

# Seattle Central Waterfront

## Recommendations for Design and Programming

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# Purpose and Process

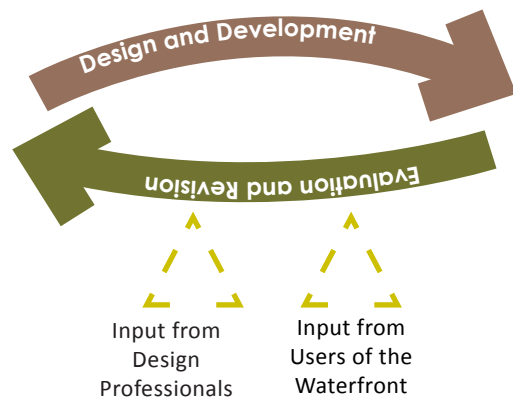
*The purpose of this project was to create a set of guidelines for ongoing redesign and programming of the Seattle Central Waterfront reflective of the preparation, analysis and work done in the "Public Spaces, Public Life" interdisciplinary studio at the University of Washington in Autumn 2010. The ultimate product is intended as a lasting document to reflect the intention of our studio designs, as though the studio itself had been an intensive charrette for the development of a waterfront vision.*

*The guidelines draw primarily on course material, discussions and group processes developed throughout the quarter and in a group travel study tour of Copenhagen and Malmo in September 2010.*

*The studio work was strongly informed by the Gehl Architects Urban Quality Consultants established framework for evaluating the design of public space, which in this case was applied to the particular physical, cultural and historical context of the Seattle Central Waterfront.*

# Recommendations for Implementation and Evaluation

To create a waterfront with lasting relevance both as a local amenity and a globally significant example of civic design, these design and programming recommendations should be treated as a work in progress. As development occurs, the performance should be evaluated systematically to determine whether the guidelines are providing adequate direction for meeting overarching goals and objectives. Evaluation by both designers and the public users of the waterfront will guide the revision of both overarching goals and specific design and programming strategies to respond to influences that are both near-term and local, and long-term and global.



## Near Term and Local Influences

The design and redevelopment of the Central Waterfront is expected to span most of a decade, and as such major interventions as the demolition of the Viaduct and opening of the Deep Bore Tunnel take place, the demographics, economic climate and private investment interest in the waterfront will respond. In addition, the cyclical nature of the built environment will influence the pace and nature of both public and private development at the waterfront itself, in the downtown area and in surrounding neighborhoods.

## Long Term and Global Influences

As scientists develop new and more accurate methods for measurement and prediction, new information on the implications of carbon emissions, climate change and sea level rise will become available. This information will effect global political and economic decisions as well as local political and social action. The response at the state and city level, as well as the federal governments' response to emerging global climate change deals, will shape the policy that regulates new development.

# Overarching Goals

*These design and programming recommendations outline a route for achieving six overarching goals for Seattle's Central Waterfront. These goals were identified by the studio Design Committee, a subcommittee of the LARC504 studio including representatives from each of the studio's four district teams. The following goals will be addressed with specific design and programming strategy recommendations applied to spatial regions along the waterfront:*

- I. Civic Waterfront**
- II. Local Economic Development**
- III. Multi-Modal Mobility**
- IV. Cultural and Social Diversity**
- V. Ecological Design**



## **I. Civic Waterfront**

*Provide an urban public space where Seattle residents, workers and visitors can engage in social activity, recreation, observation, conversation and public gathering that promote social vitality.*

### **Priorities**

1. Preserve the public nature of the waterfront, allowing public access to all amenities.
2. Emphasize a human scale in design.
3. Make use of existing landmarks and create new ones; showcase historic structures.
4. Provide places to stand, sit and stay.
5. Showcase views of nature, urban culture and industrial activity.
6. Offer a balance of activities for local residents, workers and visitors.
7. Invite active use year round and 24/7.

