

Area students gain experience in architecture, design

Written by Abeni Hill

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A group of students interested in environmental design recently completed a project centered on a possible light rail route.

Pictured: From left to right: Xee Xiong, Richard Xiong, Koa Vue, Samuel Ero-Phillips, Brandon Lee, Cheng and Alfredo. Ero-Phillips got involved because he was "interested in what Juxtaposition was doing for the community.

Photo courtesy of Samuel Ero-Phillips.

The program was a part of course presented by Juxtaposition Arts. Juxtaposition Arts, 2007 Emerson Ave. N, provides youth between the ages of eight and 21 with a creative outlet through programs in textile design, photography, drawing, painting, graphic design, and environmental design.

"We started the environmental design program seven years ago as a way for young people to better understand their ability to impact the community that they occupy," said Juxtaposition Arts Executive Director and Co-Founder Deanna Cummings. "Our (Juxtaposition Arts') focus is rising up young people." Cummings described Northside youth as, "the community's greatest asset."

Participants in the environmental design program recently presented ideas for light-rail transit. The students used two dimensional drawings and three dimensional models in their presentations. The students participating either just graduated high school or will be high school juniors or seniors in the fall.

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The project for the students was to design building structures around the light rail on the proposed Bottineau Transitway. Students Alfredo Perez, Brandon Lee, Cheng Lee, Kao Vue, Richard Xiong and Xee Xiong created models of a bike shop, coffee shop, and food co-op. These structures would be on each side of the light rail as it passes through at Broadway and Penn Ave.

In June 2011, the Bottineau Transitway was proposed to provide more transit opportunities for the northeastern part of the Twin Cities.

Architect and Environmental design instructor Samuel Ero-Phillips said he decided to give apprentices this project as a vision of what North Minneapolis could look like.

The group analyzed case studies, visited locations such as, The Wedge, and did a light rail tour during the eight-week program. Ero-Phillips said when the students first started the program not everyone was at the same level of design knowledge, but by the end of the project all the student provided valuable input.

"They came early and stayed late," said Ero-Phillips. He said the most rewarding part of the program was the finished project. "I am proud of them for sticking with it."

For more information about Juxtaposition arts and the programs they offer, visit <http://juxtaposition.org/>. For more information about the Bottineau Transitway and its developments, visit <http://bottineautransitway.org/about.htm>.