

## **A6849 Urban Design Studio I: TRANSFORMATIVE URBAN ENVIRONMENTS**

Columbia University GSAPP

MSAUD Summer 2014

Monday, Wednesday, Friday: 2:00 – 6:00 pm

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### **THE FIVE BOROUGH STUDIO**



### **ABSTRACT**

This first semester will introduce you to an urban design process, where site and program are not a given, but are treated as principal variables of urban design thinking. Working in multiple scales as well as multiple time frames will be an integral part of this investigation to design an intervention that follows a speculative hypothesis for the future of the City.

New York City will be your laboratory for experimenting with this process that re-thinks, re-shapes and re-generates the city in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Working in a post-industrial city requires the critical investigation and re-definition of the many layers of existing and past urban fabric and urban infrastructure to shape the city to the needs of its future inhabitants.

## THEME: HOUSING 9 MILLION NEW YORKERS

New York City has been in a state of *housing emergency* since World War II. This is defined by a vacancy rate of residential units at or below 5%. Housing has also become increasingly expensive in the city with more than half of all New Yorkers pay more than 30% of their income on housing.<sup>1</sup> It is becoming increasingly difficult for the majority of New Yorkers to find affordable housing. To address this housing crisis the new mayor of New York City has set an ambitious goal for the city: **To create and preserve 200,000 units of affordable housing in the next 10 years.**

In this studio, we will explore the questions this plan puts to urban designers. What do these units look like? Where will they be? Who will live in them? As urban designers, we are interested in understanding the relationships between urban policies, real estate mechanisms and urban fabric and design. **How do we work with these tools to envision not just apartments but complex neighborhoods in which future New Yorkers can live, work and play?**

We will take a look at existing policies and fabrics but also at changing demographics and life styles to develop new visions for how New Yorkers live together. With an emphasis on the neighborhood as the critical unit for change embedded in the larger system of the city, we want to consider the following questions:

**What are innovative models for housing that respond to contemporary needs of our urban society?**

**How do we integrate places to work, learn, exercise, shop, meet and enjoy into the neighborhoods in which we live?**

**What values do we attach to the places we live in that make them “home” and how do we design these?**

**How do we incorporate thinking about energy efficiency and sustainability into new models of housing?**

**How can we manipulate funding streams and costs to achieve affordability for all New Yorkers?**

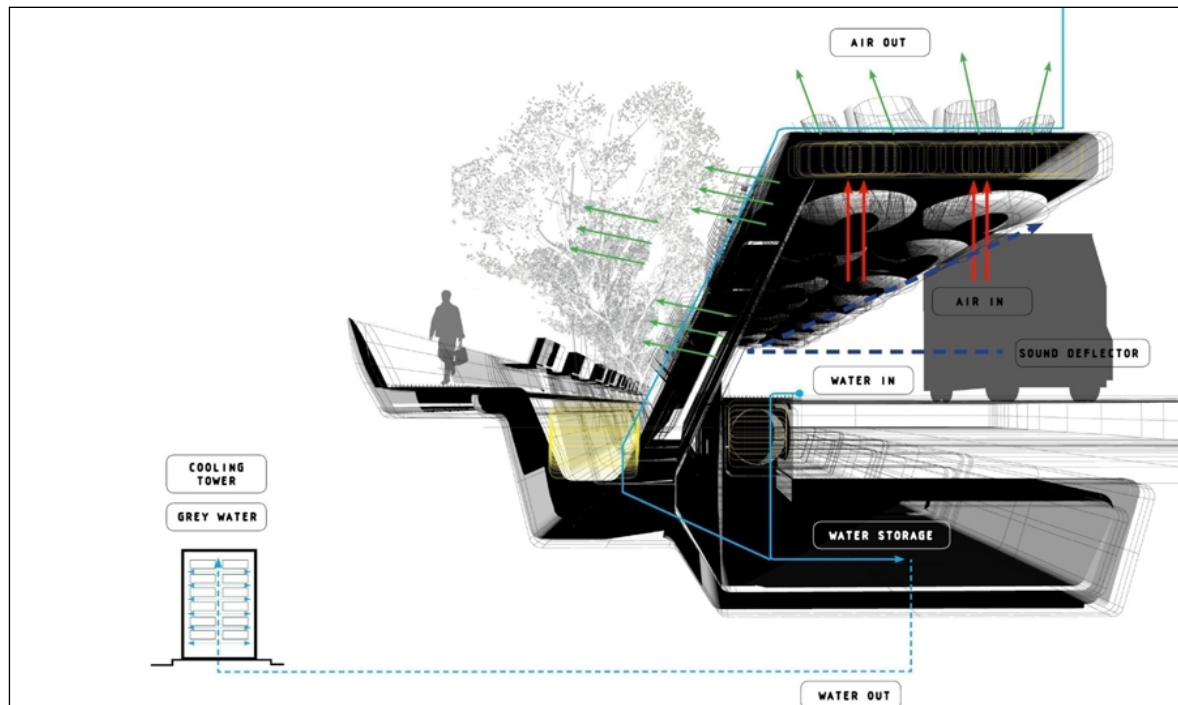
**What are the hard and soft infrastructure systems that housing needs to connect to?**

