

Helping Rebuild St. Bernard Parish

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Students in a Tulane University design studio focused their efforts on St. Bernard Parish over the fall semester, culminating in a presentation to parish president Craig Taffaro on Monday (Dec. 7) at the Parish Government Complex in Chalmette, La.



St. Bernard Parish President Craig Taffaro, seated at center, goes over development plans with the Tulane team from a School of Architecture design studio. (Photo by Nick Jenisch)

Architecture professor Grover Mouton, who serves as director of the [Tulane Regional Urban Design Center](#), has recent ties to the parish, having served as the lead in creating St. Bernard's strategic recovery plan following Hurricane Katrina. Four years later, the parish continues its challenging recovery process, now with the help of Tulane architecture students.

The design studio gives students the opportunity to spend a great deal of time focusing on one architectural or planning-related issue. Mouton's students spent the fall semester examining the area in and around a site known as Village Square.

Property in the area was acquired by the parish under hazard mitigation rules and will eventually be reconfigured for public use.

Students created plans for park development, canal-front recreation, sports field facilities and many other uses.

"The students tackled a very difficult site, but the results have been exactly aligned with our community outreach goals," Mouton says. "By engaging budget restrictions and the real policy issues of the parish, students have learned a great deal about how urban design is conducted, particularly in the context of our region's recovery."

Site work and analysis began early in the semester when students received their charge from Taffaro, and the parish's historian gave them a parish-wide tour.

After Taffaro's second review of the students' work, he is looking into the creation of paid internships and an independent study next semester to see the designs come to fruition. Mouton and the center will direct the effort as interested students combine their designs and ideas into one scheme that will be budgeted and presented to parish officials.

Nick Jenisch is project director of the Tulane Regional Urban Design Center.