Partners in Sustainability Launched!

On Thursday, September 29th, the Colorado Center for Sustainable Urbanism launched its Partners in Sustainability program. Nearly 40 people attended the launch event, which the Center cosponsored with the Colorado Chapter of the American Planning Association.

What is a Partner? The Center’s partners are colleagues from professional practice, civic engagement, and the community at-large who share the vision for creating 21st century solutions for creating more sustainable cities, towns, neighborhoods, and communities. Partners are invited to engage with the Center on specific programs or projects, or support other activities sponsored by the Center. Opportunities can include personal development, project development and implementation, civic engagement, and much more!

More information on the Partners program is available on the CCSU website at: http://cap.ucdenver.edu/ccsu

Join us! Become a CCSU Partner!

Presentations at the Partners Event

The Colorado Chapter of the American Planning Association offered two presentations at the Center’s launch event for Partners in Sustainability. APA members were also able to earn certification maintenance credits. The first presentation, titled A New Dimension of Green Infrastructure: The Potential Impacts of Vertical Green Walls on Building Efficiency, was given by Carolyn Fahey, who works with the City of Boulder’s Department of Planning & Development Services and is a doctoral candidate in the College of Architecture and Planning. Her presentation led to a lively discussion of the challenges of incorporating green walls in Colorado’s climate. Her presentation can be accessed at: http://cap.ucdenver.edu/ccsu

Green wall treatment in Boulder

The second presentation focused on the topic of Integrated Land Use Planning and Water Management. Rocky Piro, Executive Director of the Colorado Center for Sustainable Urbanism, provided an overview of the evolution of water planning in the U.S. Examples were provided of state, regional, and county-level planning efforts across the country to address water more comprehensively and systematically. Focusing then on Colorado, Anne Castle, Senior Fellow at the Getches-Wilkinson Center for Natural Resources, Energy, and the Environment at the University of Colorado Boulder, examined existing legal
structures and programs in Colorado, including discrepancies among agencies and jurisdictions. She discussed water conservation measures in the context of the gaps predicted between supply and demand in the new Colorado Water Plan. In addition, she referenced other western states that have adopted statewide conservation requirements. Rocky and Anne’s presentation is available at: http://cap.ucdenver.edu/ccsu

Partners in Sustainability: Possibilities and Prospects

At the September launch event, participants discussed a number of possible initiatives and projects that could take place through the Colorado Center for Sustainable Urbanism. For these projects to go forward, more work is needed on identifying the scope, desired outcomes, and resources – both financial and people. A sample of possible projects follows:

**Sustaining Places Comprehensive Planning for Colorado.** Possible project: Develop a complete guide for using the American Planning Association’s Sustaining Places guidelines and standards in a Colorado context. An initial part of this project could be the establishment of a baseline regarding the state of comprehensive planning today. This project could also be coordinated with another existing CCSU project: Sustainable Communities Zoning Code. (Information on the Code project appears below.)

**Urban Design Pattern Book.** Possible project: Develop a complete guide, along with tools and best practices, for incorporating urban design into local planning and decision-making for Colorado jurisdictions. Integrate design principles with sustainability. This project would happen through the cooperation of the Colorado Center for Sustainable Urbanism and the Center for Advanced Research in Traditional Architecture – a sister center at the University of Colorado Denver.

State Of Sustainability Report – Colorado. Possible project: Develop and maintain an annual (or biannual) report on sustainability factors in Colorado. This initiative would be a collaboration with various agencies and associations in the state. The initial report would focus on several key factors to provide a baseline – and then be regularly supplemented with additional information and updates.

**One Water Planning.** Possible project: Develop a complete guide for comprehensive integrated water planning – for counties and cities, developers and consultants – in a Colorado context.

**Planning for Climate Change.** Possible project: Develop a complete guide for addressing climate change, including both mitigation and adaptation – for counties and cities, developers and consultants – in a Colorado context. A multiyear series of forums would take place with this project.

**Megaregional Planning | Colorado’s Front Range.** Possible project: Develop an integrated approach for addressing key common issues that transcend regional planning areas along the Front Range. Such an initiative has been under consideration by the Colorado Chapter of the American Planning Association. The Chapter has already hosted workshops, sessions, and conversations on four key topics: water,
mobility, open space, urban-rural edges, and annexation. The project would also be coordinated with a national initiative on megaregional planning currently taking place.

**Developing a Framework of Guiding Principles for CCSU**

In the discussion that followed, participants shared a number thoughts and ideas. There were several comments supporting the work underway at the Center on integrating health into design and planning decision-making. There were also recommendations that the health-related work be expanded to address issues of equity and health as well. Other participants talked about the need to address sustainability in both growth and non-growth communities, and the specific need to assist smaller local governments, including rural towns and counties. A representative from the Denver Regional Council of Governments suggested that the Center could work on issues related to the vulnerability of the power grid in Colorado. There is a need for understanding current challenges and developing a comprehensive approach for 21st century energy solutions.

