ENVS 474 - Planning Studio 2013
Urban Transition Studio (UTS) Planning Series

2013 UTS Studio Topic: State Street Corridor Urban Design
Huxley College | Urban Planning and Sustainable Development
3:5:50 T/TH; ESC 318

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Esc 444 – office hours t/th 1:30 – 3PM

UTS Community Partners
City of Bellingham:
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Downtown Bellingham Partnership:
  Rob Camandona (rob@downtownbellingham.com), Executive Director

Course Syllabus

BEGINNING RESOURCES

Online PDF Reports:
http://www.cob.org/services/planning/downtown/index.aspx

City Center Master Plan, 2002, www.cob.org/mydowntown
Phase I and II Reports, My Downtown
CBD Historic Resources Survey and Inventory Report, 2012
Arts District Plan
City Center Design Standards, 2006
Comprehensive Plan Transportation Element
City-wide Pedestrian Master Plan
Bellingham Arts District. Making Places for People
LEED-ND. Ratings. USGBC. Online.
Transit-Oriented Communities: A blueprint for Washington State. Futurewise,
  GGLO, Transportation Choices Coalition. Seattle, WA.

OVERVIEW

This class applies planning principles, methods and processes of analyses from
 previous classroom training to develop alternative solutions for community
development. The course will examine ways to achieve planning’s social,
environmental, and economic values through the master site plan process to
further foster sustainable downtown communities. The objective of the exercise
is to balance a community’s social, environmental, and economic development
objectives informed through local, state, and national and international planning
goals and/or principles. Design alternatives emphasize sustainability principles
in community development and the consideration of LEED ND principles.

Because the problems that are presented in the studio concern a variety of
complex issues, underlying each problem are questions concerning the
appropriate "community fit," and the identification of constraints that must be
addressed before a planning solution can successfully emerge. This course
engages the student in methods for considering policy conflicts; the analysis of
physical, social and economic information; and the formulation and evaluation of
planning alternatives that meet long term community development objectives.

Students work both independently and within a project team structure and
interact with a "client partner" (represented by the UTS partners). Research of
public policy and interviews with informants help inform students about local
problems and priorities and provide insights and access to information and
resources. Students will present their draft, conceptual recommendations in a
mid-quarter critique presentation, and at a formal presentation in a public
meeting before the client and the general public, at the end of the quarter.
THE PROJECT
State Street Priority Development Area
Planning Studio will evaluate development alternatives along the “State Street Corridor,” lying on the eastern edge of Bellingham’s city center. In this studio project, students will draw from their acquired knowledge of the site and from urban design principles and theories of New Urbanism, to develop a Corridor District Plan proposal for the State Street site.

What makes Bellingham’s downtown a unique and vibrant place, despite a series of recent economic setbacks over the past several decades, its due to several factors: its persistent resilience; its ability to change; its traditional social and economic central city function; its historic physical and urban infrastructure assets; its youthful demographics; and its functional diversity. Coupled with a concerted effort by the City of Bellingham and downtown interests to foster continued social and economic revival, the downtown has experienced a significant process of redevelopment in recent decades. Downtown Bellingham is a great place because, in part, it wasn’t master planned, but rather, has experienced a series of development processes that has produced a rich mixture of vibrancy and diverse character. The downtown can be described as a “cluster of distinct sub district places” which have emerged through the attraction of new investments to rehabilitate formerly underutilized spaces. This studio project will examine a long underutilized, yet emerging, downtown space.

Student teams will formulate urban design concepts to help facilitate urban redevelopment to meet Bellingham’s goals for vibrant central city development including the addition of downtown housing and commercial space, public facilities, recreational, and infrastructure development.

Students will evaluate current conditions and city center long range goals to develop a conceptual plan that considers:

- Redevelopment capacity (site analysis) and the potential for infill
- Adaptive reuse potential of underutilized sites
- Architectural and urban character assets
- Historic properties
- Greater utility of the State Street right of way and adjacent alleys
- Public-private parking
- Opportunities for creating public plazas and other public spaces
- Private use of public spaces
- Pedestrian and bike connections

Your proposal should emphasize the creation of distinct urban character areas that reflect city center goals and GMA, Smart Growth/New Urbanism, and LEED ND principles. Implementation of project concepts will be more fully examined in the subsequent Studio II class in the spring, where you will be addressing regulatory changes, public and private investment, and detailed transportation and parking requirements.

