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Urban planning

Starting points for students and scholars

Urban planners are responsible for identifying a community's goals, and then working with public officials, civic leaders, and developers to achieve them. Their role in the community is a complex one, involving architecture, design, cartography, economic development, real estate, land use, housing, transportation planning, and the environment.

As the percentage of the world's population living in cities increases, this role will become even more important, as planners will face the task of accommodating this growth in a way that is economically sound, socially just, and sustainable. The purpose of this compilation is to support the curriculum and research endeavors of undergraduate and graduate students pursuing a career in urban planning.

This is a field that benefits from such extensive online presence, as it captures documents, maps, and other material produced by various government, educational, and nonprofit agencies but not widely disseminated by commercial publishers. This guide is intended to be general in nature, and attempts to represent the interdisciplinary nature of the urban planning field. Also, focus is placed on U.S. planning trends and practices, though some international resources are included.

Education and employment

• **Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP).** ACSP offers credentials in urban and regional planning for planning programs in the United States, and maintains a site with job listings, conference information, and links to planning schools. ACSP's downloadable *Guide to Graduate and Undergraduate Education in Urban and Regional Planning* offers more detailed information about each program, including accreditation status. *Access*: http://www.acsp.org/.

• **The Princeton Review Career Profiles: City Planner.** The site describes "A Day in the Life" of a city planner, quality of life, and earnings averages for city planners. A national internship and career search feature is also available. *Access:* http://www.princetonreview.com/cte/profiles/dayInLife.asp?careerID=162.

• **Urban Planning Now.** The site claims to complement the jobs found on the American Planning Association site. Though a paid subscription is required to use the job finding service, links to planning agencies are organized by state and category: City Planning, County and Regional Planning, Community Development Corporations, Non-Profits, and Consulting Firms. *Access:* http://www.urbanplanningnow.com/public.shtml.

Planning research and practice

• **The Earth Institute at Columbia University.** The institute supports research in the biological, engineering, social and health sciences fields, with a focus on sustainable development. Current research projects at the institute can be explored using an interactive

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map tool found under the "Action" section. *Access:* http://www.earth.columbia.edu/.

• **Institute for Policy Research (IPR), Northwestern University.** IPR is an interdisciplinary public policy research institute, and includes urban policy and community development in its policy briefs and working papers series. These resources, along with the organization's newsletters dating back to 1997, are available for free. *Access:* http://www.northwestern.edu/ipr/index.html.

• **National Building Museum.** This cultural institution was created by an act of Congress in 1980, and hosts physical and virtual exhibits dedicated to exploring architecture, design, engineering, construction, and urban planning. Transcripts of lectures and issues of the museum publication *Blueprints* are available. *Access:* http://www.nbm.org/.

• **The Urban Institute (UI).** UI is a nonpartisan economic and social policy research organization with a good balance of coverage among international, federal, state, and local sectors. The site covers a wide range of issues relevant to planners: housing, neighborhoods and community, and mobility and transportation. *Access:* http://www.urban.org/about/index.cfm.

Gateways

• **Cyburbia.** Established in 1994 at the University of Buffalo-Cyburbia, this site contains a comprehensive directory of Internet resources relevant to planning and urbanism. In addition to the 1,871 links in 492 categories available in the resource directory, the portal also hosts active online forums. *Access:* http://www.cyburbia.org/.

• **dmoz.org Planning Directory.** This directory is part of the Open Directory Project, and covers topics such as growth and sprawl, historic preservation, transportation, sustainability. This particular category on the dmoz.org site is available in nine languages. *Access:* http://dmoz.org/Science/Social_Sciences/Urban_and_Regional_Planning/.

• **GOS–Geospatial One Stop.** Also known as geodata.gov, GOS serves as a public gateway for geospatial information. The site contains links to federal, state, and local Web sites, where geospatial data can be downloaded. Community building and data sharing is a focus of the portal, and opportunities are provided for users to publish data and search for partners for data collections and acquisitions. *Access:* http://gos2.geodata.gov/wps/portal/gos.

