

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR OCTOBER 27:

1. What are the problems Jane Jacobs sees with the twentieth-century approach to urban planning in the United States? What trends is she (writing in 1961) trying to reverse?
2. What are the different “bits and pieces” that Jacobs lists as being part of a city’s visual order? What sorts of bits and pieces make up the landscapes you experience on a daily basis, either here on the UW campus or in your hometowns?
3. How does Jacobs’ approach differ from that of Seattle’s city engineer, R.H. Thomson, who is described in Matthew Klinge’s article? What is Klinge’s interpretation of why Thomson and other Seattle leaders made the choices they did?
4. Would the city planning initiatives of early twentieth century Seattle be possible today? What environmental, political, or cultural factors might prevent them from happening?
5. Both Jacobs and Klinge critique planning efforts that had unintended consequences, both socially and environmentally. What are some other examples of planning policies that have had unintended consequences?
6. Both Seattle’s city fathers and the mid-twentieth century planners discussed by Jacobs were concerned with making cities more orderly and efficient. What are the drawbacks of these efficiency programs? What are the advantages? How might cities be designed to maximize economic growth and sustain healthy and equitable communities? Are both things possible at once?
7. “The city” and “nature” are oppositional concepts in American culture, past and present. Urban engineering has often concerned itself with controlling and hiding the natural environment. How do these readings provide evidence of the persistence of urban nature – streams and rivers, hills and valleys, tides and storm systems – and what are the consequences of trying to control it? What evidence of urban nature do you see here on campus and in the surrounding community?
8. Controlling urban environments and imposing visual order often involves controlling human activity and restricting who gets to use a particular urban space. What do these readings and the readings you’ve had in earlier weeks tell you about who is advantaged by efforts to impose visual order on cities, and who is disadvantaged by it? Why? What does this indicate about larger trends in American history?