

YALE URBAN DESIGN WORKSHOP

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The Yale Urban Design Workshop and Center for Urban Design Research (YUDW) provides a forum for faculty and students from the School of Architecture and other professional schools at Yale to engage in the study of issues, ideas, and practical problems in the field of urban design. Since its founding in 1992 by Alan Plattus, the YUDW has worked with communities across Connecticut and around the world, providing planning and design assistance on projects ranging from comprehensive plans, economic development strategies, and community visions to the design of public spaces, streetscapes, and individual community facilities.

In all its work, the YUDW is committed to an inclusive, community-based process, grounded in broad citizen participation and a vision of the design process as a tool for community organizing, empowerment, and capacity-building. A typical YUDW project may include design charrettes, focus groups, and town meetings, as well as more conventional means of program and project development. Projects, supervised by the faculty of the School, are staffed mainly by postgraduate associates and current graduate students from the School. Some projects also include work from Yale College undergraduates; faculty and students from Yale's other professional schools, including the Law School, the School of the Environment, the School of Management, the School of Public Health, and the School of Art; and outside consultants and other local professionals.

Much of the work and research of the YUDW has focused on strategies for regeneration in Connecticut's small postindustrial towns and cities. Neighborhood and downtown plans developed for places like New Britain, West Haven, and Bridgeport have engaged with complex questions of preservation, redevelopment, and shifting demographics and identity; considered the changing economics of urban cores; and encouraged walkability, sustainability, and controlled, coordinated growth. Recently, the YUDW has extended this focus internationally, consulting on the regeneration of Gothenburg, Sweden.

Another area of specific interest and research lies at the intersection between preservation, cultural heritage, redevelopment, tourism, and identity. Projects, including the Thames River Heritage Park in Groton and New London, Connecticut; the Naugatuck Valley Industrial Heritage Trail, funded through a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts; and the Jordan River Peace Park on the Jordan River straddling the border between Israel and Jordan, derive much of their energy from a consideration of the place and representation of history in the city and in contemporary life.

The most recent work of the YUDW has focused on developing and deploying strategies for coastal and neighborhood resilience and adaptation that address climate

change and urban inequality. These projects include the Resilient Bridgeport strategy and pilot projects, funded by HUD under the Rebuild by Design and National Disaster Resilience Competitions, which include major new blue-green infrastructure integrated with the public realm to be constructed by 2024; and the Dwight Healthy And Just Neighborhood plan in New Haven, funded under an EPA Environmental Justice Grant in 2022.

The YUDW also hosts the interdisciplinary clinic “Housing Connecticut: Developing Healthy and Just Neighborhoods,” now in its second year. The clinic brings together students from the Schools of Architecture, Law, and Management with nonprofit developers to produce proposals for affordable housing.