**How do we consider time and generations as a dimension in designing for housing and neighborhoods?**

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<sup>1</sup> The federal government defines “affordable” as paying 30% or less of you income on housing.

## NEW YORK CITY AS A LABORATORY

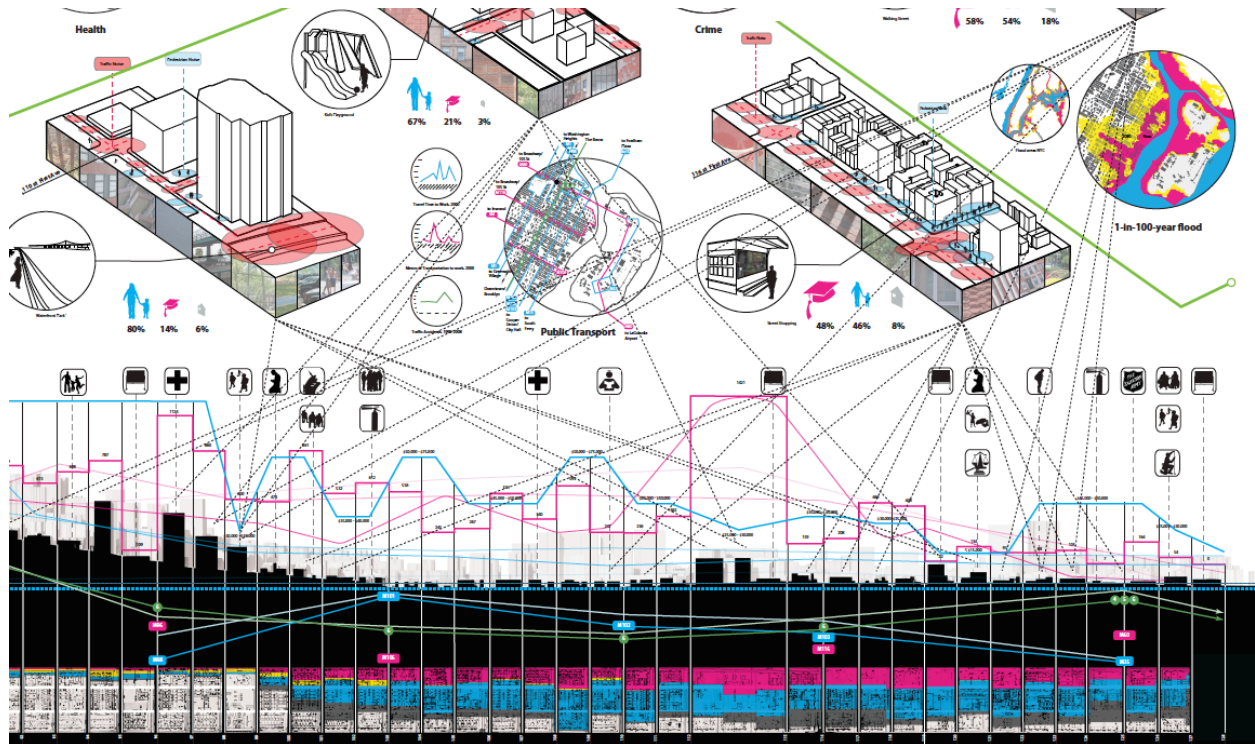


Jamie Fajardo, Dongsei Kim, pUMp, Summer 2008

New York City, the most populous and the most urban of America's cities will serve as a laboratory for these investigations. As a post-industrial city it offers a multitude of areas for transforming the urban environment in order to support the city to face the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. At a point in history, where its population is expected to grow to 9 million by 2040, New York City relies on a physical infrastructure that was planned, designed and built in the past two centuries. The Commissioner's Plan of 1811 laid out the street grid of Manhattan; the city's subway system, begun in 1904, now carries over 5.4 million passengers a day, and the city's intricate system of watersheds, aqueducts and tunnels, date back to the late nineteenth century. Many of these projects were visionary in scale and transformative for New York's residents. However, they were not envisioned for a population of this magnitude and technologies and life styles of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Similarly, 87% of New York City's over 3.3 million housing units were built more than 40 years ago<sup>2</sup>. Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, housing in New York City was developed through a complex system of public policies and financing mechanism paired with urban and architectural ideologies that produced a great variety of urban fabrics and neighborhoods throughout the 5 boroughs. Many of these fabrics and buildings do not adequately reflect the social, economic, environmental and cultural circumstances of New Yorkers today.

