

Site "boot camp" studio

Background and goals

Recent studies have shown that in most of America, the growth in housing supply is happening in two locations. Single family houses continue to be built on greenfields at the edge of metropolitan areas (as they have for the past 70 years), and more recent urban revitalization has created a boom in large scale multi-family buildings in the downtown cores. The areas between these two zones - the neighborhoods of predominantly single family houses built over the past century - have seen relatively little change (except in a few cities such as Portland). As the environmental, social and economic costs of sprawl have become more clear, a movement has sprung up to reconsider "missing middle" housing - the small-scale, multi-family housing types which met the needs of a wide range of household types in the pre-war era, but which were often rendered illegal in the postwar era. This studio will look at the smaller units and higher densities of missing middle housing, to accomplish critical goals, such as:

- Provide more diversity in housing types, to meet the needs of households (seniors, singles, non-nuclear families) who are often neglected in the current market
- Make housing more affordable, through smaller units, lower land costs per unit, and decreased operating costs
- Decrease environmental impacts and carbon footprints through infill in pre-existing, close-in neighborhoods
- Improve a sense of community, both for the new projects, and the neighborhood as a whole.

Methodology

- The design of a housing project usually involves a synthesis - adapting housing types to work with the demands and opportunities of a particular site. We tend to recognize the housing types as universal, while we consider each site to be unique. However, in the neighborhoods in which most missing middle housing is being considered, there is a limited range of site types - the 50-foot wide bungalow lot, the postwar wide-and-shallow lot, the small commercial lot on the edge of a neighborhood, etc.
- In last term's Housing "Boot Camp" Studio, taught by Michael Fifield, students completed a series of short design exercises across the spectrum of normal American housing types - houses with accessory dwelling units, rowhouses, courtyard housing and mid-rise apartments.
- This studio will follow the same format of short design projects, but will switch the focus to the range of pre-existing site types, using real sites in a variety of Eugene neighborhoods.



Plan by Clay Neal, 2017

Format and schedule

1. A study of missing middle housing types, both historical and more recent, including a field trip to Portland
2. The design of prototypical, conceptual dwelling units, to meet programmatic and affordability goals. These will form a kit-of-parts which can be combined in different building types for the subsequent design studies.
3. Design for a typical pre-war neighborhood
4. Design for a typical postwar neighborhood
5. Design for a typical transitional/commercial lot

The emphasis will be on developing a series of typical site design strategies, which will respond to the character of the various neighborhoods, while providing an appropriate shared environment for the residents.

Notes

- There is a growing housing crisis in the Eugene-Springfield metropolitan area. Our work will support the efforts of Better Housing Together, a local coalition of civic organizations, which is working towards solutions.
- The final designs will be used to reverse engineer proposals for "form-based codes" jump-starting the process of rewriting zoning ordinances to facilitate these types.
- This will be a reality-based studio, leading towards proposals which will hopefully be adopted by the cities.
- As each phase will end with a review of that project, this will be a fast-paced and demanding studio.