Urban Design Studio – Course Description

Course Name & Number: Urban Design Studio, Arch 4/584

2. Instructor/Office/Telephone: Donald Genasci  541 246 4410

3. Meeting Time & Place: Studio, Monday, Wednesday & Friday @ 1:00 to 5:00

4. Meeting Format: Studio and group discussion of precedents

5. Credit Hours & Grading: 6 Credits, Design Project, Presentations of Precedents

6. Prerequisites: Undergraduates, 382 & one 482 course, Graduates, 682

7. Study/Course Objectives: The purpose of the course is to develop analytical and design skills drawn from examples of large scale urban projects.

8. Study Vehicles/Course Content: The design project is an eight block development area adjacent to the existing Lloyd Center, an urban shopping center in NE Portland. This is one of the first in town shopping centers on the west coast. The Lloyd Center is currently in the design stage of a major refurbishment. One opportunity of the timing of this project is that far greater attention will be given to the adjacent pedestrian realm than occurred in creating the original center, which was preoccupied with efficient management of the car at street level. The aim here is to develop new housing, offices and commercial in such a way that they strengthen the cohesion of the area, helping to form a stronger neighborhood. This studio will emphasize the design of a pedestrian-oriented neighborhood, focusing on effective use of the site, public transportation and character, rather than individual buildings.

9. Texts, Primary Reading List: Books from the reading list will be on reserve in the library.

10. Instructor’s Comments: The emphasis of the studio will be to develop a neighborhood with strong, pedestrian character. The development of a clear character will support a cohesive neighborhood and a strong identity. The design will include ideas to improve the relationship between the rejuvenated shopping center and proposed neighborhood additions. Special features of the site, in addition to the shopping center, are the proximity of the I 84 Freeway, rail and light rail lines
11. City of Portland Goals:
“The goals, policies and actions included in the N/NE Quadrant Plan are in many ways intended to help repair a neighborhood that has been done significant harm by large public projects of the past. Neighborhood connectivity, housing production and preservation of historic and cultural resources are key areas in which the plan attempts to correct damage done in the past. Policies are included that attempt to discourage displacement, while allowing for significant new development. Limited change is recommended in Lower Albina where business displacement risk is high. However, in the Lloyd District, which has few residents today and significant vacant and underutilized lands, the plan suggests a high level of change. This approach is intended to accommodate substantial new development with access to transit, jobs and other Central City amenities with very limited displacement. However, it will be important to monitor potential impacts on adjacent areas that could be at risk for displacement, such as the Eliot neighborhood.

Few other areas in the region share the Lloyd District’s combination of transportation system access and degree of development opportunity. The Quadrant Plan envisions a fully-developed, cutting-edge, sustainable, livable, mixed-use community of some 30,000 jobs and perhaps 10,000 residents in the Lloyd District. It lays out a concept for open space, local pedestrian connections and regional trails, as well as tree canopy and green infrastructure enhancements, to improve watershed function and habitat vitality and provide a healthier urban environment for people and wildlife.” *

*City of Portland, NW Quadrant Plan

12. City of Portland Urban Design Principles:
A. Fill in the Central Core:
Physical transformation of the landscape is highest in this area. For the success of the quadrant and specifically the Lloyd District, the “Central Core” area should transform into a high-density, high-amenity urban place that features a mix of residential and commercial/employment uses organized around a new, signature public open space system. Currently this area is notable for its lack of a defined identity and sense of place, somewhat different from the other areas surrounding it. New development in the Central Core has the opportunity to help craft a new, marketable image or brand for the Lloyd District. The new streetcar alignment along 7th Avenue could represent a new, transit and pedestrian-oriented focal point, providing a human-scaled, storefront retail center for the Central Core area.

