UEP 194-01 URBAN DESIGN AND THE CHANGING SUBURBS
Department of Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning | Tufts University
Tuesdays, 4:30-7:30pm | Eaton Hall, Room 204
Beth Lundell Garver | BLG@tufts.edu | BLG@the-bac.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION
As planners, policy makers, and creators of the built environment, how can we reverse the negative consequences of suburbs by retrofitting them to create more sustainable communities? The course explores evolving challenges and narratives of the suburban landscape, both physical and social. It examines the history of key urban design movements as well as catalysts for the decentralization of urban form, including the proliferation of suburban sprawl nationally and internationally. The interactive course will introduce representational techniques ranging from field sketching to digital tools (Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator, SketchUp). Course activities will include active discussions, multi-media storytelling, lectures, guest speakers, site visits, and student presentations. Coursework will culminate in a final project that integrates individual and collaborative interpretations of urban design strategies into a master plan proposal for a specific site.

The course examines the rise of suburbia and retrofitting of sprawl primarily in the United States, although some attention will be dedicated to international cases. Students will perform comparative analyses of suburban housing plots to better understand connections between scale, building types, floor area ratio (FAR), and density. At the scale of the block and district, students will investigate urban design lenses associated with health and walkability; mobility and public transit; built form and development patterns; open space and natural systems; and public space. Your individual research, analysis, and interests will inform the design development and graphic representation of proposed approaches to land use, existing and future development, and associated infrastructural and cultural systems. Through these explorations, students will be able to evaluate and exhibit the individual and aggregate value of repairing sprawl and retrofitting suburbia to promote more sustainable and inclusive communities.

REQUIREMENTS
Students are required to keep current with readings, complete a design project in teams of 3 or 4 students, develop individual assignments, and attend one field trip on Saturday. Most of all, students are encouraged be open to exploring new techniques of seeing, documenting, and developing an argument through close observation, representation, and design thinking.

OBJECTIVES
• Examine and compare historical growth patterns and contexts of urban/suburban human settlement
• Investigate and critique environmental, infrastructural, cultural, and socioeconomic factors that impact growth, health, and quality of life in suburban places
• Recognize how suburbs manifest issues of equity, diversity, and social justice that necessitate planners’ role in expanding choice and opportunity for all persons.
• Learn workflows (hand drawing, digital tools, etc.) that show planning approaches at various scales
• Translate analysis into collaborative decision-making, planning, design concepts, and masterplans
OFFICE HOURS & FORMAT

- Office Hours: Specific days/locations can be arranged, if necessary.
- This course will be run similar to a design studio. Pin-ups and discussions will occur during many class periods with lectures and workshops being held at regular intervals within the course to support learning goals.
- Interaction and constructive dialogue is strongly encouraged among students; class participation is integral to the pedagogical structure for this course.
- Regular attendance is required as a prerequisite for active participation. Students will be excused from class for family or medical emergencies by notifying the instructor by email or telephone.
- Please arrive on time for class; excessive tardiness may negatively impact your grade.

GRADING

Class participation: 15%
Exercise 1: 10% (Complete/Incomplete)
Exercise 2: 30%
Final assignment (Ex. 3): 45%

Class participation will be based on the extent and quality of students’ discussion of readings and collaborative participation in activities during class. Each Assignment will be reviewed based on verbal presentation, graphic representation, content, and development/progress/collaboration.

MATERIALS

Readings, sketchbook (approximately 8.5”x11” in size), trace paper, colored markers, engineer’s scales. Please bring these to each class.

EXPENSES

Required site visits to the city of Medford, Everett, and Somerville sites will occur during the semester. These visits will require MBTA fare at the student’s expense. Course materials (above, unless otherwise noted), printing, and large-format plotting costs for pin-ups and presentations will also be at the students’ expense.

ASSIGNMENT OVERVIEW

EXERCISE 1: Inventory: Cataloguing Suburban Lots; scale =1”:60’
At the scale of a residential plot, students will research and represent analysis comparing a historic suburban housing model with their childhood home. This study will rely on representation to discover connections and relationships through hand drawing, precedent research, speculation, and graphic layout in Adobe Illustrator and InDesign.

EXERCISE 2: Inventory: Changing Neighborhoods; scale = 1”:300’
Building upon Exercise 1, students will research and represent the evolving nature of residential neighborhoods and business district blocks in connection with sprawl. Systematic shifts in mobility, development patterns, public space, and socioeconomic conditions will be presented. Graphics will connect discrete elements and interrelated phenomena, in turn informing design possibilities.

EXERCISE 3: Urban Design Proposal: Master Plan for Suburban Repair; various scales
Focusing on a specific site in Greater Boston as a testing ground for retrofitting suburban space, student teams will undertake detailed site analysis, questioning the opportunities and challenges therein. This will result in the development of urban design proposals for a master plan that will support a new narrative of sustainable community, both physical and social.
## WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Selected readings/in-class activities assigned at instructors’ discretion and subject to change.

