



UMassAmherst

LA&RP Landscape Architecture
& Regional Planning

Alumni Newsletter

2018

Spring

Department takes its place in new Design Building

The University of Massachusetts Amherst Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning celebrated the official opening of the new 87,000-square-foot Design Building on April 25, 2017. The department's new home is the largest modern wood building in the Northeast and one of the first institutional buildings in the region to employ an engineered timber structure.

The design incorporates sustainable site features such as large rain gardens collecting and treating water from the roof and nearby parking, and a green roof that is also a key outdoor gathering area with a courtyard featuring mosses, evergreens, and native plants like lowbush blueberry. It intentionally features exposed structural elements and service systems for teaching. Inside the building, Trimble Technology Lab provides advanced tools for design research and development such as 3-D printing & scanning, the latest design software, and much more.

Reflecting the university's commitment to sustainability and innovation in education, the interdisciplinary building is home to three academic units: architecture; building and construction technology; and landscape architecture and regional planning.

"I really like the way the studio combines students of architecture and landscape architecture. Before, our department was in the Hills building and architecture was in the Fine Arts Center, so there was no way you would meet architects or see their work. We didn't like the linear arrangement of the studio the first time, because the last row of desks blocked the view, so we rearranged it ourselves. After we moved those, it created both more space and more enclosed space," says Yuan-Fen (Mimi) Lo, a current MLA student.

The Design Building is defined by a series of stormwater gardens along the west façade, capturing the site's water and cleansing it with a palette of indigenous grasses, shrubs and stands of Tupelo and Sassafras. Photo: Ngoc Doan

LARP Students

BSLA student Reif Larsen '18 takes classroom knowledge into the field at internship

During summer 2017 Reif Larsen '18 (landscape architecture) interned in the Burlington, VT offices of SE Group, a landscape architecture and planning firm that works on a range of projects, specializing in recreation planning and design for communities and mountain resorts.



Over the summer, he worked on places ranging from a new base lodge at Mount Snow in Dover, VT, a park in South Burlington, VT, and a bed and breakfast in Burlington, VT.

"SE Group has really made mentoring a focus for the internship, and the projects they have me work on are curated to provide an educational experience. There's sort of an 'open door' policy here and I walk into people's offices a lot to ask them about the work they're doing or have an extended conversation about project workflow, client relations, or other aspects of a project," explains Larsen.

He feels his classes in the UMass College of Social and Behavioral Sciences prepared him for success collaborating across the practices of planning and landscape architecture at an interdisciplinary firm like SE Group. Larsen is also putting his experience as a researcher into practice at SE group, and is working on a project examining the impacts of self-driving and shared cars on transportation routes in the landscape. Reif was also the recipient of the Dean's Opportunity Award, which helped fund the internship.

LARP students research success of tree planting program in Holyoke, MA

Ben Breger (MLA '18) and Sonny Kremer (Sustainable Community Development '18) spent their summer researching urban trees, but what they remember most is their interactions with people they met and collaborated with along the way. The students worked on individual research projects in Holyoke, MA related to the Greening the Gateway Cities Program (GGCP), an effort focused on planting thousands of trees in 12 communities in the state. The GGCP locations are part of a larger group of 26 communities targeted by the state government for redevelopment efforts as "Gateway Cities." Planting these trees is intended to make participating communities more livable and sustainable.

Breger's project consists of a survey of the 1,500 trees planted in Holyoke since the GGCP began in 2013. Over the course of May and June, Breger visited each tree and collected information on their health, age, location, species, and conditions around the tree that might impact health—such as available soil area.



"I was the recipient of many curious stares as I measured trees throughout the city, but my most notable memories have been my impromptu meetings with residents and business owners who explain why they requested trees or how the new tree on the street outside their property positively impacts them each day," Breger explains.

Kremer's project examines how people contribute to a tree's survival in the challenging ecosystem of a city.



"Tree survival research currently focuses mostly on biophysical factors. We theorize, however, that social factors, especially stewardship networks, may be critical for long-term tree survival in cities," says Kremer. Her research required many hours of meeting with organizations involved in tree care in Holyoke, as well as interviewing residents in the neighborhoods where new trees were planted.

"The interviews I've conducted have been really incredible. Everyone has opened up my perspective on trees, giving me immense hope that people want and care about urban trees, and reinforcing that we can and should do more to ensure that people have access to green and healthy urban landscapes."

Kremer drew financial support from several sources, including a \$2,000 Alan L. and Carol S. LeBovidge Undergraduate Research Scholarship, as well as scholarships from the Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning and Commonwealth Honors College. The pair expect to present their conclusions in May 2018, at the end of the academic year.