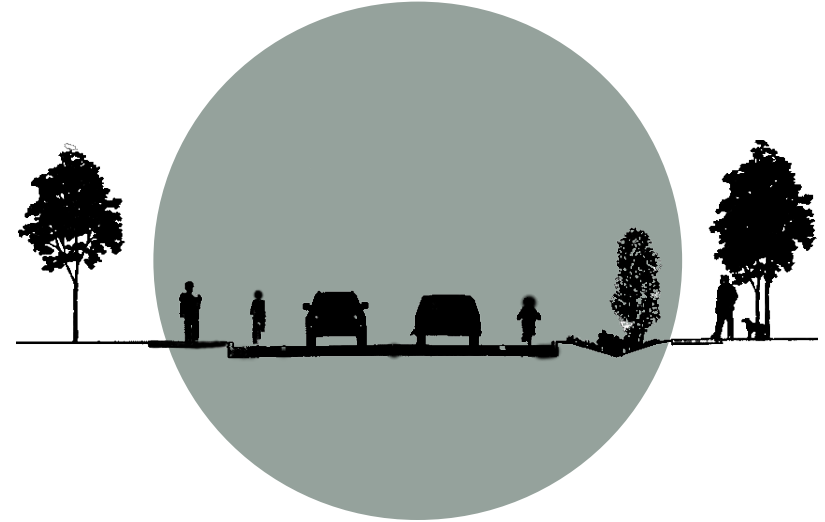


## II. Local Economic Development

*Support an economy that prioritizes diverse, resilient and distinctive water-dependent businesses and industry, including local and small, locally owned enterprises.*

### **Priorities**

1. Encourage licensed commercial activity in the public right-of-way, including retail, café seating, mobile vendors, temporary/seasonal markets, and kiosks.
2. Provide a variety of spaces for business, prioritizing smaller footprints and preservation of existing buildings, which are more affordable for independent and small businesses.
3. Prioritize business uses that increase year-round, 24/7 activity at the waterfront.



## III. Multi-Modal Mobility

*Facilitate comfortable, safe and convenient universally-designed multi-modal transportation to, from and through the central waterfront, prioritizing the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and public transit users.*

### **Priorities**

1. Minimize the visual and audible effects of automobile traffic while maintaining a flow appropriate to an urban boulevard.
2. Use details and design to enhance comfort, safety, convenience and enjoyment for cyclists and pedestrians.
3. Apply the principles of Universal Design (as developed by The Center for Universal Design at North Carolina State University) to extend access to the mobility impaired, with special consideration for children and the elderly.



#### **IV. Cultural and Social Diversity**

*Support a diverse cultural context through universally accessible features and use of color, material, shape and form that reflect the Puget Sound region's social and cultural diversity.*

##### **Priorities**

1. Provide plentiful opportunities for residents to engage at the waterfront without making a purchase.
2. Include workforce housing in conversions and new residential development.
3. Provide amenities for families to encourage 24-hour activity and safety on the street.
4. Invite regional ethnic, cultural and social groups to use the waterfront for public programming including Native American rituals, ethnic holiday celebrations, Gay Pride events, etc.
5. Include a range of active-passive activities to accommodate the varied needs and interests of people of all physical abilities and all ages, including teenagers.



#### **V. Ecological Design**

*Support the health of native aquatic and terrestrial ecology through the prioritization of ecological design strategies.*

##### **Priorities**

1. New development and redesign of both public right of way and private property should make an effort to capture, treat and re-use stormwater, and make those efforts visible to people.
2. Designs that bring people to the shoreline should encourage them to be respectful of the non-human inhabitants of Elliott Bay, including salmon populations and native plant species.

# Design and Programming Strategies

*The following strategies suggest specific applications of the five Overarching Goals to the Central Waterfront. This section approaches design and programming of the waterfront from four conceptual and spatial “edges:*

**I. Piers**  
*overwater structures*

**II. Water’s Edge**  
*seawall and waterfront park*

**III. Roadway**  
*Alaskan Way and network of roads north-south and east-west*

**IV. City Edge**  
*buildings and sidewalk on eastern edge of Alaskan Way*





# Piers

## I. Civic Waterfront

### Uses for Residents, Workers and Tourists

Reclaim large overwater spaces including Pier 48 and Colman Dock for deliberately programmed uses such as recreation and cultural venues that benefit residents, local visitors, workers and tourists alike.



Invite passersby to linger at the pier edges by placing seating for individuals, pairs and/or group at points where they can view the natural surroundings and industrial activity

### Landmarks

The pier edges, viewed against the backdrop of the city's skyline, are the first sights to greet people coming to Seattle via water. Architectural and infrastructural form should acknowledge this gateway with iconic visual presence.

