Our first studio, planned while we were still living in Santa Fe, was undertaken in complete innocence of the university’s own plans to focus on the east side of campus. The students produced the first PowerPoint and the largest watercolor painting ever seen at the School of Architecture, and came up with approaches to the future that make even more sense now than they did then.

BUILDING COMMUNITY STARTS AT HOME, and Notre Dame is well positioned to do so, according to its mission statement: “The University encourages a way of living consonant with a Christian community... Residential life endeavors to develop that sense of community and of responsibility that prepares students for subsequent leadership in building a society that is at once more human and more divine.” As a well-established institution of higher learning, Notre Dame has the ability to think and plan over a longer term than institutions that have to respond to short-term fluctuations in politics and culture and finance. Twelve Notre Dame fifth-year architecture students participated in this studio, directed by Sallie Hood and Ron Sakal.

Currently, most visitors’ first impression of Notre Dame is the ill-defined and confusing western edge, as seen from the end of the Indiana Toll Road’s exit ramp at mile 77. There’s no distinctive border to suggest that you’re approaching something important. The streets are more like highways than community-based thoroughfares, and they separate the university from related institutions and nearby communities. Landscaping, street furniture, and attractive signage are lacking. This careless and primarily auto-oriented approach offers a poor model of sustainability. By comparison, the campus’s southern entryway is well-defined, announces the institution, and is easily entered on foot, by bicycle, or by car.

These considerations are especially important as the university plans for future growth, which might involve accommodating 50 percent more buildings and people in 2101 than in 2001.
Wherever it occurs, that expansion should reflect the best of the existing campus, and reclaim areas like the western edge.

Student proposals sought to emphasize the quality of life and traditions of the University of Notre Dame, St. Mary’s College, and Holy Cross College; to physically integrate institutions and communities now separated; to promote diverse social experiences; and to model sustainable growth. They envisioned a series of gradual improvements that would accommodate growth over the short term (2-5 years), medium term (50 years), and long term (100 years). Using ideas and tools drawn from architecture, landscape architecture, transportation planning, and urban redevelopment, students proposed ways of creating a more sustainable and walkable community. Their proposals would present a welcoming face to the larger South Bend community, and would offer many different types of residential accommodations, as well as such diverse land uses as a commuter train station, parish church, theater, museum, grocery, hotel, and banquet hall.

Highway 933
Students proposed adding lighting, plantings, and street furniture to make US 933 more pleasant to walk along. Equally important, they proposed to make it less intimidating to cross on foot, by reconfiguring it as a boulevard with a central median—all without reducing its traffic-carrying capacity (see p. 132).

Western Procession
Students proposed a line of approach proceeding eastward toward campus through a series of planned vistas that purposefully unfold Notre Dame history and signify its higher goals and purposes. Parts of this passageway would also serve as a wildlife corridor. Beginning at a new South Shore commuter railroad station at the southwest corner of 933 and the Toll Road off-ramp, it would proceed across 933 to a monumental gateway leading into a new neighborhood with diverse faculty and student housing. Passing through one corner of the neighborhood, the roadway would gradually turn south and cross Douglas Road, where another gate would formally announce the campus itself. Continuing diagonally southeast, the visitor would encounter an ecumenical retreat chapel and a community hall before passing between the lakes (see p. 132).

Dorr Road
North of the road, students proposed a theater and communications center that would create
places for interaction with the community and serve as a gateway to the new avenue eastward. They would add a security building at the campus entrance, a hotel for visitors, and new dormitories to take advantage of the lakeside vistas toward the heart of campus (see p. 132).

**Southern Neighborhood**

On the east side of 933 south from Dorr Road to Angela, students proposed replacing the parking lot and golf course with a new neighborhood, including a parish church tied to St. Joseph High School, a grocery, a banquet hall to accommodate wedding receptions and similar events, gardens for a new landscape architecture program, and a new Snite Museum. Open spaces would be preserved. The neighborhood would be designed to be welcoming and permeable to walkers, with multiple entry points, carrying through the street grid and scale of the existing South Bend neighborhood south of Angela Boulevard (see p. 133).
Western Edge, Notre Dame Studio Participants

Clients

Studio participants representing the Notre Dame extended family

5th-year Architecture Students, School of Architecture:

Colette Arrendondo
Nicholas Doro
Anna Grasso
John Griffin
Neil Hoyt
Meaghan Kroener
Katherine Miller
Ariane Risto
Samantha Salden
Kelly Scibona
Marina Christina Trejo
Brian Zant

Notre Dame Faculty:

Sallie Hood
Visiting Associate Professor, School of Architecture

Professional Consultants and Studio Reviewers:

Noel William Barker
Urban Sociologist, DePaul University

Michael Bordenaro
Independent Writer

Alan De Frees
Professional Specialist, School of Architecture, University of Notre Dame

Brian Kelly, AIA
Associate Professor and Director of the Program in Architecture, University of Maryland; Senior Associate and Leader of the Notre Dame Master Plan Design Team, Ayers Saint Gross

Lora A. Lucero, Esq., AICP
Editor, Planning and Environmental Law, The American Planning Association; Planner, New Mexico

Douglas Marsh, AIA
University Architect, University of Notre Dame

Jo Patton
Policy Analyst, Business and Professional People for the Public Interest (BPI), Chicago, Illinois

Ron Sakal
Principal, Sakal & Hood Architecture and Urban Design, Chicago, Illinois

Members of the School of Architecture Faculty, University of Notre Dame
From day one of Sallie’s (or was it Sallie & Ron’s) studio (or was it an “office”), that semester was different. The twelve of us were told we would be working on one project together. We would function as an “office.” On previous assignments, our class had pulled numerous all-nighters, lived on top of each other studying for a year in Rome, and had assignments in pairs or trios; but none had asked us to take twelve different people-views, personalities, talent, and produce one seamless urban design proposal. This project would require new skills. How long would we brainstorm? When would decisions be made? Who would force compromise or push a schedule? We were students, classmates, friends. There was no boss, no management. But we dove in and dreamed big in ideas and presentation. Timing, phasing, scheduling would have to be precise. We took on an ambitious effort to produce a larger-than-life eight-foot-long watercolor. And we’d need a PowerPoint to present both our technical concepts and academic ambitions, as well as speak to the public.

The studio began with something familiar—precedent study—that instantly became more than simple library research. We visited the campuses of DePaul University, the University of Chicago, and the University of Illinois at Chicago, each set differently into the city. We analyzed successful aspects and shortcomings of each.

We took the lessons and came back to Notre Dame, our home for four years. Here we’d grown from freshmen living dorm life and playing on the quads to “fifth years” living in the community of South Bend. Now we were asked to analyze such personal surroundings through critical, urban-design eyes—to use our skills to plan an optimistic future for Notre Dame. For a place so personal to each of us, it was a giant task, and one that we took on with a great sense of responsibility. We had the skills to give back, assist with these issues, and present a brighter future. The excitement we felt in creating a realistic vision outweighed any difficulties that could arise because of twelve different designers and personalities in a studio atmosphere.

Today in our professional lives, we face the same challenges that we faced in that studio. Personalities will differ. Goals will misalign. Views diverge. There is not always the same togetherness and shared vision we felt in Sallie’s studio. But the skills we developed in that semester still serve us today. While most projects we work on are not as close to our hearts as the campus of Notre Dame, we learn and analyze better because we know each place is as important to its residents as Notre Dame is to us. Enriching communities is a part of our profession that is an honor of which we continuously strive to be worthy.