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Public Affairs, Roger Williams University
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Faculty/student collaboration among business, architecture and historic preservation to be recognized by American Planning Association at awards ceremony tonight

RWU students analyze the mill property as background research for their preservation plan aimed to revitalize the abandoned manufacturing site.

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BRISTOL, R.I. – The Rhode Island chapter of the American Planning Association (APA) will award a group of 30 Roger Williams University students (some now recent alumni) and three faculty members for their success in creating a comprehensive redevelopment plan for an abandoned manufacturing property, the former site of The Conant Thread Company and Coats & Clark Mill Complex located on the border of Pawtucket and Central Falls. Through the Community Partnerships Center, business, architecture and historic preservation students worked together with Commerce RI, the Pawtucket Foundation and the two cities to produce a plan aimed at preserving and revitalizing the mill site, an area that has been vacant since 1964.
The student/faculty team will be awarded the Student Project Award tonight at the APA Rhode Island annual awards ceremony, which recognizes local projects, plans and individual leaders in the planning profession. The award is granted to an individual student or team of students for academic or applied research, studio projects, community service or other works related to community development or planning in Rhode Island. The project was selected as the winning entry by an awards committee that judged nominations based on innovation, collaboration and inclusiveness, among other factors.

Jeff Davis, leader of the APA Rhode Island awards committee, says the panel of judges was impressed with the level of collaboration and quality of work of the students’ mill site redevelopment plan. “The work of the RWU team was both holistic and actionable and would be impressive coming from seasoned professionals, let alone a team of students. We commend the Roger Williams students for their exceptional degree of collaboration on this project.”

The property at the mill complex includes two million square feet across more than a dozen buildings that were once used for residential, manufacturing, wholesale distribution and storage purposes. Recognizing its potential for economic revitalization and community development, Commerce RI partnered with the RWU faculty and students to evaluate the space and assess a wide scope of redevelopment factors, from historical and socioeconomic context to conservation priorities and economic development incentives.

The student faculty team produced a comprehensive redevelopment plan with historic preservation recommendations, potential reuse ideas and urban design plans as well as tactics for incentivizing business development. The plan proposes using the mill properties for educational, recreational, residential, artistic and commercial facilities, all while maintaining the historic fabric of the buildings and incorporating lower development costs through the use of tax credit incentives.

Working with three faculty members – Joel Cooper from the Mario J. Gabelli School of Business, Jeremy Wells from historic preservation and Edgar Adams from architecture – the 30 students researched and developed the revitalization plan for the Conant Thread Company and Coats & Clark Mill Complex. Those students include:

- Eryn Bass, a Class of 2014 graduate from Fly Creek, N.Y.
- Fabio Bicho, a senior from North Dartmouth, Mass.
- Ryan Bonassar, a senior from Cheshire, Conn.
- Leaha Bovino, a Class of 2014 graduate from Flemington, N.J.
- Natalie Brough, a Class of 2014 graduate from Pepperell, Mass.
- Elizabeth Cardarelli, a Class of 2014 graduate from Akron, Ohio.
- Nathaniel Carden, a Class of 2014 graduate from Coventry, R.I.
· Anthony D’Anton, a senior from Toms River, N.J.
· Elizabeth de Block, a Class of 2014 graduate from North Haledon, N.J.
· Eric Deitz, a graduate student from Towaco, N.J.
· Jacob Droogan, a senior from Fitchburg, Mass.
· Sloan Elsesser, a senior from New Milford, Conn.
· Chanel Flores, a Class of 2014 graduate from Montclair, N.J.
· Sean Henry, a graduate student from Cranston, R.I.
· Andrew Hernandez, a Class of 2014 graduate from Pawtucket, R.I.
· Natalie Holy, a Class of 2014 graduate from Bristol, R.I.
· Valtinen Kari, a graduate student from Bristol, R.I.
· Robert Michaud, a Class of 2014 graduate
· Corey Pacheco, a Class of 2014 graduate from New Bedford, Mass.
· Dylan Peacock, a Class of 2014 graduate from Cumberland, R.I.
· Casey Ray, a graduate student from Poland, Maine.
· John Riel, a senior from Sutton, Mass.
· Kara Scheffler, a senior from Southington, Conn.
· Amy Skrzek, a graduate student from Waltham, Mass.
· Wu Wei, a Class of 2014 graduate from Beijing, China.
· Ali Streit, a Class of 2014 graduate from Riverside, R.I.
· Nii Oko Tetteh, a Class of 2014 graduate from Ghana.
· Kelly Valois, a Class of 2014 graduate from Essex Junction, Vt.