

RED 425: Designing Livable Communities (Section 51664R)
4 Units

Instructor: Russell Gould; russellg@usc.edu
Mobile (650) 521-7819

Schedule & Location: Mondays 6:00 – 9:20 pm
RGL 219

Office Hours: Wednesdays 5:00 – 6:00 pm, or by appointment
RGL 240 or RGL 215

1. Course Description

Myriad forces shape the look, feel and experience of our cities and communities. Changing demographics, economic markets, social values, lifestyles, lending practices, policy interests, etc., all visibly impact our urban environment and shape the way life can be lived in any given place. As long-lived assets, our cities provide the context for both permanence and change. They form complex, multivalent, ever-changing wholes whose design is constantly being adjusted in both small and large ways. Sometimes communities are created wholesale allowing architects, planners and developers to redress the perceived mistakes of the past. More often, however, these professionals, and the citizens they are designing for, are remodeling existing places, in both active and reactive ways. Either way, an understanding of the impact of physical form and space on livability and community is paramount.

This course will explore theories and concepts of livable communities and good city form. Case studies of historical and current best practices, field visits and collaborative design projects will all be used to help students gain experience required to begin to “read” urban form and understand its impact on daily life. Multiple viewpoints will be presented throughout to encourage the development of students’ critical thinking skills. All class activities will explicitly explore both the intended and unintended consequences of design decisions at the scale of urban development.

Course activities will be organized around three central questions about the relationship between design, livability, community, sustainability and health:

- What characterizes a livable community? How might these qualities have evolved from the past and potentially change in the future?
- What responsibilities do the builders of community have towards the realization of livability and community identity? Who is in charge of translating community values into community form?
- What are the physical tools and strategies designers can use to engender livable communities? Why do similar strategies have different outcomes in different contexts?

Note: As a class in design, required activities and assignments are part of every class session, every week. Successful performance depends on skills and lessons being learned early, for use in later tasks and assignments. Also, much effort is group-based as well as individual, so that every student's work directly affects not only her/his overall performance, but also that of others. As a result, attendance of all class meetings and full participation in all activities is essential for a good grade. Conversely, missed class meetings and/or low participation in class activities will result in a poor grade.

2. Course Objectives & Learner Outcomes

- To introduce students to the fundamental issues and current topics of debate impacting the livability of our communities.
- To provide a forum and framework in which students can cultivate the critical thinking skills necessary to develop their own opinions and values regarding the quality and future of city and community development.
- To provide an opportunity for students to develop the written, verbal, graphic and analytical skills required to both propose and critique urban design ideas.
- To learn to see, document and inflect the physical design of the built environment.

3. Attendance & Classroom Conduct

- Attendance of all class meetings on time and for the full duration is expected. Excused absences are rare, fully documented and normally involve things such as team athletics or major medical emergency. Communicate any concerns to your instructor.
- On a rare occasion, each of us has something that competes with attending a class meeting: an organization event, a job interview, an appointment, a transportation problem, not feeling well, etc. Sometimes the competing item seems quite compelling—but this does not constitute an excused absence, though you may choose to miss class as a result. As elsewhere in the professional world, each of us makes our own decisions about meeting our obligations, and lives with the consequences.
- If you know you are going to miss a class, arrange to turn in your printed assignment early, or have a colleague turn it in on the due date and time. Otherwise, it will be considered late.
- Not having your work completed is not a good reason to miss class. Coming to class is the best way to preserve your ability to do well in the course. Attend even if you have not completed that day's assignment.
- Please communicate any scheduled absences for religious observance and/or sanctioned athletic activities to your instructor at the BEGINNING of the semester or as soon as possible after the need for the absence is known.
- More than ONE absence, EXCUSED or UNEXCUSED, will make it very difficult to succeed in the course. Design is an iterative, ongoing process that requires consistent and continuous engagement. A student who does not attend class regularly will fail notwithstanding the delivery of assignments.
- Attendance is doubly important due to the collaborative nature of the course. Students will be working together as clients and designers on development projects. You will be responsible to your instructor, but also to your group-mates. Absences will make this work difficult to make up and will impact your partner's ability to complete their work.
- If you miss a class session, plan to meet with your instructor during office hours as soon as possible. Be sure to bring the assignments you are currently working on for the course so you can get feedback and advice about how to move forward.
- On-time arrival to class is important. Class will begin promptly with a review of the schedule, overview of the day's activities and a time for questions. VERY IMPORTANT information about assignments, due dates and expectations is given during the first 5 minutes of class and it will not be repeated if you arrive late.
- Arrival over 10 minutes late to class will be counted as an absence. Likewise, if you leave while class is in session for more than 10 minutes.

