

USP 475-575 – The Urban Design Workshop: Casing the City

Fall 2024

Overview

A city is a complex human-made organism, a continuously unfolding drama that, at its best, inspires the imagination and enriches the human prospect. Historically cities have been the loci of social, cultural, economic, and ecological innovation enabled by an intense metabolism of knowledge, energy, nutrient, material, financial and cultural flows, and interactions that animate complex and vibrant forms of community life. By the year 2030 it is estimated that about 60% of humanity will be urban residents while in the US the number will be closer to 90%. Will these dwellers be victims of un-designed and poorly planned urbanization or residents of great cities?

This course will expose students to the basic elements of building great cities. Streets, plazas, gardens, blocks and neighborhoods comprise the designed public environment and are the urban designer's primary kit of parts. We will spend the first portion of the fall quarter outdoors (yes outdoors!) exploring examples of these elements and wrestling with such questions as: What makes a great street? A memorable plaza? A welcoming garden? A functional block? A beloved neighborhood? How can designers integrate the art and science of placemaking into the creation of great neighborhoods and cities? During our field work we will "read" examples of these urban design elements to discern their intent, underlying principles, materiality, and dimensionality. We will record how these elements afford human behavior patterns (or not) and develop a language with which to document our findings. We will synthesize our work into a sharable catalogue of urban diagrams, to be drawn upon in your future work.

Objectives

The purpose of "Casing the City" is to provide planning and design students with a practical grounding in the elements of urban placemaking. This field-oriented course will:

- Familiarize students with the urban design "kit of parts"—streets, parks, plazas, activity nodes, gardens, blocks and neighborhoods-- that is foundational to urban placemaking.
- Develop skills to see, read, sketch and diagram urban public space.
- Expose students to the principles underlying great streets, public places and neighborhoods.
- Develop an understanding of urban metabolism: how cities function and how resource flows provide social, economic, and ecological function and animate public places; and
- Create a resource base of hard and soft patterns for use in future urban design, planning and architecture studios as well as professional practice work.

Themes

Underpinning our tactile city adventures will be a series of themes which we will integrate into our analyses, sketching and recording. These include:

- The legible city: How to make a memorable city by incorporating the cognitive elements-- paths, nodes, landmarks, districts, edges and gateways—humans use to navigate the city.
- The public city and the private city: How cities provide degrees of privacy and publicness in urban fabric.

- The defensible city: How “eyes on the street”, territoriality and active street life create safe city places.
- The Open City: Strategies for breaking down barriers, planning for adaptive uses over time and
- The City as a kit of parts: How to read the city and create a toolkit of precedents that can be drawn upon to inform placemaking.
- The City as urban metabolism: How resilient urban fabric holds integrated patterns of energy, water, materials, information, money and food flows and transactions and why this web of flows should be intentionally designed into public infrastructure... and celebrated.
- The spatial-temporal city: How cities evolve over time and change by season and how to design for this.

Schedule

This course will meet every Thursday of the quarter from 3:00 PM – 6:40 PM.

- **Locations: TBD either at a designated place in the field, SERA Architects, or in CH 383.**
- **Week 1: 10/03/24 -- Course overview, Field work**
- **Week 2: 10/10/24 – Field work, cheat sheets due**
- **Week 3: 10/17/24 – Field work**
- **Week 4: 10/24/24 – Field work, A Tale of Two Main Streets: Planned vs. Organic**
- **Week 5: 10/31/24 – Field work: Anatomy of a Node, final project area selection and teams due**
- **Week 6: 11/07/24 -- Interlude: Final project areas analysis, sketch book reviews, book discussions**
- **Week 7: 11/14/24 -- Field work TBD, Opportunities and Constraints due**
- **Week 8: 11/21/24 – Concept Design draft, urban design principles, project reviews**
- **Week 9: 11/28/24 -- Thanksgiving holiday; Class on either Monday 11/25/24 or 12/02/24 TBD**
- **Week 10: 12/05/24 – Final project dry run, independent book review due. Sketchbooks due.**
- **Week 11: Week of 12/09/24 Final presentation – December 7**

Required Course Materials

You will need a sketchbook (**minimum 8-1/2” x 11”**), sketching pens, pencils, scales, a tape measure, a means to digitally record places and use patterns, comfortable, warm, water-resistant clothing and comfortable, water-resistant shoes. Please bring these materials to the first class on October 3 as we will be spending class time out in the field.

Assignments

Each student will:

1. Maintain a sketchbook within which to record field exercises, and which will serve as a basis for their final project. Each student will develop a graphic “language” to express field work findings. The instructors will review sketchbooks with students to assess progress and offer critique.
2. Enter into their sketchbook an urban design “cheat sheet” for handy reference during the walking tours and project design work. This will be a one-two page summary containing all the urban design elements/principles covered in the introductory presentation.
3. Undertake an analysis of an urban neighborhood, recording and analyzing its kit of parts, cognitive elements, underlying principles, public-private interfaces, human behavior affordances and urban metabolic flows. This work will be undertaken either individually or with a class partner to be determined by study area size and complexity. Each student (or team) will provide an assessment of how successful the neighborhood and its elements are and propose conceptual design responses to address selected shortcomings. Each student (or team) will present their findings and recommendations in graphic format to the class and invited guests at a final presentation.
4. Required Reading: Each student will read and become conversant with the ideas elucidated in:
 - The Image of The City, Kevin Lynch
 - Building and Dwelling: Ethics for the City, Richard Sennett

and create a two-three-page summary of one of the following to share with the class:

- A Theory of Good City Form, Kevin Lynch
- The Death and Life of Great American Cities, Jane Jacobs
- The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces, William Whyte
- Feminist City, Leslie Kern
- How to Study Public Life, Gehl and Svarre
- Smooth City Smooth City: Against Urban Perfection, Toward Collective Alternatives, Boer
- Designing Disorder: Experiments and Disruptions in the City, Sendra and Sennett
- Biophilic Cities: Integrating Nature into Urban Design and Planning, Beatley

Or...Another book from the list below.

