This class will perform a project as part of the U.O. Sustainable Cities Initiate Year program for Redmond, Oregon. In the 1980s ODOT built a new, wide and fast highway bypass for U.S. Highway 97 around that city to the east. This new highway was built to alleviate traffic jams, increase safety and accelerate traffic flows between The Dalles, Biggs, Yakima, Portland and Bend, Klamath Falls and points south in California and Nevada.

This US 97 bypass drained a lot of traffic and commercial life out of the downtown and became a corridor largely for nationally franchised big box stores, standardized mini-malls and restaurants, and some local industrial land uses that happened to be along the new highway. The result is an unattractive, car-centered, parking lot dominated, mostly un-vegetated, significantly vacant, indistinct landscape that does not produce place identity or sense of place, wealth that significantly stays in the local area, and few family wage jobs.

ODOT and Redmond have recently completed a planning study to revitalize this corridor consistent with Oregon Transportation Commission policy adopted after the bypass was constructed. This new policy encourages highway corridors inside urban growth boundaries that are slower and more richly and truly urban.

The class will digest and master this study, perform our own design-directed landscape analyses, and generate urban designs concepts and standards. The aim will be to take the next step in the planning process by taking the concepts and analyses in the corridor plan and generating urban design options for the community to consider. These will seek to attend to the future economic viability of the landowners, developers, ODOT and the city’s budget.

The designs will seek to provide bicycle and walking access throughout the corridor, higher density and diversified commercial and mixed uses, and an attractive urban landscape including an urban forest and an open space system. This will entail options structured by options such as: (1) converting the highway to a multi-way boulevard; (2) converting the highway to a couplet or triplet configuration to separate through versus local-access traffic; or (3) commercial frontage roads as quasi-multi-way-boulevards in sectors. We will then explore zoning options, design standards, and visual landscape standards that may produce urban forms that create imageability, green urbanism, and financially viable new businesses to serve Redmond’s residents and visitors.
Here are the goals for corridor design and development articulated by Redmond’s Highway 97 planning study:

Key components of the highway corridor plan that were developed to help achieve the corridor vision include:

- Recommended urban design requirements to enhance the corridor appearance and function by bringing buildings closer to the highway and improving inter-parcel circulation
- Highway and frontage improvements to provide consistent landscape treatments, accommodations for bicyclists and pedestrians, and encourage lower travel speeds
- Development of a recreational trail along the Central Oregon Irrigation District Canal (COID) as an alternative to walking and biking on US 97
- Recommendation for the establishment of a gateway treatment at the south end of the City to announce arrival into the urban area
- An access management plan that provides a long-range, comprehensive and coordinated strategy for accommodating access as property develops or as public improvement projects are constructed

In contrast to the current condition, the Redmond South US 97 Corridor Plan benefits the community by:

- Creating a common vision among the City, ODOT, and local stakeholders by communicating the intended function and management objectives of the US 97 corridor.
- Identifying property frontage improvement needs, expectations for site design, and new public and private roadway connections to be incorporated into site plan designs.
- Providing tools to improve corridor safety and driving comfort by encouraging lower travel speeds and reducing turning conflicts.
- Helping developers create better site plans earlier in the process, saving time and money.
- Providing a platform to implement consistent and uniform improvements in the corridor.
- Supporting future grant applications to construct sidewalks, trails, and new local streets to take traffic off of US 97.
MAP OF THE CITY’S PROPOSED STUDY AREA:

SOUTH HIGHWAY 97 CORRIDOR PROJECT
HIGHLAND AVE TO SOUTH CITY LIMITS