- All cell phones, iPads, iPods and similar devices must be silenced and stowed during class. Anyone found to be emailing, text messaging, accepting phone calls or otherwise not paying attention via technology in class will have their device confiscated and the session will be counted as an absence.
- **LAPTOP POLICY:** Laptop use will be allowed only at specific class times that will be announced for research and modelling purposes. Otherwise, laptops should be stowed. Lecture slides will be posted before class so that students can print them out and take notes by hand.
- This course explicitly explores different viewpoints regarding the planning and design of our cities and communities. Though agreement is not necessary, students should at all times be polite and respectful regarding the opinions expressed by others. Please do not talk over colleagues who are already speaking (especially your instructor).
- Substantial class time is given to the preparation of required coursework. Students not using this time wisely will be asked to leave and marked absent for the class session.
- This course, like most design courses, requires ongoing, ITERATIVE WORK. Students should budget sufficient time to work outside of class on the design of their course projects EVERY WEEK, incorporating feedback from the prior class period. Students whose projects do not evolve and change will not succeed in the course.
- Should anything occur that could compromise your ability to complete all the requirements of the course, communicate with your instructor early and often regarding your situation. This is the best way to preserve your ability to do well in the class.

4. Coursework

- **Format**

Class time is divided between lectures by the instructor and/or guest speakers and studio sessions for in-class assignments, giving students the opportunity to directly engage with that week's lecture topic. Active engagement during all class sessions is vital for success in the course.

- **Communication**

This course heavily utilizes Blackboard. Digital versions of course documents, announcements, readings, and other critical items will be posted there. You are responsible for checking Blackboard frequently for updates and notices. Also, you are responsible for checking your USC email regularly. It is this address to which course related emails will be sent.

- **Readings & General Class Preparation**

Students should come to class prepared to participate fully in the work at hand. Questions and observations are welcome, so please do not hesitate to ask or speak up during class lectures if you do not understand the material, or to make other relevant observations. As you prepare readings, please make note of:

- Concepts that seem important but are not clear to you.
- Questions that address the primary point of the reading and the course.
- Ideas that you feel deserve a different perspective or conclusion than that the author has given.
- Applications of the content of the reading to the work of the class.

- **Course Project**

Students will design a development project that will improve the livability, sustainability and health of two mid-city neighborhoods along the Expo Line using the topics of the course as a lens or focus. Specific assignments will

guide students through an analysis of place, identification of a relevant development idea and the design process. Assignments will be collected and graded at the end of each course module. Students will revise assignments to incorporate feedback and will resubmit them as part of the final project.

This project, a medium-scale infill real estate development project, will be conducted individually but also collaboratively. There are two project sites. Each student will act as the developer for one site and the designer for the other. Students will propose the program and project vision for Site One, and design to another student's program/vision on Site Two, or vice versa. Studio sessions will be conducted as project design meetings where students present design proposals to their "developer clients," documented via traditional architectural tools including plans, sections, diagrams and massing models, and constructively critique the schemes prepared for them by their "designers". All projects must include multi-family housing (for seniors, families and/or emerging adults), a significant PUBLIC community outdoor space, and a "third element" that characterizes the project and distinguishes it from other project proposals. This third element might be another land use, user group or program. Projects must create an "intentional community" of some kind – not merely throw together unrelated uses.

