

## Architectural Design 3.2 and 3.3

Winter/Spring 2019 | Architecture Department | Cal Poly | Instructor: Kent Macdonald

# Paradise Redux: Urban Design Assignments, Part One

As noted in the Project Description for the course, our early work involves developing a new planning armature for Paradise. Because nearly everything above grade was destroyed in the Camp Fire, it might be tempting to think that the place is a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate, where nothing existed before, and therefore, you can do whatever you want.

But this would be a mistake. First, the place is still one where people lived, worked, shopped, went to school, and worshipped: it still exists in the memories of the people who lived there and want to return – though it must be said that some will not want or be able to. Secondly, there are the remains of the town's infrastructure, however damaged: roads still cut through the forest, property lines still exist as legal definitions of property, and certain structures remain intact.

Before beginning our work, then, we need to understand the place itself, as it was before the fire: Who lived there? What kind of work did they do? What were the boundaries of the place? What social and cultural amenities did the town have? What was the layout of the town? How did it sit in the landscape?

Next, of course, we need to understand the scope of the devastation. What remains of the town? Is there anything worthwhile left standing? Can we build on those things or do we start from scratch? Our first visit to Paradise will help us understand the terrible costs of the fire – both on the ground and in the lives of residents. In the meantime, we can begin looking long distance at the landscape made raw by the fire.

We'll also do some research on town planning history, principles, and precedents. Our focus will be on the **New Urbanism**, a planning paradigm or movement that seeks to counter the effects of automobiles on the urban environment. It does this by prioritizing the creation of mixed-use neighborhoods that are walkable and contain strongly identifiable public spaces. The intent is to create a greater sense of community and environmental responsibility. We'll start by defining some key terms, but we'll also look at some town planning precedents, both New Urbanist ones but also older ones.

## FORMAT

For each of the following assignments, develop a 20x20 board (more if necessary) and up to five-to-ten slides that describe the issue. All of your boards and slides should have a consistent look (graphic bands, titles, font sizes, etc). We'll do a few prototypes and then establish a template for everyone to use. Use images where appropriate and avoid long amounts of text (like this!). Use short, narrow columns of text or bullets, both of which can be easily read by the viewer.

As described in the headings, some of these will be individual assignments, others will be done in groups. Everyone in the class should carry an equal weight!

## SCHEDULE

A draft version of all of the boards is due this coming Friday at the beginning of class. We'll do a quick review with Stacey's class. Afterwards, you'll refine the exhibits for our public presentations next week in Paradise.



Plan of Bo01, Malmö



Western Harbor Riverbank, Bo01, Malmö



Turning Torso, Bo01, Malmö

## Paradise Redux: Urban Design Assignments One

### 1A. TASK ONE: LIFE IN PARADISE (In pairs)

Jointly, as a class, you are to create an exhibit that provides a portrait of Paradise as it was before the fire. Listed below are nine topics related to some aspect of the town's setting, history, population, etc. Working in pairs, select one of the topics and, using diagrams, photographs, and text, give us your understanding of it. This exhibit need not be encyclopedic; too much information would be overwhelming and therefore not much help to you as you start making proposals for the new town. Instead, can you describe the town and its surrounding in broad strokes?

1. **Natural Resources:** *What are the natural features in the area? Streams, lakes, ponds? Prominent mountains or rock outcroppings? What is the terrain like? What flora and fauna are prevalent here?*
2. **Climate:** *What is the weather pattern like here? What are yearly high/mean/low temperatures and rainfall amounts? From which direction do winds and storms come over the course of the year? Include Psychrometric Chart with the five most impactful passive design strategies, a Wind Rose (on site plan base), a Sun Path Diagram (on a site plan base), and a Precipitation Chart (distinguish by type).*
3. **History:** *Who lived here before "us"? When and how did this place come to be settled by Anglos? Are there significant events that shaped the city's development – that is, before the fire?*
4. **Land Use Patterns:** *How was/is the city organized? Is there a prevailing pattern of development? How does the layout of the city interface with the landscape? Does it "merge" with the topography or ignore it?*
5. **Infrastructure:** *What public services exist to support the population? Do they have medical care? Police and fire departments? What about transportation: how do people get to wherever they need to go? Where does the town get its energy? Its water? Where does wastewater go?*
6. **Economy:** *What are the economic drivers in the area? How do people make their livings?*
7. **Demographics:** *Who lives here? What are their education levels, income levels, ages, and ethnicities? You might do some comparison with another town or our state as a whole to give such statistics meaning. Is the town richer than SLO? Younger than SLO? But beyond statistics, are there unique population groups who live here?*
8. **Cultural and Educational Amenities:** *What are the social spaces that support people coming together? What outlets exist for enjoying the arts? For learning? For recreation? For practicing their religions?*
9. **Building Heritage:** *Were there significant landmarks of the past, and did they survive or get lost in the fire? Was there a prevailing building type? A house type? Were there long-term retail or cultural establishments that residents feel made their town feel special?*

### 1B. TASK TWO: MAPPING LIFE IN PARADISE

Working as a large group and drawing upon the work you did in Task 1A, develop two maps that locate the various uses in the community and in Butte County. Primary focus should be on the map for the town of Paradise. A secondary emphasis is on the one for Butte County; this need not be as detailed but should show the major assets within the county that Paradise residents might take advantage of.

