and I arranged to meet Martin at the University during Spring Break. Far from the stereotypical stuffy German professor of pop culture, Martin was as friendly and open as Chris Abel had been and we formed an immediate rapport.

We spent hours talking and looking at designs. Martin specializes in passive heating and cooling designs, including a kindergarten in Germany that is “off-the-grid” -- the only external energy they use is for supplemental lighting and running their computers.

Martin explained that part of the University’s mission is to provide services to communities so we began exploring the possibility of making Albion one of those communities. In less than a week Martin visited Albion. He seemed impressed with the potential of the community and warmth of the people.

Martin set the wheels in motion at UNL and this summer Lori and I met with the Dean of Architecture, Wayne Drummond, yet another warm and enthusiastic gentleman. We again spent hours discussing the ‘Albion project,’ a semester-long “studio” where 5th and 6th year students would adopt Albion as their “second home town” and then help identify community needs and design possible solutions.

Lori and I went down for the first day of classes, and I ended up tag-team lecturing with Martin for over two hours. I tried to give his students an in-depth understanding of Albion, its history, its strengths and its challenges.

Two days later the students paid their first visit to Albion, touring the community and getting to know people from all of the towns in Boone County at a dinner sponsored by the Boone County Economic Development Agency.

The students arrived as strangers but I honestly believe they left as friends -- a result of everyone’s openness and the warmth that Martin had already discovered characterizes people here.

Hopefully the students will develop a sense of belonging to our community. They will produce over 40 preliminary designs this semester, and hopefully some students will continue to develop their ideas in following semesters. Hopefully too this will be the beginning of a long and fruitful partnership between the University and Boone County -- already a second professor, Erhard Schütz, is considering doing a studio here.

It remains to be seen, of course, what will ultimately come from all this, but I feel we’re off to a great start. It’s wonderful to see how many people have already embraced the students (even inviting them to stay in their homes) and how this is becoming a community project (rather than just our hair-brained idea). There would seem to be great potential for this partnership to help our area grow.

And all because of a conversation in a bar...

Perspectives

By Paul Hosford

An exciting step forward

It was quite the experience. A group of people from three local communities were assembled on the bridge spanning the moat at the Stuhr Museum listening to UNL Architecture professor Martin Despang's 15 students explain their ideas for our future before they began their tour of the grounds.

It seemed appropriate that we examined each of these concepts on a bridge. We were not only bridging the past and the future but also bridging the generations.

Martin's students are devoting a full semester to working with Boone County to generate new ideas for "pioneering the future." Each has created a 3 foot by 2 foot four-panel graphic presentation that expressed 1) their initial impression of Albion, 2) something that was here but isn't anymore, 3) something about the community that caught their attention, and 4) an innovative precedent from someplace else that could be adapted to this area.

Expressing ideas in visual form is the foundation of every architectural project. In this case the project is our community, and the displays showed images ranging from the combine demolition derby to the Dairiette, the Courthouse and the Gateway Theater. By the end of this semester, three-dimensional models will have evolved from these initial concepts.

The talent it took to create each display, coupled with the creativity of the underlying concepts, made them stand out as genuine works of art.

One by one, the students stepped forward and explained why they had chosen the images on their intricate displays. One young woman used something I had written -- that the road to the future begins with a vision -- as her starting point. She began her project with an image of an eye, the quintessential symbol of vision, and then proceeded to illustrate her own.

All the students' visions were amazing and each demonstrated a genuine interest in our area. The students clearly appreciate that to move forward we must remember -- and honor -- our past. They spoke of such things as "intelligently integrating" new concepts and designs into our community. But they weren't sentimental -- one pointed out that the pioneer past was anything but the "Good Life." There were droughts, prairie fires, locusts and blizzards. Another wisely pointed out that a balance must

be struck between preservation and innovation, reminding us that clinging too strongly to the past will stop us from embracing the future.

One display focused on our values. Its creator was especially impressed by how community members on the students' initial bus tour pointed to so many landmarks with an obvious sense of pride. She was also impressed with our traditional values, illustrated in part by the number of our churches. And most of all, she was impressed by our sense of trust, illustrated by the fact that we don't have many stop signs in our downtown -- she pointed out that we trust each other to "do the right thing" not only when driving but in many other areas as well.

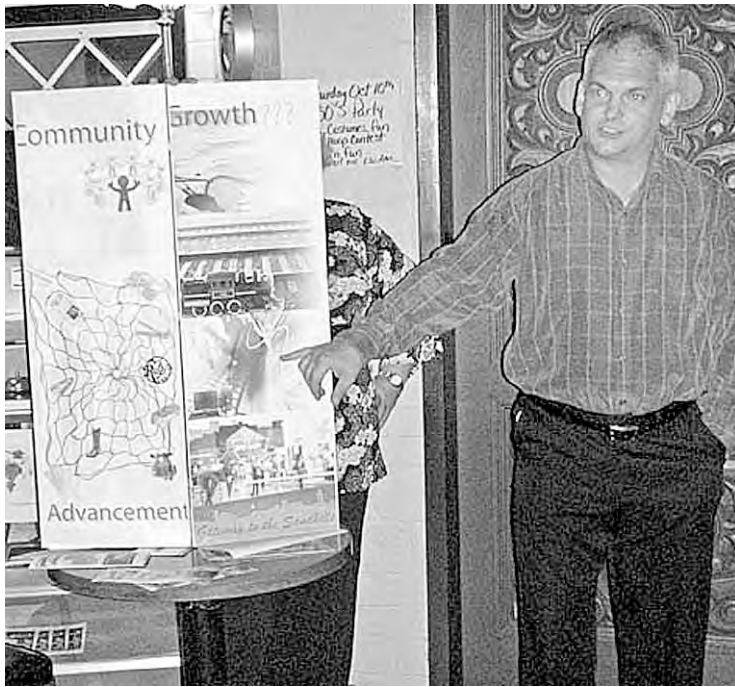
The concept of sustainability came up repeatedly. Our area needs to sustain a viable population and conserve our natural resources. The concept of integrating new designs into the existing environment was also explored -- building from local materials in ways that reflect this area's characteristics.

The downtown was a primary focus; ways to redevelop the living spaces above our existing buildings were discussed by several students. Another student pointed out there were once many more trees in the downtown and suggested ways to "re-green" the area. Yet another showed how another community has created ornamental gardens in empty buildings.

