

UDES 509b Looking at the Region

Urban Design Case Studies in Metro Vancouver

Fall 2018 - Thursdays 9-12

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You can tell a lot about a city by looking - Allan Jacobs

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Urbanism and urban design is best experienced in situ - and the objective of this course is to explore and examine how ideas and issues in urban design play out on the ground in selected places throughout the Metro Vancouver region. Each week, we will visit a different location, meet with a local expert, walk around, take notes, measure, consider, debate, and unpack the complexities of, and the role of design in, how places and urban environments are shaped and evolve.

Through this course, we will collectively explore, through 'feet on the ground' engagement with real places, questions of what makes a 'good' place, how do we assess and measure urban design quality, and how places come to be - through an ongoing and dynamic intermingling of decisions, inheritances, negotiations, and resources. Guest speakers will provide essential context and insight into some of the decisions and trade-offs involved in shaping places from an urban design perspectives, as well as successes, failures, and lessons learned. Above all, however, this course is intended to be interactive with students participating by being prepared, asking thoughtful questions, contributing their own perspective, and reflecting on each week's readings and tour.

Throughout the course we will take a broad and inclusive perspective of what constitutes urban design (intentional actions to shape the built environment) and what makes a 'good' place (exploring, for example, questions of aesthetic pleasure, fit, vitality, sustainability, adaptability, complexity, inclusivity, livability - just to begin with). We will also use the real world case studies to ground larger debates and critical thinking in urban design.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

To help clarify and sharpen our thinking about places, students will be responsible for the timely completion of the following assignments:

1. **Weekly Reaction and Reflection.** A one/two-page illustrated paper detailing your reactions and reflections on the previous week's readings and tour. These weekly reaction and reflection papers provide an opportunity to get down and express your thoughts on the course content, as well as experiment with graphic techniques, as the course progresses. *Due one week from the tour day via email to nlamontagne@sala.ubc.ca. 30% of Final Grade.*

2. **Learning from (Metro) Vancouver.** In groups of two, building on some of observations, and methods of observations discussed through the tour, complete an overview/summary of urban design thinking specific to one of the key themes provided on the Canvas site (or suggest your own). The overview should reflect critically on how this theme has been explored and articulated in Metro Vancouver, 10 lessons learned, and precedent examples (with the goal to inform current and future practice). **50% of Final Grade**
3. **Participation and Final Review.** Active and thoughtful participation during class. In addition, every student is expected to submit a collection of 3 images that represent favourite and/or meaningful experiences or revelations. The 3 images are to be submitted via email to nlamontagne@sala.ubc.ca at the end of the course (1 week from the final tour). **20% of Final Grade.**

IMPORTANT NOTE: All assignments are to be submitted via email PDF format with the following naming convention: lastname.assignment.pdf (i.e. lamontagne.reflection1.pdf). Paper versions are optional but not required.

A NOTE ON THE TOURS

All the tours are walking tours and will proceed rain or shine (rain is a frequent condition in Vancouver) so please dress comfortably (especially shoes!) and check the forecast in advance to be prepared for any inclement weather. All tours start at the identified meeting place for the week and it's the student's responsibility to travel to the meeting place at the designated time (all meeting places are transit-friendly). We will be out in the urban environment with all the hazards and distractions that are to be expected - please keep out of the way of traffic and other walkers/cyclists, and stay close to the instructor.

Be sure to bring a camera (a phone with a camera also works), notebook/sketchpad and whatever you need to capture ideas and observations along the way!

COURSE SCHEDULE AND READINGS

Week 1: September 6

Introduction - West End to False Creek North

Our first tour is an introduction to the course and to the Vancouver model of planning, design, and development. We begin in the West End, Vancouver's original tower neighbourhood, and travel through Downtown South to Yaletown and False Creek North. Along the way, we will

explore the emergence of 'Vancouverism' and the distinctive tower-podium typology. Although there are many influences on the Vancouver approach to high-rise urbanism, through the tour we will see how it evolved locally and incrementally.

Meeting Place: Morton Park (Davie and Denman) / **End Point:** Yaletown-Roundhouse Canada Line Station (Davie and Mainland)

Readings

Boddy, T. (2003) "New Urbanism: 'The Vancouver Model'" *Places* (16:2), 14-21.

