

Students' Albion leads view of the

By Mark Coddington

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This week, Albion leaders got to see 45 envelope-pushing building designs to realize their town — and even one came free of charge.

The designs were created by graduate students at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln College of Architecture, the culmination of a semester-long class using Albion as a test site to envision designs for small-town renewal.

For students, the class was an opportunity to gain experience working with actual clients to help find solutions to a community's functional problems.

"It fits very well with the work of a professional practice," said Dean of Architecture Wayne Drummond.

For Albion, the class ideas have expanded community leaders' vision of what the town can be, and they could be a catalyst for further development.

"We have gotten designs of things we've never even conceived of," said Paul Ford of Albion, who coordinated the project with his wife Lori. "It's been a very fundamental shift in the way we look at our community."

The designs — from each member of the 15-person class — have been on display in the state Capitol all week. They include ideas for just about every area of town, with projects such as a restaurant, a care center, bus terminal and senior-citizen-oriented housing development.

Many of the projects focus on downtown, the area that drew much of the class's attention after an initial visit to Albion in early September.

The class focused on bringing more people downtown and making it more attractive to visitors, Ford said.