

[Home](#)[Previous Issue](#)[Next Issue](#)[College Home](#)[College Calendar](#)[Aggie Daily](#)

Neighborhood Revitalization

Students assist Beaumont with urban renewal project

An interdisciplinary group of Texas A&M College of Architecture students are assisting the Beaumont Housing Authority (BHA), preparing strategies for revitalizing of homes and businesses of the Magnolia Garden public housing community that was devastated in 2005 by Hurricane Rita. The HOPE VI project, funded by a \$20 million grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development, will replace public housing units with a mixed income community.

The students, from Shannon Van Zandt's "Neighborhood Revitalization" class and Cecilia Giusti's "Urban and Regional Economic Development" traveled to Beaumont last February to meet with Robert Reyna, BHA executive director, Cleveland Como, BHA planning and development director, and Andre Lewis, HOPE VI coordinator, to review site plans and discuss the options for bringing investment and economic development to the community.

While in Beaumont, students reviewed site plans for the new development and visited both the existing public housing development and the site of the new development. They also documented existing conditions among the major commercial corridors that serve the neighborhood. The data will be integrated with parcel-level data in a Geographic Information System (GIS) to help Van Zandt and Giusti track changes to the neighborhood over the life of the four-year redevelopment.

The students will present development recommendations to the Beaumont City Council in late April.

"Most of the grant will go toward construction of the new development and comprehensive social services to the existing public housing residents, but the impact of the grant is expected to be much greater," said Van Zandt. "The new development is expected to revitalize the surrounding neighborhood by sparking investment and economic development in the community."



Beaumont Housing Authority Planning and Development Director Cleveland Como explains the HOPE VI program and plan to students. On the left is Executive Director Robert Reyna, on the right is HOPE VI Coordinator Andre Lewis, AIA.



Students review potential site plans for the new development. Pictured from left to right are Juton Horstman, Eric Thompson, Shalanski White, Nicole Adair, Stephen Gage, Lauren Tarpley and Ben Swanson.



Planning and Development Director Cleveland Como points out features of the proposed site plan as student visit the new site. Pictured from left to right are Justin Silhavy, June Martin, Michelle Audenart, Cleveland Como, Jacob

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The housing authority already has a list of more than 5,000 income-qualified residents seeking subsidized housing in the revitalized development. The four-year project calls for the construction of more than 400 subsidized and market-rate rental units, as well as affordable units that will be sold.

Students working on the project include: master of urban planning students Matt Hilgemeier, Juton Horstman, Jacob Browning, Nicole Adair, Shalanski White, Stephen Gage, Michelle Audenart, Justin Silhavy, Abhijeet Saboo, Matthew Robinson and Luis Estevez; master of architecture students Jill Atkinson, Regina Stamatiou, Marie Blackmon, Joe Seitzer, Alexis Mixon; land development student Ben Swanson; master of landscape architecture student Eric Thompson; and bachelor of landscape architecture student Lauren Tarpley.

For more information about the project, visit <http://www.bmtha.org/>

Browning, Jill Atkinson, Abhijeet Saboo, Cecilia Giusti, Matt Hilgemeier, Ben Swanson and Luis Estevez.



Businesses in the neighborhood surrounding the HOPE VI sites are badly in need of physical upgrading and economic revitalization.

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- The End -

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