State Street Project Example
Malcolm Shabazz High School in Madison, Wisconsin

This project example documents collaborative work between schools in the Madison, Wisc. Metropolitan School District and the office of the Mayor. Students from Hamilton Middle and Malcolm Shabazz High Schools were asked to research ways to make a central city street more youth-friendly, while considering the concerns of merchants and property-owners. Their report, survey, and reflection instruments (included) illustrate how students might engage in service experiences that dig deeper, going into the realm of policy or advocacy work, and resulting in attainable and visible outcomes.

Project Overview
Students research ways to make State Street more “youth friendly” while allaying the fears of State Street merchants and property owners.

Population Served
- Youth in the area
- Customers of State Street
- The Mayor of Madison, WI

Type of Service
Direct

Academic Content
- English
- Urban planning

Goals
To research activity and attitudes about State Street.

Objectives
- Strengthen school community
- Strengthen leadership skills
- Help the community
- Work with the street merchants to come up with a mutually beneficial solution

Implementation and Resolution
Based on all of the information gathered and opinions expressed, Shabazz students in the class came to the conclusion that no single summer event or program would deal with the deeper problems of State Street and young people. The problems were much broader and needed a multi-layered approach. Our findings and recommendations fell into five categories: interaction of people; transportation and traffic flow; aesthetics and urban design; recreation/things to do; continued youth involvement.

Short-Term Recommendations
Our recommendation was for a summer project that would be a youth-orientated outdoor concert with a wide variety of music and food and little visible police presence.
Student Survey

Shabazz High School is working with the Mayor’s office and the University of Wisconsin’s Department of Urban and Regional Planning to come up with recommendations to improve State Street. The purpose of this survey is to gather the opinions of local high school students and share them with the Mayor’s office.

Please state your age ______
Male____ Female____
Ethnic background (optional) __________________________

1. Do you spend time on State Street? (please check only one)
   ___ Yes (if yes, please answer questions 3 through 12)
   ___ No (if no, please answer questions 2 and 12)

2. If “no,” what would make you want to go to State Street? Explain.

3. What do you do on State Street? (please check all that apply)
   ___ Eat    ___ Work
   ___ Entertainment ___ Hang out
   ___ Shopping: clothes ___ Shopping: music
   ___ Special events (Maxwell St. days)
   ___ Other (explain)

4. How often do you go to State Street? (please check only one)
   ___ Every day
   ___ Once every few months
   ___ Two or more times a week
   ___ Once a week
   ___ Once or twice a year

5. What time of year are you most likely to go? (please check only one)
   ___ Winter (Dec., Jan., Feb.)
   ___ Summer (June, July, Aug.)
   ___ Spring (March, April, May)
   ___ Fall (Sept., Oct., Nov.)

6. What time of day do you go to State Street? (please check only one)
   ___ Morning ___ Lunch time
   ___ Afternoon ___ Dinner time
   ___ Night

7. Where do you spend your time at? (please check all that apply)
   ___ Adult establishments
   ___ Food establishments
   ___ Clothing stores
   ___ Concrete Park (by Urban Outfitters)
   ___ Peace Park (across from Ella’s Deli)
   ___ The Loft (next to Dottie’s)
   ___ Convenience stores
   ___ Other (explain)

8. Please indicate how you feel about the following things. (Circle the number that corresponds with how you feel using the scale above.)

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9. How do you usually get there? (please check only one)
   ___ Bus ___ Roller blade ___ Car
   ___ Skateboard ___ Walk ___ Other
   ___ Bike

10. Who do you usually go to State Street with? (please check only one)
    ___ Friends ___ Yourself ___ Family ___ Other

11. Do you feel safe when you are on State Street? (please check only one)
    ___ yes ___ no

If “no,” please specify areas where you don’t feel safe, and in what ways you do not feel safe.

12. What changes would you like to make on State Street? (please be specific)
State Street Walk: An Environmental Scan

There are two goals of the State Street walk. First, we want to increase our understanding of the structure, layout and design of State Street — to try to see the street in a way that we may often overlook. Second, we want to enhance our observations and understanding of the assets and challenges facing State Street.

1. Where do people hand out, congregate, or gather?

2. What is it about State Street that encourages people to gather in a particular area?

3. What disencourages or hinders congregation, or hanging out?

4. What is there to do on State Street?

5. Is it easy to get around on State Street? Specifically, what do you see that makes it easy or difficult for people to get from place to place?

6. What one or two things stand out or catch your eye as you stand at the Capitol Square and look towards the University?

7. What one or two things stand out or catch your eye as you stand near the Library Mall and look toward the Capitol?

8. What do you smell on State Street? Where are the good and/or bad smells?

9. What is the most interesting building on State Street and why?

10. Which business, or businesses, have the best of most appealing store front and what is it that you like about it?

11. Which business, or businesses, have the worst or least appealing store front and what is it that you don’t like about it?

