

## **Ron Sessoms Commitment to Community Planning**

Ron Sessoms is a master's student in the School of Architecture's Master of Urban Design (MUD) program. Unlike many of his peers, his background comes in the form of urban planning rather than the architectural skills normally seen in the program. "Ron entered our program specifically to learn design skills to complement his planning knowledge," says David Walters, UNC Charlotte Professor and Director of the MUD program. "This combination which he sees (correctly in my opinion) as one of the most appropriate skill sets for advancement in our shared professional enterprise of improving America's towns and cities."

According to Sessom's, the demographics of North Carolina, and the nation are shifting. "This shift has created a need to address community changes on a variety of levels including social and economic," he explains. His resume includes numerous community and small town projects in the state including the Evans Street Gateway Project in Greenville, the Town of Aurora Waterfront Redevelopment Plan, and the Winterville Comprehensive pedestrian Plan.

This commitment to community planning earned Sessoms the 2011 North Carolina American Planning Association (NCAPA) Diversity Scholarship. The NCAPA Diversity Scholarship was created to increase diversity in the planning profession by fostering increased interest among minority students in the field of urban planning. The \$1,000 scholarship is open to graduate and undergraduate minority students majoring in urban planning, urban design, urban studies, geography or public administration at an accredited university in the state of North Carolina.

"Receiving this prestigious award is truly inspirational," says Sessoms. "It has helped further enforce my strong work ethic in urban design and to strive for even greater success both academically and professionally."

At UNC Charlotte, he designed an independent study focusing on representational graphics, but through the medium of an actual "Main Street" revitalization project of a small town in eastern North Carolina. During the semester, he worked with stakeholders in the community to deliver a new vision for the area that is attractive yet achievable.

"I have rarely seen a student work so hard and so effectively to improve his skills," praises Walters. "Skills specific to the purpose of putting those talents at the service of communities in need."