<sup>2</sup> 2011 New York City Housing and Vacancy Survey

## DESIGN PROCESS



Johannes Pointl, Gilmar Campos, Minyoung Kim, Lowell Day, *Pocket Urbanism*, Summer 2011

### *Site and Program*

In urban design, “site” is not a given; designers must identify and investigate the complex, layered contexts, operating at multiple scales, within which urban places are embedded. Similarly, the construction of “program” is within the urban designer’s purview; opportunities exist to extend and expand the field for human action and interaction.

### *Making Knowledge*

The techniques of investigating a site, its physical and non-physical context, –its geographic, historical, or socioeconomic aspects, its boundaries and networks, its areas of influence and impact create knowledge about the site. They establish the horizon for a design project, a reference and means of communication between the different disciplines involved in the design process.

In this studio, we treat drawings, diagrams and models not as final representations of a proposal, but as material evidence for a process of “thinking through making”. You will be introduced to a variety of different techniques throughout the semester and we encourage you to test, refine, and sharpen your skills of representation as a means of thinking and communicating your ideas.

### *Process*

In developing an urban design project, the process by which we imagine a project being implemented is an essential part of design itself. Who are the stakeholders that would advocate for or pay for the project? Who are the users that would benefit? What is the timeframe in which it is envisioned? Speculative answers to these questions inform the decision-making process for the physical manifestation of the urban design project.

### *Hypothesis*

You will be asked to translate your investigation of site and program, and the making of knowledge about an urban site into a series of conceptual hypotheses for your site that operate on several scales and in several temporal dimensions. In the context of this studio, you will be asked to speculate with innovative models for housing New Yorkers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and mechanisms to develop such models.

You will then be asked to apply your hypotheses to your specific site and develop design proposals that translate your speculations about housing into physical space.



*Urban Systems Charette, Summer 2012*

## STRUCTURE

Urban Design is teamwork. Practicing how to communicate in teams, how to negotiate different interests, challenges and strengths, both visually and verbally is an important aspect of Urban Design. For each of the distinct parts of this semester you will be asked to work in teams of different size and constellation.

### PART I

#### ***Urban Artefact***

Individual

1 Week

Introductory exercise to explore, interpret and represent one of five sites in New York City. You will construct your site in a physical model using material from the site and constructed on site.

#### ***Constructing Site***

Groups of 3 or 4

3 Weeks

Students will incorporate a variety of modes of investigation to map and diagram the condition of the site finding new knowledge that leads to the construction of a site, a hypothesis of its characteristics, and several scenarios of opportunities for its future.

### PART II

#### ***Urban Fabric***

Groups of 5 (One from each site)

2 Weeks

Students will examine one of many mechanisms that produce housing and visualize its footprint in the city. Students will then work across sites to understand and experiment with systemic linkages between sites and larger regional patterns to identify potentials for public investment on a larger scale and develop working hypotheses for the growth of the city.

### PART III

#### ***Applied Systems***

Groups of 3 or 4

4 Weeks

Students will develop an urban design proposal for their original site of investigation. Building on the constructed site as well as the developed hypotheses for the growth of the city, students will focus on implementation strategies that have the potential to transform the city at the neighborhood scale as well as the city-wide scale.



In addition, there will be three activities that will be continually 'growing' throughout the semester:

### ***Site Knowledge***

1 group per site

10 Weeks

Throughout the semester, students will be responsible for introducing guest critics to their specific site conditions at each of the 5 sites through a 3min. introductory movie. You are encouraged to incorporate images and video footage as well as your own representation of site, geography, social, economic and environmental data. Utilize voice over as another layer of information.

### ***Postcards from Home***

Individual

10 Weeks

Housing is more than just shelter. It is a place we call home. Each week, students will be asked to solicit input from another New Yorker and send a postcard-size design to the studio that interrogates the question "What makes this place home? You are free to use any media of your choice (sketch, model, writing, rendering, photo-collage) as long as it fits on a postcard. The entire collection will contribute to an exhibition curated by the art collective "No Longer Empty" in Sugar Hill, Harlem.



