

# Course Syllabus

## Neighborhood Planning and Community Development

### Focus on Planning for

UW Seattle: URBDP 562 A

Gould 440 Tuesdays 6:00 – 8:20 PM

Spring, 2025

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### Introduction and Course Description

This course is an introduction to neighborhood planning and community development in the United States. We will review the history of the concept of neighborhood planning and the academic approaches to developing neighborhood plans, and will examine the Seattle Neighborhood Planning process in depth with the goal of understanding how neighborhood planning actually works over time on the ground and critiquing this process. The class will also include working in a team to develop a plan around the reconceptualization and renovation of Jim Holm Park in the City of Granite Falls. The City of Granite Falls, through the Livable Cities program, has asked for this planning to be done, and will work with the class to provide study materials and to review and comment on the proposed strategies for creating a plan and the specific elements that the class teams recommend.

The City of Granite Falls is supporting this exercise in order to develop a draft plan for the park that will address the many needs of various age and recreational interest groups. The City wishes to be quite intentional in how it determines the needs for this signature park property. The proposed planning process should include a portfolio of recommended community engagement elements and a set of evaluation strategies for recreational uses, facilities, green space, security/visibility, flow of pedestrian and other nonmotorized access, and multi-age recreational and social benefits.

The class teams will be expected to consider the context around the park and develop a framework for how the City and its population will relate to the park as well as the other potential publicly owned spaces in the vicinity of the City Hall. Granite Falls is comparable in size to an urban neighborhood, and the scope of this class work essentially includes examining how the entire city can relate to the park and the complex of possible public investments in the center city area.

Teams are expected to consider and develop methodologies for conducting community engagement and assessment strategies to assess the vision, practicality, and social justice issues around the redevelopment of the park. Teams will be expected to consider issues around implementation and the realities on the ground over time, and to provide a thoughtful perspective on the effectiveness and utility of the planning process and how it could be monitored and evaluated over time. Class participants will:

- Review the history, current status, and usage and budget information for the current park design. Consider this in the context of the possible use of other currently owned and potentially acquired public spaces in the core area around City Hall.

- Consider this information along with current and projected future demographics and the intentions and capabilities of City government to suggest possible components for a future redevelopment of the park and the other civic spaces. The proposed redevelopment should pay particular attention to issues of social justice, equity, and access (particularly nonmotorized access). Place these concepts in the context of the city and its current and future planning for population and other core development issues.
- Develop a set of recommended community engagement strategies that will provide community input on possible park and other civic center elements and salient issues.
- Provide a set of criteria for evaluating possible alternatives and incorporating the results of community involvement.
- Recommend a methodology for evaluating the redevelopment as it is brought into service and a plan for ongoing engagement, continuous improvement, and project evaluation.

### **The course will include the following components:**

Introduction to the concept of neighborhood planning and the relationship between neighborhood services, community organizing, and community development.

- Overviews of neighborhood planning and community engagement strategies.
- Learning about the context of Granite Falls and conducting field visits to understand the planning process and the opportunities for future actions.
- Class work on considering issues of community engagement and social justice, and how planning might be able to engage these frameworks more effectively.
- Work in small groups to create an overall review and assessment of the possible futures for public land in the center of Granite Falls and recommendations for public engagement and alternative actions to create a vibrant and widely accepted set of public spaces. The work plans will be presented to the class and to decision makers from the City.

The course will reference perspectives on broad issues around neighborhood planning and community development, including definitions and historical interpretations of community, neighborhood, and planning; the challenges of developing community engagement; and issues of race and social justice, democracy, decision-making, and difference within the local environment. The core focus of the class will be on the practical skills and approaches to developing a neighborhood plan and to evaluating the shortfalls and accomplishments of neighborhood planning.

Our conversations will be informed by readings available electronically, including academic articles as well as professional writings; reviewing the planning for Granite Falls and its current and possible future public spaces; touring the area and understanding its context; learning from the instructor the on-the-ground realities of plan implementation; and hearing from and talking with key city staff. The class will focus on student participation and engagement, and students should be prepared to share their expertise and experience and to engage in active discussions about neighborhood planning strategies, how to analyze and draw conclusions about neighborhood planning, how to conduct community engagement and assess issues of race and social justice, and how to evaluate the past and develop ideas for the future.