Plan Content (tentative)

1. Vision, Goal and Objectives Statements
2. Vicinity maps (land marks, features, major transport, viewsheds)
3. Site Capacity Analysis identifying “hard” and “soft” sites
4. Conceptual Bubble Diagram reflecting use and character sub districts
5. Pedestrian Sheds (transit)
6. Existing & proposed land use maps (3D)
7. Existing & proposed figure-ground drawings
8. Existing & proposed connectivity plan
9. Architectural vernacular for building and sub district plan character
10. Historic properties map
11. Environmental resources plan, including storm water, carbon, energy
12. Public spaces plan (parks, plazas, and other spaces by acres)
13. Parking plan, with table illustrating capacity and user targets
14. Perspective drawings of buildings, streetscapes and cross-sections
15. Table of land uses: Buildings (retail, office, institutional, industrial by square feet; residential by type by number and size of units) and building height and bulk analysis

Hard-Soft Site Analysis
The study combines objective site analysis with the students’ own informed impressions of urban patterns and redevelopment potential. The study will include a capacity for redevelopment analysis – referred to as a “hard” and “soft” analysis for each recorded property. The analysis identifies properties and buildings that your group characterizes as “hard or permanent” – and a base upon to build your urban design concepts. These “hard” sites contrast with “soft” sites which represent opportunities for redevelopment. For example, a vacant property, or one used for surface parking, may be indicated as “soft”, and therefore suitable for conversion to more intensive urban uses. Hard properties are existing high value assets and may include the YMCA site, an historic building that is intensively utilized. Newly constructed buildings will likely be categorized as “hard”, given recent investments, however, you should critically evaluate the appropriateness of all buildings, even those that have been constructed recently, for more intensive use.

Some beginning community goals – from Phase II My Downtown Report

Placemaking Events: Streets as Places
State Street Corridor. September 20, 2012

Participants explored opportunities for the State Street corridor, and how the street and sidewalk could be used to serve the people of the downtown district
and revitalize the area. Considerations for Implementation Strategy:

- Adjust the driving lane widths to provide pedestrian improvements such as wider sidewalks, better crossings, mid-block crossings, as well as bicycle improvements such as bike boxes. (Other bike recommendations may result from the city-wide Bicycle Master Plan process).
- More landscaping / maintain existing landscaping
- Connect with adjacent businesses re: their interests and opportunities for business growth to spill into the street.
- Traffic calming needed - cars go too fast for 25 mph zone
- Partnership opportunities for art: sculpture, murals, tattoo artists, graffiti art on the walls etc.
- Implement a pedestrian wayfinding and destination highlight program.
- Dance parties (partnership with adjacent businesses - capture bar crowds)
- Food: Encourage vendors, walk-up food service windows
- Sidewalk seating: Expand outdoor dining areas, as well as add public space (ie. Such as parklets) to provide places for games, eating, etc.
- Partner with YMCA to expand childhood activities to the outdoors.
- Work with Saturna Capital to enhance the use of their public plaza

The Studio Experience
Students are treated as entry-level planning professionals and will be expected to perform independent and collaborative research and planning analysis under the direction of the instructor. As expected of professionals, students will clearly articulate project objectives, gather relevant data, identify and critically analyze problems, conduct policy, economic, and environmental analysis, and apply urban design, smart growth, and sustainable design principles to achieve long term community development objectives. Students will present their recommendations in narrative and illustrated written reports and presentation format. The Planning Studio 2013 final report will serve as the “plan concept chapter” to the UTS year-long investigation.