Roehr, D., M. Soules, and D. Burger (2007) "Mirage Metropolis: Vancouver's Suburban Urbanism", *Topos* (57), 71-77.

City of Vancouver (2003) "Downtown South" and "False Creek North" from Vancouver's New Neighbourhoods: Achievements in Planning and Urban Design.

Week 2: September 13

Public Space / Public Life - Downtown Vancouver

Public space - the space between buildings - is the heart and soul of public life in the city and a primary concern of urban design. In this, the final week, we will explore a variety of public spaces in downtown Vancouver to better understand what works (and what doesn't) and varying ideas of publicness.

Meeting Place: Robson Square (in front of the Art Gallery entrance)

End Point: Vancouver Convention Centre (Jack Poole Plaza - foot of Thurlow St.)

readings

Gehl, J. and B. Svarre (2014) "Counting, Mapping, Tracking, and other Tools" in *How to Study Public Life*. Washington DC: Island Press. pp. 21-35.

Whyte, W.H. (1980) "The Life of Plazas", ch. 1 in *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* New York: Project for Public Spaces. pp. 16-23.

Fleming, R. "Questions to Ask a Space" in *Places* 6:4 (1990): 12-13.

background

City of Vancouver. Places for People Downtown: <http://vancouver.ca/home-property-development/places-for-people-downtown.aspx>

Week 3: September 20

Qualities of Place - Lower Lonsdale (North Vancouver)

North Vancouver is one of Vancouver's original 'streetcar suburbs' and the urban heart of the north shore. In recent years, the Lower Lonsdale district (including the North Vancouver waterfront) has been undergoing a revival with new development and public realm investments. The tour will start at Lonsdale Quay - a public market developed as part of an earlier effort at waterfront revitalization, explore the expanded public realm anchored by the new Polygon Gallery and the emerging Shipyards District, followed by an examination of urban design strategies employed to help manage the densification of this distinctive city and neighbourhood.

Meeting Place: Outside South Entrance - Lonsdale Quay / **End Point:** Lonsdale Quay Seabus Terminal

Readings

Ewing, R. and O. Clemente (2013) "Introduction" in *Measuring Urban Design: Metrics for Livable Places*. Washington DC: Island Press. pp. 1-23.

Garvin, A. (2016) "The Characteristics of the Public Realm", ch. 2 in *What Makes a Great City*. Washington DC: Island Press. pp. 11-20.

Week 4: September 27

Patterns - Granville Island/False Creek South

Granville Island is one of the most popular attractions in Metro Vancouver and a fine early example of industrial district redevelopment into a public place of markets, plazas, studios and theatres. Although the current version of the Island was opened to the public in 1979, it remains a vibrant place of experimentation and people-centric design with many lessons for the contemporary city. We will also explore False Creek South where many of the patterns and principles for the Vancouver model were developed.

Meeting Place: Plaza north of Kids Market (east of Pedros Coffee - 1550 Anderson St) / **End Point:** north end of Laurel Street Land Bridge (Laurel and W 7th - a quick walk to Broadway)

Readings

Alexander, C. et al (1977) "Using this Book" in *A Pattern Language*. New York: Oxford University Press. pp. ix-xliv.

City of Vancouver (1974) *False Creek Official and Area Development Plan*. pay attention to the design guidelines throughout the plan.

Watch: *Urban Magnets: The five essentials of successful places* at <http://www.dialogdesign.ca/open-dialog/urban-magnets-five-essentials-for-urban-successful-places/>

Background (Optional)

Granville Island 2040: granvilleisland2040.ca

Week 5: October 4

Scale - Metrotown (Burnaby)

A significant accomplishment of regional planning in Metro Vancouver has been the restraint of urban sprawl and the development of rapid transit to link the region's town (urban) centres. In the heart of the region, the City of Burnaby has seen the transformation of a shopping centre surrounded by parking and affordable rental housing into a vibrant urban district through large-scale urban development for a 'hyper'-diverse community. Metrotown is an amplified example of transit-oriented development and we will explore the contradictions of the last few decades of high-rise urbanism in what we used to think of as the 'suburbs'.

Meeting Place: Plaza Forecourt of Metrotower III / **End Point:** Metrotown Station

Readings

Lynch, K. (1960) "The City Image and its Elements", ch. 3 in *The Image of the City*. Cambridge MA: MIT Press. pp. 46-96.

