

## **Outstanding Planning Student Organization Award Submission**

### **SCHOOL/PROGRAM/STUDENT ORGANIZATION**

University of Michigan  
Masters of Urban Planning Program  
Urban Planning Student Association (UPSA)

### **STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE**

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### **SUBMISSION CATEGORY**

“Best Practice”

### **DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT**

Expanded Horizons is an annual event planned by second-year Masters of Urban Planning students as a way to introduce the incoming first-year students to a diversity of topics and opportunities in the field of urban planning. It's purpose is to literally “expand the horizons” of graduate students who want to make a difference in helping cities grow and change in a way that promotes sustainability and social justice. In addition, the trip is intended to foster friendships among the incoming class of students and encourage them to interact with each other outside of a classroom setting.

This year, the trip took place in Toronto, Ontario, where students attended several site visits with various organizations doing work related to urban planning. Over the course of the trip, there were three sessions of five site visits each, and students were assigned to site visits based on their preferences. The topics of these site visits included: transportation, community development, economic development, physical planning and design, sustainability, affordable housing, land use, urban gardening, public policy, and international development. The students arrived in Toronto on the evening of Wednesday, September 18, 2013. On Thursday, the group participated in a walking tour of downtown Toronto and then attended one of five scheduled site visits during the afternoon session. Thursday evening, the group attended a social event with local young professionals and graduate students from Ryerson University and the University of Toronto in order to promote networking and engagement with like-minded peers interested in urban planning. On Friday there were two more site visit sessions. On Saturday morning, the group participated in a volunteer activity with the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority. The remainder of the day was designated as free time for the students to explore the city. We returned to Ann Arbor on Sunday morning.

### **DESCRIPTION OF PLANNING PROCESS**

The planning process began in January 2013, when a committee formed to plan the 2013 edition of Expanded Horizons. The event was entirely student planned with minimal faculty/staff involvement. It began by choosing a city within driving distance of Ann Arbor

and finding a convenient 5-day time period in September during which the trip would take place. The committee then informed professors and the Chair of the Department, so they could integrate the trip into their syllabi and ensure that all first-year required courses would be cancelled during the chosen time frame. The next step consisted of forming committees based on urban planning interests – transportation, physical planning and design, housing, community development, economic development and land use planning. Within each committee, students identified organizations to contact about hosting a site visit. Once organizations were identified and contacted, we made sure there were a sufficient number of site visits for each topic in order to encourage engagement across a wide variety of interests. Committee members then became a point people for developing and implementing one site visit each. This planning process lasted from April through September 2013. Simultaneously, the committee held several fundraisers to raise money for the Expanded Horizons trip. Extensive fundraising must be undertaken in order to keep costs down for the student attendees. Toward this goal, we organized bake sales, clothing sales (t-shirts and sweatshirts designed for the urban planning program), restaurant nights, and more. Additionally, students coordinated lodging and transportation; reached out to Ryerson University, the University of Toronto, and the Urban Land Institute – Toronto to plan a networking event to engage with other students and young professionals; coordinated a walking tour of downtown Toronto with local professionals and a professor from Ryerson University; and, planned a volunteer activity for a group of 62 students.

#### **LETTER OF SUPPORT**

As a separate PDF, please find a letter of support from Dr. Richard Norton, Chair of the Urban and Regional Planning Program at the University of Michigan.

#### **EVENT MATERIALS**

As a separate PDF, please find the complete event packet, detailing the schedule for the entire Expanded Horizons trip.

In addition, blog posts written by first-year students who attended Expanded Horizons were posted on our student planning journal's website:

- <http://agoraplanningjournal.com/online-content/2013/11/5/designing- Dundas-west>
- <http://agoraplanningjournal.com/online-content/2013/10/17/the-don-mills-neighborhood-and-its-legacy>
- <http://agoraplanningjournal.com/online-content/2013/10/16/the-poetry-of-urban-biodiversity>
- <http://agoraplanningjournal.com/online-content/2013/10/8/design-and-justice-thoughts-from-toronto>

Lastly, the Expanded Horizons blog, updated and maintained during the planning process to keep incoming students informed about the trip and the organizations that they would have an opportunity to engage with, can be found at this location:

- <http://mupexpandedhorizons.tumblr.com/>