Most of all, though, these bright and perceptive young people focused on the need for spaces that draw people together especially to enjoy the arts. They are well aware that technology is isolating people. They have looked at our past and found example after example of people coming together to enjoy music (such as around the bandstand that once stood on the courthouse lawn) and would like to see that happen again.

The students understand that communities are made up of people, not buildings. But buildings serve the needs of communities and if properly designed, can do much to strengthen the ties among people by giving them places to gather.

There is much more than I can describe in this space. All 15 students' designs will be on display soon in Albion at all four banks and City Hall. I would urge everyone to take a moment to view them -- they are inspiring signs of things to come.



COMMUNITY GROWTH - Paul Hosford gives a brief presentation of the Albion area history and projects after the PrairieLand RC&D banquet held last Tuesday.

PrairieLand RC&D holds annual meeting/banquet on Sept. 15

PrairieLand Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Council's annual meeting and banquet was held Tuesday, Sept. 15, 2009 in Newman Grove.

The council had a social hour with musical entertainment by Paul Hosford, a brief business meeting and officer nominations. Al Mittan, coordinator, gave a brief overview of the projects the RC&D has been involved with during the last year.

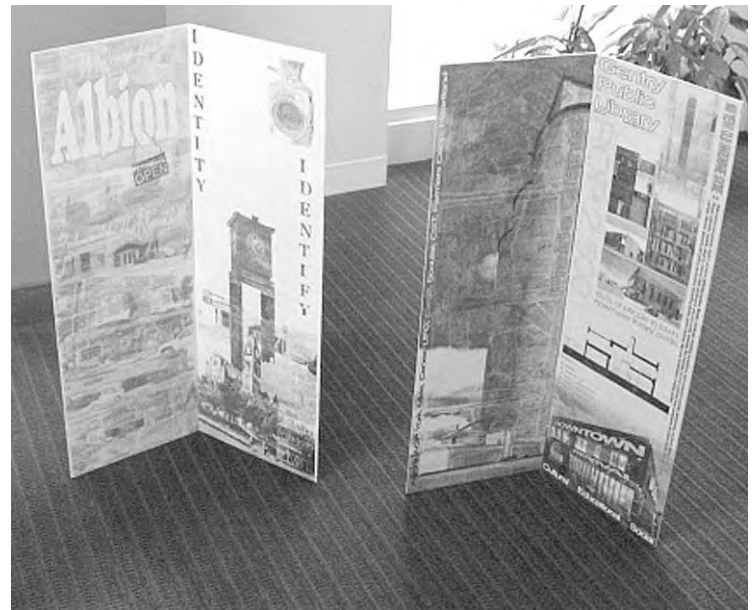
Paul Hosford gave an overview of Albion area history and projects after the banquet. A group of UNL students have been studying Albion.

They made design boards with interpretations of the community and will be working on

"green" plans for renovations and improvements throughout the community.

PrairieLand RC&D is helping concerned citizens complete vital rural development projects in Nance, Boone, Platte, Madison, Colfax and Stanton Counties. Dues paying council members are encouraged to attend monthly meetings to exercise their vote during council business proceedings.

Everyone is encouraged to participate in active projects, propose new projects and attend meetings. Please join us to find out what you can do to get involved in helping your rural community. Please contact the office at 402-454-2026 for more information.



Architectural student displays

Display boards with Albion themes, made by graduate students in the University of Nebraska College of Architecture, are now on display in local banks and the Albion City Hall. The displays were created as a class assignment after the students visited Albion last month. They will be working on "green" designs for renovations and improvements throughout the community. These display boards are located at Boone County Bank.

Perspectives

By Paul Hosford

The Pink Revolution

The Arts Council recently got phone call from Connor Snyder, the woman who played “Nurse Abel” on the old M*A*S*H TV show. She’s very active in helping children learn about acting and was calling to see if there would be interest in this area for an afterschool workshop. She mentioned that in addition to having been Nurse Abel, she has also been a writer/producer for HBO.

That same day, I received an e-mail from one of this season’s artists, Jill Anderson of Omaha. In she was commenting on the shift taking place in TV programming. She mentioned that practically every show on HBO and other cable channels is now about a strong and intelligent woman “who faces serious challenges and obstacles and succeeds in one way or another.”

Women are portrayed a lot differently today than in the days of M*A*S*H, and this of course reflects their changing role in society. In the old days, independent women like Mary Tyler Moore were the exception. Now they’re the rule.

Lori and I had the good fortune to have lunch last month with Jane Heany, who has strong ties to this area. She now works with the NU Foundation and started our conversation by saying very proudly We’re taking over!”

She was referring, of course, to women and went on to explain that since women outlive men, affluent older women are now responsible for four out of every five major charitable contributions. Thus, organizations that promote women’s values and priorities are being funded like never before.

And while being the focus of cable TV shows and our society’s primary philanthropists may not technically constitute “taking over,” consider that without widespread and increasing intervention to boost male graduation rates, two out of every three college graduates today would be female. And the trend of more women completing their education than men only seems to be accelerating.

This is going to have a major influence on the business world. Already women make up half of the workforce. But despite their equal representation, during the current economic crisis only 20% of lost jobs have been women’s.

Some of this is due to the fact that fields such as construction, manufacturing and finance -- male dominated fields -- have been the hardest hit. And some is due to the fact that women are still paid less than men, making the higher-paid males the first to go. But it’s also believed that women’s values have a lot to do with this. Author Catherine Kaputa recently pointed out that women’s management styles are more collaborative, and this is proving important in holding things together during trying times.

In previous columns, I’ve discussed criticism of the Women’s Movement; some authors assert that women have had to sacrifice their “femininity,” adopting masculine values and aggressiveness in order to compete with men. But as layoff rates are showing, feminine values are proving their worth. Women’s talents are proving valuable in keeping businesses together.

With women graduating at twice the rate of men, their influence in both politics and economics will only grow.

And it isn’t just in America where women are exerting a greater and greater influence on society. This past summer’s uprisings in Iran and western China against oppression and injustice have been led by women (and violently put down by men). On the economic side, Muhammad Yunus won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006 for his innovative and successful practice of making micro loans to impoverished women in Third World countries (the practice has now even spread to Omaha). Women in all parts of the world are starting their own small businesses, and families are rising out of poverty as a result.

