

U of M students learn, aid efforts to develop resilient communities

Scott County is partnering with the University of Minnesota's Resilient Communities Project (RCP) to advance and implement key resilience planning recommendations coming out of the 2040 Comprehensive Plan. The collaboration with University students and faculty began in September and will continue through summer 2019.

Over 30 students from across the University are currently collaborating with Scott County on a variety of projects with more engagement planned for spring semester.

Students have been actively meeting with Scott County project leads and engaging with community members and stakeholders throughout the County.

On a brisk morning in early October, a group of nearly 50 undergraduate and graduate students in Environmental Science Policy and Management were hosted by project lead Paul Nelson, the County's Natural Resources Manager. Paul led the group to various sites related to his project, which focuses on diversifying agricultural land with perennial crops. The group met with a farmer in Jordan and learned about the agricultural benefits of cover crops, and then traveled to the site of a future wetland restoration project coming to fruition in a rural residential location in Helena Township. The students are talking with farmers, policymakers, and community leaders this semester to gather information on the barriers to planting perennial crops and how planting these crops might be incentivized.



U of M students and Professor Mae Davenport visit a farmer in Jordan to learn about the agricultural benefits of cover crops.

Several University public policy students are collaborating with the Scott County CDA on a couple of housing-related topics. CDA staff and students are addressing housing affordability and shortage issues by trying to understand how the County might increase landlord participation in rental assistance programs and partner with local employers to offer housing solutions.

Jamie Bachaus, the County's Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP) coordinator, is heading up the County's edible landscape project. Two Public Health students will be working with Jamie for the duration of the partnership to envision how the County can offer more locally grown healthy food options by designing and planning a food forest that includes fruit and nut trees, shrubs, herbs, vines, and perennial vegetables. The students will develop a plan for collecting community input on the landscape and create educational materials on how to forage for food and use the foods in meal preparation.

Brad Davis is the County's Planning Manager and RCP partnership coordinator. "It's exciting to see how much passion and energy the University students have already put into the different research projects so far. Many students have spent considerable time in the County getting to know our communities, landscapes, stakeholders, and residents. We can't wait to see the results of their research!"



Paul Nelson, the County's Natural Resources Manager, talks with a group of U of M students about a wetland restoration project in the County.