The overall purpose of the Paradise map is to get a sense of the lay of the land: how the town is organized; what comprised the built environment (public and private uses) and how the place is laid out; what geographic features defined its border (or not), and so on. The maps should attempt to establish an underlying order – even a somewhat broken or chaotic one.

- *First, identify geographic features: streams or bodies of water, steep terrain, hills and canyons, densely forested areas, or anything that might help give a picture of how the town sits in its larger landscape.*
- *Next, identify the existing infrastructure of roads, highways, rail lines (if any), and trails. How is the town laid out? Which are the major roads? Which are secondary? How would you describe the overall pattern of development? Does the town seem to have established neighborhoods that can be identified?*
- *Next, identify major civic assets in the town: city hall, police and fire stations, schools, libraries, hospitals, playgrounds, parks, and public recreation centers. How are these arranged – in one central location or spread out?*

- *What kinds of commercial and retail facilities were available to serve the community? Are there any industries that are major employment centers? What percentage are franchises of national chains? Of locally owned businesses, what seem to be the major types of businesses: cafés or restaurants, services (plumber, electrician, auto repair), other?*
- *What was the housing stock like? Single-family homes? Trailers? Apartments? See if you can establish a pattern to the ways in which housing was located in the community.*
- *What were the private **social spaces** that supported people coming together? This would include recreation facilities (private gyms, for example), houses of worship, and social clubs (Elks, veterans clubs). These are the places where people gathered to celebrate, mourn, seek information.*
- *What were the structures that spoke to the community's heritage: an old wooden bridge, an historic building, or long-time running retail establishment that community members will generally recognize as part of what makes their area special?*

To start, keep it simple. What can you discern from Google Earth – the application still shows the town as it was before the fire (including Street View!). What can the town's own Planning Map tell you? What did Paradise have to offer its residents and how were these arrayed throughout the town?

### 1C. TASK THREE: PLANNING PRECEDENTS (In pairs)

You are asked to do research on one of the places listed below. Whether a new town, suburban development, city district, or an infill neighborhood, nearly all of these places were conceived – either as whole new enterprises or as infill developments – at some point in the last 100 years. All of them made significant contributions to urban planning theory – the discussion about the nature of what cities can and should be – either by virtue of their formal organizations or their relationships to context.

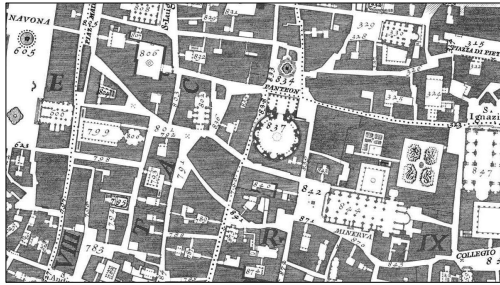
Working with a single partner, research the place, describing where it is, when it was built, who designed it, and what are its most salient features. Why is it important as a place? What planning innovations did it make? Are there any lessons to be drawn from it that might transfer to our redesign of Paradise? Use annotated plans (overlain on good quality images) and diagrams to explain the concepts involved in each one.

1. **Letchworth Garden City, Hertfordshire, England (1900's):** *The first Garden City using Ebenezer Howard's principles, designed by Raymond Unwin.*
2. **Radburn, New Jersey (1929):** *"A town for the motor age," designed by architects Clarence Stein and Henry Wright, and landscape architect Marjorie Sewell Cautley. Known for its separation of vehicular and pedestrian traffic.*
3. **Greenbelt, Maryland (1935-38):** *One of three greenbelt towns built and owned by the federal government's Resettlement Administration as a response to the jobs and housing crises of the Great Depression.*
4. **The Sea Ranch (1960's):** *An oceanfront community some 100 miles north of San Francisco, Sea Ranch is known for its architecture, drawn from vernacular agrarian building forms and materials, that seeks to mitigate the impact of the buildings in the landscape.*
5. **Lake Anne Village, Reston, Virginia (1963-67):** *Reston is a new town outside Washington DC. It's composed of several separate village centers; Lake Anne Village was the first and best known of these.*
6. **Kresge College, Santa Cruz (1971):** *One of the colleges at UC Santa Cruz, Kresge, located in a eucalyptus grove on the edge of campus, was designed to resemble an Italian hill town.*
7. **Seaside, Florida (1985):** *A resort community on the Gulf Coast of Florida's panhandle, Seaside was the first "traditional" new town using a planning and architectural code to promote a regional vernacular style.*
8. **Bo01, Malmö, Sweden (2001):** *New district completely reliant on renewable energy, developed on abandoned industrial sites in Sweden's third largest city and designed by Renzo Piano, et al.*
9. **Hammarby Sjöstad, Stockholm, Sweden (2004-16):** *Built in what was a dilapidated industrial area, Hammarby is Sweden's first "eco-city," a district with sustainable alternatives for water, energy, and waste management.*

