



## Mount Baker Station Area Seattle, Washington

### University Of Michigan Wins

A team of students representing the **University of Michigan** has won the \$50,000 top prize in the 2011 Urban Land Institute (ULI) Gerald D. Hines Student Urban Design Competition with a redevelopment plan for a Seattle neighborhood

that emphasizes sustainability through neighborhood diversity, affordability, walkability and environmental conservation.



The Michigan team edged out teams from the University of Maryland, University of Oklahoma, and a second team from the University of Michigan in the final round of the competition, held March 31 in Seattle. The three finalist teams split \$30,000 in prize funds.

More than 760 students comprising 153 teams from 60 universities in the U.S. and Canada participated in this year's competition, which addressed Seattle's traffic congestion and sprawling network of auto-oriented neighborhoods and infrastructure. Students were charged with creating a design and development proposal for a 33.5 acre site around the Sound Transit system's Mount Baker light rail station, widely considered a key station that will define how the city will approach the opportunity to create more sustainable and transit-rich neighborhoods in the coming years.

The Mount Baker station, at the intersection of Rainier Avenue and Martin Luther King Jr. Way, is surrounded by property that is currently being used for large parking lots, two heavily-traveled thoroughfares, and single-family detached residential properties. The competition challenge: devising a scheme that would transform and brand the neighborhood with an identity, and serve as a benchmark for future development in the Greater Seattle region.

The winning proposal, "[Health-Oriented Urbanism in South-East Seattle, \(H.O.U.S.E.S.\)](#)," reorients the site to Rainier Avenue with a strong block pattern, effectively calming traffic throughout the district. The theme of creating a healthy integrated community was consistent throughout, showing a thoughtful and well-communicated conceptual framework. The plan

embodies four major aspects of sustainability: community health, economic health, environmental health, and individual health:

- Community health is promoted through social integration of diverse communities through the community center, community gardens, local small businesses, and farmers / crafts market.
- Economic health is accomplished through integrating different transportation systems and land uses, promoting diverse housing types, and reconfiguring existing big box retails.
- Environmental health is achieved by introducing green infrastructure and adding sustainable systems at the district and the building level to close environmental loops of energy, food and waste on site.
- Individual health is enhanced by walkability, easy bicycle access and by greening the environment. Extensive traffic calming improves pedestrian safety.



“This design is largely a reflection of rethinking contemporary urbanism to create more sustainable neighborhoods and livable, resilient cities,” said team member Sara Hadavi, PhD in landscape architecture. Other team members: Aditya Inamdar, master of urban design; Alex DeCamp, master of urban planning; Amir Hajrasouliha, master of urban design; and Michel Banna, master of urban design. Douglas Kelbaugh served as the faculty advisor to the team.

“The winning team conceived a plan with clear architectural character that showed an obvious hierarchy of spaces,” said Jury Chairman James A. Ratner, chairman and chief executive officer of the Forest City Commercial Group in Cleveland. “The plan addressed the transit issues and created a solution that gave pedestrians and bicycles an advantage. Their phasing strategy and its costs were artfully reflected in their financials.”

The development schemes from the other three teams in the final competition:

- **University of Maryland:** “[Pilot Point](#)” exhibited a strong site plan with a thoughtful reconfiguration of the development site’s urban fabric; highlighted by strong linkages to public transit and the Rainier Avenue corridor.
- **University of Oklahoma:** “[Rainier Boulevard](#)” articulated a clear and realistic development schedule and phasing plan that could conceivably transform the character of the existing development site. The public identity of this proposed neighborhood redevelopment, and its connection to the surrounding community, were conveyed through a strong visual presentation and statement of development objectives.
- **University of Michigan:** “[Rainier Valley Exchange](#)” is a locus for transit, cultures, and businesses distributed appropriately on a new street grid that completes the existing pattern. This overlay promotes permeability and integration with the neighborhood and maximizes the development’s town-center functions.

The competition is designed as an exercise; there is no intention that the students’ plans will be implemented as part of any development of the site. However, the schemes are expected to be realistic and practicable, incorporating the highest and best sustainable use, new economic

development activities, evidence of market support for those activities, and financial justification for their design decisions.

“Congratulations to ULI for creating excitement about good urban planning through the ULI Hines Student Urban Design Competition,” said Seattle Mayor Mike McGinn. “This year, Seattle is fortunate to have the leaders of tomorrow creating visions for making the Mount Baker station area an exciting, culturally rich, 21st century community hub.”

Added Diane Sugimura, director of the city’s Department of Planning and Development: “Many thanks to Hines for selecting Seattle this year ... we’re honored and excited. It isn’t often that we get some of the brightest young people from across the country thinking about how to create a truly great transit-oriented community.”

Seven team entries were also selected for honorable mention in the 2011 competition. Two honorable mentions for overall merit were awarded to the University of Pennsylvania with “Get Up and Go” and Massachusetts Institute of Technology with “Living Workshop.” In addition, the jury recognized five other entries for specific plan elements. The jury commended Harvard University with “Baker Square” for superior urban design; the University of Oregon with “Water Scapes” for comprehensive thinking about the water cycle; and the University of California at Berkeley with “Urban Catchment” for pedestrian linkage. For transit and transportation solutions, the jury recognized a joint team from North Carolina State University and the University of North Carolina with “A New Rainier” and the University of California at Berkeley with “Rainier Triangle.”

The competition jury consists of renowned experts in urban planning, design and development. In addition to Jury Chairman James A. Ratner, other jury members are: Martha Barkman, senior project manager, Harbor Properties, Seattle, Wash.; Dana Behar, president and CEO, HAL Real Estate Investments; Seattle, Wash.; Mimi Burns, principal, Dekker/Perich/Sabatini, Albuquerque, N.M.; Tom Cody, founder and managing partner, Project^, Portland, Ore.; Brian Cullen, founder and chair, Keane Enterprises, Inc., Washington, D.C.; Boris Dramov, principal, ROMA, San Francisco, Calif.; Bonnie Fisher, principal, ROMA, San Francisco, Calif.; Richard Heapes, co-founder and partner, Street-Works, White Plains, N.Y.; Jim Heid, founder, UrbanGreen, San Francisco, Calif.; Jeffrey D. Kune, managing director, BeaconRock Group, LLC, West Palm Beach, Fla.; Michael Lander, founder and president, Lander Group, Minneapolis, Minn.; and Peter S. Stone, principal, Trinity Real Estate, Seattle, Wash.

The ULI Gerald D. Hines Student Urban Design Competition was created in 2003 to encourage cooperation and teamwork—necessary talents in the planning, design and development of sustainable communities—among future land use professionals and allied professions, such as architecture, landscape architecture, urban planning, historic preservation, engineering, real estate development, finance, psychology and law. World-renowned real estate developer Gerald D. Hines, chairman and owner of the Hines real estate organization, has funded the competition in perpetuity through a \$3 million endowment.