There is a “Pink Revolution” taking place around the globe. Women are impacting society like never before. And as my father once observed, “This is a good thing. Women can’t do any worse than we men have, and may well do considerably better.”

In talking with the UNL architecture students -- many of whom are women -- I’ve tried to stress that in envisioning the future of this area we all need to consider the importance of women. Women most often make the decisions as to where their family should live and are on track to outnumber men in many professions. By thinking about women’s concerns -- childcare, schools, healthcare, churches, eldercare and green spaces -- we can make our communities more and more attractive to professional, entrepreneurial women, who will do much to help us “repioneer” tomorrow.

P.S. -- I’d like to wish Steve Fox a swift and full recovery from the medical problem he discussed in a recent column.



DESIGN WORK -- Andy Devine of Albion and Bev Schiele of Cedar Rapids review designs with UNL architecture student Archie Carpenter. Archie is explaining his design for a combination art/history center for the downtown.

UNL architecture students present ideas for Albion

Visitors got a glimpse of how downtown Albion could look in the future at an Oct. 12 review of ideas developed by UNL Professor Martin Despang's fifth- and sixth-year architecture students.

Held in Lincoln's old City Hall, people from the Albion area, UNL students and professors, and professional architects from Lincoln were invited to join in this four-hour event.

Albion is at the center of a semester-long studio focusing on ways to help rural communities prosper in the 21st century. The students, who visited Albion in late August, each designed and presented a project intended to help revitalize Albion's downtown area.

Projects included dwelling and retail spaces, an art and history center, an off-the-grid child care center, a new library, a recreational center, art galleries and performance spaces, a combination winery/microbrewery and many others. Concepts involved both new constructions and the renovation of existing structures.

This event showcased the first of three designs each student will develop over the course of this semester. The centerpiece of this display was a scale model of Albion's downtown, complete with photos of existing buildings affixed to the fronts of the models. This enabled the students to demonstrate how their designs would fit into the existing community.

In addition to the model of the downtown, the students created intricate larger models of their projects that were displayed around the room. Students explained their ideas to visitors over the course of the afternoon.

This project is intended to dovetail with the work of Albion's planning consultants, Hanna:Keelan and Associates of Lincoln. Tim Keelan of Hanna:Keelan is a member of the College of Architecture's professional advisory board.

In summing up the event, Albion City Administrator Andy Devine said: "The boundless creativity and optimism of these talented students is quite contagious.

Reviewing the projects shifts one's perspective from the community's shortcomings to endless possibilities of what we could become by accentuating the many positives our community has to offer. While some projects may seem more feasible than others, even the most outrageously innovative ideas provide fuel for envisioning the community's future. I encourage members of the community to review the projects when the opportunity comes."

The next review will be held on Wednesday, Nov. 4, at Lincoln's old City Hall building. Anyone interested is welcome to attend. For more information, contact Paul Hosford of Albion.

UNL students' Albion designs get second review in Lincoln

A juried review of ideas for Albion's development was held in Lincoln's old City Hall Building on Wednesday, Nov. 4. Experts in architecture and community planning from both Lincoln and Kansas State University critiqued the designs of Professor Martin Despang's fifth and sixth year architecture students, all of which focused on ways to help Albion grow.

At the review, the students presented the second of three designs each is developing for Albion.

Ideas included utilizing space above downtown buildings for apartments and as hotel rooms, a permanent farmer's market, studio space for visiting artists, a wine bar, a recording studio, an apartment tower capable of generating electricity from the wind without a visible urbine and many other unique and innovative concepts.

Jury members examined each design in detail and then made comments and suggestions. Several jurors commented that the results of this partnership effort between Albion and the UNL College of Architecture will, in addition to assisting in Albion's growth, provide new ideas and approaches for rural communities to follow throughout the Great Plains.

The third and final review of the students' ideas will be held in Lincoln on Dec. 10. The students' designs will then be displayed on the first floor of the State Capitol through Dec. 18. After the exhibit at the Capitol, the designs will be brought to Albion for further examination and consideration.

For more information, contact Paul and Lori Hosford.



Architecture students return

UNL architecture graduate students were back in Albion on Monday, Nov. 9, to view buildings and open areas in the downtown area, continuing their semester design project here. The students first visited the community in late August. Albion residents accompanying them on their tour Monday were Andy Devine, city administrator, Lori Hosford and Mitzi Fox. See story on page 9.

Student design concepts of Albion will be featured at State Capitol

Nebraska Governor Dave Heineman and UNL Dean of Architecture Wayne Drummond will be featured speakers at a Dec. 10 reception showcasing 45 architectural designs intended to help Albion “re-pioneer” itself for the 21st Century.

The reception will be held at 3:30 p.m. on the first floor of the State Capitol, where the designs will be displayed and visitors can examine them and speak with the 15 students who created them. Refreshments will be served in the Capitol cafeteria, and all interested persons are invited to attend.

The design showcase was created by German eco-architect and UNL professor Martin Despang’s fifth and sixth year students during a semester-long studio entitled “re-pioneering Albion.”

Intended to serve as part of Albion’s comprehensive planning process, the stu-

dents’ ideas provide a fresh perspective on ways to help the community grow and prosper in the years ahead.

For this project, Professor Despang’s students have attempted to make themselves members of the Albion community in order to better understand and appreciate Albion’s strengths and weaknesses. As a result, they have become their own “clients,” allowing them to design from the perspective of Albion residents.

The students have sought to build upon Albion’s character and its past to create a variety of innovative and eco-friendly structures to serve the community. The students strived for designs that increase a sense of community, strengthen cultural institutions, reinvigorate commerce and attract young professionals and entrepreneurs to build not only businesses but their families in Albion.

Because the students’ ideas could potentially benefit many rural communities, their designs are being displayed in the State Capitol -- a building known as the “Beacon of the Pioneers” -- from Dec. 10-17 for people from across Nebraska to see.

Experts in architecture and community planning from Nebraska and other states have critiqued the student designs several times during the semester.

The partnership between Albion and UNL started last summer with a visit to Albion by Professor Despang. He brought his students back in the fall, and some have visited the community several times to explore new possibilities.

Anyone having questions may contact project coordinators Paul and Lori Hosford at 402-395-6727.

Speakers applaud link between Albion, UNL architecture students

Enthusiastic graduate students from the University of Nebraska College of Architecture had an opportunity to show their work in a statewide forum last Thursday.

