

# Blue Urbanism: Inviting Urban Play on Seattle's North Waterfront

Scan I Design Master Studio, Autumn 2014 [Larch 501/Arch504]

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**GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR SEATTLE'S CENTRAL WATERFRONT** (adopted by City Council):

- Create a waterfront for all.
- Put the shoreline and innovative, sustainable design at the forefront.
- Reconnect the city to its waterfront.
- Embrace and celebrate Seattle's past, present and future.
- Improve Access and Mobility (for people and goods).
- Create a bold vision that is adaptable over time.
- Develop consistent leadership—from concept to construction to operations.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

Seattle's Central Waterfront is heralded as one of the most significant civic projects in the city's history. With imminent removal of the Alaskan Way Viaduct and current replacement of the aging Elliott Bay Seawall, Seattle has begun to envision and enact a great "waterfront for all." Removal of the viaduct and rerouting of Alaskan Way along the waterfront will create abundant new and qualitatively different public space, while the seawall replacement will provide for a more ecologically functional edge. However, while the team led by James Corner Field Operations has proposed and designed a new waterfront between Piers 48 and 62/63, less attention has been paid to the waterfront segment between Piers 62/63 and the Olympic Sculpture Park. With the reconfiguration of Alaskan Way, this northern segment offers rich opportunities for better public, pedestrian, bicycle and ecological space along a less-traveled roadway. Connections to the Belltown upland, Elliott Bay, and to the waterfront landscapes both north and south, are paramount.

Our studio focus for this northern segment is to **imagine and develop an active, vibrant and multi-dimensional public realm that invites a range of play activities**; to propose design interventions that **reclaim the waterfront as an ecological space, both aquatic and terrestrial**; and to identify planning strategies and opportunities to **connect the Central Waterfront with the rest of the city and bay**. These tri-partite goals align with the priorities developed by the guiding Central Waterfront Committee, which emphasize *Connections, Partnerships, Vibrancy and Diversity of Experiences and Identities*. Transportation connections to the waterfront – especially transit and cycling from the north and south, pedestrian access east to Belltown and water access to Elliot Bay and Puget Sound – will also be critical to your planning and design proposals.

During the term, our Master Studio will benefit from the involvement of Bianca Hermansen, formerly with Gehl Architects and now with her own firm, Cititek. Throughout the quarter, we'll build on the Copenhagen study tour by employing and expanding on Gehl's Quality Criteria and apply Gehl methodology as we develop our design, as well as creatively engage ecological considerations and implications of climate change. We will also interact with professionals and stakeholders who have been working on the ongoing waterfront, road and seawall re-designs through lectures, tours and design reviews.

### **COURSE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

- to practice site analysis methods
- to become familiar with and inspired by national and international waterfront development examples;
- to explore strategies for creating a democratic public realm that is ecological, resilient, regenerative, playful and economically and socio-culturally viable;
- to explore, implement and expand on Gehl Architects' urban design concepts and methods to promote a lively urban realm;
- to develop and apply ecological infrastructural planning and design to foster vibrant and green urbanism, addressing future challenges such as climate change;
- to incorporate ecological science as a design determinant, including aquatic systems;
- to imagine and communicate pilot and temporary design actions that will incite interest and familiarity with a new waterfront design
- to apply evaluation metrics to anticipate actual social, environmental and/or economic performance of design interventions;
- to develop clear and compelling graphic and verbal communication skills;
- to practice working effectively in interdisciplinary teams;
- to practice working between scales, using both large and small scales simultaneously to each inform the other.

### **EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES**

At the culmination of the studio, students will:

- understand key issues and potential design approaches for ecological urban waterfronts
- be facile with implementing recognized public space planning principles and design criteria
- have advanced personal planning, design and design communication skills
- have gained an appreciation for and ease with language used by related design disciplines
- have increased insight and skill for working in teams

## **STUDIO PROCESS and EXPECTATIONS**

We will meet Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, 1:30 to 5:20 for *group presentations, discussions, field trips, working time and desk critiques*. Occasionally we'll go beyond these times for special events and work times. This term you will primarily work in groups on analysis/interpretation and conceptual planning/design level endeavors, with options to work in groups, pairs or individually at the detailed design scale. Each participant is expected to be in class during the scheduled class time, and to participate as a full member in your teamwork. When Bianca Hermansen is scheduled to be in town, we expect you to be in studio at all times, and plan on slightly longer days and scheduled sessions outside of class time to best make use of her limited time with us (recognizing conflicting work and school commitments). This may require some planning, such as Tuesdays and Thursday desk crit times.

