URPL 6205 Plan Making

Instructor: Peter J. Park, Associate Professor Adjunct
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Credits: 3 Units
Meeting Time: M 9:30am-12:15pm
Room: CU Bldg 495
Enrollment Requirements: Graduate Level

Description
In this seminar we will explore plan making at the city scale. Specifically, we will examine various approaches to comprehensive planning in jurisdictions in the United States and how the ideal of rational comprehensive planning has evolved (and continues to evolve) in practice. We’ll use a case study method to look at growing cities such as Denver, Los Angeles, Austin, Houston, and Oklahoma City, as well as legacy cities such as Milwaukee, Detroit, and Memphis to better understand the relationship between aspirations in Comprehensive Plans and the realities of development and change. We will confront pressing issues in planning today such as: How do planners effectively apply technical expertise in politically constrained contexts and what is the role of the public in preparation of comprehensive plans? Where is innovation most needed in planning practice and how can comprehensive plans support it? What are the social, economic, technological, and environmental forces that shape the built environment and how can comprehensive plans most effectively influence positive outcomes? How can sustainability (economic, environmental, and social equity) and affordability be proactively addressed in comprehensive planning?

Organization:
The seminar discussions will be organized in five modules:

Module 1: Tracing the roots of Comprehensive Planning in the United States
In Module 1 we will review the professionalization of planning in the 20th century and the political, economic and social forces and design concepts that shaped and evolved rational comprehensive planning practice over the years.

Module 2: The Components of Comprehensive Plans (processes and products)
In Module 2 we will review the fundamental components of comprehensive plans; their legal foundations; the entities that prepare them; the topics they address (land use, transportation, capital infrastructure, urban design, open space, historic preservation, sustainability, resilience, public amenities, community health, arts and culture, etc.); and various the types of plans, planning, and implementation activities comprehensive plans influence.
Module 3: Visioning
In Module 3 we will explore the aspirational and projective aspects of comprehensive plans; the necessary analytical foundations (economic, demographic, physical, environmental, infrastructure capacities, etc.); the visioning process and models of public engagement; Scenario Planning; and the importance of managing expectations through effective messaging. Module 3 will include student presentations of the “Vision Analysis” of their case studies that follows a shared format to be prepared in a collaborative class effort.

Module 4: Implementation Tools and Strategies
In Module 4 we will explore the implementation tools and strategies (regulatory, infrastructure, and partnership) that bring vision to reality and the importance of clear linkages between planning policy and implementation activities; organizing, prioritizing, and phasing implementation; coordination across multiple departments and jurisdictions; political leadership; and regular update cycles. Module 4 will include student presentations of the “Implementation Tools and Strategies Analysis” of their case studies that follows a shared format to be prepared in a collaborative class effort.

Module 5: The Outcomes
In Module 5 we will assess the outcomes of comprehensive planning efforts, how effectively they guide desired results over time and reasons for success and failure in an attempt to describe a direction for successful comprehensive planning efforts in the future. Module 5 will include student presentations of the “Outcomes Analysis” of their case studies that follows a shared format to be prepared in a collaborative class effort.

Coursework
The course will be structured as a seminar. Each class will consist of a presentation, followed by class discussion. Students are expected to prepare for each class and be ready to discuss readings and/or other assignments. Regular attendance and active participation in discussions is mandatory and vital to the progress of the class. Participation is a key grade component.

There will be three assignments:
1) A beginning-of-semester summary of your understanding of comprehensive plans and the planner’s role in plan making.
2) Comprehensive Plan Case Study (written and verbal presentations in three parts)
   a. Analysis and Presentation of the Case Study Vision (during Module 3)
   b. Analysis and Presentation of the Case Study Implementation Tools and Strategies (during Module 4)
   c. Analysis and Presentation of the Case Study Outcomes (during Module 5)
3) An end-of-semester reflection piece on your perspective of comprehensive plans and the planner’s role in plan making.