### I. Representing the Built Environment (Lot Scale)

#### W1. 1/22 Framing Suburbia
- **Overview, Assignments, In-Class Activity, Discussion**

  Read:
  - Fishman, “The Fifth Migration” (2005);
  - Mumford, “Fourth Migration” (1925);
  - Tachieva, *Sprawl Repair Manual*, Ch.7 “Repair at the Building Scale” “Building Repair,” (2010);
  - Hayden, *Building Suburbia*, Ch.3 “Borderlands” (2004);

  **Exercise 1 assigned:**
  - BurbLog: Cataloguing Suburban Lots; Scale = 1’’:60’’

#### W2. 1/29 Changing Patterns of Suburbia
- **Walking city (before 1820)**
- **Semi-rural suburbs (1820)**

  **Visualizing Layers of Urban Design**
  - DataLab Workshop 1
  - Adobe CS Photoshop + Illustrator

  Read:
  - Williamson, *Designing Suburban Futures* p.2-49 (2013)

#### W3. 2/5 Cataloguing Suburban Lots
- **Ex 1 Assignment Submission**

  Read:
  - Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias*, “London: Birthplace of Suburbia” (1987);

  **Exercise 1 due at noon**
  - In-Class Presentations

#### W4. 2/12 Changing Patterns of Suburbia
- **Romantic suburbs (1850)**
- **Streetcar suburbs (1870)**
- **Kit-of-part suburbs (1900-1920)**

  **Exercise 2 assigned:**
  - BurbLog: Changing Neighborhoods; Scale = 1’’:300’’

  **DataLab Workshop 2**
  - SketchUp

  Read:
  - Gehl, *Cities for People* Ch. 3 (2010); Gehl Architects Urban Design Matrix;  
  - Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier* Ch. 10 and Ch. 11 (1985); Tachieva, *Sprawl Repair Manual*, Ch.4 and Ch. 6 (2010);  
  - Keesmaat, Invisible Cities Podcast link: [https://soundcloud.com/invisiblecitypodcast/ep011](https://soundcloud.com/invisiblecitypodcast/ep011)
## II. The Real City: Cultural Change in Metropolitan Areas (Block Scale)

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity and Readings</th>
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| **W5.** 2/19 | Visualizing Patterns of Development and Community Change | [DataLab Workshop 2, cont.]
|         | SketchUp                                                              |
| **W6.** 2/26 | Shifting Patterns, Policies, and Cultures | Read + Lead In-Class Activity
|         | Garden City Model (1898)                                                              |
|         | Motor Age Ideologies (1920)                                                            |
|         | Sitcom suburbs (1940)                                                                  |
|         | Edge nodes (1960)                                                                     |
|         | Rural fringes and Sprawl (1980 - Present)                                             |
|         | Read: Krieger and Saunders, Urban Design (2009); Williamson, Designing Suburban Future “Sited in the Setback: Increasing Density in Levittown” by Meri Tepper, pp. 64-71 (2013); Flint, This Land “Grids and Greenfields” and “Six Healthy Habits for Sensible Growth,” (2006) |
| **W7.** 3/5 | Retrofitting Suburbs Representing Change Over Time Making a Manifesto | [DataLab Working Session]
|         | SketchUp                                                              |
| **W8.** 3/12 | Changing Neighborhoods Ex 2 Assignment Submission | Exercise 2 due at noon
|         | In-Class Presentations                                                              |
|         | Read: Dunham-Jones and Williamson, Retrofitting Suburbia, Ch. 2 thru Ch. 4 (2008); Gehl, Cities for People Ch. 3 (2010); Krieger and Saunders, Urban Design “Where and How does Urban Design Happen?” and “Defining the Urbanistic Project” pp. 113-134 (2009); Lynch, City Reader, “City image and It’s Elements” Image of the City (1960); Rusk, Cities Without Suburbs Ch. 1 “Lessons from Urban America” (1993) |
| **W9.** 3/19 | SPRING BREAK | NO CLASS
III. Designing Sustainable Suburban Futures (District Scale)

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>W10. 3/26</td>
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<td>Storytelling and Schematic Design</td>
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<td>Exercise 3 (Final) Assigned: Master Plan; various scales</td>
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<td>3/31 9a-2p</td>
<td>Field Trip – Final Project Site Visit</td>
<td>Site Observation and Sketching</td>
<td>[Meet at the Wellington Station MBTA (Orange Line)]</td>
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<td>W11. 3/26</td>
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<td>Schematic Design Approach</td>
<td>Progress Pin-Up, Desk Crits</td>
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<td>W12. 4/9</td>
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<td>Defining Density, Mobility &amp; Land-Use</td>
<td>[DataLab Workshop] GIS to SketchUp</td>
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<td>MAPC and City of Medford, <em>Medford Square Master Plan</em> (2017); Envision Cambridge, <em>Citywide Planning and Alewife Planning Working Group #6</em> (2017); Floor Area Ratio Diagram; Example of “Standard Land Uses and Map Designations” (2011)</td>
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<td>W13. 4/16</td>
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<td>Massing, Section, and Scale</td>
<td>[DataLab] SketchUp 3D Progress Pin-Up, Desk Crits</td>
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<td>W14. 4/23</td>
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<td>Place-making and Ecological Impact</td>
<td>Progress Pin-Up, Desk Crits</td>
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<td>REVIEW 4/30 6PM</td>
<td>Optional Presentation Draft Review</td>
<td>Progress Review</td>
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<td>FINAL 5/7 6PM</td>
<td>Final Presentations</td>
<td>Invited Reviewers: Alice Brown (Boston Harbor Now); James Hostaras (I2UD); Amber Christoffersen (MyRWA); etc.</td>
<td>[Meet in Lecture Hall (TBD)]</td>
<td>Exercise 3 due at noon</td>
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SELECTED READINGS

Readings will be assigned or recommended at the instructor's discretion and posted on the courses’ CANVAS site. They may include excerpts from the following books:


* Will be referred to as textbooks for the course. Strongly recommend purchasing these books.