SITE PLANNING & SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Human settlements are created and communities structured mostly by private individuals or firms constructing buildings on parcels—as long as the sites are accessible, somehow related to nodes of other urban activity, and equipped with support services. In the United States, this practice has been called "site planning" or "subdivision" and has created millions of houses and thousands of commercial centers around all American metropolitan areas and cities since World War II. The results have been roundly criticized from an urbanistic point of view; however, the public preference is still strongly in favor of this type of development. We should be able to do this job well, and seek methods through which a better environment, at affordable costs, can be built.

The specific techniques that planners and developers can employ toward achieving good site development are discussed, and a reasonable degree of skill in application is expected to be obtained by the students. The course could also be called "municipal engineering," although it has a wider perspective than is usually understood by that technical term. To take specific physical actions alone is not enough – they also need to be understood in terms of their effectiveness and efficiency. Their relationship to neighboring units and the community at large are important as well.

The specific objectives of the course are:

* to offer the students adequate knowledge as to what actually exists, can happen, and is likely to occur in the physical urban environment (as well as on specific sites);
* to describe the process through which new land is transformed into habitable districts;
* to give the students a full understanding of what services and actions are desirable or required, and what they do; and
* to provide most of the necessary tools that will enable planners/designers and developers to operate constructively and professionally in their fields (and to judge when the need for assistance by specialist arises).