LARP Faculty

Students and faculty participate in Park(ing) Day



Mark Lindhult (center) and students during Park (ing) Day 2017 at UMass
Photo: Matthew Medeiros, MLA '09

Members of the department placed trees, shrubs, and seating near Franklin Dining Commons to create several parking space-sized parklets as part of the worldwide event called Park(ing) Day. The event takes place each year on the third Friday in September, and is organized by artists, designers, and citizens who transform metered parking spots into temporary public parks.

"The reason for Park(ing) Day is to highlight the large amount of paved surfaces dedicated to the automobile and the need for additional park space for people," explained Professor Mark Lindhult.

Lindhult worked with about 30 students who are involved with everything from setting up the parking spot to sitting in the space to answer questions. The department organizes a meeting a few days before Park(ing) Day to decide on a theme for the parklets.

"In the past we've highlighted green infrastructure and the landscape's role in cleaning stormwater," notes Lindhult.

DiPasquale Receives \$50,000 to Support "Make-It Springfield"

Michael DiPasquale, UMass LARP Extension Assistant Professor was awarded \$50,000 in funding to support the growth of "Make-It Springfield" the downtown Springfield collaborative design and maker space he founded in June 2016. The funding includes \$25,000 from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts "Collaborative Workspace Program" administered by MassDevelopment and a matching grant of \$25,000 provided by the MassMutual Foundation.

The grant awards were announced by MA Housing & Economic Development Secretary Jay Ash at a ceremony at Gateway City Arts in Holyoke on October 24, 2017. Secretary Ash said the Collaborative Workspace grant program "will help advance community-based innovation and collaboration throughout the Commonwealth," including cities like Springfield.

"Make-It Springfield" is Springfield's "Transformative Development Fellow" in a vacant downtown storefront, offers dozens of free or low-cost workshops to hundreds of Springfield residents each month. The maker space is supported by staff that includes LARP doctoral student Lara Furtado, and recent LARP graduate, Yanhua Lu.



An attendee paints at an event by Make-It Springfield
Photo: courtesy Make-It Springfield

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Faculty Updates

Jack Ahern presented a paper "Green Infrastructure: retrospect and prospect" at the 2018 National Council for Science and the Environment in Washington DC, Jan. 23.

Michael Davidsohn and students from the senior Landscape Contracting class safely installed a green-roof tray system donated by Eco-Roofs on to the roof above the West entry to the John Olver Design Building in November 2017.

Theodore Eisenman published research in the journals *Landscape and Urban Planning*, as well as *Environmental Management*. He examined the work of pioneering Scottish planner Sir Patrick Geddes, and also an analysis of the tree canopy on the University of Pennsylvania campus. **Elisabeth Hamin and Robert Ryan** traveled to Puerto Rico during May 2018 for a workshop organized by the Sustainable Adaptive Gradients in the Coastal Environment (SAGE) study. Hamin and Ryan, along with workshop participants, worked to brainstorm infrastructure responses to coastal hazards related to climate change. **Ellen Pader** spoke with the BBC for a story titled "How to Live Small" during October 2017. **Henry Renski's** article "Resident Sentiment in Declining Cities: A Comparative Analysis of Twitter Posts." is published in the *Town Planning Journal*. **Frank Slegers** present a paper during the 55th International Making Cities Livable Conference May 14-18, 2018 in Ottawa, Canada. The paper, titled "Systemic Design Frameworks for a Healthy Neighborhood in the South End of Springfield, MA," is derived from his work with the UMass Design Center in Springfield.

Alumni Updates

Peter Flinker, MLA '87, is among 23 ASLA members elevated to the ASLA Council of Fellows for 2017. This is one of the highest honors in the profession of landscape architecture. Peter's nomination recognizes his career spent establishing a central role for landscape architects in policy planning, smart growth, and sustainable design.

Jessica Allan, MRP '04, took a position with MLB Housing & Development, a multi-disciplinary consulting firm focused on housing and economic development projects. Allan was previously the City Planner in Easthampton, MA since 2012.

LARP presented an alumni achievement award to **Katie Stebbins, MRP '97**, on April 19. Stebbins, who is now Vice President of Economic Development for the UMass system, returned to campus to present a Zube Lecture.

The department continues preparations for the **6th Julius Fábos Conference on Landscape and Greenway Planning**, which will be held in 2019. The conference is held every three years to bring together experts who are influencing landscape planning, policy making and greenway planning from the local to international level. It is intended to highlight recent trends and expand the literature about landscape and greenway planning.

In Memoriam

Hugh C. Davis, Professor Emeritus of Regional Planning, died on June 2, 2017. During WW II, he enlisted in the Army Air Corps as an aerial photographer and received the Distinguished Flying Cross. In 1967 he came to UMass Amherst, joining LARP. He taught graduate students in regional planning and in the new environmental design program. Among many services over the years, he directed the Center for Rural Massachusetts and the Institute for Man and Environment. He retired in 1993.