## READING URBAN DESIGN

Over the course of the semester, there will be several seminars in which we discuss readings pertinent to your design process. You are expected to familiarize yourself with the authors and context of these readings and be prepared to discuss them during each seminar session.

### Seminar 1: Defining Site

*Mon, June 17, 2:00 – 3:00 pm*

Kahn, Andrea. [“Defining Urban Sites.”](#) in Carol J. Burns and Andrea Kahn, eds. *Site Matters* (New York: Routledge, 2005)

Corner, James, [“The Agency of Mapping: Speculation, Critique and Invention.”](#) in *Mappings*, Cosgrove, Dennis, ed. (Reaktion Books: 1999).

### Seminar 2: Designing for the Public(s)

*Mon, June 24, 2:00 – 3:00 pm*

Cuff, Dana and Sherman, Roger, [“Introduction”](#) in Cuff, Dana and Sherman Roger *Fast-Forward Urbanism: Rethinking Architecture’s Engagement with the City* (Princeton Architectural Press, 2011)

Harvey, David, [“The Political Economy of Public Space.”](#) in *The Politics of Public Space*, edited by Low, Setha M., and Smith, Neil. (London, Routledge 2006)

### Seminar 3: Affordable Housing

*Mon, June 30, 2:00 – 3:00 pm*

Susanne Schindler, Grahame Shane, Karen Kubey and Juliette Spertus, [“Affordable New York: On instruments of subsidized housing and its impact on the city and its architecture”](#) in *bauwelt 10.12* (Bauwelt Verlag Berlin 2012)

Center for Urban Pedagogy, [“What is Affordable Housing? Envisioning Development / Guide No.1”](#) (Center for Urban Pedagogy, 2009). See also [background on the project here](#)

Aaron Betsky, [“Mayor de Blasio’s Plan to Build More Cells”](#) in *Architect* online, May 7<sup>th</sup> 2014

### Seminar 4: Design Strategies

*Mon, July 21, 2:00 – 3:00 pm*

Models of collective living and shared space in the City: For this last seminar, we will **read projects**. Each student will post a case study to the class website. Case studies should investigate the thresholds between private, public and shared spaces in housing and neighborhood design. A template and login will be given to you prior to this seminar. Here are short articles on [collective housing development](#) and [shared cities](#) as an inspiration for discussion.



## STUDIO LOGISTICS

### *Attendance*

Attendance is expected for all studio events. The studio curriculum includes class sessions, lectures, seminars, site tours, pin-ups and reviews. Studio meets M/W/F 2:00 – 6:00 p.m. Lectures are at 12.30 p.m. on Wednesdays. Attendance is mandatory for all reviews.

This studio is team-taught. Students will work with all seven faculty members throughout the semester-long project, but may be affiliated with particular critics at different points in the process.

### *Grading*

Studio work is done in groups, but all grading is based on each individual student's design product, process and progress, and their contribution to the group effort. Assessment in these areas will be evaluated by how you demonstrate and communicate design thinking through drawings, models, and presentations, and your participation in group discussions. To PASS the course you must engage the studio agenda; consistently contribute to group work; articulate clear design goals; develop coherent design proposals; demonstrate verbal and graphic communication skills and a willingness to explore and test new modes of design research. HIGH PASS grades reflect a concerted effort to consistently exceed basic course requirements. Failure to meet basic course requirements will result in a LOW PASS or FAIL.

Any student considered at risk of receiving a “low pass” or “fail” grade will receive a formal notification by email. Receipt of final grades depends on submission of full project documentation. (See **Archive** below)

### *Office Hours*

To schedule meetings regarding administrative issues, contact the studio coordinator:

Kaja Kühl [kk730@columbia.edu](mailto:kk730@columbia.edu) +1 917 916 5478 (for emergency only)

Faculty contact information: Ben Abelman [benabelman@gmail.com](mailto:benabelman@gmail.com), Brian Baldor [baldor@gmail.com](mailto:baldor@gmail.com), Jamie Chan [jc776@columbia.edu](mailto:jc776@columbia.edu), Tricia Martin [tmartin@wedesign-nyc.com](mailto:tmartin@wedesign-nyc.com), Michael Piper [mppiper@gmail.com](mailto:mppiper@gmail.com),

### *Material*

While much of the work will be digital (each student will have a computer), students are responsible to have legible print material of their design process ready for use in each studio session. Physical model making also plays a key role in the studio working process, and the studio will have working space to facilitate their production. Familiarize yourself with equipment and facilities available.