Urban Transitions Studio – A collaborative partnership with Bellingham’s Office of Planning and Community Development and Sustainable Connections

Beginning in 2010, the Planning Studio participated in a coordinated service learning curriculum that partners several WWU classes with the City of Bellingham, Sustainable Connections, and other community and institutional partners in order to develop new urbanism planning concepts to help transition Bellingham into a more urban and sustainable community. Planning Studio is the first in the series of coordinated class investigations that emphasizes the preparation of the plan/design concept. Other classes that have participated in the Urban Transitions Studio program include: Planning Studio II (Implementation), Sustainable Design Studio, and Environmental Impact Assessment. Each of the participating classes further build upon the concepts developed in planning studio. The program is intended to expand student learning by concentrating planning studies over the course of an entire year and incorporating multiple dimensions of the planning process that aims to effect change towards sustainable community development.

Teams Organization: Students will be assigned to one of five “Design Teams” of 4-5 students. Each team will be responsible for a segment of the study area to conduct land use planning, urban design, and capacity analysis. In addition, each Design Team will assume responsibility for one of the following overlay studies applied to the entire site area:

- Architectural vernacular, character districts, and historic properties
- Plazas and public spaces
- Street design, vehicular, transit, and parking
- Pedestrian (shared) and bike spaces and connectivity
- Environmental Resources, landscaping, and sustainability features

Studio Production Costs
Students are expected to share in the cost of product production. A final report will prepared in hardcopy and PDF formats. 3 bound hard copies of the final report will be prepared for distribution to UTS partners along with a presentation board and a informational brochure.

Documentation
Each Design Team will identify informants – agency personnel that have expertise on the problems addressed as well as affected neighborhood associations and stakeholders. Each team will be responsible for obtaining and reviewing resource material and conducting data collection pursuant to an approved team research methodology.

Project Objectives, Assumptions, and Team Methodology
Each team will define their project site boundaries, project objectives and assumptions prior to commencing design development. During the first 2 weeks, students will develop a project methodology and schedule, identifying a general approach to fact finding, resources, field evaluation, distribution of individual student assignments, and contact persons. Your methodology will be contingent and should be updated periodically as needed. Students will use their research methodology as a project critical path to show the progression of activities over the 10-week study period. Student teams report on their progress to the instructor on a weekly basis.

Team Critical Path and Initial Methodology:
- Select and form project teams
- Define parameters of inquiry and data needs
- Define project objectives
- Define a system of team coordination, leadership, and decision making
- Establish relationships with project clients and identify client objectives
- Establish schedule and deadlines, and a plan for distribution of work
- Formulate team approach to project synthesis
- Perform field work
• Formulate design alternatives and analysis of alternatives
• Establish criteria for evaluating and justifying the proposed plan
• Establish team editorial rules and graphics standards
• Integrate report findings and recommendations
• Organize public presentation

Grading and Evaluation: Based on Instructor and Peer Evaluations
• Team participation (peer evaluations) (10 points)
• Critical Path Report (5 points)
• Presentation of Draft Design Concepts - week 4 (25 points)
• Final Master Site Plan Report and Illustrations (50 points)
• Final Presentation, Presentation Board, Brochure (10 points)

Project Deliverables:
A final report in a standard format (to be provided) consisting of the following project deliverables:
1. Critical Path
2. Statement of planning objectives
3. Identification of issues and opportunities (table format)
4. A hard and soft capacity analysis (for each property)
5. An analysis of land use mix
6. A character districting plan
7. A conceptual redevelopment plan sketch
8. Individual Design Team topic overlay studies
9. Detailed site plans, elevation drawings, photo survey, and sketch up modeling emphasizing massing study
10. Narrative report including references and tables
11. PDF report, Hard copies
12. Presentation board, brochure, PPT

STANDARD OF EXCELLENCE
Planning studio is intended to serve two purposes: to introduce students to skills required in urban plan making processes, and to positively contribute to public policy development in our case study partner community. Student team projects will be evaluated based on the overall quality of their proposed solutions, the strength and feasibility of the development concepts, the clear application of sound planning principles, and the quality of the written and graphic presentation. Only those projects that meet an equivalent grade standard of “A-” or above will be included in the final UTS Report to our community partners, and serve as “proposed actions” in subsequent classes participating in the UTS program.

DEADLINES
In order to achieve project objectives within the limited 10-week term, adherence to deadlines is essential. Therefore, grade deductions will be employed if your work is turned in late. Deadlines for submission of reports are listed below.

Field Investigation
Teams are expected to visit the project site regularly and clients periodically and independently.