12. What areas or places on State Street would you classify as very noisy? What activity occurs here, or what kind of noise is it? Is it a good, acceptable noise or a bad, irritating noise?

13. Are there any quiet places on State Street? If so, where are they?

14. Knowing what businesses are currently on State Street, what types of businesses do you think are missing from State Street? Why?

15. Are there any businesses on State Street that you feel just don’t fit in or belong to State Street? Why?
Long-Term Recommendations

1. Interaction of people
   
   **Issue:** Students found that people wanted less harassment by drunks, panhandlers, and the mentally ill, but they also wanted a more positive and less visible police presence.

   **Recommendations:**
   - Stronger enforcement of the drinking laws including bars serving people obviously under the influence.
   - Police/citizen interaction and training. Volunteer members of the community would receive training in police responsibilities and procedures. They would then ride along (or walk along) with police officers as observers. Meetings would be held from time to time between police and community representatives to discuss what was learned and observed on both sides.
   - On State Street, police tended to congregate in only a few areas. We recommended that they be spread out, or that they rotate from place to place more frequently.

2. Transportation/Traffic Flow
   
   **Issue:** Even with most vehicles banned from State Street, there was a lot of congestion, especially on the sidewalks.

   **Recommendations:**
   - More easily accessible gathering places with benches, off the sidewalk.
   - Maintain State Street as a pedestrian mall with access only for buses and emergency vehicles.

3. Aesthetics/Urban Design
   
   **Issue:** State Street needed to be cleaner and more aesthetically pleasing.

   **Recommendations:**
   - Maintain State Street cleanliness perhaps by paying teens to do much of the maintenance throughout the year.
   - Create more gathering spaces with plants, trees, various kinds of music, and vendor carts.
   - Increase aesthetic appeal by creating murals on parking ramps, buildings facing empty parking lots, back walls of buildings or creating other public art. Young people should be involved in the creation of this art.

4. Recreation/Things To Do
   
   **Issue:** There is almost nothing available for teenagers to do on or near State Street. Students like the array of restaurants and music stores, but little else draws them to State Street. A genuine need of students is to “just hang.” While they want some activities they would also like safe, teen-orientated places.

   **Recommendations:**
   - Provide more youth-orientated concerts and festivals.
   - Provide a couple of places with different atmospheres where students could hang out, talk, play music with unobtrusive adult supervision. A skateboard part near State Street was mentioned frequently.
   - More frequent music, more diverse music, and more all-age places to hear music. While there is a diversity of music in the city, most places are limited to over-18 or over-21 patrons.
   - Inexpensive food and beverages available from more vendor carts.

5. Continued Youth Involvement
   
   **Issue:** There exists both a tension and a distrust between teens and the State Street owners and merchants. People need to know each other and to interact more frequently and more positively.

   **Recommendations:**
   - Create a forum/institute for youth to talk to city officials and the downtown merchants and stakeholders. Teens should have the opportunity several times a year to meet with adults who are invested in State Street.
Reflection Questions

1. “People can be divided into three groups: those who make things happen, those who watch things happen, and those who wondered what happened.” ~ Woody Allen

How does this quote relate to our service-learning project?

How do you personally relate to this quote? With which “group” did you identify before you took this class? What has changed as a result of this class?

2. “The care of human life and happiness is the first and only legitimate objective of good government.” ~ Thomas Jefferson

How does this quote relate to the responsibility of the Mayor’s office and city planners in the State Street Initiative?

3. “We have inherited a large house, a great ‘world house’ in which we have to live together. We can never again live apart, and must learn somehow to live with each other in peace.” ~ Martin Luther King, Jr.

How does this quote relate to the tensions between the “power brokers,” business owners, clientele, youth, and college students who have an investment in State Street?

4. “Community developers, planners, and local leaders need to do more to ensure that our [youth] have the knowledge and skills to become responsible and active community members in the future. This is achieved by teaching young people about civic responsibility and giving them the opportunity to learn it in a very practical sense.” ~ Connie Bodeen

What are some of the important ideas and concepts which you have learned as you participated in this service-learning project?

What are some of the skills that you learned and/or utilized as a participant in the State Street Initiative?

5. “If we teach [youth] now that they are an integral part of the community, that their voice matters and will be heard, they are that much more likely to believe that they are an integral part of the community as adults. They will have grown up as an active community member and will carry those experiences with them throughout their lives.” ~ Connie Bodeen

As you look to your future, do you see yourself staying involved in community activities and decision-making? If so, what kinds of things might you be doing? If not, why not?