### Restoration of Pier Buildings

As the pier structures are retrofitted and redesigned to accommodate new uses, consider the following:

- Restored buildings and signage should reflect industrial and working history through use of materials, textures and color
- Walls facing pedestrian corridors and pier-edge seating areas should be made permeable, with windows and entrances at the ground floor
- Structures such as umbrellas, shades, awnings, trellises and overhangs should provide protection from rain and sun.

## II. Local Economic Development

### Commercial Programming

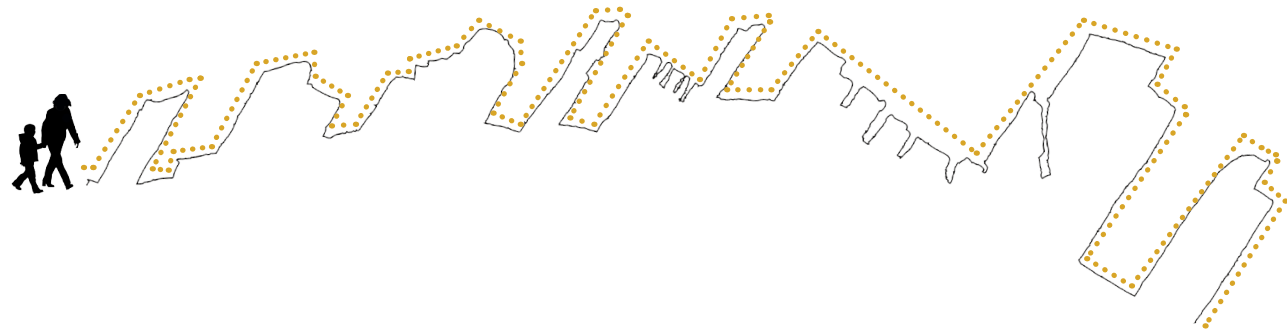
Award preferential status to water-dependent businesses that provide services to the general public and that do not alienate public passersby (such as guided large- and small-boat tours, and small-boat rental).



Until a more equitable balance between tourism-focused and locally focused businesses is achieved, award preferential status to cafes and retailers that serve a local clientele.



*a continuous, legible pedestrian path enabling public access along the waterfront edges of all piers...*



At Colman Dock, award preferential status to businesses that cater to office and commuter clientele including coffee shops, bakeries, grocers and delicatessens.



To help preserve the strong local identity of the waterfront, award preferential status to Washington-based businesses.

Consider office and hotel use as a means for attracting more 24-hour and year-round activity to the piers.

### III. Multi-Modal Mobility

#### Public Access

All public and private property owners on the piers will be required to provide and keep clean their respective portions of a continuous, legible path enabling public access along the waterfront edges of all piers.

#### Pedestrian Engagement

Make pier pathways as navigable for pedestrians as active city sidewalks. Pathways for walking should be kept clear of containers, vehicles and debris and adequately lit after dusk to provide a safe walking environment.

### IV. Cultural and Social Diversity

#### Public Art

Reserve prominent public spaces on the piers for installations by local artists. Emphasize those projects that reference historical context of the waterfront or a representation of one of the many cultural minorities that are part of Seattle's social fabric.

### V. Ecological Design

#### Environmental Stewardship

In public areas that are susceptible to litter and pollution, channels must direct stormwater to areas for collection and treatment before releasing it into the Sound.

When safe and appropriate, install sunlight-transmitting tubes or light-permeable paving to provide underwater ecosystems with natural light and warmth.

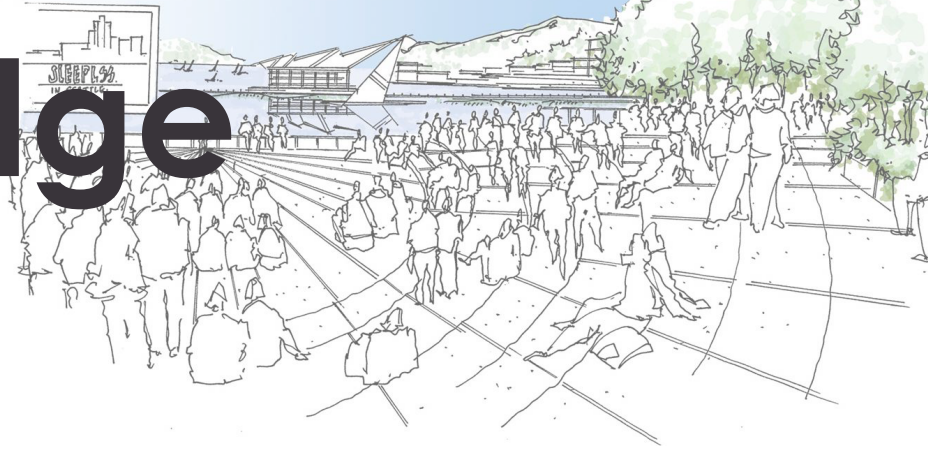
#### Environmental Education and Awareness

