

Course Syllabus



Nohad A. Toulan School of Urban Studies and Planning

USP 524: Site Planning (3 credits)

Spring 2025

Thursdays 6:40p – 9:20p

Instructor: Brian Davis, AICP

Pronouns: he/him

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Office hours by arrangement

Course Overview and Objectives

This course is intended to provide a high-level survey of the key elements of site planning, from analysis to the actual preparation of site plans for hypothetical building or public programs. The course serves as a building block for careers preparing or examining site plan submittals, and prepares students for more intensive study in urban design and real estate development in subsequent courses. It features a heavy emphasis on skillbuilding, and frames site planning as an exercise in placemaking, introducing students to the concept of "reading the city" in the process.

Course Format

The class will be presented in a collaborative format, with lectures from the instructor and from several professional guests, interactive discussion and debate, and student presentations and critiques. The emphasis will be on learning pragmatic details of the preparation and review of site plans and this will include many opportunities for design and other creative endeavors. You will progressively build an understanding of site planning with analysis of underutilized urban sites in Portland, which serve as an entry point to many bigger picture planning concepts.

Theme

Each year in Site Planning, we highlight a particular urban planning trend or problem and focus our work around delivering site plans that are responsive to this topic. This year's theme will focus on **the**

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>).

Title IX Prohibited Discrimination and Harassment Policy and Resources

Portland State is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of prohibited discrimination and sexual harassment (sexual assault, domestic and dating violence, gender or sex-based harassment and stalking). If you have experienced any form of sexual harassment, know that help and support are available. PSU has staff members trained to support survivors in navigating campus life, providing academic support and more. Information about PSU's support services on campus, including **confidential services** (<https://www.pdx.edu/womens-resource-center/sexual-and-relationship-violence-response-program>) and **reporting options** (<https://www.pdx.edu/sexual-assault/reporting-options>), can be found on PSU's **Sexual Misconduct Response** (<https://www.pdx.edu/sexual-assault/get-help>) website or you may call a Confidential Advocate at 503.894.7982 or by scheduling **online**  (<https://psuwrc.youcanbook.me/>). You may also report any incident of discrimination or discriminatory harassment, including sexual harassment, to the Title IX Coordinator, **Office of Equity and Compliance** (<https://www.pdx.edu/diversity/file-complaint-discriminationharassment>), or the **Office of the Dean of Student Life** (<https://www.pdx.edu/sexual-assault/reporting-options>).


Please be aware that all PSU faculty members and instructors are required to report information of an incident that may constitute prohibited discrimination, including sexual harassment and sexual and relationship violence. This means that if you tell me about a situation of sexual harassment or

discrimination, I have to share the information with the University's Title IX Coordinator or the Office of the Dean of Student Life. However, the information will be kept private and only those with a need to know will be provided with what you disclose.

Please complete the required student module **Understanding Sexual Misconduct and Resources** (<https://www.pdx.edu/diversity/understanding-sexual-misconduct-and-resources-student-module>) in Canvas, which provides information about PSU policy and resources.

You may also report sexual and relationship violence to law enforcement on campus with **Campus Public Safety Office (CPSO)**. (<https://www.pdx.edu/campus-safety/>)

Or you may file an 

anonymous report 

(<https://docs.google.com/a/pdx.edu/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScGJ2EsjqRT9MBkEkQCAuaeLfvZBiRDfHztvIEzMyCq>)

with Campus Public Safety Office

(<https://www.pdx.edu/campus-safety/make-report>) or a

Bias Incident report

(<https://web.imaging.pdx.edu/AppNet/UnityForm.aspx?key=UFKey>) with the

Bias Review Team (BRT).

(<https://www.pdx.edu/diversity/bias-review-team>) PSU does not typically investigate the reports that are made through these two avenues. These reports help PSU understand what students and employees are experiencing on and around campus and provide support where needed.

Course Evaluation

You will be evaluated on:

- The thoroughness and creativity of your approach to studied sites
- Your ability to work in a team to successfully execute project elements “on time and on budget”
- Attendance and participation in class discussion and exercises
- Clear presentation skills (excellent writing, graphics, and public speaking skills are crucial in site planning)
- The overall quality of your final site plan

Course Grading

Exercises: **10% each, 40% total**

Class attendance and participation: **10%** (Good, robust discussion is the goal!)

Final group project and presentation: **50%** (25% for report, 25% for final presentation)

Grades: **A: over 90; A-: 85 to 90; B+: <85**

Team Work

I can't emphasize enough how important it is to work effectively in your teams. You will form your own teams and choose your own site. You should clearly articulate your personal goals for the class as well as outline your personal schedules when you first meet as a team. Project management and teamwork are critical skills for the planning field so we will emphasize this throughout the class, and a different person will function as the project manager for each piece.

Course Readings:

Since there is no single book that would work for this class or topic, there is no textbook required. The following books are frequently cited as useful in various aspects of site planning and related fields. Increasingly, the latest and greatest content is migrating to the internet. This increases the accessibility (as you might note, excellent references books can carry a high price tag!), however it is important to be cognizant of the pedigree and quality of online resources.

