



Hunter College | Graduate Urban Planning Studios for 2014-2015

1. Development of the Sunnyside Rail Yards, Long Island City: Land Use Planning, Urban Design, and Transportation

Fall 2014

Instructor: Pablo Vengoechea

Client: Long Island City Partnership

Long Island City is currently experiencing explosive growth and change, much of it decades in the making, and has a thriving industrial sector, booming real estate market, vibrant arts and cultural community, growing hospitality industry and a developing technology hub. It is an authentic mixed use community but faces many challenges related to maintaining that vital “mix.” The idea of developing the property adjacent to the Sunnyside Rail Yards, or decking them over, has long been discussed among area stakeholders. Redevelopment of this property could have a substantial economic and infrastructural impact on Long Island City and the greater New York City region. The potential for new commercial development, housing, community facilities and transformative transportation connectivity will be explored in the studio. Hudson Yards and Atlantic Yards will be examined as case studies and cautionary tales. With careful and creative land use and transportation planning and urban design, Sunnyside Rail Yards could be reinvented as a sustainable, walkable and economically vibrant neighborhood that is organically integrated with surrounding areas.

2. Greening the South Bronx: Hunts Point Green Zone

Fall 2014 and Spring 2015

Instructor: Laxmi Ramasubramanian

Client: Sustainable South Bronx

Decades of poor land-use planning plagues the community of Hunts Point in the South Bronx, resulting in homes located in close proximity to food-related industries and other industrial uses, plus a lack open space and lack of access to the waterfront. Approximately 15,000 trucks enter and exit the community on a daily basis contributing to high levels of particulate matter. As a result, residents face a range of cumulative negative health impacts including high rates of asthma and other health problems, lack of green space, high incidence of pedestrian injuries and fatalities, and a high unemployment rate. Special zoning districts have been used both to mitigate the long-term harms of industrial areas and to support community-based planning. This two-semester studio will focus on the following questions to develop a greening plan for Hunts Point: Could a “Green Zone” be an effective strategy to address environmental, health, pedestrian safety, and economic problems in the Hunts Point Community? How are other cities across the country utilizing “Green Zones” to promote sustainability and resilience? How can we adapt best practices and apply them locally to address environmental injustices in the South Bronx?



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3. Planning for a Safer Queens Boulevard

Fall 2014 and Spring 2015

Instructor: Ralph Blessing

Client: Transportation Alternatives Queens

This two-semester project will focus on re-designing Queens Boulevard so that it can evolve from being known as the "boulevard of death" to a safe street for all users. Rather than focusing only on typical traffic calming techniques, the project will look more broadly at the concerns and ideas of residents, merchants, drivers, cyclists and pedestrians. The project will also consider how improving safety can complement economic development and community-building efforts. The project has the support of five City Council members and has received some media attention. It may be particularly timely in light of Mayor de Blasio's Vision Zero Action Plan, which aims to drastically reduce traffic-related deaths in New York City. Because Queens Boulevard is more than 7 miles long, varied in size and context along its length, and passes through many political jurisdictions, studio participants will choose a portion of the boulevard to focus on.

4. A Regional Trails System: Contributing to The Fourth Regional Plan of the Regional Plan Association

Spring 2015

Instructor: Richard Bass

Client: Regional Plan Association

The Regional Plan Association is America's oldest independent urban research and advocacy organization and has been a major player in shaping urban/regional planning thought and practice. Recently, the RPA launched a multiyear initiative to create a Fourth Regional Plan – a blueprint for the region's growth, sustainability, good governance and economic opportunity for the next 25 years. The initiative was launched in April 2013, and the final plan will be released in April 2016. Working closely with RPA staff, this studio will contribute research and recommendations for possible inclusion in the final plan. The studio will look particularly at the possibilities for developing a regional trails system. What would a regional network of hiking and biking trails in the New York metro area look like? How could it be integrated with and help maintain "gene-ways" (migration routes that are essential to maintaining healthy wildlife populations)? RPA's first three regional plans provided the impetus for the creation of the region's one-million acre open space system, a network of regional, state and national parks, and a new network of large regional reserves that protects the region's most important public water supplies and ecological systems. This studio would explore the possibility of building on these achievements and enhancing them by creating a network of hiking and biking trails. The studio would conduct a regional analysis of existing trails and gaps and then zoom in to specific sites in order to develop models that could be applied regionally.