Their designs, displayed in the Nebraska State Capitol, focused on new possibilities for Albion. The culmination of a semesterlong "re-pioneering" project drew positive reactions from speakers at the reception.

Nebraska Gov. Dave Heineman said he liked the possibility that the students' "outside the box" thinking could have a positive impact on rural communities.

An "ability to work together," very evident among Nebraskans and their communities, is reflected in this project, Heineman said. He congratulated both the students and the communities of Boone County on their willingness to look at new possibilities.

About a dozen Boone County residents attended the afternoon reception.

UNL Dean of Architecture Wayne Drummond also congratulated both the students and the community on a successful project. He said it was "a privilege to work with the people of Albion and Boone County."

Paul Hosford, who with his

wife, Lori, was a leader of the re-pioneering project, said the student designs focused on "ways to bring people together."

Hosford introduced the 14 students attending and commended their professor, eco-architect Martin Despang, for his role in connecting the College of Architecture with Albion. Despang was visiting his home in Germany and was unable to attend the reception.

The students' 45 building concepts focused on the downtown area, with buildings that maximize energy efficiency and minimize the use of fossil fuels. The course also emphasized the community's history, along with its strengths and weaknesses.

The designs include a hotel and restaurant complex, an outdoor theatre, various stores with apartments above, an arts center, fitness center, a day care and even a bus/train station.

Andy Devine, city administrator, said the student designs could help Albion and other rural communities meet the challenges of attracting young professionals and young families in the future.

"I hope that creativity is contagious," said Devine. This gives us an opportunity to dream of what Albion could be in the next century."

The student designs will be on display in the State Capitol through Dec. 17. Dean Drummond said he hoped transportation could be arranged to bring the display to Albion after that time.



RECEPTION SPEAKERS -- Paul Hosford gives remarks during Thursday's reception. Looking on are UNL architecture student Katie Johnston, Gov. Dave Heineman and Albion City Administrator Andy Devine.



CAPITOL RECEPTION -- UNL architecture students, Albion residents and state officials gathered for this photo during the Re-pioneering Albion reception at the State Capitol on Dec. 10. Those attending included (front, l. to r.) students Jared Carda and Andy Sorensen; Paul Hosford, Gov. Dave Heineman; students Cinthia Barragan, Whitney Polt and Meghan Deharty; Lori Hosford. Back row: Andy Devine; student Jacob Smith; Dean of Architecture Wayne Drummond; and students Brian Akert, Kyle Miller, Aaron Nohrenberg, Kory Randa, Archie Carpenter, Kati Eitzman and Katie Johnston. Not pictured are students A.J. Campbell and Xin Zhao, and professor Martin Despang.



Student displays back in Albion

UNL student design concepts for Albion were brought back to the community last week, and most will be on display at the former Scrapbook Paradise building, 137 South Fourth Street. A. J. Campbell (above), one of the participating graduate students, returned to Albion Sunday evening, Dec. 20, to help set up the displays.

From Albion News Dec. 23, 2009



newsletter

arch | crpl | ides | larc 09

college of architecture

community outreach

by audrey j burns

SECTION



above top | an Albion city conceptual model.

above second | brian akert discusses his project with an Albion community member.

above third | jared carda collaborates with an Albion resident.

behind | megan dehart's and whitney polt's design for the Albion community.

opposite | a preliminary table design rendering. [courtesy of chris williams]

ROOF PLAN

As an expression reflecting society's core beliefs and personal values, designing originates in our conception of the world surrounding us and is shown through our ability to affect change in that world. The College of Architecture encourages the development of research and outreach objectives in each of its design studios and electives. Each of these studios and classes are in turn able to offer students and faculty opportunities that reflect professional practice in today's world. Community outreach experiences are an essential part of a student's education. The integration of current local, regional, and national issues and concerns gives way to a methodology of designing in the present for the future.

"Re-pioneering" | for a vital future

This fall, Martin Despang and his studio of fourteen students are taking part in a collaborative design project taking place in Albion, Nebraska. Albion, a town of 1,700 people in Boone County, is centrally located between Grand Island, Norfolk and Columbus. The original intent of the town of Albion, founded in 1871, was to be an agrarian and mercantile center, a town in which farmers could buy necessary supplies and sell their goods. However, the early pioneers did not anticipate the shift in population from rural to urban communities. Farmers are now fewer and the once prospering business has shifted to the larger cities surrounding the small community.

The all-encompassing semester goal of Despang's studio is to "re-pioneer" the town of Albion, in order for them to survive and prosper in the twenty-first century and beyond. The students visited the town for the first time on August 26, 2009, and have returned to do individual on-site case studies every other week for the remainder of the semester.

"One of the challenging parts about working within a small community is

the townspeople wanting to keep with tradition, not making any sudden, drastic changes," Despang said. "However, the 're-pioneering' aspect of the studio recreates a notion of when the pioneers moved west. They were not afraid to try something new, be creative in their ways, or set out on their own."

Initially, the students visited the community of Albion, where the students began a research phase. "Living and being in the community on a day-to-day basis, makes it challenging for those living in the community to see what may need to be accomplished," Despang explained. At a community member and student meeting at the Stuhr Museum in Grand Island, the students shared with the community their initial thoughts and participated in an interactive discussion.

The students then furthered their research within their specific areas which led to individual focus areas of the student's choice. Sixth-year student Whitney Polt considered the fact that, "having no preconceived notions of the community itself, it is beneficial for the town of Albion to hear our opinions as outside viewers looking inward." A few of the projects include: a bed and breakfast providing minimal enclosure which

enables the user to experience the changes in seasons with the structure adapting to the weather, temperature and lighting needs; a winery plus microbrewery in which all the ingredients are grown on site and the incorporation of a cleansing/ recycling center for glass bottles; and an addition to the Albion news office and residence. As the semester progressed, each student further developed his or

her individual focus area to the betterment of the community of Albion. "The key to 're-pioneering' a community lies within the innovative and experimental actions the townspeople are willing to take," Despang said. The conglomeration of the class's semester work will hopefully give the community of Albion a broader range of ideas to keep their community alive and prosperous in the years ahead. "We appreciate (the students)

bringing their creativity, passion and talent to help us better realize our potential and in the processes, redefine what rural America can become...a vital, forward-thinking, sustainable and environmentally sensitive place with high quality-of-life for people to live in, work in and raise their families," Paul Hosford (Albion resident) said.