## 1D. TASK FOUR: NOLLI MAP COMPARATIVE STUDY (In pairs)

Giambattista Nolli was an Italian architect and surveyor, best known for his very detailed map of Rome, first published in 1748; see the image below. The map shows the city's layout in stark contrast: buildings are presented as solid matter, rendered in dark gray, while open spaces, such as streets, plazas, courtyards, and even the interiors of major buildings, are presented as voids, rendered in white or sometimes in light gray, in order to depict plantings, paved areas, and even water. As James Tice notes in his book, *The Nolli Map and Urban Theory*, the map "provides an immediate and intuitive understanding of the city's urban form." He continues:

*The city, thus conceived as an enormous mass that that has been carved away to create outdoor rooms, is rendered intelligible and vivid through this simple graphic convention.*



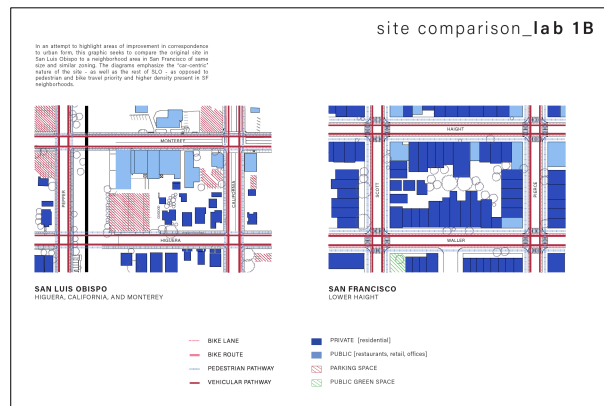
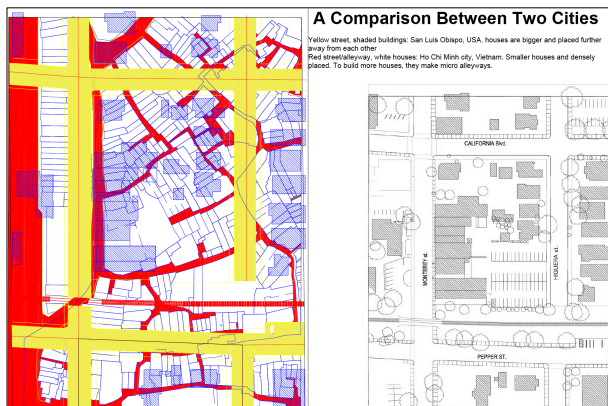
This form of representation, Tice writes, "encourages an understanding of the building, not as an isolated event, but one that is deeply and intrinsically embedded in the fabric of the city." In other words, in denser cities like Rome – Paris, New York, San Francisco – buildings are first and foremost part of a continuous whole.

By contrast, in cities like Los Angeles or Las Vegas, and most likely Paradise before the fire, buildings exist as objects in space, where void spaces are less often used as public gathering spaces, and more often as streets and parking lots for cars.

Paradise was neither Rome nor Las Vegas, of course. But in order to get at a better understanding of the particular nature of its urban fabric, I'm asking you to prepare a poster that compares its layout of buildings, streets, and open spaces with that of one of the cities you did in Assignment 1C above. In both cases, you need not depict the entire city, but only portions that seem emblematic of the whole – and that can provide a starting-off point for a discussion about the nature of cities in general, and about Paradise in particular.

**Start with Paradise.** Google Maps still show Paradise as it was before the fire. Select an area that encompasses both part of the town's commercial center (along Skyway Road or Clark Road) and a residential area adjacent to it. The area should be about 6 to 10 acres (or two city blocks, up to 660 x 660 feet). Next, choose one of the places from the list in Task 1C above. Using Google Earth, select an area of that place that strikes you as a good contrast to the one you've selected in Paradise.

Draw the buildings and outlines of both places in AutoCAD or other digital program. Similar to the Nolli maps, buildings should be rendered in dark gray, streets in white, and open areas (parking lots, sidewalks, yards, parks, forests, water) in shades of gray. Working with the two areas at the same scale, make a comparative poster that shows them either side by side or as an overlay. Augment your maps with pictures or text. What do the drawings tell you about the nature of public space in each of them? Are there lessons to be learned for your work in Paradise?



Resource: <https://www.cnu.org/publicsquare/2017/01/19/nolli-map-tool-small-developers>