Course description

What do we do in response to suburban sprawl? We have analyzed its many evils and concluded that mixed-use density linked to transit is a more sustainable form of development. But while we infill and redevelop urban areas, and plan for transit-oriented development, suburbs represent a vastly greater land area and continue to grow. Major demographic shifts are also altering the traditional image of white, affluent suburbs and minority, lower-income inner-city neighborhoods. Suburbs can be improved in physical form, density and mix of uses, housing choices and transportation options. Many of the qualities of various kinds of suburbs, which continue to shape household location decisions, can be retained within a more sustainable environment that benefits both local municipalities and the region. Indeed, in order to preserve open space, conserve and replenish resources, reduce pollution and gas emissions, improve residents’ health and quality of life, and increase municipal revenue, suburbs need to be retrofitted.

Failed shopping centers represent immediate opportunities for redevelopment. Creating civic/commercial centers in residential subdivisions where none existed, making streets walkable and bikable, and introducing different housing types, are other avenues. Intervening in existing town centers to increase the mix and density of commercial uses, allow housing, pedestrianize streetscapes and strengthen main streets, is another approach currently being used by many municipalities.

The course looks at examples of retrofitting strategies, and presents a planning assignment for East Milton Square in Milton, MA where students can propose some of the approaches learned.

Objectives

- Distinguish among varying components of suburbs the challenges and opportunities they present to their communities and to planners.
- Learn different strategies to physically improve suburbs, the goals to achieve, and the assumptions underlying these goals.
- Apply some of the methods learned through a town planning exercise for a suburban town south of Boston.

Requirements

Students are expected to keep abreast of readings, post their observations about them and respond to other students’ observations, every Thursday by 3 pm. There is one individual short paper and one planning assignment done in groups of two or three students.

Grading: planning assignment 40%, short paper 25%, observations on readings 25%, class participation 10%.

Instructor

Christine Cousineau Christine.cousineau@tufts.edu office: 617-627-5331
72 Professors Row, Room 205 cell: 781-576-9099

Office Hours

Office hours are on Tuesdays from 10am to 9 pm, at 72 Professors Row. Other days and other locations (Brown House, Campus Center, Davis Square) can also be arranged.
## One-page course outline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lectures</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sept 4</strong></td>
<td>Introduction, course overview, readings, assignments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sept 11</strong></td>
<td>Why the need to retrofit suburbs? What types, what parts, for whose benefit?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sept 18</strong></td>
<td>Definitions. Suburbs and Sprawl.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sept 25</strong></td>
<td>Components and consequences of suburban sprawl environments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Oct 2</strong></td>
<td>Strategies – Sprawl repair analysis model and techniques; policy approaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Oct 9</strong></td>
<td>Presentation of planning assignment: East Milton Square, Milton, MA Walkability, retail mix, and clear boundaries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Oct 16</strong></td>
<td>Creating centers – nodes, civic space, third places, active open space.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Oct 23</strong></td>
<td>Increasing the mix and diversity of uses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Oct 30</strong></td>
<td>Student presentations of East Milton Square draft proposals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nov 6</strong></td>
<td>Increasing housing choices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nov 13</strong></td>
<td>Increasing transportation choices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nov 20</strong></td>
<td>Case studies: Mashpee Commons, Cape Cod, MA; Belmar, Lakewood, CO; Levittown, NY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dec 4</strong></td>
<td>Final student presentations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Readings for each class, and assignments

Sept 4  Introduction, course overview, readings, assignments.

Sept 11 Why the need to retrofit suburbs? What types, what parts, for whose benefit?

Ehrenhalt, Alan. 2012. The Great Inversion
   Prologue, pp. 3-21

Dunham-Jones, Ellen and June Williamson. 2011. Retrofitting Suburbia
   Preface and Introduction, pp. xiii-xxx
   Part One – The Argument, pp.2-14

Williamson, June. 2013. Designing Suburban Futures
   Preface, Foreword and Introduction, pp. x-xviii

Sept 18 Definitions. Suburbs and Sprawl.  Paper assigned, due Oct 2

History and Types of suburbs
   Railroad Suburbs (1850-1900) – Riverside Park, IL, Forest Hills, NY
   Streetcar Suburbs (1880-1920) – Dorchester, Jamaica Plain, Boston
   Pre-WWII Suburbs (1920-1945) – Small houses subdivisions, Mariemont (New Town)
   Post WWII Suburbs (1945-1970) – Levittown, NY and PA, Park Forest, IL
   Contemporary Suburbs (1970-present) – Larger houses, 2 & 3-car garages,
   Edge Cities, Gated Communities, McMansions, Foreclosed Suburbs