B. Strengthen Connectivity: Strengthen connectivity to and through the quadrant area. Some of the biggest streets or corridors will be enhanced and designed to reflect their “civic” roles, becoming focal points for development and urban, active places by both day and night. Other streets or corridors could take on more of a “boulevard” function, having less adjacent storefront retail activity but more landscape plantings and a much stronger tree canopy presence. In-between the Quadrant’s busy streets, the large blocks and quiet street in the quadrant create the potential for a continuous system of quieter pedestrian and bicycle-oriented...
streets and sometimes public, sometimes private pathways that when completed could provide a unique district amenity in Portland.

C. Take Advantage of Urban Form: The different urban form, pattern and character of the area present a unique alternative for Central City redevelopment. The larger scale of blocks and buildings in the quadrant, coupled with significant development entitlements present special opportunities not available everywhere in the Central City. The Lloyd District offers many large blocks that present an alternative development platform to the prevalent small block pattern of the rest of the Central City. Larger office/employment (or other) businesses and uses that require specialized connections between multiple buildings, need larger floorplates, or prefer campus-like arrangements could take advantage of large blocks in the district. 

The larger block pattern also offers new options for public spaces and overall quadrant connectivity. Today, there are several pedestrian and bicycle-oriented pathway segments, and current regulations require new public connections through the larger blocks. New development, especially on the large blocks, could add new, similarly oriented links to these existing segments, turning the network into a viable pathway system, simultaneously increasing mobility choices for quadrant residents, workers and visitors and providing a major new development attracting amenity.

D. Celebrate the Crossroads: Connect the quadrant across barriers to the river, the rest of the Central City and adjacent neighborhoods along a signature system of public spaces. A new, Centrally located East-West system of public spaces and improved multi-modal connections would help quadrant residents, workers and visitors reach destinations South and West of the freeways and large event facilities.

The open space system would also provide compelling amenities around which to organize new development. To date, the district has seen public event, some streetscape, transit and other transportation-related improvements, but few new public parks or open spaces to augment Holladay Park. New, high density employment, institutional and residential uses in the quadrant will need to be supported by new parks and open spaces offering opportunities for recreation, relaxation and respite. Linking new facilities to each other and existing open spaces like Holladay will increase the functionality of the overall system and its service to a variety of potential new user.

E. Policies:

1. Diverse and Distinctive Urban Places. Focus more intense development in the Central Lloyd area and Rose Quarter while enriching the entire district through strengthening the distinct character of the existing Lloyd District subareas.
2. Better Connected District
   a. More Seamless Connections. Improve the character of connections across transportation barriers in the district - freeways, major arterials and rail facilities.

   b. Variety in Street Character. Expand the diversity of street character in the Lloyd district, distinguishing three major types: retail/commercial, boulevard and flexible/pathways.

3. Large Blocks. Take advantage of the unique opportunity for dense, large site development made possible by the large blocks found in the Lloyd District. Integrate this development into the surrounding blocks through well designed internal green spaces and pedestrian connections.

4. Open Space. Develop a signature sequence of open spaces, linked through a pedestrian wayfinding system, that serves the Central Lloyd area, becomes a primary organizing structure for new development, and offers a diversity of character, experiences, and recreational functions for district residents, workers and visitors.

5. Riverfront Development. Encourage development along the Willamette River that activates the riverfront, better connects the riverfront to the rest of the district and surrounding neighborhoods, improves visual and physical access to the river, and enhances natural resources.

6. Pedestrian-Oriented Development. Discourage new automobile-oriented uses and encourage the eventual redevelopment of drive-throughs and large surface parking lots with development that is oriented to the street and enhances the pedestrian environment.

7. Transition to Adjacent Neighborhoods. Provide sensitive transitions in the scale and pattern of development between higher density development encouraged in the Lloyd District and adjacent lower density neighborhoods and historic districts.

8. Active Street Edges. At least 60 percent of street frontages within the Lloyd District should be occupied by buildings oriented to the street, measured by the amount of retail storefront and partial fenestration (windows and doors) facing the street.