### **Project Background and Purpose:**

### **Project Outcomes:**

- Assess the potential actions for developing public open space and park facilities in the center of Granite Falls and how these would serve the population of the City.
- Propose one or more sets of alternative concepts for the redevelopment of Jim Holm Park and other public spaces that will be inclusive and reflect current and future development of the City, propose a set of civic engagement strategies to help determine public interest in alternatives, and create a work plan for future activities/planning in the community.

## Background:

Granite Falls is a community on the east side of Snohomish County, close to the Cascade Range. Traditionally it was a relatively small city primarily dependent on natural resource extraction. In recent decades, it has become an attractive and relatively affordable bedroom community, a farther out suburb of the urban conurbation of Puget Sound (Everett-Seattle-Tacoma). In the most recent Comprehensive Plan (2015), the City described its vision as follows:

*“Granite Falls is the gateway to the historical Mountain Loop Outdoor Recreation Area and is nestled at the base of Mount Pilchuck, the westernmost peak of the Cascade Mountain Range. Our vibrant City is committed to achieving balance between community expectations and attainable resources by satisfying the needs of visitors and residents alike. Our City expresses the history of the turn of the century mining and logging operations, the adventure associated with outdoor recreation, and the subtle pleasure that comes from living in a northwest town.*

*Our unique location, historical relevance, and accessibility to outdoor recreation “attract” thousands of tourists, while our services, accommodations and hospitality cultivate in those visitors a year-around desire to “return”.*

*All essential needs for goods, services, health and wellness are met within the City, but those who choose to commute to work or shop are supported by well-planned transportation elements. Having a traditional small-town Americana appearance, Granite Falls has a nationally recognized school system, a vibrant commercial district, well-connected neighborhoods, and parks and open areas. All of these qualities are combined within a compact Urban Growth Area, to provide an enviable family environment that fosters among residents of all ages the lifelong desire to “stay”.*

*Granite Falls is “open for business” attracting companies that provide living wage jobs. These companies operate in harmony with the City, allowing employees to work within walking or bike riding distance of where they want to live. By maintaining a strong local economy based on a balance of tourism, commerce and industry, Granite Falls attracts and supports new businesses and citizens to help shape the future we collectively desire to “build”.*

*As the gateway to the Mountain Loop Recreation Area, one of the top tourist attractions in the region, Granite Falls has the air of excitement, the elements of adventure, and the friendliness one associates with a small mountain village. Granite Falls is a jewel in the crown that Snohomish County has as a place that is “Close to everything, far from ordinary.”*

The City is currently in the process of amending the present comprehensive plan to bring it into compliance with new state and federal laws, court decisions, administrative guidelines and best management practices. This effort, known as the 2024 Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update, lays out a 20-year growth plan for the City which includes growth targets for new housing and jobs, local

preferred goals and policies, and a set of inventories of existing and desired public facilities, infrastructure improvements and programs.

The Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) establishes many of the requirements for the City's comprehensive planning documents. GMA establishes an overall goal to "ensure that those public facilities and services necessary to support development shall be adequate to serve the development at the time the development is available for occupancy and use without decreasing current service levels below locally established minimum standards." (RCW 36.70A.020).

Amendments to these documents are prepared in accordance with direction provided by the City Council and carried out by City Planning staff and the City Planning Commission to review, recommend, and adopt the preferred amendments. Coordination must also occur with other agencies on regional planning and tribal issues.

Development in Granite Falls has been constrained by its position at the east end of the major transportation systems and by other infrastructure issues, particularly a lack of sewage treatment capacity. Because of such factors, Granite Falls was one of the few urban areas in Western Washington that had its projected growth target reduced in the most recent growth management process. The City has, however, grown significantly in recent decades, and is currently completing a new sewage treatment plant which will remove that limitation.

This class will look at the City's history and its projected future, including the proposed revised Comprehensive Plan, as we consider the possibilities and prospects for new and redeveloped public spaces in the center of town.

This class will consider questions such as:

- What is the ability of city government to affect change?
- How can a predominantly single family suburban city address issues of multimodal transportation options, affordable housing, and the viability of open space and park projects?
- What kind of public spaces will work to serve a broad range of the community in safe and cost effective ways?
- Who makes decisions about these things, and who participates in community processes?
- What methods of community engagement could be used to most effectively inform such decisions?
- How do issues of social justice, underserved communities, and equity relate to communities that are more homogenous and less diverse than nearby urban areas? What would be the expectations for diversity in the future of Granite Falls?