THE CAPITOL SOWER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE CAPITOL COMMISSION|FEBRUARY 2010

Nebraska Capitol Commission

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*Capitol Architect
Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, 1869-1924*

Commissioners View Albion Planning Project

Capitol Commissioners Governor Dave Heineman, at the podium, and UNL College of Architecture Dean Wayne Drummond helped Albion resident Paul Hosford unveil the plans UNL Professor Martin Despang's students developed

for revitalizing Albion's downtown area. Following their opening remarks, the Governor and Dean, along with students and Albion community leaders viewed the plans and models on display in the 1st floor Rotunda of the Capitol.



Perspectives

By Paul Hosford

Hitting the Jackpot

"This is absolutely incredible," remarked Governor Heineman at a reception held in the State Capitol last week. He was referring to 45 designs intended to help Albion grow and prosper in the years ahead, designs created by 15 fifth- and sixth-year students attending the UNL College of Architecture.

The Governor praised Albion not only for this innovative approach to its future but also for involving young people in the process. Young people, the Governor pointed out, too often leave Nebraska once they complete their education, taking their skills and talents with them.

As many people reading this already know, this partnership between Albion and UNL has been going on all of this semester. Entitled "Re-pioneering Albion," it was intended to complement Albion's comprehensive planning process.

My wife Lori and I have had the good fortune to be very involved with this project. It has been led by German eco-architect and UNL professor Martin Despang. Lori and I had initially approached Martin last February, hoping he could assist us in finding ways to cut energy costs in existing buildings and possibly help us with an energy-efficient addition to the county museum.

Professor Despang visited Albion shortly thereafter and seemed to fall in love with our community, remarking that he'd like to make Albion an extension of UNL so he could live and work here.

And that's nearly what he did.

Part of the UNL's mission as a

land-grant university is to provide service to the state. And it does a great deal of this. But while service projects are very valuable, they don't always interest students. Service projects give students a taste of the working world as well as a chance to refine their skills but aren't as "glamorous" as many of the abstract classroom projects students are accustomed to.

To avoid a possible lack of enthusiasm for what students might see as "just another service project," Professor Despang decided to make them not only the designers but also the clients.

"The clients?" I wasn't sure I'd heard him right. "We're the clients!" But he went on to explain that he wanted to unlock the maximum creativity in his students and to do that he wanted them to be able to design what they wanted to design.

To accomplish this he proposed making them "citizens of Albion." He wanted them to get to know Albion and the people living here so that they could design the sort of renovations and new constructions that they would like to see if they were actually living and working here.

If I hadn't had so much respect for Martin, I would have objected. After all, this had never been tried before and neither he nor anyone else could guarantee what would happen. It would be a gamble, but one that held the potential to produce an "absolutely incredible" jackpot.

Oh, and I was to co-teach it with him (like I knew anything about teaching architecture!). I was to begin my co-teaching duties by writing the introduction to

the syllabus and then lecturing along side him on the first day of class.

Tag-team lecturing with Martin was a great experience. We fed off of each other's energy and ideas, discussing not just architecture but many other things as well. I tried to give the students some grasp of this area's history and the tidal forces reshaping it today. (Several students remarked later that it was unlike any other lecture they'd ever attended...)

The students visited Albion several times, and Lori and I went to Lincoln to work with them as often as possible. But they didn't need us. The project took on a life of its own. Martin traveled back to Germany just before Thanksgiving and through a series of unfortunate events was unable to return to Lincoln. But the students just kept working (even on the days the university closed due to the snow). They not only finished all their projects on time but set up the display at the Capitol so anyone interested -- including the Governor -- could view their ideas.

We'll be bringing their projects to Albion soon for the entire community to examine. Not all may be feasible, but many are things we should consider developing.

And word is already spreading: a couple in Santa Fe just e-mailed me saying: "What a wonderful vision and now it has escalated to 'hope with practical potential.' It is a model that could serve rural & waning communities nationwide."

This is one gamble that paid off in spades...

From Albion News Dec. 16, 2009



During their meeting last Wednesday, the Albion Economic Development Corp. (AEDC) recognized Paul and Lori Hosford for their leadership in working with graduate students from the UNL College of Architecture on the recent "Re-pioneering Albion" project. The Hosfords (third and fourth from left) received an appreciation gift from AEDC officers (l. to r.) Andy Devine, Shannon Landauer and Doug Young.

Talks on merger of AEDC, Chamber continue last week

Discussion continued last week on a possible merger or cooperative arrangement between the Albion Economic Development Corp. (AEDC) and the Albion Chamber of Commerce.

The arrangement was discussed during the monthly AEDC meeting on Wednesday, Dec. 16, and board members from both organizations will be meeting again soon to talk about details that could align the two organizations more closely together.

Such "joint operating" agreements have been worked out in other Nebraska cities and counties, some involving more than two organizations.

Preliminary work has included writing a possible agreement and job description for director/administrator of the two organizations.

UNL Architecture Reception

Paul Hosford reported that the reception for graduate students of the UNL College of Architecture was successful, and he believes some of the designs have great potential.

The students spent the past semester designing possible structures and

improvements for the downtown area in a "Re-pioneering Albion" project.

The student displays have been transported back to Albion, and they will be on display this week at the former Scrapbook Paradise location, 137 South 4th St.

Hosford said the project generated good publicity for the community, and he has received e-mail messages from throughout the U.S. as well as some foreign countries.

There is a possibility that the community could gain some improvements through this connection with UNL. Paul said he is hopeful that the architecture students could participate in another studio for local designs, focusing on public facilities such as the county museum and a performing arts center.

The AEDC officers, President Doug Young, Secretary Shannon Landauer and Treasurer Andy Devine, presented Paul and Lori Hosford with an appreciation gift for their work in helping to lead the student architecture project.

From Albion News Dec. 23, 2009



STUDENT DESIGN TOUR -- Albion Planning Commission made a visit to the former Scrapbook Paradise building after their Feb. 1 meeting to look over the design concepts for Albion that were created by UNL students last semester. In this photo, Paul Hosford explains one of the designs to Andy Devine and Lisa Skillstad. The design concepts are available for review by appointment.