Students will be assigned to groups of 4 to work on the course project. These groups will remain in place for the duration of the semester.

At the end of the semester, both project development vision and design will be evaluated by outside expert critics at a formal review. All invited critics will be professional architects, planners, urban designers and developers whose practice works to improve the design of our everyday environment. Students will be asked to incorporate this feedback as part of the final exam at the end of the course.

USES Requiring a Variance from your Instructor:

Lazy Rivers, Giant Chess Boards, Shipping Containers, Maze Gardens, Food Trucks, Skate Parks, Rooftop Bars, Pedestrian Bridges, Dog Parks, Pools, Amusement Parks, Water Parks and Fountains. Use of any of these programs will require written justification supporting its benefit and rationale for your project. Your instructor will decide whether the use is acceptable based on the quality of your argument. Otherwise, keep thinking!

- **In-Class Assignments**

In-class assignments given during studio sessions are intended to allow students to gain some direct experience with the skills, concepts and examples presented throughout the course. By creating these opportunities to "think in situations" rather than think in the abstract, students will cultivate an understanding not just of concepts themselves but also of the consequences of their application. Students must participate fully during in-class assignments do well in the course. Many assignments will also require additional work outside of class. Students who miss these assignments due to an excused or unexcused absence must follow up with their instructor immediately and complete the work as soon as possible.

Allow sufficient time to complete printing of assignments well BEFORE the start of class on due dates. Printer problems do not constitute an acceptable excuse for missing a deadline.

- **Final Project**

The final project will require the collection, revision and re-presentation of all the assignments conducted both inside and outside of class. Making improvements based on feedback from fellow students, the instructor and invited guest critics is crucial for success on this component of the course.

- **Final Examination**

The take-home final exam will ask students to summarize the feedback received during final project reviews, and redesign their site plan accordingly.

- **Assignment Submission, Revision and Late Work**

NEW WORK that builds upon prior work completed both in class and at home will be required every week. EMAILED ASSIGNMENTS will **not** be accepted. Submit printed, hard copies in class on due dates.

FAILURE TO KEEP UP WITH WORK

All assignments build upon previous ones; getting behind in your work, for any reason, will make it very difficult to do well in the course. If an absence is known/excused, any work due that day should be completed and handed in BEFOREHAND. **Missed work due to an unanticipated absences should be made up as soon as possible, ideally before the next class session.**

WORK IS LATE if turned in after the due date and time and will be graded down accordingly. The grade deduction will increase until turned in. (Refer to course schedule below)

- **Syllabus Revision**

The instructors will regularly assess progress and solicit student feedback regarding the course. If necessary the syllabus will be revised to shape the course responsively.

5. Textbook & Materials

- **Readings for the course will be drawn from:**

Abendroth, Lisa; and Bryan Bell (Editors). Public Interest Design Practice Guidebook. New York, NY: Routledge, 2016.

Connor, Adam; and Aaron Irizarry. Discussing Design, Improving Communication & Collaboration Through Critique. Sebastopol, CA: 2015.

Davis, Charles; Korydon Smith and Beth Tauke (Editors). Diversity and Design, Understanding Hidden Consequences. New York, NY: Routledge, 2016.

Gehl, Jan. Cities for People. Washington, DC: Island Press, 2010.

Kasprisin, Ron. Urban Design, the Composition of Complexity. New York, NY: Routledge, 2011.

Extracts from all sources will be posted on Blackboard.