- NACTO Urban Street Design Guide
- Cities for People, Jan Gehl
- Smart Growth Manual by Duany, Speck, and Lydon
- Sustainable Urbanism: Urban Design With Nature, Douglas Farr
- Site Planning by Kevin Lynch
- To Scale by Eric Jenkins
- The Visual Display of Quantitative Information by Edward Tufte

Software and Materials:

A key element of this class is learning to communicate your planning work clearly, attractively, and effectively. Familiarity with applications including Adobe InDesign and Illustrator, Sketchup, and GIS will be **very** helpful as you prepare your exercises professionally useful to you. To this end, we will offer optional tutorials later in the term covering the key applications.

Final reports will be submitted as standard 8.5x11 or 11x17 reports, double-sided and in color; in preparing this document working knowledge of Adobe InDesign or another similar application will be useful to some or all of your team.

Class Schedule:

The class schedule is preliminary, and subject to change depending on schedules and speaker availability. Please be sure to provide a working email address, and to check email prior to class so I can notify you of changes to the schedule.

April 3: Introduction

Student introductions. Course objectives and syllabus review. Introduction to the subject of Site Planning.

April 10: Site Inventory and Selection

Discussion of “site inventory,” or how to evaluate and classify the various pros and cons of a site at a high level. Selection of sites for planning exercises.

- ***Exercise #1: Site Inventory (due April 24).***

April 17: Site Analysis; Fundamentals of Graphic Design & Presentation; Exercise 1 & 2 Workshop (Virtual)

What to look for and think about when looking at a site. Preparing a base map. Understanding scale. Preparing graphic site analysis diagrams.

- ***Exercise #2: Mapping & Site Analysis (due May 8)***

April 24: Regulatory Framework; Exercise 1 Presentations

Introduction to Portland’s zoning code, public process and approvals.

- ***Exercise #3: Zoning and Regulatory Framework (due May 15)***

Week of April 28; time TBD: Adobe Illustrator tutorial (optional)

May 1: Site Circulation and Concept Design

Street types and appropriate dimensions. Parking, walking, biking, transit, auto and service access.

- ***Exercise #4: Transportation & Site Concepts (due May 29)***

Week of May 5; time TBD: Adobe InDesign tutorial (optional)

May 8: “Creating Interactions” (walking tour)

A look at the public realm versus private realm. Green spaces, sidewalks, semi-public plazas and gathering areas, as well as dumpsters, loading zones, and foreboding walls.

Week of May 19; time TBD: Sketchup tutorial (optional)

May 15: Buildings and Land Uses, Programming, Architecture (walking tour)

A look at the evolution of sites over time, the relationship between buildings, sites, land uses, and programming.

May 22: The Market and Development Program

Market and real estate forces. Understanding your client and your users. Selecting an appropriate development program for selected sites.

- ***Teams should begin to produce final reports. Final team reports must include descriptions of potential buildings and suggested architectural form and inspiration (photos, sketches or Sketchup).***

May 29: Green Infrastructure, Landscape Architecture, Public Art;
Exercise 4 Presentations

Green roofs, courtyards, streetscapes and urban parks, art, culture, and placemaking.

- ***Folks should be producing/revising final reports. I highly encourage folks to share in-progress work with me via email or office hours for feedback.***

June 5: Final team presentations and critiques.

Presentation of final site plans. In addition to presenting your own plan, be prepared to offer feedback and critique on other groups' plans. NB, depending upon class size and other factors this session may go late.

Final Reports due by 5:00 pm on June 12.

Final Report

Your team will be considered as a consulting firm for this project. This report provides an excellent opportunity to build materials for your career portfolios. The document should be creatively and professionally designed, in color, and double-sided. We'll provide past examples for guidance. Again, Indesign will be essential to produce this. Ideally, much of the draft work for this report will have been completed by the final 2 weeks of class for other assignments and you can just edit and format as needed. The report should include, but is not limited to, the following information:

- Team Introduction and Vision Statement and Goals for the Site
- Vicinity Map and context. Urban design analysis of surrounding neighborhood
- A title block, north arrow and scale for all site drawings. Include firm's name.
- Site inventory and analysis (including but not limited to existing soils, climate, land use, noise, circulation, views, experiential factors). Include material refined from your first two exercises.
- Summary of site's history, including photos or maps
- Regulatory framework and adjustments that will be requested. A summary of your Exercise #3 work.
- Summary of neighborhood and public involvement required to gain approvals
- A basic program for the site, with rationale for that program's marketability. Real estate students—feel free to go into more detail if desired, on potential unit sales prices, lease rates, project costs, etc.
- Summary of site circulation and access. (Summary of Exercise #4)
- Scaled cross sections of surrounding streets and across site. Photos of inspirations from other places.
- Technical, colored, scaled site plan (hand-drawn or in computer) with conceptual building footprints, basic dimensions, property lines, existing easements, known utility lines, public space, topography
- An assessment of the project's contribution to sustainable urbanism

- Studies of your site plan's architectural form are encouraged but not required. It's more important to get the site plan correct than to spend time fussing with Sketch Up. Keep it simple!