Perspectives

By Paul Hosford

Building Blocks of Tomorrow

I feel dumber all the time. Not that I'm all that smart to begin with; I've felt dumb many times before. But recently, the frequency of these episodes has really accelerated.

Thirty-nine of 45 designs for Albion's future created by UNL professor Martin Despang's students last fall are now set up in the former Scrapbook Paradise building (and many thanks to Kami Warner and Jean Kaup for making this possible). Six of the designs, most of which are surprisingly detailed and intricate, were just too fragile to survive being moved first from the University to the State Capitol, where they were displayed for a week, and then on to Albion. (Tom Schuele transported the models and is to be commended for the large number that arrived unharmed. Because of their delicate nature, no one had expected so many to survive.)

I initially felt dumb when I saw the first of each student's three designs. They had thought of so many things I never had -- it was a mind-expanding process to view their models and hear them explain why they had done what they did.

I felt even dumber when the second designs were displayed. This time a "jury" of experts attended, including some from Kansas State University. The students explained their designs to the jury whose members made a great many insightful comments and suggestions. The jury members seemed to agree that this project had enormous potential not just for helping Albion, but as a model for addressing the challenges faced by struggling communities everywhere. Although I was hoping this project would benefit other communities, I hadn't comprehended just how far-reaching those benefits could be.

But I really feel dumb now that community members are visiting the display. After examining the models, everyone seems to have ideas for adapting them to our needs in ways I've never dreamed of. It's one thing to not be an expert in architecture -- it's understandable that I would encounter a lot of new ideas there. But I've lived in Albion all my life. Lori and I worked with the students to help them know Albion better, to understand its needs. I have no excuse for not having taken the rationale behind and the techniques incorporated in the various

designs and applied them to other aspects of the community.

But, this is where the strength of our community is really showing. There are A LOT of people here every bit as dedicated to seeing Albion grow as Lori and I are, and perhaps because they are seeing these new ideas for the first time rather than having watched them develop as Lori and I have, they are seeing them with fresh eyes.

While all of the designs propose legitimate projects for Albion's future, people here are seeing them as more than just discrete projects. They are seeing them as building blocks for new projects. People are taking a "mix-and-match" approach to these designs. Techniques the students devised to breathe new life into one existing building can be applied to other buildings and nearly everyone who visits comes up with three or four new applications for the green techniques and innovative thinking the students have introduced us to.

Ideas are flowing like wine...

This is where the greatest strength of this partnership with the College of Architecture lies for both Albion and communities everywhere. Its fruit serves as in-

Its fruit serves as inspiration for new ideas. And inspiration is a prerequisite for every successful project, no matter what area of life it involves.

spiration for new ideas. And inspiration is a prerequisite for every successful project, no matter what area of life it involves.

A second group of students is now working in St. Edward, Petersburg and again Albion. They are building on the approaches and lessons of last fall's group, drawing inspiration from them just as we are.

And people in other areas are showing an interest, contacting people here to learn more. Our creativity and vision are making us stand out as leaders in "re-pioneering" rural areas.

I didn't foresee all this happening and that reminds me of the limits of my vision. But I'm proud to be part of a community that embraces new ideas. And, I'm honored to be able to work with people at UNL who have so much faith in both the abilities of their students and the ability of people here to take their students' ideas and run with them that they've dedicated two full semesters to working with us. The students are gaining valuable real-world experience and rural areas are gaining conceptual building blocks for tomorrow.

Planners present challenges for downtown development

A challenging downtown redevelopment plan was introduced to the Albion Economic Development Corp. (AEDC) during its monthly meeting Tuesday, Feb. 16, at the former Scrapbook Paradise building.

The redevelopment plan, which started with a blighted/substandard determination several months ago, calls on community leaders and business owners to begin an ambitious improvement project in the downtown area.

The plan serves as a guide for future downtown development, emphasizing historic preservation, use of compatible building materials and alternative energy systems.

Downtown building designs created recently by UNL architectural students are included as a suggested reference.

The overall plan includes rehabilitation or replacement of some 47 downtown buildings, building facade replacement, development of downtown housing, an outdoor market and festival venue, a downtown lodging facility, replacement of outdated infrastructure and reuse of vacant lots.

The redevelopment plan map includes a 15-block area or 50.5 acres, bordered on the west by Sixth Street, on the south by State Street (Highway 91) and on the north and east sides by the Nebraska Central rail line.

Planner Tim Keelan pointed out that current assessed value of this area is only \$4.8 million, which he considers very low.

"Your downtown needs more economic development," Keelan said. "It is not reaching its potential."

He challenged the community to increase the downtown tax base to a level of \$7.5 to \$8 million through redevelopment over the next 10 years.

Keelan said funding sources are available, and one improvement could lead to another by using such tools as tax increment financing (TIF), revolving loans, CDBG and USDA or private foundation grant programs and other sources.

Incorporation of downtown housing is a big part of the redevelopment plan, and planner Lonnie Dickson showed the group several sites near the downtown business district where apartment or condominium style housing could be developed.

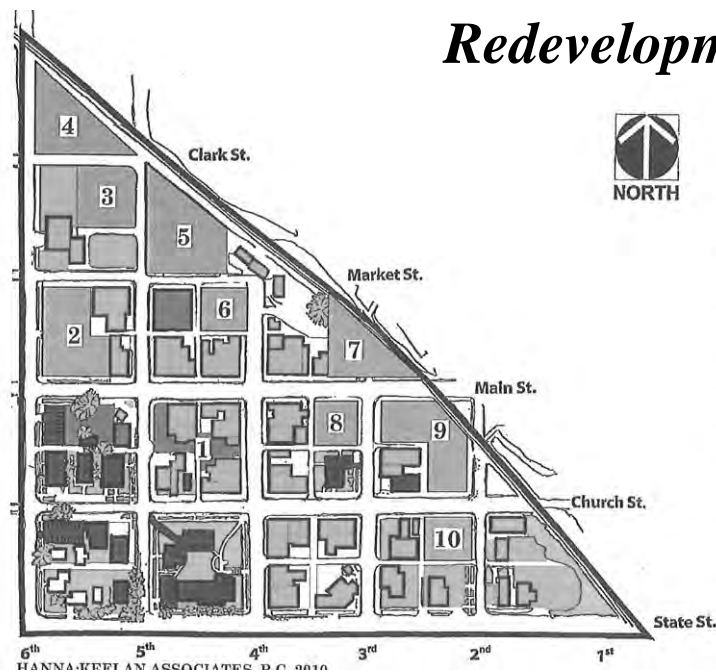
The cost of these developments, compared with potential rental rates, were a concern of the group. Keelan said a variety of public programs, and public/private partnerships, could be used to finance new structures, and that affordable rents could be maintained.