- **Required Materials** (materials can be found at Office Depot, Staples, Amazon or any art supply store):

- Engineering Scale (1" = 50', 1" = 100', etc.)
- Clear plastic straightedge (triangle or ruler)
- Roll of Trace (12", white)
- Thick and thin black pens (Sharpie)
- White Artists Tape (1" wide)
- Digital Camera (phone camera ok)

- **Graphic Software:**

SketchUp and PowerPoint are required. A student license (\$49) for SketchUp can be purchased here: <https://www.sketchup.com/3Dfor/education-students>. NOTE: Though PowerPoint and SketchUp will be introduced in class and their use required for some assignments, this is not a computer course in which much of classroom time is devoted to software training. For ongoing instruction, visit www.lynda.com via Blackboard.

6. Grading

- Grading will break down as follows:

10%	Participation (attendance, on-time arrival, contributions to discussions, pin-ups and reviews, peer evaluation, engagement in teamwork)
40%	Course Assignments 1 – 4 (10% each)
30%	Final Design Presentation (10% Verbal & 20% Graphic)
<u>20%</u>	<u>Final Exam</u>
100%	

- The University standard for undergraduate-level grades will apply (source: USC Catalogue):

A	Work of excellent quality		≥94 = A	90-93 = A-
B	Work of good quality	87-89 = B+	84-86 = B	80-83 = B-
C	Work of fair quality	77-79 = C+	74-76 = C	70-73 = C-
D	Work of minimum passing quality	67-69 = D+	64-66 = D	60-63 = D-
F	Failure to adequately complete all course work		≤59 = F	

NOTE: Earning an “A” grade in this course is difficult. Students must complete all work on time and submit work of superior quality. Work must address all aspects of the required assignments, be guided by a strong design idea and demonstrate critical thinking. Students must revise prior work for the final project based on feedback from your instructor and classmates. Students must consistently contribute to class and be an active participant in all aspects of the course.

7. Design Advice – Rules to live by in the design studio.

- FOUR THINGS YOU WILL LEARN THAT YOU MUST REMEMBER:

- Trade Offs NOT Unlimited Budgets
 - Though this course will use a basic, static *pro forma* as part of site programming, other important aspects of real estate development (finance, market analysis, capital markets or project management, for example) will not be explicitly addressed. These issues are implied, however. Students will be asked to use their existing knowledge and common sense to evaluate whether their proposal is reasonable from these other points of view.
 - In other words, projects proposed during the course are not divorced from financial reality and do not have unlimited budgets. Students will be asked to think about cost and revenue trade-offs. For example, if parking is underground which we know is very costly, what will the extra space generated by that strategy be used for to generate commensurate revenue.
- Context Context Context Context Context CONTEXT!
 - The form, use and character of the physical context surrounding your site, and that generated within your project itself, matters. Use it frequently to evaluate the quality of your design ideas.
- Design INTENTION Matters!
 - It is hard to design without a set of objectives or goals that you are working towards. Clearly articulating specific intentions helps you make meaningful, rather than random, design decisions.
- A successful strategy, oftentimes, is to operate in the space between the known and the unknown.
 - Take two things you think you know well, for example, a stairway and a park, and combine them to create something new that we have perhaps never seen before. What might a STAIRWAY PARK be like?

- Read all assignment sheets and handouts closely and often. These are detailed and give a step-by-step breakdown of the design process. If you have started your work but are confused, go back and re-read the assignment sheet. More often than not, it will answer your questions. If it does not, only then contact your instructor for a clarification. If the answer is, in fact, stated on the project sheet, your instructors will not respond.
- Start early! Drawings and models will take longer than you think. But also set time limits for yourself. Getting the work out there is more important than creating a perfect drawing.
- ITERATION means repetition with improvements, and is an essential part of the design process. Also, practice the “Rule of Threes:” try to find at least three ways to do something. The third will, more often than not, be the best approach.
- When presenting a design scheme, always talk about “This project . . . ” never “My project. . . .” This practice will distance your self from the project and ensure that criticism is not taken personally.
- When critiquing the work of others, always lead with the positive. Once positive aspects have been identified, move onto elements that you feel could be improved. Suggesting alternative strategies or other design approaches is helpful.
- Pay close attention to the design feedback given to ALL of your colleagues’ projects and evaluate it through the lens of your own project. TAKE NOTES. Advice given to other students will almost always apply to you, too.
- There are no, or at least very few, “right answers” in design. However, some things are definitely better than others. Remember, good design turns constraints into opportunities. All good design projects use the prompt/instructions or program/vision as a catalyst.
- Bring yourself and your experience to bear on the work. Use your own goals, interests and experience to actively shape your design project.
- Learning to DESIGN and learning to use DESIGN SOFTWARE are two entirely different things. Knowing how to use Sketch Up does not make you a good designer, or a designer at all. This course will focus on learning the design process first (ie, design intention and decision making), supported by opportunities to learn Sketch Up.

8. Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct:

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” <https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b/>.

Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct>.

Support Systems:

Student Counseling Services (SCS) - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling/>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1-800-273-8255

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

Relationship & Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-4900 - 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.
<https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp/>

Sexual Assault Resource Center

For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: <http://sarc.usc.edu/>

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX compliance – (213) 740-5086

Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. <https://equity.usc.edu/>

Bias Assessment Response and Support

Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support/>

Student Support & Advocacy – (213) 821-4710

Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa/>

Diversity at USC – <https://diversity.usc.edu/>

Tab for Events, Programs and Training, Task Force (including representatives for each school), Chronology, Participate, Resources for Students

Academic Accommodations - Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to the instructor (or to a TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8.30 AM to 5.00 pm Monday through Friday. Website and contact information for DSP:

http://sait.usc.edu/academicssupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html (213) 740-0776 (Phone), (213) 740-6948 (TDD only), (213) 740-8216 (FAX), ability@usc.edu

9. Course Schedule (*subject to change as the semester progresses*)

INTRODUCTION	1	<i>August 28</i>	LECTURE	Course Introduction, Design Matters Discussion
			STUDIO	Site Visit
				<i>Site Observation Assignment INTRODUCED</i>
	2	<i>September 4</i>	LECTURE	Site Observation Pin Up & Discussion, Site Analysis Lecture
			STUDIO	Site Programming Charrette
				<i>Site Observation Assignment DUE</i>
DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT	3	<i>September 11</i>	LECTURE	LA Design & Development History
			STUDIO	Design Thinking Exercise, Design Idea Tutorial, Begin Brainstorming
				<i>Development Vision Assignment INTRODUCED</i>
	4	<i>September 18</i>	LECTURE	Design & Development: The Iterative Process
			STUDIO	Pin Up 25 Project Ideas (and rank) Graphic Representation Tutorial, Drawing Exercise

	5	September 25	LECTURE STUDIO	Design & Development: Fundamental Concepts & Tools Hand Drawing Tutorial, Site Planning Charrette, Write Three Sentence Vision <i>Precedent & Massing Model Assignment INTRODUCED</i>
CREATING COMMUNITY	6	October 2	LECTURE STUDIO	Regulatory Fundamentals, Design Precedents, Product Types & Building Typologies Sketch Up Tutorial, Begin Site Modelling <i>Development Vision Assignment DUE</i>
	7	October 9	LECTURE STUDIO	Housing & Open Space Design, Parking Layout Pin Up Sketch Up Models & Precedent Research Precedent Analysis Tutorial
	8	October 16	LECTURE STUDIO	Retail, Office and other Building Types, Mid-Semester Course Evals Student Group Precedent Presentations <i>Community Design Assignment INTRODUCED</i>
PLANNING for LIVABILITY	9	October 23	LECTURE STUDIO	Resilience: Concepts & Case Studies Site Plan/Site Planning Tutorial, Design Charrette <i>Precedent & Massing Model Assignment DUE</i>
	10	October 30	LECTURE STUDIO	Gentrification: Concepts & Case Studies Pin Up, Studio Session, Urban Design/Landscape Design Tutorial <i>Final Project Requirements INTRODUCED</i>
STUDIO INTENSIVE	11	November 6	STUDIO	Introduce Final Presentation Template Revise Site Plan, Document Process Work, Refine Development Vision <i>Community Design Assignment DUE</i> <i>NOTE: Individual Meetings with Instructor outside of class held this week.</i>
	12	November 13	STUDIO	Draw Final Site Plan & Site Sections, Draw Housing Plans Park Precedent, Sketch Up Views, Programs & Partners Finalize Development Vision
		November 18	STUDIO	Extra make up class session Continue Work on Final Presentation
	13	November 20	STUDIO	Draw Final Open Space Plan Print & Assemble Final Presentation <i>Design Presentation DUE</i>