Public art, interpretive signage and interactive installations should allow public users to view and learn about the area's aquatic ecology.



# Water's Edge

Image credit: Allied Arts)



## I. Civic Waterfront

### Public Spaces

*Incorporate public spaces at the following scales:*

- Neighborhood scale: Intimate spaces for individual activities and contemplation
- District Scale: Small-to-medium spaces for pairs and small groups
- City Scale: Large public gathering and recreational spaces

Use pattern and color to help users differentiate between scales of spaces, and communicate the location of significant views and other stopping opportunities along the waterfront

## II. Cultural and Social Diversity

### Public Art

Designate space in the waterfront park for art and performance, to be curated by an artist or art institution. Emphasize installations that are interactive.

## III. Ecological Design

### Temporal and Climatic Conditions

Include details that add excitement at different times of day and in different weather conditions, such as light installations to add interest at night or visual elements that respond to rain.

### Water Views

Incorporate transparent or perforated paving materials and windowed structures that allow the underwater habitat to receive sunlight and be viewed.

Provide a variety of visual experiences that offer creative framing of water views. Consider various elevations and terraces, outdoor "rooms" with windows formed by structures or vegetation, intimate and vast spaces, and other strategies.



Image credit: archdaily

### Water Contact

Where bathymetry and habitat conditions allow, incorporate built and landscape features that allow visitors to come in direct contact

with the water. These could take the form of stairs, swimming piers, recreational beaches, seating, water-level catwalks or stepping stones, climbing features, small boat launches and numerous other programming opportunities.

Points of contact should strive to gently and creatively educate visitors and encourage awareness of the natural cycles that take place in the Puget Sound and the conditions that effect its health. Sometimes this education can take the form of unexpected and moving views of the Sound; other times it may be appropriate to provide signage or interactive tools such as telescopes. Consider allowing visual access instead of physical access during salmon migration and other sensitive ecological periods.

### **Vegetation**

Create native microhabitats through strategic groups of plantings. Select plants for optimal stormwater absorption and pollution mitigation in sensitive areas.

Incorporate green roofs in structures in the park to provide habitat, absorb rainwater and create an unbroken green appearance when viewed from above.

Make native vegetation and/or soils visible through paving or pathways when appropriate.



Image credit: Picasa user "Craig"



# Roadway

## I. Multi-Modal Mobility



Image credit:  
petesyrradddesign.co.uk

### **Public Transit**

Provide comfortable, visible, well lit and attractive waiting areas for transit users. Waiting structures should not be identical replicas of one another; they should be sized according to heaviness of use and distinctive in appearance.

### **Cyclists**

Brightly paint on-road crossings, stopping areas and lanes for cyclists.

Install cyclist foot rests/handrails at prominent intersections (ie at Colman Dock, Pike St.)

Place a minimum of one rack per city block on the east side of Alaskan Way, and racks near all large public gathering spaces in the waterfront park.

### **Pedestrians**

Create crosswalks that reflect common pedestrian desire lines with wide entrance/exit points that narrow into a lane for crossing the street.

Street crossing lights and signage should allow enough time for mobility impaired people to safely cross the entire road.

### **Parking**

Use parallel on-street parking along both the east and west sides of Alaskan Way to create a physical buffer between car traffic and pedestrians on the sidewalk and in the park.

Minimize visual impacts of parking at the waterfront to the greatest extent possible.

Eventually retrofit above-grade parking structures by incorporating pedestrian-friendly first-floor facades. These treatments can include murals or even shallow storefronts.