Digital libraries

• **National Transportation Library (NTL).** This digital library, established through the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century, is charged with the mission to increase timely access to information that supports transportation policy and research. Users can search or browse various documents published by public, academic, and private organizations. The virtual library also offers topical bibliographies, transportation definitions and acronyms, and an Ask-A-Librarian service. *Access:* http://ntl.bts.gov/.

• **Oregon Sustainable Community Digital Library (OSCDL).** OSCDL provides a central online repository for key urban planning documents on the Portland Metropolitan area. As a result of a collaboration among Portland State University and various municipal and nonprofit agencies, planning reports, policy records, historical correspondence, and digital images can be viewed online. An interactive mapping feature allows researchers to control more than 60 data layers to gather information about the region's topography, land use, parks, transportation and other features. Progress is being made to create simultaneous use of the static documents and the current interactive mapping features on the site so that planning documents can be represented in a geographic context. *Access:* http://oscdl.research.pdx.edu/.

• **Smart Growth Resource Library.** The Smart Growth Resource Library provides access to reports, Web sites, tools and case studies covering topics such as transportation, housing, and urban design. The digital library is available as part of the Smart Growth Network, which was "formed in response to increasing community concerns about the need for new ways to grow that boost the economy, protect the environment, and enhance community vitality." *Access:* http://www.smartgrowth.org/library/default.asp.

E-journals and blogs

• **Places Journal.** The peer-reviewed journal explores the relationship between design and the creation of neighborhoods, parks, streets, workplaces, infrastructure, and other spaces that support communities. *Access:* http://www.places-journal.org/.

• **Randall Crane's Urban Planning Research Blog.** Crane, a UCLA Department of Urban Planning professor, maintains a blog where topics including sprawl, suburbanization, smart growth, and transportation are discussed. The majority of the posts are lengthy, have an academic tone, and include bibliographic references. Both an RSS feed and e-mail updates are available. *Access:* http://planningresearch.blogspot.com/.

• **Shelterforce Online.** This National Housing Institute publication began in 1975 as a "how-to" resource for tenant activists. The publication examines the issues causing the crisis in housing and community in America, and serves as a primary forum for advocates in the affordable housing and neighborhood revitalization movements. *Access:* http://www.nhi.org/online/.

• **Sustainability: Science, Practice, and Policy (SSPP).** Published semi-annually, SSPP is a peer-reviewed, open access journal that provides a platform for the dissemination of new practices and for dialogue emerging out of the field of sustainability. *Access:* http://ejournal.nbii.org.

• **Urban Cartography.** This collaborative blog discusses mapping, GIS, land use, urban planning, and related subjects. The posts are searchable, and an RSS feed is available. *Access:* http://www.urbancartography.com/.

News and forums

• **APA Daily Planning News.** The American Planning Association offers full-text access to planning articles from U.S. newspapers and periodicals. *Access:* http://www.planning.org/news/feed.htm.

• **H-URBAN.** This forum was established in 1993 at the University of Illinois-Chicago and is part of the international scholarly network, H-NET (Humanities and Social Science OnLine). It is geared toward an audience of urban history and urban studies scholars, professionals, and graduate students. In addition to the forum, the site provides links to book reviews, syllabi, teaching tools, and a scholars directory. *Access:* http://www.h-net.org/~urban/.

• **Planetizen.** This public-interest information exchange includes news updates, active forums, commentary, interviews, as well as press releases and announcements from other urban planning sites and publications. A biweekly newsletter, RSS feeds, and free podcasts of planning news and discussions are available. *Access:* http://www.planetizen.com/.

• **Smart City Public Radio Program.** The weekly radio talk show explores urban life and planning trends. Guests include public policy experts, elected officials, economists, developers, and planners. The site gives information about the live broadcast, and provides access to past shows, a podcast, and links to related online resources. *Access:* http://www.smartcityradio.com/.

• **Urbanism.org.** This news site has a Google-like, unembellished layout and is updated several times daily. Though it lacks

an RSS feed, readers can subscribe to a yahoo e-group to receive updates. *Access:* www.urbanism.org

New urbanism resources

What is new urbanism? According to the American Planning Association, it is "a time-tested planning practice that incorporates interrelated patterns of land use, transportation, and urban form to create communities that foster the most desirable characteristics of human habitation: neighborliness, environmental sustainability, economic efficiency and prosperity, historic preservation, participation in civic processes, and human health."

