Brownfields / Green Neighborhoods

Arch 4/584 / LArch 4/589  
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Inquiry
The studio has two major content areas: urban design and brownfield remediation. Through the design project, students will understand how history (ecological and industrial) influences the potential futures of urban design, and how landscape / architectural design acts a catalyst to repair a site. Students will also gain expertise in negotiating scales of inquiry, as they design a twenty-acre site, its connections to the city, and catalyst projects on the site.

The Studio
The studio will research the industrial history of a brownfield site in Seattle; research best practices for environmental remediation of brownfields; evaluate opportunities for ecological urban redevelopment of those sites; and propose redevelopment strategies. Projects will be team-based, and will include students from the architecture and landscape architecture departments.

Urban design
“In 2008…for the first time in history, more than half [the world’s] human population … will be living in urban centers.” How we design and make cities is increasingly a central concern for the design professions. Understanding how architecture influences and is influenced by urban processes and systems is a critical skill for design professionals. And the design of urban places that improve the environment and ecology of cities is the future of the field.

Brownfield remediation
As populations urbanize, we have two options for accommodating them: increase the physical space of cities, or increase their densities. Sites within urban areas are becoming increasingly valuable for a variety of reasons; protecting outlying productive lands; access to goods and services; limiting dependence on motorized travel. Many vacant sites in cities are brownfields: sites left toxic from a previous industrial use. Learning the issues inherent in and solutions to brownfield development is increasingly important for urban design. The studio will discuss health, safety, legal, and economic concerns with brownfield redevelopment, standard and best practices in remediation, and how to match future use to past abuse of a site.

Zero Week Site Visit
Prior to the beginning of fall term, the studio will travel to Seattle to visit the studio site, tour brownfield and urban design projects, meet with experts on brownfield remediation and Seattle ecology, and visit Seattle urban design firms.