### *Citing Work and Ideas*

In producing a professional body of research, you are required to acknowledge and cite sources for ALL material referenced in your graphic as well as textual work.

## STUDIO ARCHIVE

You are responsible for archiving your work after each review. Please make sure to include the final product (PDF of boards, PPT or movie, etc) as well as **all original editable files** included therein. For every archive submission, please take time between review and due date to correct spelling mistakes or similar errors. Please make sure that no files are corrupt and that they are downsized to the extent possible without losing quality.

### Standard File Naming Conventions and Archiving Considerations

Submit all graphic material as image files (.tif) or illustrator files (.ai) at 300 dpi. Movies should be Quicktime (.mov). Written material should be edited for spelling and grammar and exact notations to be suitable for public dissemination, and be submitted as a Word document, if not embedded in the image file.

Please use the due date and author name (for individual work) or site location name (for group work) and a 3-digit number to identify the work as shown below.

**yymmdd\_lastname\_001.tif or yymmdd\_lowereastside\_002.swf**

Before submitting, create a directory with subdirectories as necessary to organize your submission. The main folder should be named using the due date and the names of group members or the name of the site.

**yymmdd\_lastname\_firstname or yymmdd\_lowereastside**

Within the main folder create subfolders for images, presentations, diagrams, text, etc... as you see necessary.

### Studio Archive Schedule

Archive of your work is due for each of the four parts on the following days. Please submit all archive work on the due date to the studio TAs on a CD or USB drive or place them in the appropriate folder on the studio server.

- |                                     |                     |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Urban Artefact Review June 9     | Archive due June 13 |
| 3. Constructing Site Review June 27 | Archive due July 2  |
| 3. Urban Systems Review July 14     | Archive due July 18 |
| 4. Final Review Aug 07/08           | Archive due Aug 15  |

## SCHEDULE

Week    Date

### 1 URBAN ARTEFACT

Wed June 4                    Introduction to studio and five sites  
Fri June 6                    Individual site visit / no studio

### 2 CONSTRUCTING SITE

Mon June 9                    REVIEW: URBAN ARTEFACT  
Wed June 11                    **12:00pm Lecture: Richard Plunz**  
   Studio  
Fri June 13                    11am GIS Workshop  
   Studio

### 3 CONSTRUCTING SITE

Mon June 16                    Seminar 1: Defining Site  
   Studio  
Wed June 18                    **Lecture: Juan Saldarriaga, SIDL**  
   Studio  
   **6pm: Pecha Kucha: Positions in Urban Design**  
Fri June 20                    11am GIS workshop  
   Studio

### 4 CONSTRUCTING SITE

Mon June 23                    Seminar 2: What is Urban Design?  
   Studio (Meet with site groups)  
Wed June 25                    Studio  
   **7-9pm: Exhibition Opening: New York is my Home**  
Fri June 27                    REVIEW: CONSTRUCTING SITE

### 5 URBAN SYSTEMS

Mon June 30th                    Seminar 3: Affordable Housing  
   Studio  
Wed July 2                    Studio  
Fri July 4                    Holiday

### 6 URBAN SYSTEMS

Mon July 7                    Charette: The Future of Housing in New York City  
Wed July 9                    **Lecture: Jacob Moore, Buell Center**  
   Studio  
   **6PM: Panel: Housing New York**  
Fri July 11                    Studio

#### 7 APPLIED SYSTEMS

Mon July 14	9-6pm REVIEW: URBAN SYSTEMS
Wed July 16	<b>6:30PM: Lecture: Vishaan Chakrabarti, SHoP (at SHoP)</b>
	Studio
Fri July 18	Studio

#### 8 APPLIED SYSTEMS

Mon July 21	Seminar 4: Design Strategies
	Studio
Wed July 23	<b>Lecture: Eric Bunge, Mimi Hoang, nArchitects</b>
	Studio Pin-up
Fri July 25	Studio

#### 9 APPLIED SYSTEMS

Mon July 28	Studio
Wed July 30	<b>Lecture: Jeremy Alain Siegel, BIG</b>
	Studio Pin-up
Fri August 1	Studio

#### 10 APPLIED SYSTEMS

Mon Aug 4	Studio
Wed Aug 6	No Studio / Final Review material will be collected at 9PM
Thu Aug 7	FINAL REVIEW: APPLIED SYSTEMS
Fri Aug 8	FINAL REVIEW: APPLIED SYSTEMS
<b>Sun Aug 10</b>	<b>Closing: Exhibition New York is my Home</b>

12 ARCHIVE DUE: FRI AUG 15

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