Class Meeting Times
• Class time is reserved for independent teamwork, field visits, interviews, team and independent research activities, instructor progress weekly reviews, and to discuss problems as they arise.
• In addition to scheduled class hours, students should plan to devote a minimum of 12 hours per week to their individual and team research assignments.

A Note on Conflicts and Frustrations working in Teams
Expect conflicts to emerge within your teams. Conflicts arise when we depend on fellow teammates to complete assignments well and on time. Disagreements occur as different opinions may result in a clash of ideas. This is especially a problem when grades are largely based on team efforts. How will you overcome team conflicts? Establish a procedure for conflict resolution among team members, and rely on the instructor as an arbiter of problems that are not resolvable by the team. Don’t let problems persist. Strive to keep communications and expectations clear.

WEEK 4 PRESENTATION FOR UTS CRITIQUE – 10 minute presentation
• Core principles and development program
• Land use mix matrix – bubble diagrams
• Hard and Soft capacity analysis
• Transportation and parking solutions concept
• Conceptual site plan of land use mix and massing study

DELIVERABLES
• Narrative and Illustrated Master Site Plan, published and bound (3 hard copies, 3 electronic PDF CD);
• 20 x 30 inch Mounted Presentation Board
• Public Informational Brochure for handout at presentation
Tentative Schedule subject to revision
Additional presentations with partners may be scheduled throughout the quarter.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Activity deliverables due on Thursday of each week</th>
<th>Projects Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>T. Orientation, class goals, expectations, grading, format, project selection and team organization and assignments. Studio set up, resources identified, teams begin developing research methodologies. Production cost responsibilities. Planning boundaries identified. Th. City Planners’ discussion on cbd goals. Darby Cowles and Chris Comeau</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>T. Field Survey; Rose Lathrop, SC. Site visit with downtown developers, city planners Katie Franks on Historic resources. Th. LEED ND presentation (with Rose Lathrop, Sustainable Connections), Team Research Methodology / Critical Path</td>
<td>3, 4</td>
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<td>Week 3</td>
<td>T. Schematic site plan of concepts. Th. Presentation of preliminary design concepts: UTS Partners Critique</td>
<td>5, 6, 7</td>
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<td>Week 4</td>
<td>T/Th. Field Survey, data collection and analysis Major goals/issues identified. Range of land use mix identified. Development concept defined.</td>
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<td>Week 5</td>
<td>T/Th. Concept refinement based on critique feedback.</td>
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<td>Week 6</td>
<td>T/Th. Concept refinement.</td>
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<td>Week 7</td>
<td>T/Th. Draft Report refinement, Client briefing.</td>
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<td>Week 8</td>
<td>T. Production Begins. Th. Draft Reports and Draft Site Graphics Submitted for instructor review. Refinement of edited reports, Final mapping and text editing</td>
<td>8, 9, 10 (1st draft)</td>
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<td>Week 9</td>
<td>T/Th. Publication Production, graphics, maps and text editing.</td>
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<td>Week 10</td>
<td>T/Th. Presentation rehearsals. Power Point, Presentation Boards, Information Brochure, Invitations and public notices sent. Final Presentation. Location: City Hall, Date: TBA</td>
<td>8, 9, 10, 11, 12</td>
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Supporting Materials

The Site
OUR STUDIO PROJECT SITE consists of State Street, between York Street, to the north, and Berry Street, to the south. The site encompasses approximately half a block east and west of State Street, inclusive of the adjacent alleys, forming the east and west boundaries of the site. The site lies in the CBD and York neighborhoods.
Examples of Plan Graphics

Land Use Map or Model
Show land uses coded by standard colors:

- Commercial - red
- Residential - yellow
- Vertically mixed-use – orange or show separate colors
- Institutional/Government - blue
- Open space – green
- Parking lots, streets – gray

Conceptual District Plan

3D Massing Study Model
**Figure-Ground Plan**

At minimum show all the building footprints. Curb lines are optional, but quite helpful. This will be used for comparison with your final design. When you enter the next phase of the project, this is a good design tool to see how spaces are being shaped.
Photo Survey

Site Analysis “Bubble” Diagram
Architectural Design – emphasizing massing, simple detailing