Pave surface parking lots with sturdy, permeable, light-colored materials designed to filter dirty runoff from beneath parked cars and reflect sunlight.

On Alaskan Way, consider permanently devoting on-street parking spaces to bike parking where heaviness of cyclist

use supports this function.

## II. Cultural and Social Diversity

### Legibility and hierarchy

Use paving, plantings and road widths to visually communicate the street hierarchy (side streets, main corridors, pedestrian-priority streets), understanding that narrower and irregular spaces are more engaging for pedestrians



Image credit: Thien Gretchen, flickr

### Design competition

Encourage innovative and awareness-generating designs for bicycle services with such programs as a design competition for bicycle racks, with installation of winning designs.

## III. Ecological Design

### Stormwater treatment

Capture and treat stormwater on-site with ecological strategies including roadside bioswales, which can also improve the aesthetic of the roadway and calm traffic. Stormwater capture and on-site treatment should be sufficient to prevent

combined sewer overflow into Puget Sound.

Strive for the highest standard in ecological roadway design. Strategies should include the use of environmentally friendly, locally produced and recycled materials; design with consideration for stormwater and nearby habitat and waste-reducing construction practices. When appropriate, consult existing standards such as the Greenroads standard for performance benchmarks.



Image credit: Oregon Live



# City Edge

## I. Civic Waterfront

### Urban Promenade

Treat the sidewalk along east edge of Alaskan Way as a public promenade and “front stoop” for Seattle’s downtown. Designate this area a Pedestrian overlay zone, requiring pedestrian-friendly facades at the ground floor and eliminating parking minimums in this area.

Include the following improvements to the right-of-way:

- Street trees that create an urban canopy and buffer between pedestrians and traffic on Alaskan Way. Select native species with aesthetic qualities such as vibrant fall color or bark texture that will visually engage pedestrians.
- Select patterned paving that designates the sidewalk as a special place. Paving could reference that of another successful public space such as the Salish basket weave pattern found at nearby Westlake Park, or use a new form and color to reference the waterfront itself.

### Affordability

New development and renovations budgeted at 30 percent of total asset value or greater must include at least 10 percent affordable units aimed at workforce populations earning no more than 60 to 80 percent of median income.

Encourage activities and events that engage non-paying users as well as paying users, such as busking or other street performance, or sidewalk flea markets.

### Existing Structures

Preserve and adaptively use existing active facades wherever possible.

Prioritize ecological design and energy efficiency retrofits for all new development permits.

Remedy existing blank walls with a treatment that improves visual interest, such as one of the following:

- Storefront windows, awnings, decorative doors and architectural details
- Vertical foliage
- Murals, mosaics, light fixtures or other art installations



Adapt functional structures such as loading docks to active pedestrian uses whenever possible.

Re-examine zoning for loading, garbage and delivery uses on a case-by-case basis, with the goal of eventually removing services that interrupt pedestrian engagement and safety.

## II. Local Economic Development

### Financing and Maintenance

Finance the sidewalk improvements with both public and private funds, requiring a portion of funding to be assessed from waterfront property owners. Private owners will be responsible for clearing and repair of paving and furniture adjacent to their western property line.

### New Development

Hold developments on large vacant sites to a high aesthetic and performance standard. This area should feature world-class architecture befitting the waterfront's status as a major regional, national and global destination.

Hold new structures to a high standard of ecological design. New buildings should incorporate cutting edge ecological design strategies including zero net-energy and zero net-water, and have high standards for locally produced materials, light and air, and beauty and inspiration.

Discourage setbacks from the sidewalk. Do not permit surface parking lots in front of buildings (flanking Alaskan Way).

Encourage variation in form and materials creating a mix of old and new styles of architecture. The mix should be deliberate, and new buildings should respond to adjacent structures. Encourage building heights and tops that respond to adjacent existing structures to a varied but coherent profile



Image credit:  
creative commons

### Business Guidelines

Prioritize the following uses to maximize pedestrian engagement:

- Retail uses that engage public passers-by, including cafes with outdoor seating, retailers with “spill” onto the sidewalk and mobile kiosks, food carts and “pop-up” stores
- Kiosks and food carts to add sensory interest to the street, provide inexpensive meals for local employees and visitors, and offer independent entrepreneurs with scarce resources, including immigrant and ethnic chefs, an opportunity to launch their own ventures downtown