Types of sprawl
   Suburban – post 1970
   Urban – Los Angeles, CA, Dallas, TX, Phoenix, AZ

Designing Suburban Futures, Vision, pp. 1-23

Jackson, Kenneth T. 1987. Crabgrass Frontier
   Ch. 6   The Time of the Trolley, pp. 103-115
   Ch. 7   Affordable Homes for the Common Man, pp. 116-137

Fishman, Fishman, Robert. 1987. Bourgeois Utopias
   Ch. 5   The Classic Suburb: The Railroad Suburbs of Philadelphia, pp. 134 – 154
   Ch. 6   Los Angeles: Suburban Metropolis, pp. 155-181

Sept 25 Components and consequences of suburban sprawl environments:
   Residential subdivisions, commercial strips and malls, office parks and transportation

Duany, Andres, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, and Jeff Speck. 2000. Suburban Nation. The Rise of
   Sprawl and the  Decline of the American Dream.
   Ch. 1   What is Sprawl, and Why? Pp. pp. 3-20
   Ch. 2  Counting Costs and Benefits. Is Sprawl Efficient? pp. 57-84
   Ch. 7  You Can't March on a Strip Mall, pp. 217-248
   Ch. 8  Sprawl, the Environment and Climate Change, pp. 249-265

Oct 2  Strategies  
Sprawl repair model and techniques: sector mapping, assessment tool, void analysis.

*Designing Suburban Futures*, Better Suburban Futures, pp. 38-49

*Sprawl, Justice and Citizenship*, Ch. 9  Reforming Sprawl, and Beyond

   Ch. 1  From Sprawl to Complete Communities, pp. 1-15
   Ch. 2  The Sprawl Repair Method, pp. 16-31

Oct 9  Presentation of planning assignment: East Milton Square, Milton, MA  
Walkability, retail mix, and clear boundaries.  
*Planning assignment explained*
*Draft due Oct 30; final due Dec 4*

Background material on Milton history and current Master Plan

Oct 16  Creating centers – nodes, civic space, third places, active open space.

*Retrofitting Suburbs*. Ch. 4 Retrofitting Social Life Along Commercial Strips, pp. 59-94

*Sprawl Repair Manual*
   Define open and civic space  
       Single-family subdivisions, p. 85; multi-family subdivisions, p. 101
   Integrate local food production  
       Single-family subdivisions, p. 86; multi-family subdivisions, p. 102
   Shopping Center, pp. 111-128
   Shopping Mall, pp. 129-149
   Commercial Strip, pp. 151-161

Oct 23  Increasing the mix and diversity of uses.

*Retrofitting Suburbs*, Ch. 6  From Regional Malls to New Downtowns through Mixed-Use and Public Space, pp. 108-139

*Sprawl Repair Manual*
   Introduce new building types and mixed uses  
       Single-family subdivisions, p. 83; multi-family subdivisions, p. 98
Business Park, pp. 163-177

Oct 30  Student presentations of draft proposals for East Milton Square.  

Nov 6  Increasing transportation choices.

_Sprawl Repair Manual_
- Connect and repair thoroughfares
  - Single-family and multi-family subdivisions, p. 84-97; p. 99
- Rationalize parking, p. 100
- Ch. 5  Repair of Thoroughfares and Parking, pp. 216-233

Nov 13  Increasing housing choices.

_Sprawl Repair Manual_
- Single-family subdivision, pp. 75-82;
- Rezoning, Phasing, Implementation, Application, pp. 87-91
- Multi-family subdivision, pp. 92-97;
- Rezoning, Implementation, Application, pp. 103-105
- Ch. 6  Repair at the Block Scale, pp. 235-255
- Ch. 7  Repair at the Building Scale, pp. 257-271

Nov 20  Case studies: Levittown, NY; Mashpee Commons, Cape Cod, MA; Belmar, Lakewood, CO.

_The Great Inversion_
- Ch. 9  Urbanizing the Suburbs, pp. 204-226

_Retrofitting Suburbia_
- Ch. 3  Residential Case Study: Changes to Levittown, pp. 44-58
- Ch. 5  Strips Case Study: Mashpee Commons, Cape Cod, pp. 95-107
- Ch. 8  Mall Case Study: Belmar, Lakewood, CO, pp. 154-171

Dec 4  Final student presentations.  

_Final assignment due_