Cities must create/pioneer innovative approaches to establish new pathways for civic engagement and listening to traditionally underrepresented communities in order to shape future city decision-making. And this decision making must find ways to create low carbon, affordable communities that will accommodate the mandates of a growth management strategy in a way that embraces the commitment to race and social justice (RSJ), diversity/equity/inclusion (DEI). How can all this be accomplished through democratic decision making?

#### Course Expectations: Being Prepared to Participate

This is a seminar course, which means first and foremost that you must be prepared to participate. This means having read the assigned readings and completed the assigned tasks before class. It may

also mean going beyond what is assigned to explore an issue or question further than it is taken in the syllabus. Being prepared also means having thought critically about the assigned readings. It is important to ask questions of the readings and to try to extend them by applying them to a site, comparing them to other readings, or in some other manner exploring their limits as well as their utility.

### Learning Objectives

- Understand fundamental concepts inherent in neighborhood planning, including community, neighborhood, and civic engagement in a democratic context.
- Understand the institutional, political, and policy frameworks in which neighborhood planning and community development occur, and the social and cultural contexts within which neighborhood planning takes place.
- Learn how to apply these concepts and related tools by completing the project to suggest feasible paths to the use of public spaces in the center of Granite Falls.

### Grading

Grades will be based on the draft (40%) and final (40%) plan developed through small group work, and a final paper that summarizes learnings from the course (20%). The draft plan and presentation are due by midnight Monday, May 22 (Week 9). The final plan is due by midnight Monday, June 5 (Finals Week). The final paper/project is due by midnight Friday, June 9 (Finals Week). Assignments should be submitted on the Canvas site or electronically to [rconlin@uw.edu](mailto:rconlin@uw.edu).

### Assignment Descriptions

*Examining Jim Holm Park, the possible public spaces around it, and the community's needs and aspirations for the future and recommending options and community engagement strategies.* For this assignment, students will work in groups of 3-6 to analyze the current and projected public spaces in Granite Falls and the evolution of the community. Each group will then propose a strategy for the future that will guide and produce outcomes that reflect the core values of democratic engagement, as well as (to the extent that these are relevant factors), climate friendly transit oriented urban development, and RSJ/DEI. This report will be presented in draft form for review and comment by the class and instructor. Students will then have approximately two weeks to revise and extend the draft into a final and more formal document. How can principles of democratic process and practical strategies for civic space development best be applied to Granite Falls?

*Final Paper:* The final paper is intended to provide an opportunity for individual work on the materials presented and developed in the class. It should be in the range of 3-5 pages, 1000-1500 words, and should be a reflection on and critique of the concepts and materials from the class. The paper should respond to the following:

- What is the utility of neighborhood planning in shaping the future of cities and communities?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the neighborhood planning approach?
- How do the concepts of neighborhood planning relate to the a place like Granite Falls?
- What policy implications can be drawn from this assessment?

This is intended to be an expression of your opinion and a critique of the materials presented and the experience of the class. Opinions should be substantiated and backed up by examples and illustrations from the class readings and activities, appropriately footnoted where necessary.

## Assessment

All assignments will be evaluated on the basis of their creativity, insight, thoughtfulness, writing quality, thoroughness, and depth, as well as the quality and professionalism of the product. The draft reports will be evaluated on the basis of their completeness, appropriateness, relevance to the assignment, and comprehensive approach to the subject. The final reports will be evaluated on the basis of how well the team responded to critiques and suggestions provided in class and by the instructor, with special attention to areas that required more depth or content. The final paper will be evaluated on the strength and documentation of the perspective presented, and on the paper's reflection of a range of perspectives and materials presented in the class.

All class members are expected to fully participate and to complete all individual and group work assignments. This class is an innovative approach to teaching about neighborhood planning, and it is the expectation of the instructor that all students will achieve strong results in the assessment.

## A Note About Readings

Students are expected to read the academic articles and book chapters listed in the syllabus.

