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A New Way for SPA Students to Engage in Local Planning Issues

By Student Advocates for Progressive Planning (SAPP)

The USF MURP program is fortunate to have two active student organizations. The Student Planning Organization (SPO) focuses on professional development and encourages student engagement with classmates and the larger planning community. Student Advocates for Progressive Planning (SAPP) is a new organization open to all students in the School of Public Affairs.

SAPP is an issues-based political engagement organization that unites student voices behind best practices in urban planning, economic development, and social and environmental justice on campus and beyond. As an advocacy-oriented organization, SAPP complements the Student Planning Organization (SPO), and most of our members are active in both organizations. SAPP provides students with the support, skills, and opportunities to put into practice the principles they study in class: striving for sustainable urban development, racial justice, affordable housing, clean energy, and more.

Students who join SAPP are provided with free workshops on skills such as how to lobby elected officials, how to give a public comment, and how to win elections. Each monthly general meeting has two parts: an educational or skill-share workshop and an action-oriented activity where students will write a letter to an elected official, paint a poster, sign a petition for a progressive planning policy, or learn a new tool for exercising their voice.



One of SAPP's current campaigns is supporting a fiscally-responsible budget for the brand new 1% transportation sales tax in Hillsborough County to ensure that a large share of funding will go to public transportation and safe bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure. Another ongoing campaign involves pressuring the City of Tampa Government to bring permanent benches back to Lykes Gaslight Park in Downtown Tampa. Last year, SAPP organized a bike lane painting activity on USF Transportation Day in front of CUTR (the Center for Urban Transportation Research) on the USF Tampa campus to demonstrate an easy bike safety infrastructure improvement. Students are also encouraged to bring new ideas and campaigns to the group's attention.

The ultimate goal of the organization is to train students who are quickly becoming experts in their field to engage with the decision-makers who have the power to make their ideas come to life. SAPP provides a supportive environment for students to share their passion for justice and change, while exchanging and exploring new ideas. Students are truly the experts in their field and they should feel empowered to flex their knowledge to change their world.

Join ***Student Advocates for Progressive Planning*** on **BullSync** or **send an email** to the current President Samuel Becker. **Like us on Facebook** to be updated on current events and monthly meetings!