

Illinois L.E.A.P. Team Wins at APA

Student members of the L.E.A.P. team won APA's inaugural Smart Cities Student Design Competition at the National Planning Conference in New York in May, which included a \$1,000 prize. The team included 5 graduate planning students—Dijia Chen, Gavin Wong, and Junghwan Kim, Richa Singh, and Amanda Wolfe. The team's creative approach to identifying a four-part vision-- L.E.A.P. to a Smart Future--detailed how Smart City technologies could be used to improve Livability, Empowerment, Accessibility, and Play on site. The competition was sponsored through a partnership with the APA's Smart Cities and Sustainability Initiative, the APA's Division Council, and Student Representatives Council, which offered student teams from across the country the opportunity to learn about how Smart City technologies are changing our communities. Teams were given the task to develop public and private smart city solutions for a proposed vacant block in the Chelsea area of New York City. The site was connected to the greater Lower Manhattan area via a New York City transit bus stop, the Hudson River Greenway, and the High Line Project, as a means to encourage students to think beyond the project boundary. Eleven student teams representing colleges and universities from all regions of the country submitted a poster and a report detailing their place-based Smart City solutions. Interdisciplinary teams with other students from our allied professions such as architects landscape architects, engineers, etc. were encouraged. An independent jury of planning professionals evaluated each team on their creativity and quantity of Smart City ideas; quality of research, writing, and document preparation; quality of their physical design; and approach to team collaboration. From that evaluation, five finalist teams were selected to present their project at the National Planning Conference in New York City, including **two** teams from Urbana: L.E.A.P. and The All-Nighters. Each finalist team presented an overview of their design, discussed their collaboration and approach to the project, and otherwise presented their case as to why their design deserved to be the winner. We are very proud of both of our finalist teams! (Source: Matt Bucchin, AICP for the APA Blog)