Urban Design: Public Realm

Sample Agenda — Fall 2015

The course will seek to develop fundamental public realm urban design skills of observation, analysis, documentation, idea generation, design development, and effective graphic presentation techniques. Public space and places, especially street space, are essential elements of the city, town, and village public realm and the most valued from a neighbourhood perspective. The design of places - urban, suburban, and rural for meaningful public use and enjoyment is the main purpose of this course. The course will be highly interactive, mixing presentations with discussions and exercises, so that participants can develop effective ways to approach the design or redesign of a public places. At the same time, this high paced and interactive course will help improve individual analytical, design and graphic presentation skills.

Course Objectives:
1. Increase awareness of the significance of urban public spaces as the “urban glue”, including streets, parks, plazas, and greenways;
2. Recognize the many roles public realm plays in building and sustaining both a sense of place as well as of community;
3. Discuss the place development process and the associated importance of setting realistic goals, principles and targets;
4. Review what makes a successful “place” in Europe and North America and how “place-makers” are unique to their location and time;
5. Develop critical abilities to observe and analyze how urban public spaces and street spaces are used, and how the needs of intended user groups are met;
6. Examine the interplay of land economics, adjoining land uses, and spatial definition in defining the enduring success or failure of places;
7. Develop “team” and “collective learning” skills beneficial for multi-disciplinary project work in public realm projects;
8. Use key urban design principles to expand place use and public interaction;
9. Discuss the importance of ownership, programming and maintenance in creating and sustaining vibrant urban places and streets;
10. Refine analytical and presentation tools and techniques through a hands-on approach.
DAY 1

9:00  Welcome and Introductions, Overview of course
      Michael von Hausen

9:15  Presentation 1: Frank Ducote
      History and Precedents of Public Realm

10:30 Break

10:45 Presentation 2: Frank Ducote
      Case Studies and Design Elements

11:45 Best Squares discussion with class: Top Square in North America and Europe
      based on Project for Public Spaces (PPS)

12:15 Lunch

1:00  Presentation 1: Michael von Hausen
      Public Realm Analytic Framework

      Presentation 2: Michael von Hausen
      Current Applications: Downtown Historic Trail, Frontier Street, City Greenways
      and Others

3:00  Team Work and Working Break: Teams Site Visit of one of two sites in
downtown Vancouver: Woodwards or Park Place Plaza

4:00  Team Review in Studio: Conclusions

4:30  Presentations: Existing Site Analysis and Future Improvements

5:30  Adjournment

DAY 2

9:00  Introduction to Studio Challenge:
      ANALYSIS of Hornby Plaza (Lot 19) and adjacent streets
      --with Rachelle Jones, Downtown Vancouver Business Improvement
      Association; Andrew Pask, Vancouver Public Space Network

9:20  Team site visit and analysis

10:15 Team conclusions in Studio

10:45 Break
11:00  Analysis Presentations: Existing Situation and Program Potential

12:00  Lunch

1:00   DESIGN: Designing Hornby Plaza and Street

3:00   Break

3:15   Team Presentations: Concept and Detailed Plan (Section and Axonometric) (Michael von Hausen, Frank Ducote, Rachelle Jones, Andrew Pask)

4:45   Conclusions, Assignment and Evaluations

5:30   Adjournment