

URP 541: URBAN LAND USE PLANNING

Winter 2025

2108 Art and Architecture Building

Instructor: Jeff Kahan (jfkahan@umich.edu)

Urban Land Use Planning will provide a broad overview of major land use planning practices from the perspective of a professional planner. Students will learn the fundamentals about the planning and development process including how to: review site plans, develop comprehensive plans, revise design standards to advance sustainable land use practices, write staff reports, and inspect development sites. Important planning tools and techniques will be applied to sustainable land use practices such as natural features protection, infill development, floodplain regulations, brownfield remediation, “new urban” development and urban waterfront redevelopment. A core theme of the course is learning how to promote sustainable land use practices at local and regional levels. Speakers and field trips will provide a first-hand glimpse of the major land use issues that professional planners deal with every day. This course will be helpful to anyone interested in working as a public or private sector planner or for anyone interested in working in the design and land use planning community.

Learning Goals:

Students will learn the fundamentals of urban land use planning and apply their knowledge to encourage more sustainable land use practices. By the end of the term, students will be able to:

- Review a development site plan and write a professional staff report
- Understand the main elements of a land use comprehensive plan
- Understand the main components of zoning and parking codes
- Understand the process of amending design standards and comprehensive plans to advance sustainable land use practices
- Understand how municipalities protect natural features including floodplains, wetlands, creeks, landmark trees, woodlands, and steep slopes
- Understand basic concepts of civil engineering for planners
- Understand the fundamentals of historic preservation and archeological protection
- Become familiar with a variety of tools and practices used by professional planners
- Become familiar with what Downtown Development Authorities do as well as the concept of tax increment financing
- Become familiar with new trends in urban non-motorized transportation systems

Course Requirements:

Course assignments include a take-home midterm exam, designing a site plan (no design experienced is necessary), reviewing another student’s site plan and presenting your staff report to a mock planning commission (fellow students), and a take-home final exam.