You are highly encouraged to continue your sketchbook from Copenhagen (or start a new one) that documents your research and design explorations. Consider including your research and design process, notes from readings, class discussions and community meetings, solutions seen, heard, and imagined, and your reflections and conclusions about process and product.

## **READINGS AND RESOURCES**

The required book for the term is Jan Gehl's most recent, *Cities for People*, which has been ordered by the UW Bookstore. Two optional texts, *Urban Design and Ecological Design* (Rottle and Yocom) are recommended. We have developed an extensive list of Resources, many of which are on Reserve in the CBE Library and on-line (see attached). Over the term we'll compile a studio library to support your work, and you are encouraged to share new resources with each other as you discover them.

**COURSE WEBSITE:** <http://courses.washington.edu/gehlstud/>

### **Course Share Space:**

The share space for our course is on Google Drive. The course folder is **PSPL 2014**. Google Drive is very user friendly. For anyone interested in becoming more familiar with how Google Drive works feel free to avail yourselves of the numerous tutorials online. Here's a good place to start: <https://support.google.com/drive/?hl=en#topic=14940>.

You will need to have your own Google Drive account in order to access the class files. UW administers its mail and file sharing through Google so you can access a Drive account that way, or if you already have a Gmail account we can share the files with you there. The PSPL 2014 folder will be shared with everyone's UW email addresses by default, since those will allow you to access Google Drive, but if you prefer another Gmail address simply request an invitation.

The PSPL 2014 Drive folder will be shared with all students, with some files editable and others not. Since everything that you share could potentially be edited/removed/otherwise changed by other members of the group, do not store your original files on the class Drive. Please share copies (exact duplicates) of your work and store the original files elsewhere for safekeeping. We will happily advise on storage systems if anyone would like help safely and conveniently storing their files.

## **STUDIO EVALUATION (C/NC)**

Evaluation will be both from guest reviewers and faculty throughout the quarter, with written comments provided at the end of the term. We may also elect to conduct peer evaluations for group work.

### **Required at the end of term:**

- **Digital upload of your project files, including scans of your process work**
- **Your final printed posters**
- **Printouts of your book pages**
- **Final posters and process work uploaded to the Landscape Architecture archives**

## **Resources**

### **Site Maps & Analysis:**

Individual GIS data layers clipped to study area.

Additional GIS Data can be found at: <http://wagda.lib.washington.edu/> and [https://wagda.lib.washington.edu/data/geography/wa\\_cities/seattle/index.html](https://wagda.lib.washington.edu/data/geography/wa_cities/seattle/index.html)

### **Waterfront Seattle Website:**

<http://waterfrontseattle.org/>

### **Sea Wall**

[http://www.waterfrontseattle.org/seawall\\_project/environmental.aspx](http://www.waterfrontseattle.org/seawall_project/environmental.aspx)

[http://www.waterfrontseattle.org/seawall\\_project/default.aspx](http://www.waterfrontseattle.org/seawall_project/default.aspx)

[http://www.waterfrontseattle.org/pdfs/ebsp\\_dseis/00\\_EBSP\\_DSEIS\\_ExecutiveSummary.pdf](http://www.waterfrontseattle.org/pdfs/ebsp_dseis/00_EBSP_DSEIS_ExecutiveSummary.pdf)

### **Waterfront Arts Plan**

[http://www.seattle.gov/arts/\\_downloads/art\\_plans/SCW-ARTPLAN.pdf](http://www.seattle.gov/arts/_downloads/art_plans/SCW-ARTPLAN.pdf)

### **Waterfront Seattle Library - planning documents:**

<http://waterfrontseattle.org/library>

### **Waterfront Street Schematic Design**

[http://waterfrontseattle.org/pdfs/design/WFS\\_Main\\_Corridor\\_SchematicDesignReport\\_1.5.pdf](http://waterfrontseattle.org/pdfs/design/WFS_Main_Corridor_SchematicDesignReport_1.5.pdf)

### **Cycle Track Schematic Design**

[http://waterfrontseattle.org/pdfs/design/Main\\_Corridor\\_SchematicDesignReport\\_1.6.pdf](http://waterfrontseattle.org/pdfs/design/Main_Corridor_SchematicDesignReport_1.6.pdf)

### **Waterfront Seattle Design Plans**

<http://waterfrontseattle.org/design/plans.aspx>

### **Other Resources:**

<http://www.8-80cities.org/>

<http://www.gehlarchitects.com/>

Waterlines website, Burke Museum: <http://www.burkemuseum.org/waterlines/maps.html>

See separate bibliography