



Harvard University
Graduate School of Design
Career Discovery
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Summer 2017

Dear Planning and Urban Design Student,

Welcome to Career Discovery! The Planning and Urban Design Instructors and I are looking forward to working with you as you explore the many facets of the both professions this summer. Planning and urban design are collaborative disciplines by nature, and this course is specifically structured in the studio format to be an introduction to both.

You will spend the next six weeks learning by doing, tackling real urban challenges through one-on-one engagement with your instructor as well as collaborative discourse with your peers. Planning and urban design are iterative, process-driven disciplines, and one of the fundamental benefits of studio culture – both in school and professionally – is the proximity, access, and time afforded for the exchange ideas, sharing of expertise, and engagement in ongoing creative debates (often times very late at night, and sometime unsolicited).

By definition, the work of planning and urban design is almost always collaborative and involves outreach and understanding the community, the surrounding context, and outside forces. Economics, ecology, culture, and politics all have direct influences on the built environment. Similarly, decisions we make about built form – streets, blocks, buildings, open spaces, and transportation infrastructures – have the potential to influence social relationships, economic activities, and the perception and identity of place. The role of the planner and urban designer is to understand, illustrate, and synthesize these and other forces that shape and reshape the built environment, and to envision new or revitalized regions, cities, and communities that reflect the needs of our society. Some work with municipalities or regions, others with non-profits such as community development corporations or universities, while others still choose private consulting firms. The work they do can influence policy, establish visions and guidelines, and regulate the future development of housing, transit, open space, sustainability measures, and community development.

While in the Planning and Urban Design Program at Career Discovery, we will teach you planning approaches, design language, and drawing tools that will enable you to express your ideas about the future form of the city. Your instructors will encourage you to form your own ideas for the future. They will help you to develop and articulate original design proposals for specific urban settings through representation techniques including sketching, diagramming, mapping, and the creation of planning and urban design drawings.

Guest speakers, field visits, and other activities will complement the studio assignments. Nearby studios will be studying architecture and landscape architecture so that you can see how these professions interrelate. Many writers have influenced our understanding of cities from the perspectives of planning and urban design. I encourage you to find articles or books by any of the authors on the attached bibliography or search out other related sources. Even more importantly, begin to observe your environment and consider how planning and urban design have shaped the places that you know well. Come ready to share your ideas and talk about what inspires you about the fields of planning and design.

We look forward to having you join us in the Planning and Urban Design Studios of Career Discovery this summer.

Sincerely,

Stephen Gray
Lead Faculty in Urban Planning and Design
Career Discovery Program, 2017