

The N.S. branch of API sponsored a “Meet & Greet” wine and cheese reception in conjunction with the annual Dalhousie Planning School Winter Module last Thursday evening, February 8, 2007 at Dalhousie. This year’s theme was “Making Great Streets” The reception was a prelude to the Design Charette: Street Visioning workshop “Street Utopia” which carried on for two hours following the reception. Both the reception and the charette exercise were well attended by students and participants in the day and half planning module. Prior to the charette and Prof. Frank Palermo’s inspirational “spur the troops on” address, yours truly gave a promo plug for our branch, API and CIP citing the benefits of membership.

The design charette was very spirited and some very imaginative ideas for three key HRM streets emerged. Yours truly was part of one of the co-winning teams of the charette. Converting Halifax’s Spring Garden Road” into a permanent walking street and opening up the Public Gardens year-round, 24-7 was two of the bold initiatives advanced to create “a great street” for HRM. The other co-winner was a team advocating some very interesting and radical changes for Quinpool Road. All and all, it was an interesting and fun night!

I was also an outside member with the student the planning team for the conference that featured some excellent presenters. The keynote speaker on Wednesday evening was Mark Childs, a noted professor from the University of New Mexico. Mark is the author of “Squares: A Public Place Design Guide for Urbanists”. The evening session was very well attended by the public, professional planners and students and was in conjunction with the Carmichael Lectures sponsored by the Downtown Halifax Business Commission.

The sessions on Thursday and Friday featured presenters from the Toronto based “Streets are People”, Art City from Winnipeg, NS Sport and Recreation, Halifax Regional Police Department, TRAX from the Ecology Action Centre, HRM planners Marcus Garnet (transit) and Andy Fillmore along with the Toronto consultant from Office for Urbanism (HRM’s Urban Design Plan) and a Participatory Design Process team from CBCL Consultants.

As usual, the conference organization by the students and the committee was very well done, the presentations very informative and timely and for the participants a very worthwhile and productive 2 days. Unfortunately, which usually is the case lacked sufficient participation from the decision makers (politicians and planners). Other than the two HRM planners that were on the program and a couple of others, there were only two from other N.S. municipalities and a couple from private planning enterprises. One has to ask, “Where were the planners”? Maybe things will change now that Continuous Professional Learning is now mandatory for those of us who wish to remain accredited. So much for my rant on participation!

Respectfully submitted,

Stan Kochanoff, MCIP, RCA # 427