14 November 27
NO CLASS Thanksgiving Holiday

CONCLUSION 15 December 4
STUDIO Design Project Presentations with Guest Critics

FINAL EXAM December 13
EXAM 4:00pm Friday
Final Exam DUE

10. Course Bibliography

Reference Texts:

Banerjee, Tridib; Loukaitou-Sideris, Anastasia, Editors. Companion to Urban Design. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2011.

Ching, Francis. Architectural Graphics. New York, NY: John Wiley and Sons, Inc, 2003.

Hopper, Leonard J.. Landscape Architectural Graphic Standards, Student Edition. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2007.

Ramsey, Charles G., Harold R. Sleeper, Bruce Bassler. Architectural Graphic Standards, Student Edition. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2008.

Steiner, Frederick R., Kent Butler. Planning and Urban Design Standards, Student Edition. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2007.

Recommended Texts:

Alexander, Christopher. A Pattern Language, Towns, Building, Construction (Center for Environmental Structures Series). Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1977.

Childs, Mark C.. Urban Composition, Developing Community through Design. New York, NY: Princeton Architectural Press, 2012.

Farr, Douglas. Sustainable Urbanism, Urban Design with Nature. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2008.

Ewing, Reid, Otto Clemente. Measuring Urban Design, Metrics for Livable Places. Washington, DC: Island Press, 2013.

Hester, Randolph T.. Design for Ecological Democracy. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2006.

Jacobs, Allan B. Great Streets. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1995.

Kiib, Hans. Performative Urban Design. Aalborg, Denmark: Aalborg University Press, 2010.

Kostof, Spiro. The City Shaped, Urban Patterns and Meanings Through History. Boston, MA: Bulfinch Press, 1991.

Lynch, Kevin. Good City Form. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1984.

Lynch, Kevin, Gary Hack. Site Planning, Second Edition. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1984.

Toker, Umut. Making Community Design Work, A Guide for Planners. Chicago, IL: Planners Press, 2012.

Internet Resources:

LOS ANGELES:

Los Angeles City Planning Department	http://planning.lacity.org/
LA Zoning Information Map Access System	http://zimas.lacity.org/
LA Dept of Neighborhood Empowerment	http://empowerla.org/
Plan for a Healthy Los Angeles	http://planning.lacity.org/cwd/gnlpln/PlanforHealthyLA.pdf
Urban Mobility in a Digital Age	http://www.urbanmobilityla.com/strategy/
Re:code LA (new zoning code)	http://recode.la/
LA Sustainability Plan	http://plan.lamayor.org/

SUSTAINABILITY, LIVABILITY & HEALTH:

Architecture 2030	http://architecture2030.org/
2030 Palette	http://2030palette.org/
Active Design Guidelines	https://centerforactivedesign.org/guidelines/
8 80 Cities	http://www.880cities.org/
Universal Design	https://www.asla.org/universaldesign.aspx

DESIGN, DEVELOPMENT:

Curbed LA	https://la.curbed.com/
Urbanize LA	https://urbanize.la/
Abundant Housing LA	http://www.abundanthousingla.org/