# Unifying Elements

*The Central Waterfront design team will work with the Seattle Design Commission in the following areas to achieve a consistent and legible design language and simplify future maintenance and replacement.*

## **Public Art**

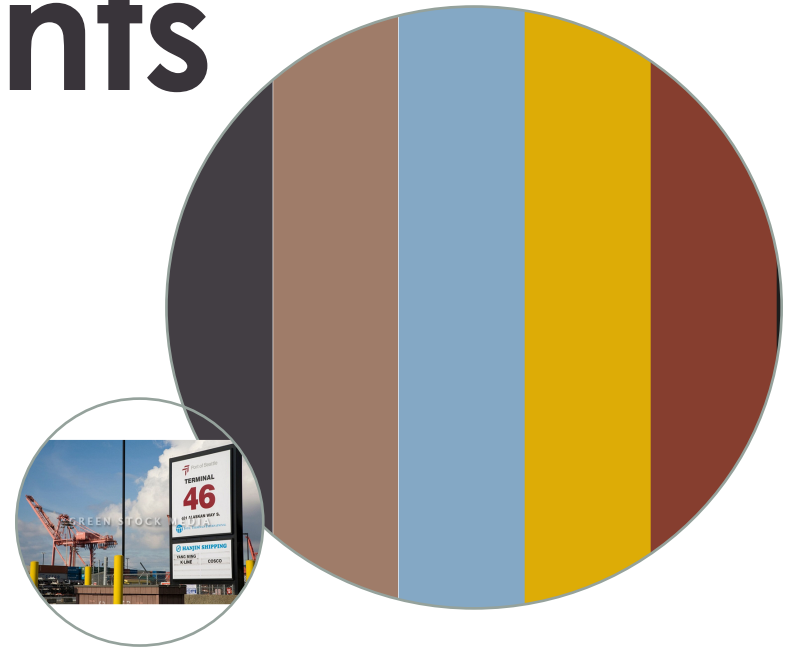
The city should engage an artist to develop and art plan for public art along the waterfront that gives each district and edge a unique civic expression. Priority should be given to participatory installations that encourage interaction (physical or social) or awareness (environmental or cultural).

## **Landscape, Street Furniture and Services**

Identify themes and products for paving, lighting, street trees, outdoor furniture, public restrooms and trash receptacles to be installed throughout the waterfront.

## **Color Palette**

Encourage selections from or complimentary to a color palette that reflects the area's industrial character as well as the natural hues of water, sky and mountains.



## **Public Seating**

- Install benches where they will be most useful: in highly trafficked spaces with reasons for pedestrians to stop, including commercial activity, cultural activity and significant views.
- Require waterfront seating to be comfortable and rain-resistant to encourage heavy use year-round.
- Select seating furniture in a variety of forms, including ledges integrated into the edges of buildings, fountains and other built features; benches that accommodate groups in an L-shape or semicircle; unusual forms including sculptures, stairs and ground forms such as gently molded hills.
- Design seating arrangements to support a variety of social interactions, from being alone to sitting next to strangers to being in a group of friends.





Image credit:  
411greenwave.com

### Lighting

- Prioritize energy efficient and low-carbon lighting technologies.
- Consider fixtures that respond to levels of ambient light in order to save energy, and to aesthetically reflect changing seasonal and temporal conditions.
- Prioritize detail-level lighting strategies including LED strips, fiber optics and string lights.

- Consider embedding lighting in structures and footpaths where appropriate.
- Consider lighting as part of artistic or whimsical installations.

### Cyclist Services

- Install metal bicycle furrows on all public staircases.
- Install digital cyclist counter on most-used cycle path near Colman Dock to visibly track and document passing cyclists.
- Install cyclist foot rests/handrails at prominent intersections on Alaskan Way (ie Colman Dock, Pike St.) for cyclist comfort and visibility.

### Public Restrooms

Provide public restrooms in permanent structures that are attractive and consistently maintained. The Parks Department may consider bidding a management contract out to a private company. Staffed, pay-per-use facilities may be considered if there is no other socially and financially sustainable means of providing restrooms for public use.

Include shower and changing facilities for cyclists in designs for public restrooms. These facilities may function best if installed inside community center buildings on the waterfront, as this will put them closer to office buildings and create safe and social environments for cyclists.