**However, there are a number of government documents, plans, etc., that are referenced in the syllabus that are extensive and lengthy. Students are not required to read all of these completely, but to look at them and read enough to get a feeling for the document or to review specific elements noted by the instructor. The instructor will provide more specific instructions as needed in class.**

## WEEKLY SCHEDULE & READINGS

Text: Neighbor Power: Building Community the Seattle Way, Jim Diers, UW Press 2004 (reserved for class at University Book Store)

Tuesday, April 1            Introductions and overview of class. Presentations on Neighborhood Planning. Discussion of the definition of community and organization of neighborhood planning concepts. Introduction to engagement strategies and concepts.

### *Readings:*

Clarence A. Perry. 1929. "The neighborhood unit." Pp 34-60 in *Regional Survey of New York and Its Environs*, Vol. VII. New York City: Committee on the Regional Plan of New York and Its Environs. Access at: <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015027870255&view=1up&seq=11>. (jump to Page 31)

Allen B. Jacobs. 1985. *Looking at Cities*. Pp. 1-29. Available online: [https://orbiscascade-washington.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/fulldisplay?vid=01ALLIANCE\\_UW:UW&mode=advanced&tab=UW\\_default&offset=0&docid=alma99329716217301451&query=any,contains,Looking%2520at%2520Cities,AND&query=any,contains,Jacobs,AND&context=L&sortby=rank&lang=en&search\\_scope=UW EVERYTHING](https://orbiscascade-washington.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/fulldisplay?vid=01ALLIANCE_UW:UW&mode=advanced&tab=UW_default&offset=0&docid=alma99329716217301451&query=any,contains,Looking%2520at%2520Cities,AND&query=any,contains,Jacobs,AND&context=L&sortby=rank&lang=en&search_scope=UW EVERYTHING)

Herbert J. Rubin and Irene S. Rubin. 2001 "Understanding community". Chapter 5, Pp 97-118 in *Community Organizing and Development*. On Canvas site.

William M. Rohe. 2009. "From Local to Global: One Hundred Years of Neighborhood Planning" *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 75:2, 209-230 available online: <https://www.tandfonline-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/doi/full/10.1080/01944360902751077>



Tuesday, April 8 Introduction to the Comprehensive Planning process: demographics, organizational context, current approach. Formation of small groups for study purposes, and discussion of steps to be taken to obtain information and begin developing materials for the study.

*Materials to be posted on the Canvas Site*

Tuesday, April 15 Note: Date could be flipped with Week 4, depending on logistical issues.

Tuesday, April 22 Review of materials about; participation and engagement techniques; race and social justice toolkits.

*Readings:*

United States Environmental Protection Agency. 2021. "Smart Growth and Equitable Development" (On Canvas Site)

Local and Regional Government Alliance on Race and Equity. 2015. "Equitable Development as a Tool to Advance Racial Equity" (On Canvas Site)

Local and Regional Government Alliance on Race and Equity. 2015. "Racial Equity Toolkit" (On Canvas Site)

City of Seattle, Office of Planning and Community Development. 2016. *Equitable Development Implementation Plan*(On Canvas Site)

Lindsay M. Miller. 2019. "Community-Based Equitable Development: Seattle's Response to Gentrification" National Civic Review, 107:4, 36-45 available online (download PDF): [https://www-jstor-org.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/stable/10.32543/naticivirevi.107.4.0036?refreqid=excelsior%3Ab780db7e94bf5899f82d20a768917ae9#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www-jstor-org.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/stable/10.32543/naticivirevi.107.4.0036?refreqid=excelsior%3Ab780db7e94bf5899f82d20a768917ae9#metadata_info_tab_contents)

Willow Lung-Amam, Rolf Pendall, Elijah Knaap. 2019. "Mi Casa no es Su Casa: The Fight for Equitable Transit-Oriented Development in an Inner-Ring Suburb." Journal of Planning, Education, and Research, 39:4, 442-455 available online (download PDF): <https://journals-sagepub-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/doi/full/10.1177/0739456X19878248>

Sherry Arnstein. 1969. "A ladder of citizen participation." *JAIP*, 8:3, July, pp 216-224. Available online: <https://www-tandfonline-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/doi/full/10.1080/01944363.2018.1559388>

Jeffrey M. Berry, Kent E. Portney, and Ken Thomson. 1993. Chapter 1, "Participation and democracy," pp.1-17; Chapter 3 "The potential for success," pp. 46-70. In *The Rebirth of Urban Democracy*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution. (On Canvas Site)

