

Surrey is located on the unceded traditional territories of the Semiahmoo, Katzie, Kwikwetlem, Kwantlen, Qayqayt, and Tsawwassen First Nations. Just three years ago, the City of Surrey did not vocally acknowledge those Nations' status as Rightsholders of the lands on which Surrey resides.

## **SUBURBAN**

UBC SALA – Fall 2024 Graduate Urban Studio  
ARCH 520

Instructor: James F Huemoeller

*When buildings stand isolated, oblivious to any urban infrastructure that gathers them together, their impact is effectively limited to the farthest sight line measured in architectural feet instead of urban miles. - Albert Pope*

This studio is a journey into the unique characteristics of suburban spaces that surround our increasingly monotonous, sanitized urban cores. These cores currently hold sway over urban thinking, but this is not a permanent state. As architects, we have a duty to infuse areas outside the centre with enthusiasm and energy, allowing these communities to thrive as unique urban places.

To do so means accepting a different kind of urbanism. In the centre, space is at a premium and, therefore, the focus of design. At the edges, space is in excess, and landscape becomes dominant. The excess space means buildings are free to relish in

their objectness, protected by mid-century zoning codes. Yet this freedom renders architecture in suburban contexts powerless to have any urban impact. The antithesis of the Rossian primary urban artifact. A series of functionally separated zones (street, bike lane, planting strip, sidewalk, planting strip, parking, lawn) means architecture's only hope for a transformative urban project is through spectacle, Denise Scott Brown's Vegas Strip.

As we inevitably move beyond car-centred development, we are called to reimagine the suburbs. We must find a new avenue for an operation that rejects the "decorated box" and the derivative New-Urbanist villages that came later. This is a call to action, a challenge to acknowledge that the genie is out of the bottle and to strive for a new, innovative approach to suburban architecture.

In other words, we must abandon our obsession with the core and embrace the mess we have made, but with more optimism about what design can achieve.

## **Key Studio Themes**

- Understand and challenge the legacy of the 20th-century hyperfunctionalist planning ideas by reframing the city as a post-Anthropocene world that embraces social justice by designing around the most vulnerable and the challenges of climate change.
- Restore the ground as a multidimensional, active entity, confronting its traditional status as background to the object

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS:**

All projects should be completed in groups of two. Students must carefully document their design research and any precedent projects or images throughout the semester. A portion of their grade will be submitting that documentation as a PDF or online resource. The instructor will provide some examples of approaches that can be adopted.

### **Project 1: A vision (4 weeks)**

The first project will be to develop a storyboard of images representing, to steal, the words of Aldo Rossi, an analogous future for the City of Surrey set roughly 50 years into the future. To develop ideas for this future, we

need to develop an idea of what we want that future to look like rather than a post-apocalyptic vision of everything going wrong. How would we like to see Surrey evolve to meet society's challenges? This visioning exercise should be developed hand in hand with your research on the place.

These drawings are expected to combine your ambitions as a design professional, the aspirations of the community at large, and research into the future of our urbanizing world. Ultimately, they will attempt to make your goals and values for the late design project tangible.

As with comic book illustrations, the representations can be abstract and detailed, only enough to convey an idea and avoid extraneous information. The project should capitalize on the abilities of various AI tools, such as Midjourney, but it can also utilize mixed media. Students should anticipate paying some funds for monthly licenses for the AI software to allow for iterations.

## **Project 2: Final Design Project (9 weeks)**

For the final design project, students will be asked to develop a neighbourhood plan for the Newton Town Centre area with approaches for landscape, transit, social spaces (cultural and retail uses), and community formation, including housing and amenities. This plan should be a framework (allowing for flexibility and adaptation) that achieves the vision from the first project. It is anticipated that these plans should find a strong and coherent idea of landscape that will organize the projects, similar to how False Creek functions in Vancouver.

Students must identify at least one area they develop in more detail within the plan, such as a landscape or a civic or mixed-use building. This project should outline how the plan and vision can be carried forward with more specificity. The development of this project will be structured around exploring the figure/ground relationship within cities, moving beyond Colin Rowe's thesis outlined many years ago and embracing a more complex, even ambiguous, understanding of that duality.

As part of this project, students will need to outline how the project meets the following criteria:

- Ecology enhancement
- Forms exterior social and recreation spaces
- Creates streets safe for kids
- Incorporates cultural considerations
- Ensures vibrant retail
- Creates a sustainable housing mix
- Builds resiliency

The course will explore the design criteria through conversations and readings from relevant organizations, designers, planners, and scholars. Students can anticipate at least one reading per session.

**NOTE: The studio will visit the site on Friday, September 13<sup>th</sup> and meet at 1:30 at the Surrey Central Library before taking a bus as a team to the site. Please address any scheduling conflicts before that date.**