These kinds of projects are already being done in Nebraska communities, he added.

Keelan also suggested a Community Development Agency be formed to set priorities, and possibly recruit outside developers to complete an initial project. He said a downtown lodging facility would be one of his priorities.

Plan Recommendations

Among the recommendations of the



Redevelopment area

Illustration at left shows the designated 15-block Albion downtown area for redevelopment.

plan are:

- Set a primary goal to repair, rehabilitate and restore buildings of value, and demolish buildings which are beyond the economic value of rehabilitation and reuse.

- Make building facade restoration a priority, especially along both sides of Main and Fourth Streets, which are the focus of the historic retail center. Restore commercial buildings to their historic appearance.

- Use upper stories of buildings as housing or office space, installing a public elevator and creating hallways through attached multilevel buildings.

- Develop an elderly housing complex at the perimeter of the downtown area.

- Develop an outdoor market and festival venue, using the southeast corner of Main and Fifth Streets for outdoor farmers markets and other events. This gathering area could be expanded along the eastwest alley from the corner lot to the existing downtown mini-park, with roof structures to provide shade and shelter and connections to outdoor garden cafes and retail spaces behind commercial buildings.

- Develop a lodging facility in the downtown, with a variety of suite layouts to include individual kitchenettes and expanded living rooms. Small scale convention and meeting places could also be included in this development.

- Retain existing businesses, support their growth and development, and recruit a cross-section of new commercial retail and professional businesses.

- Replace water, sanitary sewer and storm sewer utility mains throughout the downtown area, coordinating with street and sidewalk improvements in a capital improvement plan.

- Require industrial uses, such as parking lots or outside storage of materials to be screened with a visual obscuring fence or planting area to visually reduce negative impacts.

- Reuse vacant or underused land parcels for commercial, public and residential development.

Projects in Action Plan

Eight specific projects are outlined in an

action plan for the downtown area as follows:

- Annually designate at least two-block lengths of streets and sidewalks for repairs and/or resurfacing. Estimated cost: \$150,000 annually. Potential funding sources: city budget, CDBG/USDA Rural Development, TIF, special assessments.

- Develop a water and sanitary sewer main analysis and replacement program to address undersizing and advanced age of utility lines. Estimated cost: \$200,000 annually. Potential funding sources: city budget, CDBG/USDA Rural Development, sanitary sewer districts, TIF, special assessments.

- Establish a facade improvement program to encourage property owners to restore the historic appearance of buildings. Estimated cost: Contribute up to \$35,000 per project, requires 50 percent matching funds. Potential funding sources: TIF, local lenders, property owners.

- Property acquisition and demolition program to demolish dilapidated buildings and prepare sites for new uses. Estimated cost: \$100,000 annually. Potential funding sources: TIF, Albion Economic Development Corp., Boone County Area Community Foundation, local property owners.

- Downtown streetscape enhancement program to replace lighting and signage poles with historic cast iron replicas. Estimated cost: \$2,000 to \$3,000 per light pole, \$250 to \$400 per sign pole. Potential funding sources: TIF, property owners, special assessments.

- Develop a public access elevator to serve several multi-story buildings. Estimated cost: \$235,000. Potential funding sources: NIFA, NEDE, USDA Rural Development, local lenders.

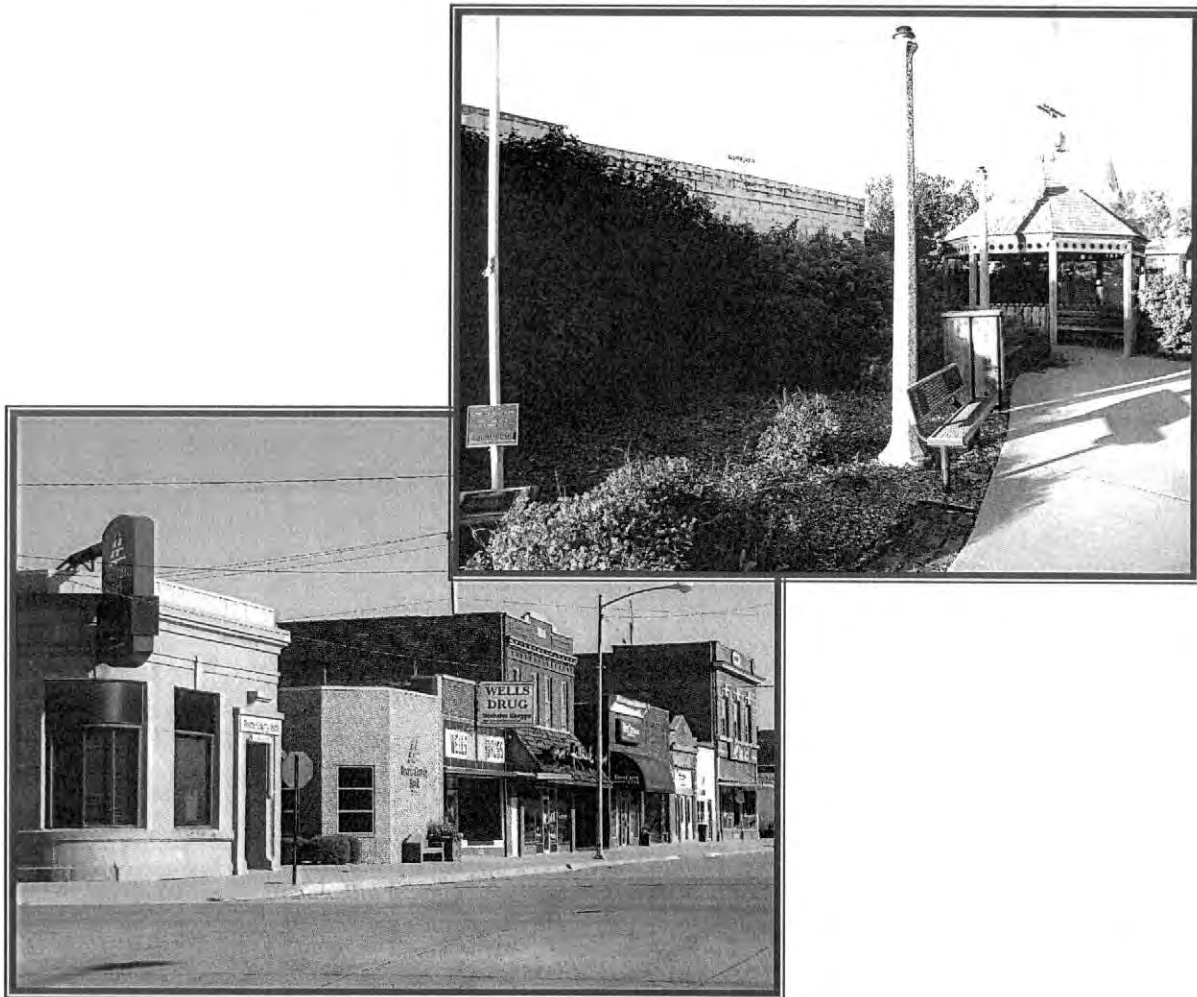
- Create a downtown housing initiative to build up to 16 units of either owner-occupied or rental units. Estimated cost: \$2.6 million. Potential funding sources: TIF, local lenders, LIHTC, HOME, NAHTF.