Adam Lubinsky, Susan S. Fainstein. 2020. Chapter 8, "The Relationship Between Citizen Participation and the Just City: Can More Participation Produce More Equitable Outcomes?" pp. 165-184. In Mickey Lauria, Carissa Schively Slotterback. *Learning From Arnstein's Ladder*. New York: Routledge. (On Canvas Site)

Engle, Agyeman, Chung-Tiam-Fook, Editors. 2022. *Sacred Civics, Chapters 11 and 14*. (On Canvas Site)

*Background Material:* City of Seattle. 2016-2017: *Racial Equity Toolkit; Equitable Development Implementation Plan, Financial Strategy; Race and Social Justice Vision and Strategy 2015-2017* (On Canvas Site)

Tuesday, April 29

*Readings:*

Jim Diers. 2004. "Sustaining communities: the neighborhood planning program" pp 128-140 in *Neighbor Power: Building Community the Seattle Way*.

Carmen Sirianni. 2007. "Neighborhood Planning as Collaborative Democratic Design: The Case of Seattle." *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 73:4, 373-387 available online: <https://www-tandfonline-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/doi/abs/10.1080/01944360708978519> (download PDF)

Mike Eliason. 2019. "How Seattle Designed Neighborhood Plans to Inhibit Inclusivity" *The Urbanist.org*. (On Canvas Site)

Ray Dubicki. 2022. "Neighborhood Plans are High Minded Gatekeeping" *The Urbanist.org*. (On Canvas Site)

President Joe Biden. 2021. *Executive Order On Advancing Racial Equity*. (On Canvas Site)

United States Department of Transportation. 2022. *Neighborhood Access and Equity Program*. (On Canvas Site)

United States Department of Transportation. 2022. *Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program*. (On Canvas Site)

United States Department of Transportation. 2022. *Story Board 2022 Awards Reconnecting Community*: <https://arcg.is/1DazHH0>

United States Department of Transportation. 2023. *Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods Grant Program, FY23 Awards Factsheets*. (On Canvas Site)

Tuesday, May 6

*Readings:*

City of Seattle, Office of Planning and Community Development. *Mount Baker TOD RFQ*. (On Canvas Site)

City of Seattle, Department of Planning and Development. 2012. *Rainier Beach Neighborhood Plan Update*. City of Seattle, Department of Neighborhoods, *Rainier Beach Neighborhood Plan/Legislation*. (On Canvas Site)

Watershed Community Development. 2024. *The Bend: A Live-Work District*. (On Canvas Site)

Tuesday, May 13            Review of materials not covered in previous sessions. Integration of materials, how does neighborhood planning actually work? Opportunity for workshop/discussion: what have we learned about the Granite Falls planning process? Discussion of direction for the papers and analysis.

Tuesday, May 20            Review and discussion of how to formulate recommendations; opportunity for students to meet in groups.

\*\*\* Draft report due at midnight, Monday, May 26 on the Canvas Site or [rconlin@uw.edu](mailto:rconlin@uw.edu) \*\*\*

Tuesday, May 27            Student groups present analysis and proposed actions; critique and discussion of group presentations and plans



Tuesday, June 3 Does planning work? What are the problems and pitfalls? How is community change best fostered? Where does community engagement fit in? Is the neighborhood still relevant?

*Readings:*

Ann Van Herzele. 2004. "Local knowledge in action: valuing nonprofessional reasoning in planning process." *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 24, 2:197-212. <https://journals-sagepub-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/doi/10.1177/0739456X04267723> (download PDF)

Robert Chaskin. 1999. "A view from the city: local government perspective on neighborhood-based governance in community-building initiatives." *Journal of Urban Affairs* 21:1 pp 57-78. <https://www-tandfonline-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/doi/abs/10.1111/0735-2166.00003> (download PDF)

Aaron Wildavsky. 1973. "If planning is everything, maybe it's nothing." *Policy Sciences* 4:127-153. <https://link-springer-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/article/10.1007/BF01405729>

\*\*\* Final plan due at midnight, **Monday, June 9** on the Canvas Site or [rconlin@uw.edu](mailto:rconlin@uw.edu) \*\*\*

\*\*\* Reflection paper due at midnight, **Friday, June 13** on the Canvas Site or [rconlin@uw.edu](mailto:rconlin@uw.edu)