All students in the MCRP Program are required to complete one of three completion requirements: a Masters Thesis, which is a scholarly research paper, a Comprehensive Examination, or a Professional Project.

The professional project option allows the student to engage in solving a real-world planning problem as a focused professional task. It is representative of the caliber of work done in a professional planning setting (public agency, planning firm, non-profit organization, etc.). The student designs, conducts, analyzes and reports on an area of inquiry related to the needs of a client. This option requires completion of CRP 596: Professional Project (4 credit hours).

**Definitions**

Professional Project—A demonstration of capability based on a real-world planning task or a carefully constructed simulation, carried out in a manner that demonstrates excellence in professional judgment and competence. It applies a planning approach to the task at hand. The project can be undertaken independently, or as part of a team working on a specified task. If the student is a member of a team, he or she must have a leadership role on the team. For example, the student may participate as a team member that is preparing a master housing plan for a local community agency, or work independently to construct a manual for use in creating Historic Preservation Programs for small towns.

Product—A professional project demonstrates diagnostic, analytic and synthesizing capabilities in the context of an actual planning task. A professional project is a communication document (written or visual) in form and content. It is a completed professional endeavor.

**Substance and Scope of the Professional Project**

The professional project must have a client, a task, and an end product. A committee composed of a faculty chairperson and two other members will oversee the professional project. Establishing a committee and preparing a project outline for researching relevant aspects and making plans for conducting the project are necessary prior to enrolling in CRP 596: Professional Project.

The client can be actual or generic. For example, an actual client could be the local city planning department. A generic client could be all uses of state water in state recreation areas and parks. The identification of the client provides of the project report.

The task is what is being done for the client. For example, the City of Albany Department of Parks and Recreation may be in need of a plan for open space trails. The task becomes the
analysis, design, and report writing of the trails plan. Defining the task requires discussion with the committee and the client, as well as an understanding of the literature and what has been done by others in the field.

The end product is the Professional Report. The structure of the professional report is decided upon by the student and committee. The document is the end product of the planning process that includes designing, conduction, analyzing, and reporting on the work. The report format can take many forms from a written document to a set of drawings or a video tape. The form of the report is a function of the task and of the client needs.

The professional project is undertaken first as part of the educational experience, and second as part of the client’s work program. Thus, the final quality, level of analysis, structure and organization of the report shall also meet the requirements of the committee.

Steps in the Process

I. Identify a Project Topic. Topics are identified through experiences in actual agency settings, personal interests, faculty recommendations, courses related to research and practice, class projects and by reading reports of professional agencies and firms. The topic is developed and refined through exploring ideas and circumstances that interest you.

Students who have planning internships or part-time planning jobs may identify a task through discussions with their colleagues and supervisors, or as part of the agency work program. For example, a local city planning office that needs a noise element for a comprehensive plan can become the client for this task. A faculty member working with a community water users association that may need a program developed for preservation and conservation of water systems is another example.

Projects can be identified by looking at the type of professional documents prepared by agencies and firms which work in an area of interest to the student.

II. Create a project prospectus that includes a statement of the task, client and the client’s specific needs. Describe the central task by telling what it is, why it was chosen, why the client wants it done, and to what use it will be put. Describe the methodology required to complete the work. Describe what kinds of data collection, manipulation, and analysis will be used, and why there were chosen.

III. Identify a Professional Project Committee. The committee is composed of a faculty chairperson from within the City and Regional Planning Department, a second regular faculty member from within the College of Architecture and Environmental Design, and a third person who can be from the outside the department, college, or university.