The following resources should allow students to explore this topic in more detail, particularly how it is put into practice by city and regional planners.

• **APA-New Urbanism Division.** Though much of the content is restricted to members, news stories and a list of recommended readings on the topic is available. Those with memberships can access newsletters, presentations, and join the electronic list. *Access:* http://www.planning.org/newurbanism/index.htm.

• **Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU).** This San Francisco-based nonprofit organization is a collaboration among architects, planners, developers, and community activists who work to reform North America's urban growth patterns. The CNU site includes searchable databases of publications, an image bank, and a bibliography. *Access:* http://www.cnu.org/.

• **Latino New Urbanism (LNU).** The LNU project began in 2003 as part of the Transportation and Land Use collaborative. The concepts behind the project build upon the thesis that the growing population of Latinos in California may become instrumental in the construction of more compact and sustainable cities in the state. The site offers background information about LNU, summaries from past conferences, and the opportunity to receive e-mail updates. *Access:* http://latinonewurbanism.org/.

Sustainable development

• **Environmental Sustainability Index (ESI).** ESI is an initiative of the Yale Center for Environmental Law and Policy and the Center for International Earth Science Information Network at Columbia University. The index ranks countries on 21 elements of environmental sustainability, and the site provides access to the current and past reports and underlying data. *Access:* http://sedac.ciesin.columbia.edu/es/esi.

• **EPA-Sustainability.** The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) site "examines sustainability and provides links to EPA programs and tools in four key areas: the Built or Human-created Environment; Water, Ecosystems and Agriculture; Energy and the Environment; and Materials and Toxics. Links to the programs and tools are organized in three categories: Policies and Programs; Research, Tools and Technologies; and Assessments and Performance Measures." *Access:* http://www.epa.gov/sustainability/.

• **Smart Communities Network.** This site, formerly the Center of Excellence for Sustainable Development, is managed by the National Center for Appropriate Technology for the U.S. Department of Energy. The program aims to assist communities with adopting sustainable development practices, and the site covers multiple topics relating to sustainability: green development, land use planning, community energy, transportation, sustainable business, and resource efficiency. Full-text publications, tool kits, manuals, and other educational resources are available. *Access:* http://www.smartcommunities.ncat.org/.

Government resources and statistics

• **American FactFinder.** This invaluable resource provides access to thematic maps, community fact sheets, housing reports, and census data. Most notably, however, is the inclusion of the new American Community Survey, which will provide annual rather than decennial demographic, socioeconomic, and housing information. *Access:* http://factfinder.census.gov.

• **DataPlace.** This Fannie Mae-sponsored site culls demographic, economic, social, and housing data from multiple government agencies and presents it in a simple, straightforward format. Users can create thematic maps and scatterplots to represent the information. *Access:* http://www.dataplace.org/.

• **HUD USER.** The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) clearinghouse offers information on housing and community development, datasets, and HUD regulations. *Access:* http://www.huduser.org/.

• **TranStats.** The Bureau of Transportation Statistics supports this site designed for transportation researchers and analysts. Datasets are organized by mode, subject, and agency. *Access:* http://www.bts.gov/.

• **USGS-GIS Education Resources.** Sponsored by the U.S. Geological Survey's Education and Communications program, this site provides lessons, tools, and guidelines for using Geographic Information Systems (GIS), software frequently employed by planners to manage, analyze, and disseminate geographic knowledge. *Access:* http://education.usgs.gov/common/lessons/gis.html.

Associations

• **American Institute of Architects.** *Access:* http://www.aia.org.

• **American Institute of Certified Planners.** *Access:* http://www.planning.org/aicp/.

AICP American Institute of Certified Planners
American Planning Association's Professional Institute

• **American Planning Association.** *Access:* http://www.apa.org.

APA American Planning Association
Making great communities happen

• **Community Development Society.** *Access:* http://comm-dev.org/.

• **Urban Affairs Association.** *Access:* http://www.udel.edu/uaa/.

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