Gehl, J. "To Assemble or Disperse: City and Site Planning" in *Life Between Buildings: Using Public Space*. (Washington DC: Island Press, 2011 - 6th Edition): 80-127.

Cheung, C. (2016) "Burnaby Boom: From Bedroom 'Burb to Growing City" in *The Tyee*. August 30. <https://thetyee.ca/News/2016/08/30/Burnaby-Boom-Burb-to-City/>

background

City of Burnaby (1977) *Burnaby Metrotown Community Plan*: <http://www.burnaby.ca/Assets/city+services/policies+projects+and+initiatives/community+development/Metrotown+Plan+1977+Adopted+Original.pdf>

Week 6: October 11

Cosmopolis - Richmond City Centre

The extension of the Canada Line into the City of Richmond has catalyzed a major shift from suburb to city and the rise of a major new 'ethnoburb' shaped by Metro Vancouver's growing Chinese Canadian community. We will explore the challenges of urbanizing a low-lying island in the face of climate change and the transformation of large-scale 'superblock's into fine-grained urban places, as well as the transformation created by the Canada Line. We will also consider the challenge of translating a dynamic cultural context into urban design strategies.

Meeting Place: Aberdeen Centre Canada Line Station / **End Point:** Richmond-Brighouse Canada Line Station

Readings

Bosselmann, P. (2008) "To Measure: Vitality, Livability and Sense of Place", ch. 3 in *Urban Transformations: Understanding City Design and Form*. Washington DC: Island Press. pp. 141-192.

Cheung, C. (2016) "'Ethnoburbs': The New Face of Immigrant Cities" in *The Tyee*. August 5. <https://thetyee.ca/News/2016/08/05/Ethnoburbs/background>

City of Richmond. (2007) *City Centre Area Plan Concept Boards*.

Lansdowne Centre Master Plan overview: <http://www.dialogdesign.ca/projects/lansdowne-centre-master-plan/>

Week 7: October 18

Morphology/Transformation - Cambie Corridor

The urban impact of the Canada Line has not been limited to Richmond. In Vancouver, the Cambie Corridor is the current site of a dramatic transformation from primarily low-density residential neighbourhoods to a transit-oriented corridor with mid to high-rise infill development. We will explore some of the urban design strategies employed to manage this transition and examine some of Vancouver's most recent urban development from the high-rise (Marine Gateway) to the mid (Langara-49th Avenue).

Meeting Place: Broadway/City Hall Canada Line Station / **End Point:** Broadway/City Hall Canada Line Station

readings

Ewing, R. and O. Clemente (2013) "Field Manual", ch. 6 in *Measuring Urban Design: Metrics for Livable Places*. Washington DC: Island Press. pp. 99-135.

Oliveria, V. (2016) "The Elements of Urban Form", ch. 2 in *Urban Morphology*. Springer International Publishing. pp. 7-30.

Background

Cambie Corridor Plan: <http://vancouver.ca/files/cov/Cambie-Corridor-Plan.pdf>

Week 8: October 25

Wild Card (tour TBD - based on emerging interests/curiosities)

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance is required. All assignments must be completed by the start of class on the day due. No deadline extensions will be offered. All illnesses must be accompanied by a doctor's

note. Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. It is expected that classroom behavior will be respectful and that all students will take responsibility for their own learning process (even if the classroom is the city!).

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The academic enterprise is founded on honesty, civility, and integrity. As members of this enterprise, all students are expected to know, understand, and follow the codes of conduct regarding academic integrity. At the most basic level, this means submitting only original work done by you and acknowledging all sources of information or ideas and attributing them to others as required. This also means you should not cheat, copy, or mislead others about what is your work. Violations of academic integrity (i.e., misconduct) lead to the breakdown of the academic enterprise, and therefore serious consequences arise and harsh sanctions are imposed. For example, incidences of plagiarism or cheating may result in a mark of zero on the assignment or exam and more serious consequences may apply if the matter is referred to the President's Advisory Committee on Student Discipline.

Careful records are kept in order to monitor and prevent recurrences. A more detailed description of academic integrity, including the University's policies and procedures, may be found in the Academic Calendar at <http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/?tree=3,286,0,0>