Urban Design

Overview

The Program in the Design of Urban Places, leading to the Master of Urban Design degree, is a unique, interdisciplinary program of advanced study in which exceptional architects and landscape architects holding professional degrees partake in an intense, focused learning experience. They share working methods, acquire additional skills, and explore new avenues of development under the supervision of an interdisciplinary group of faculty members in the College of Environmental Design drawn from the Departments of Architecture, Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning, and City and Regional Planning.

The program addresses the need for professionals who are specifically concerned with the design of varied urban areas open to public use. The activities of urban design are diverse in both type and scale. Urban designers may be concerned with settlement patterns in urbanizing areas, the restructuring of inner cities, and the design of streets and open spaces, buildings, and landscape patterns that establish neighborhoods and provide the settings for public life. They may shape the form and space of specific places such as civic or shopping centers, or they may design citywide systems such as streets, lighting, signing, greenways, or bicycle and pedestrian ways. They may work on infill in older towns and cities, or they may prepare plans, guidelines, or standards to manage extensive new development at the metropolitan growth edge.

The need for urban designers is as urgent today as in any period of recent history. Worldwide, the cities of both developing and developed countries are struggling with problems of managing rapid growth. Urban design professionals are as necessary in cities of developing countries where infrastructure and land use patterns are being established as in developed cities where historical continuity and the reuse of existing sites are major issues.

Urban places are shaped by many forces acting over long spans of time. The design of good places—places that are configured so that they will sustain reasonable patterns of development, provide valuable opportunities for public and private involvement, and nurture citizenship—requires many skills. Their design requires consideration of current users as well as unknown future users. Ecological, cultural, social, political, technical, and financial issues must be addressed.

Today as more and more land is developed in patterns that are dehumanizing and wasteful, the core cities continue to decline. Repair of the country's urban infrastructure is an increasingly important priority. Under these circumstances, designers, who are able to work effectively in teams across a range of scales and with a well-developed understanding of urban places and the interdependencies of the fabric of buildings, landscapes, public ways, and the social interactions that shape them, are needed. Professionals who can deal creatively with urban design problems both within existing towns and cities and at the growth edge of the metropolis are in demand. Older inner city districts require rethinking and adaptation to new uses and to new groups of users. At the same time, cities are expanding at an unprecedented pace into open land. New models for dealing with peripheral growth are desperately needed that are socially informed and ecologically sensitive.

Urban design also may be pursued as a concentration in the master's degree programs in the Departments of Architecture, Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning, and City and Regional Planning. A concurrent degree in urban design offering both the MLA and MCP is offered in the Department of Landscape Architecture and City and Regional Planning, and a concurrent degree in urban design offering both the MArch and MCP is offered in the Department of Architecture and the Department of City and Regional Planning. Please refer to these departments for further information.

Undergraduate Program

There is no undergraduate program in Urban Design.

Graduate Program

Master of Urban Design (MUD) (http://guide.berkeley.edu/archive/2014-15/graduate/degree-programs/urban-design)