



Anna Harvatine and Mara Hitt (not pictured), students in the College of Design at the University of Minnesota, were awarded Best Student Poster at the Resilient Communities Project End of Year Celebration.

U of M student projects aid work in Scott County; partnership celebrated

University of Minnesota students and faculty celebrated with Scott County staff and elected officials last spring at a Resilient Communities Project (RCP) End-of-Year Celebration on campus and this summer at a community celebration at the County Fair.

During the campus event, students presented posters representing their work on Scott County projects, including planning for autonomous vehicles, creating a community land trust, managing household waste, and more. Posters highlighted the findings and recommendations from some of the more than 100 students who worked on a project with the county this past academic year.

Two students in the College of Design, Anna Harvatine and Mara Hitt, were awarded best poster for their collaboration with the Scott County CDA to develop visuals and resources to increase landlord participation in rental assistance programs. Hitt noted the value of working on these types of collaborative projects. “I have taken three classes with RCP projects because the real-world impact has been much more fulfilling in terms of my own growth and the knowledge that my work is contributing to something. It felt good when our partners at Scott County were so excited to put our ideas into motion,” said Hitt.

At the campus event, Associate Vice President for Public Engagement Andy Furco expressed appreciation to Scott County for “opening up your doors to allow members of the University to work with you on issues that matter to your counties.”

Scott County Board Chair Barbara Weckman Brekke likewise expressed her appreciation to the University, saying that Scott County’s “...partnership with RCP has been an amazing gift” and thanking U of MN students, faculty, and

administrators “for not just participating in our projects, but forming true partnerships and giving us results that are going to change the ways we do work and deliver services in the future.”

Brad Davis, Scott County’s planning director, spoke about the power of the RCP model: “The energy you feel in this room is the exact same energy I felt throughout the year -- when I came to campus and went to different [student] presentations, when I joined field trips around Scott County, when I just did some periodic check-ins. The students were asking such good questions -- and *new* questions -- and making us at the County think about things so much differently.” Davis noted that although he knew working with the University through RCP would be valuable for the County and help them achieve important strategic goals, “What I didn’t know going into this partnership is the unique thing that happens when you match the energy here at the University of Minnesota with questions and ideas from our staff. It was fun to see it come together in a room, and see the blending of ideas, new ways of looking at these issues.”

Student posters were also displayed at the County’s booth at this year’s Scott County Fair. The year-long partnership provided Scott County with case studies, data analysis, concept plans, designs, and policy recommendations to build community resilience, and offered students in 20 classes the opportunity to tackle real projects as part of their coursework, working directly with County staff, residents, community-based organizations, and business owners. Next year, the County will continue its partnership with RCP to create an edible landscape and to investigate mobility hubs in a suburban context. You can also view all of the projects and final reports at www.rcp.umn.edu.