

# SUPAR

## School for Urban Planning and Architecture

### Mission

The School for Urban Planning and Architecture (SUPAR) is a 4-year high school that works to bring high school students to proficiency, prepare them to pursue successful careers, and introduce them to the skills and professions involved in planning, designing, and transforming communities to create a better future. Located at 32<sup>nd</sup> and Burnham on Milwaukee's near southside, SUPAR opened in August 2007.

### Vision

SUPAR will create a learning community in which every individual is empowered and supported to do their best work. Students will achieve proficiency in math, science, literature, composition, and social studies through project-based learning focused on a wide range of issues that will engage students in problem-solving and knowledge acquisition. In addition, students will learn interpersonal communication and build leadership skills while developing their own self-confidence. Students at SUPAR are supported to learn self-discipline; students are responsible for their own learning in a supportive school environment.

Talented professionals in urban planning and architecture, along with community partners, will support teachers in creating this engaged learning environment. Through these partnerships and mentoring relationships, students will be highly motivated to make a difference in their communities and to achieve their own development for future success. Students will learn through a wide range of experiences in the community, including job shadowing, service projects, and internships.

Through regular contacts with UWM faculty and students and visits to the UWM campus, students will develop a sense of familiarity and belonging in a college environment. Students will learn directly about a range of career choices in the fields of planning, design, and community building. Following graduation, students may choose other career paths, but all will continue to be engaged with their communities, applying the skills they learned at SUPAR to create equitable, prosperous, and sustainable communities.

### History

In 2004 Dr. Kirk E. Harris, a faculty member at UWM's School of Architecture and Urban Planning (SARUP), felt that there was something that UWM should be doing to address the lack of quality educational opportunities available in Milwaukee. He was intrigued by developing a high school to achieve the following goals:

*Increase retention and graduation rates for high school students in Milwaukee.* Kirk recognized that cities like Milwaukee are not going to "come back" as long as their schools are failing, and African-Americans, in particular, are not going to succeed as long as city schools are failing to serve them successfully;

*Provide a stronger link between our program and grassroots neighborhood organizations by working together on a long-term project—the high school;*

*Provide opportunities for our faculty and students to increase our cultural competence by working with a wide range of social and cultural groups through the high school; and*

*Increase the awareness of city youth and adults in the possibilities of pursuing a career in planning and architecture, potentially increasing minority enrollment in planning and architecture programs.*



## **History** (continued)

Kirk took the concept to the Urban Planning faculty. The faculty was both enthusiastic and cautious; the benefits that Kirk identified fit well with the department's values and aspirations, but the small faculty thought the undertaking would be too overwhelming. The faculty arrived at a strategy to explore the feasibility of the idea. In the Spring of 2004, Dr. Harris taught a class focusing on the small steps to start a high school. The conclusion of the course was a report that detailed necessary steps and determined that such an effort would be worth pursuing.

By fall 2005 core constituents formed a planning team consisting of diverse experiences and viewpoint. The planning team's first goal was to develop the mission, vision, and curricular approach in order to submit a grant proposal to an intermediary organization in Milwaukee, the Technical Assistance and Leadership Center, that could provide a start up grant and technical assistance. In the spring of 2006, SARUP was selected to receive funding.

The next challenge was to obtain a charter to enable the school to open and operate. In the spring of 2006, the planning team received a charter with Milwaukee Public Schools. Since that point, the planning team formed committees to make the school a reality: organization, outreach, finance, and curriculum. One particularly successful event was a curriculum charette hosted by SARUP to get community and "expert" input on the school's curriculum.

After a lot of hard work, SUPAR opened its door to students in the fall of 2007. Now it is time to get a board of directors in place that can continue the job of the planning team, ensuring adherence to the mission and garnering resources to contribute to the School's success.



## **Curricular Focus and Partnerships**

SUPAR is a public, chartered high school. Students achieve proficiency in math, science, literature, composition, and social studies through project-based learning focused on a wide range of problems that engages students in problem-solving and knowledge acquisition.

Talented professionals in urban planning and architecture, along with community partners, support teachers in creating this engaged learning environment. Through these partnerships and mentoring relationships, students are highly-motivated to make a difference in their communities and to achieve their own development for future success. By collaborating with professionals and community leaders, SUPAR students are able to experience first hand the challenges that these individuals face, and get to provide support to them by helping to fashion solutions.

SUPAR students and faculty will benefit from ongoing access to resources available at UWM. These resources include: faculty expertise for professional development and other support for SUPAR teachers, contacts to the business and non-profit community for curriculum project ideas and resources, materials and technological resources. SUPAR students will receive regular exposure to UWM and will be able to achieve a comfort level in an institution of higher learning.



### **Outcomes and Impacts**

Pursuant to the specific educational program we will offer at SUPAR, expected student outcomes include:

- An understanding of social justice and equity
- A thorough understanding of design and planning concepts, and an ability to apply these concepts to solve problems
- An ability to effectively advocate for themselves, their neighborhood, their community
- The experience of turning vision into reality, and knowing how to adequately evaluate outcomes and make improvements
- The capacity to successfully communicate in a variety of settings, including public speaking, small group discussion, and in writing
- An improved degree of comfort in the university setting and the workplace, whether or not they choose to pursue higher learning
- An awareness of surroundings; an understanding of how things tick and a development of the creativity and drive required to bring about positive change

### **Structure and Governance**

At the day-to-day level of operations, SUPAR operates with a teacher cooperative structure. Every teacher and staff member is a member of the cooperative. The lead teacher is the point person to MPS and designated as the "person in charge," although teachers make decisions collectively. Twice weekly teachers meet to discuss concerns such as addressing parental issues, student issues, educational program issues, and issues related to MPS administrative requirements.

SUPAR is governed by a board of directors, the School Governance Council. Parents of SUPAR students will represent the majority on the School Governance Council. The Council will also consist of representatives of community based organizations and practicing professionals in fields relevant to architecture and urban planning, as well as business and civic leaders. Recruitment for the School Governance Council began in September 2007 and will continue through the Fall 2007. The School Governance Council will also serve as the board for this non-profit, overseeing budget, major programmatic endeavors, and policy approval

SUPAR is an established non-profit corporation in the State of Wisconsin. SUPAR has pursued 501(c)(3) status with the federal government . SUPAR's 501(c)(3) application is pending approval. Once approved, donations made to support SUPAR's programs and activities will qualify as tax-deductible by the IRS.

### **Duties of SUPAR's Board of Directors**

The most essential duty of the School Governance Council is to ensure that SUPAR's culture, curriculum, and programs, continue to be aligned with the school's mission: to bring high school students to proficiency, prepare them to pursue successful careers, and introduce them to the skills and professions involved in planning, designing, and transforming communities to create a better future.

To this end the School Governance Council is responsible for the following duties:

- Garnering in-kind resources that will be used for professional development, student projects, career, academic, and personal development of students;
- Raising additional funds to support the school's program;
- Evaluate, make recommendations, and implement enhancements to the educational program; and
- Providing oversight over the school and nonprofit budget

*Please contact Kirk E. Harris at 708-955-3015 for more information.*