- Develop a new downtown lodging facility. Estimated cost: \$3.5 million. Potential funding sources: TIF, local lenders, CDBG.

ALBION, NEBRASKA

DOWNTOWN REDEVELOPMENT AREA #2

GENERAL REDEVELOPMENT PLAN



PREPARED BY:
HANNA:KEELAN ASSOCIATES, P.C.
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FEBRUARY, 2010

Green Buildings and the Sustainability of the Downtown.

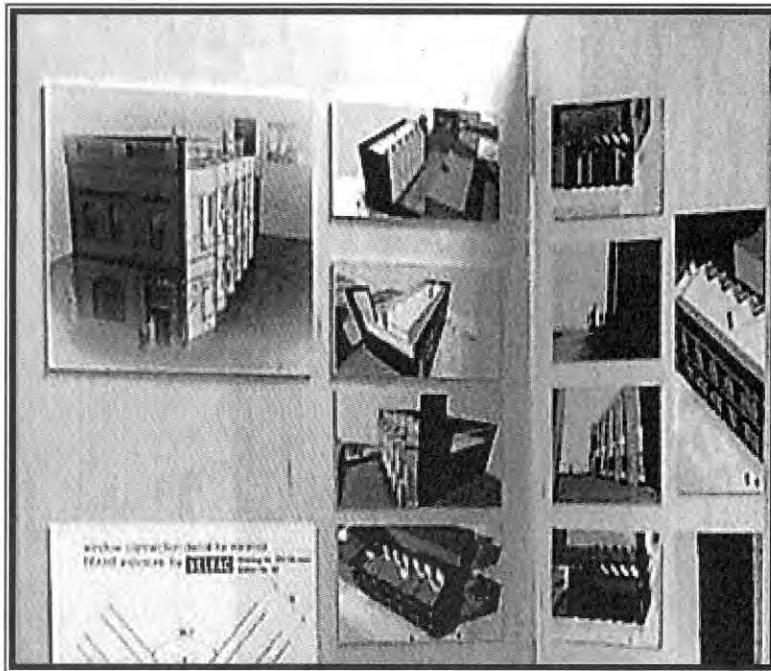
Buildings targeted for future restoration or adaptive reuse throughout **Redevelopment Area #2** are strongly encouraged to utilize “Green” building techniques to certify that buildings are energy efficient and meet the standards for **Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)** buildings. LEED gives building owners assurance that the structure meets nationally accepted standards for design, construction and operation of high performance green buildings. LEED promotes quality building techniques by methods used to promote sustainability, which recognizes performance in five areas of human and environmental health: 1) sustainable site development, 2) water savings, 3) energy efficiency, 4) materials selection and 5) indoor environmental quality.

LEED certified buildings are combining recycled building materials, energy conserving building components and utilizing alternative energy sources to reduce our reliance on conventional electric power sources. Additionally, recent legislation by both Federal and State Governments encourage public and private buildings to utilize a variety of alternative energies such as solar, wind, geo-thermal and bio-mass. Buildings are more and more frequently incorporating solar collecting roofing materials, or even a variety of wind turbines in components of building facades or roofs to capture Nature’s energy sources and reduce reliance on public electric systems to heat and cool buildings.

“Re-Pioneering” Downtown Albion, Nebraska

The Fall 2009 Semester Architecture Studio class of Martin Despang and his 14 students focused the entire semester on creating a new “vision” for Downtown Albion. The goal of the class, like the original pioneers, was to be innovators and entrepreneurs, to not be afraid to try new ways, to be creative and find new solutions. Students worked directly with Albion residents to become familiar with Downtown Albion and further define the concepts of their projects. One of the projects was based on adaptively reusing facades of long established buildings, while devising entirely new uses for the interior of the structure. Another project focused on developing a winery and microbrewery in which all the ingredients are grown on site. Others devised new models for Downtown commercial buildings.

A common theme of all the projects was to utilize environmentally friendly building materials, taking advantage of natural light, wind, solar energy sources. Public forums were held in Albion and Lincoln to present the final projects of the semester long process.



An architectural student's design, shown at the right, focused on adaptively reusing the former bank building at the northwest corner of 4th and Church Streets. The two street facades are preserved, while the former north facade (currently a party wall with the theatre building) has a zigzagged, shaped, glass curtain wall. An array of solar panels is also integrated within the roof structure.

A student's new design concept for commercial buildings in Downtown Albion is pictured at the right. The upper portion of the presentation panel illustrates the interior view of the building where natural light is to be utilized, as much as possible, to reduce the reliance upon electrical energy. Horizontal slates are incorporated into the window systems and a series of sky lights with rectangular baffles diffuse direct sunlight into the center of the rooms.

The exterior elevation of the building shows that the structure is intended to reflect the rectangular scale and dimensions of existing commercial buildings. However, the design of the structure is also intended to have this unique building create a new standard for commercial properties. The projection of the second level beyond the first, simulates the use of awnings and recessed storefront entrances of the late 1800 and early 1900 commercial buildings.

