

Public Spaces | Public Life for Seattle's Central Waterfront

ScanIDesign Master Studio, Autumn 2010 [Larch 504/Arch503]

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image source: Sharon Sutton

With the decision to remove the aging Alaskan Way Viaduct and replace the Elliott Bay Seawall, Seattle has a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to reclaim its downtown waterfront, reconnect the city to Elliott Bay, and set an example for the sustainable development of the rapidly-urbanizing Puget Sound shoreline. As important, we have the opportunity to create a new “heart” for our city – a dynamic and forward-looking public space accessible and attractive to people from all walks of life, and connecting both the physical and the cultural fabric of our city to Elliott Bay. With this project, Seattle has the opportunity to create a public place where urban and natural world mix, where we can celebrate the connection of land and water, and where we can offer a beautiful, sustainable and democratic front yard for a city that has long lacked a central park. -S

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 replacement of the aging Elliott Bay Seawall, Seattle is poised to envision a great "waterfront for all." Removal of the viaduct will create abundant new and qualitatively different public space, while the seawall replacement will provide opportunities for a more ecologically functional edge.

Our studio focus will be to imagine and develop an active, vibrant and multi-dimensional public realm that serves a multicultural, intergenerational population; to propose design interventions that reclaim the waterfront as an ecological space, both aquatic, terrestrial, and cultural; and to identify planning strategies and opportunities to connect the Central Waterfront with the rest of the city. These tri-partite

goals align with the priorities developed over the last year by the Central Waterfront Partnerships Committee, which emphasize *Connections, Partnerships, Vibrancy and Diversity of Experiences and Identities*.

During the term, our Master Studio will benefit from the involvement of Gehl Architects, who over the past two years has consulted with the City of Seattle to improve the pedestrian and environmental quality of the city's downtown in a Public Space | Public Life (PSPL) study. We'll benefit from this summer's waterfront analysis work by the Green Futures Lab / Gehl Interns, which is based upon the Gehl analysis conducted by the GFL for the PSPL study but updated specifically for our use. We'll also employ and expand on Gehl's 12 Quality Criteria, and apply Gehl methodology as we develop our design. We will also engage with professionals and stakeholders who have been working on the waterfront, road and seawall re-envisioning and design through lectures, tours and design reviews.

As the culmination of almost a decade of attention and debate about the viaduct and waterfront, James Corner Field Operations, an internationally renowned firm/team, has just been hired to develop a guiding plan for the waterfront. Our studio discoveries, enacted principles and design ideas may directly inform that work. A team (led by Tetra Tech) is currently developing alternatives for the seawall replacement, which will influence the shoreline design; our work will both draw from and potentially contribute to that effort.

COURSE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- to explore strategies for creating a democratic public realm that is ecological, resilient, regenerative, and economically and socio-culturally viable.
- to practice manipulating physical space for intended social and ecological outcomes
- to develop strategies for accommodating diverse, and sometimes conflicting user needs, including those of teenagers, elderly, disabled, homeless, etc.
- to explore, implement and expand on Gehl Architects' urban design concepts and methods
- to develop and apply infrastructural planning and design to foster vibrant urbanism
- to incorporate ecological science as a design determinant, including aquatic systems
- to develop clear and compelling graphic and verbal communication skills
- to practice working effectively in interdisciplinary teams;
- to develop skill at technological applications related to planning and design
- 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 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 (students are expected to be in class and work Fridays on group or individual projects) for *group presentations, discussions, field trips, working time and desk critiques*. This term you will primarily work in groups on inventory, analysis, and planning

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 Gehl Architects are scheduled to be in town, we expect you to be in studio at all times, and plan on slightly longer days, recognizing conflicting work and school commitments. There will be some review sessions scheduled outside of class time to best make use of Gehl Architects' time.

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. 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 throughout the term.

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

U-Drive:

To log in under windows, right-click the red "N" in the lower left corner of the screen and select "Novell Login" (the novell client has been installed on all lab machines in the college). Click the Advanced button, and make sure the parameters are set to the following:

Username: larc504
password: waterFront
Tree: UWCAUP
Context: COURSES.CAUP
Server: jabba.caup.washington.edu

To login on a mac, use the menu item /Go/Connect to Server/ from the finder and enter jabba.caup.washington.edu (tree and context are not needed on a mac). Enter your username and password, then select the volume USERS.JABBA. This volume will be mounted on your desktop. Open it to find the course folder. For the macs in BE labs, there is an application on the dock and in the Applications folder called "Mount Jabba" that automates this.

STUDIO EVALUATION

Evaluation will be based on departmental criteria and college standards, with a numerical grade at the end of the term for Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning students and evaluation forms for Architecture students. Evaluation will be based roughly on the following:

Site and Context Analysis	10%
Precedent Study	10%
Mid-term	20%
Final Design Package (including book pages)	50%
Class Participation	10%

CDs with all of your files, including scans of your process work, and your final posters are required at the end of the term.

Central Waterfront Planning web resources (links available on studio website):

http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Central_Waterfront/PartnershipsCommittee/BriefingBook/index.htm

Resources found on DPD website include: [briefing book has also been printed and is available in studio binder]

- a. Background and Existing Conditions- maps and concept plans
- b. Case studies from other cities and Case Studies from Seattle
- c. Management and Financing Models- powerpoints
- d. Central Waterfront RFQ Materials- site area map, public realm diagram, and proposal text

http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Central_Waterfront/Overview/default.asp

<http://www.seattle.gov/transportation/seawall.htm>

<http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/Viaduct/>

<http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Projects/Viaduct/viaductSeawall.htm>