



PARTNERSHIP for ACTION LEARNING in SUSTAINABILITY

The Partnership for Action Learning in Sustainability (PALS) at the University of Maryland (UMD) is a new, campus-wide initiative that enlists faculty expertise and student ingenuity to offer fresh solutions to challenges facing Maryland communities. Administered by the National Center for Smart Growth at UMD, the PALS mission is to provide high-quality, low-cost assistance to local governments while creating an active and valuable real-world learning experience for UMD graduate and undergraduate students.

The collaborative partnership created through PALS aims to provide communities with a unique roadmap for creating sustainable, thriving places to live, work and play. Governments gain access to the depth of knowledge and experience of UMD faculty along with the ingenuity and enthusiasm of UMD students. Concurrently, UMD students reap the benefits of engaging with the community while applying course material and critical thinking skills to sustainability-focused projects.

Targeted, customized coursework, created by self-selected faculty across a wide range of disciplines, captures the partner community's specific issues. The results are innovative ideas and solutions to help Maryland communities secure a more economically, environmentally and socially sustainable future.

How does PALS work?

PALS collaborates with interested communities to pinpoint challenges and, acting as a campus-wide liaison, helps coordinate a series of suitable courses specifically aimed at developing solutions for the partner city or county. These courses then adopt the projects as case studies or applied exercises and conduct site visits as necessary. Once a partnership is created, a Memorandum of Understanding is drafted. PALS coordinates and manages the University side of the work while the partner jurisdiction coordinates and manages their side.

Who is eligible to participate in PALS?

Any city or county can apply to PALS. Commitments are usually made a year in advance in late summer. The partnership requires a one-year commitment, assistance with coordination and a modest financial contribution to defray faculty, student and administrative expenses.

The National Center for Smart Growth

The NCSG is a cooperative venture of four schools on the University of Maryland's College Park campus: Agriculture and Natural Resources; Architecture, Planning and Preservation; Engineering; and Public Policy. Since its inception in 2000, the NCSG has established an international reputation for rigorous and objective research, education and technical assistance.





PALS to date

PALS has worked in three Maryland cities over the past 1½ years: Salisbury, Frederick and College Park. The program is about to begin the 2015/2016 academic year in Howard County with 33 courses and 400 students. Below is a selected list of projects:

Salisbury, Spring 2014

- Envision Salisbury, a master plan for Downtown

City of Frederick, 2014–2015

Economic & Community Development

- Downtown architectural tour guide
- Economics of historic preservation
- Reimagining the North East Street corridor
- East Frederick Rising industrial redevelopment
- Development plans for surplus city properties
- The potential for the airport and convention center
- Alternative plans for key site on Monocacy Blvd

Environment

- Composting and organics recovery
- Greenhouse gas inventory
- Remedying algae in Carroll Creek
- Climate change and the Frederick watershed
- Widening Route 15: traffic and GHG implications
- Designing the shared use path
- Reconciling recreation and stewardship in the watershed

Social

- Video journalism/feature articles on City themes
- Outreach to minority-owned businesses
- Mapping neighborhood identities

College Park, Spring 2015

- Greenhouse Gas Inventory
- Improving solid waste management practices
- Making Place: public art and design
- College Town: enhancing the urban life of College Park

Howard County, Columbia Association, 2015–2016

Economic & Community Development

- Route. 1: Workforce development and revitalization
- Business models for profitable farming-small farms
- Economics of Local Agriculture: food hubs
- Oakland Mills Village Center redevelopment
- Fostering economic vibrancy in historic Ellicott City
- Fostering innovation networks
- An app for historic sites county-wide
- Video-journalism/feature articles on county themes
- Lake Kittamaquundi plaza master plan

Environmental

- Green infrastructure networks
- Regional Patapsco greenway
- Public emergency notification system
- Evidence based practices for Corrections programs
- Climate change and hazard mitigation
- Private Sector energy conservation
- South Fulton Park master plan
- Rails to trails conversion
- Managing edges in Columbia's open space

Social

- Aging within the community and aging in place
- Developing a neighborhood stabilization index
- Bridging the benefits cliff
- Regional Impact on HoCo's Homeless Plan
- First responders challenges county wide
- Get Benched: ID need and placement of benches
- Predictive models and responses for emergencies
- Changing demographics/vulnerable communities
- Revitalization Program for older neighborhoods
- How to generate more civic engagement
- Oral Histories from Columbia

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