Additional References

- The places we visit during our Portland adventures together
- Making Massive Small Change: Building the Urban Society We Want, Kelvin Campbell
- Defensible Space, Newman
- Great Streets, Jacobs
- The Boulevard Book, Jacobs
- City Planning According to Artistic Principles, Sitte
- City Comforts: How to Build an Urban Village, Sucher
- Making EcoDistricts: Concepts and Methods for Advancing Sustainability in Neighborhoods, Seltzer, Smith, Cortright et al, Introduction and Chapter 1.
- Cities as Sustainable Ecosystems, Newman and Jennings
- The City as a System: Metabolic Design for New Urban Forms & Functions, Dooghe et al
- Going Public: Public Architecture, Urbanism and interventions, Gestalten

- A New Theory of Urban Design, Alexander, Neis et al
- Pattern Language, Alexander, Ishikawa, Silverstein et. al.
- Life Between Buildings, Gehl
- Street Fight: Handbook for an Urban Revolution, Sadik-Khan
- The City Assembled, Kostof
- Tactical Urbanism: Short-Term Action for Long-Term Change, Lydon & Garcia
- The Poetics of Space, Bachelard
- Welcome to Your World: How the Built Environment Shapes Our Lives, Goldhagen
- Town and Square, Paul Zucker

Instructor

Timothy W. Smith, FAICP, AIA

Tim Smith is Principal Emeritus and founder of the Urban Design and Planning Studio at SERA Architects, a Portland firm that offers integrated services in architecture, urban design, planning, and sustainability consulting. He is a registered architect, certified planner, and a Fellow in the American Institute of Certified Planners with over 40 years of professional experience. Tim is passionate about the art and science of placemaking, and his work is aimed at creating whole and beautiful places that enrich the human experience and integrate nature at the aesthetic and systemic levels. His work spans a variety of scales, from the site, block and neighborhood to the community, campus, city, and region.

His recent work includes long-range framework planning and urban design for both Google and Stanford University in Silicon Valley, the master plan and development guidelines for Liwa, a new capital city for the Western Region of Abu Dhabi, concept, numerous community revitalization and urban design projects throughout the Pacific Northwest, numerous campus plans and award-winning projects and research in sustainable urban design and city planning. Tim has served as urban design advisor to the San Francisco Mayor's Office for the Redevelopment of Treasure Island in San Francisco Bay and to the Portland Development Commission for the Redevelopment of the South Waterfront in Portland. He was the lead urban designer for the Avenue of the Arts, the one-mile long, primary north-south streetscape that anchors Philadelphia's downtown arts district.

Tim developed Civic Ecology, a citizen-driven, whole systems framework for community design and has helped implement the framework in numerous communities nationally and internationally. He co-authored *Making EcoDistricts: Concepts and Methods for Advancing Sustainability in Neighborhoods*, authored *Civic Ecology: A Citizen-Driven Framework for Transforming Suburban Communities*, delivered a TEDx talk on Civic Ecology and lectures widely on the topic. Tim is currently a founding partner of InfraCenters LLC, a regenerative infrastructure development firm specializing in integrated, net-zero carbon, equitable community-scaled infrastructure design and development.

Tim has served as Vice President of the Portland Planning Commission, on the Portland Chapter AIA Urban Design Committee, the Portland Mayor's Central City Roundtable, and as a member of the City of Portland EcoDistrict Technical Advisory Committee.

Tim holds a B.S. and an M Arch. from the University of Michigan and an M. C. P. and M. Arch. in Urban Design from the University of Pennsylvania where he taught urban design studios in the School of

Design. He has taught urban design studios and workshops at the University of Oregon and Portland State University.

Access and Inclusion for Students with Disabilities

PSU values diversity, equity, and inclusion. My goal is to create a learning environment that is accessible, equitable, inclusive, and welcoming. I am committed to fostering mutual respect and full participation for all students. If any aspects of instruction or course design result in barriers to your inclusion or learning, the Disability Resource Center (DRC) provides accommodations in the learning environment.

If you have, or think you may have, a disability that may affect your work in this class and feel you need accommodations, contact the DRC to schedule an appointment and initiate a conversation about reasonable accommodations. The DRC works with students who have physical, learning, cognitive, mental health, sensory, chronic illness, and all other disabilities.

If you already have accommodations: Please contact me to make sure that I have received your Faculty Notification Email, and to discuss your accommodations.

The DRC is located in Smith Memorial Student Union, Suite 116. You can also contact the DRC at 503-725-4150, drc@pdx.edu, or visit the DRC website (<https://www.pdx.edu/disability-resource-center>).