There were comments on the value of the Center for providing a platform for cutting edge approaches to addressing the challenges of urbanization. The Center is well positioned to advance practical applied solutions that touch on all facets of sustainability. An initial task of the network of Partners was suggested to be working with the Center’s mission to craft *guiding principles* to provide direction to the types of projects and initiatives that the Center takes on as it grows its capacity.

The event concluded with social time at Denver’s Rhein Haus, which allowed participants to get a taste of Oktoberfest.

**Current Projects at the Colorado Center for Sustainable Urbanism**

In its first year, the Colorado Center for Sustainable Urbanism has already taken on a number of initiatives. Below are brief descriptions of key projects completed or currently underway.

**Resiliency and Hazards Mitigation E-Resources.** The Colorado Center for Sustainable Urbanism responded to a request from the Colorado Department of Local Affairs to work on the continuation of a project to develop and maintain resources for local jurisdictions related to planning for resiliency and mitigating both nature and human-caused hazards. An initial phase of work was completed in Spring 2016. The continuation of the project now allows the Center to maintain and update resources for communities in Colorado.

**Sustainable Community Zoning Code.** The Colorado Center for Sustainable Urbanism has migrated the Code from the Rocky Mountain Land Use Institute to the University of Colorado Denver. A work program has been developed for ongoing maintenance and updating of the Code.

**Fall 2016 Course: Environmental Planning and Management.** Students in this class are working on updating several sections of the Code, including natural resource conservation, water conservation, water management, and wildfire hazards.
We incorporate health and wellness principles and the built environment. The team has interdepartmental studio series on health formed and is working on crafting media initiatives to support professional degree programs for architects, planners, and designers, up-to-date tools for practitioners and decision-makers, and social media initiatives to support professional networks. Outcomes include new approaches to integrating health into professional degree programs for architects, planners, and designers, and more.

Creating Healthy Communities through Transformational Education and Design. This is a multiyear project focused on integrating health and wellness into design and planning education and decision-making. Funded by the Colorado Health Foundation, the project includes courses and studios, lectures and workshops, and broad professional and community engagement. Outcomes include new approaches to integrating health into professional degree programs for architects, planners, and designers, up-to-date tools for practitioners and decision-makers, and social media initiatives to support professional networks. The project is intentionally interdisciplinary and brings together students, academics, and practitioners from various departments and specializations.

This fall an interdisciplinary team has been formed and is working on crafting recommendations for a three-year interdepartmental studio series on health and the built environment. The team has investigated key programs and initiatives across the country and in Colorado that incorporate health and wellness principles into the design and planning of neighborhoods and communities.

West Denver Renaissance Collaborative. The Colorado Center for Sustainable Urbanism has been working with CityCraft and the University of Denver to support the West Denver Renaissance Collaborative. The vision is to use holistic sustainability principles to work with neighborhoods in west Denver to create vibrant, healthy, and complete communities in which existing residents and newcomers can live, work, and play.

An initial effort between the Center and CityCraft focuses on working with the Denver Housing Authority to develop of a common data resource center for compiling information from west Denver neighborhoods on environmental, housing, economic, social, services, and infrastructure factors.

Conversations are underway to develop a multiyear research agenda that could include a wide array of planning initiatives and support research and studio projects within the Center and the university.

Rino Art District. The Colorado Center for Sustainable Urbanism research team is creating a baseline evaluation data set and methodology going forward for ongoing monitoring and advancement of the Art District in order to inform planning and advocacy needs for infrastructure, affordable housing, studio space, community engagement, sustainable travel, and more.
CCSU Project Weighs in on Alternative Development Patterns

In response to a request from the North Tahoe Preservation Alliance, the Colorado Center for Sustainable Urbanism project team provided a technical report and alternative development scenarios employing smart growth and sustainable design principles. The Alliance requested the technical expertise to inform its review of a development proposal of large lot sites. The Alliance worked with its county commissioners to offer alternatives that would cluster development and set aside open space.

CCSU

Colorado Center for Sustainable Urbanism

The Colorado Center for Sustainable Urbanism at the University of Colorado at Denver is a collaborative home for urban planners, architects, engineers, economists, health professionals, public policy experts, and others to work together in using best available information and best practices to create resources to advance sustainable solutions for both the natural environment and the built environment. The Center is a hub that provides support to practitioners and decision makers on a broad range of urban planning and policy issues.

Contact us to learn more!

email: CCSU@ucdenver.edu
phone: 202.315.0013
web: http://cap.ucdenver.edu/ccsu