

Students Aid Gulf Coast Recovery

June 08, 2009 1:15 AM Ryan Rivet
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Since the university reopened following Hurricane Katrina, Tulane students have pitched in to lend a helping hand in the Gulf Coast's recovery. In that spirit, some architecture students had an opportunity to put their skills to use in helping to design the new face of one decimated Mississippi town.



The Tulane-led design team of students, faculty and staff members works on a recovery scheme for Moss Point, Miss., which was devastated by Hurricane Katrina. (Photos by Nick Jenisch)

The project was an offshoot of adjunct associate professor Grover Mouton's spring design seminar, "Design Urbanism", which focuses on urban design issues across the Gulf Coast. As a part of the class, students were able to engage in real-time projects undertaken by the [Tulane Regional Urban Design Center](#), an opportunity Mouton calls "huge" for his students.

"It was great for the students because they were able to present their work to the client," says Mouton, who directs the design center. "They were able to see how their work really instructs public sector design."

The opportunity came about when the mayor of Moss Point at that time, Xavier Bishop, attended a Tulane-hosted session of the Mayors' Institute on City Design funded by the National Endowment for the Arts. At the session, Mouton says he saw the continuing needs of Moss Point, which is located near the coastal city of Pascagoula, Miss., and suffered major damage from the powerful eastern side of Katrina. Mouton offered the expertise of his staff and students.

“The whole downtown was underwater (after Katrina),” Mouton says. “They were heavily damaged. City Hall is still in a trailer. This is all part of their ongoing recovery process.”

Architecture professors Marilyn Feldmeier and Ginette Bone, along with Mouton's seminar students Sim Ward, Royce Gracey and Kevin Muni, and design center associates Nick Jenisch and Robert Bracken, participated in the design process and presentation to Moss Point officials.



One goal of the project is to develop a new face for the waterfront in Moss Point, helping to encourage more activities and festivals there as a way to reinvigorate civic pride.

The team's design includes a new face for the Moss Point waterfront, where \$18 million in federal funding will build a new City Hall, Fire Station and Waterfront Park. Mouton says he wanted to give the waterfront back to the people of Moss Point, and encourage more waterfront activities and festivals as a way to reinvigorate civic pride.

Mouton says the students rose to the challenge in the collaborative effort.

“The students designed it out,” Mouton says. “For example, one student got to the interpretive center, while another dealt with the larger design plan. They were able to work and have their work be part of the process. It's rare for kids to be a part of the public sector design like this.”

Mouton says he is proud of what his students were able to accomplish and that their work will have such a positive impact on a town still struggling to recover.

“It's so wonderful that the students are involved in the recovery,” says Mouton. “Instead of sweeping glass or gutting houses, their work is changing the face of Moss Point. This is the greatest reward an educator can have, to see a 21-year-old change the face of a town that has been destroyed.”