Scale Effect; Experience of Scale in Natural Landscapes:
A Washington Parks Information Center on Seattle's Waterfront

Kyle Douglas Kinney

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Committee:
Ann Marie Borys
Rick Mohler
Gundula Proksch

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Abstract

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Parks and public lands in Washington are continually in a state of distress stemming from various social, environmental, and political factors. The current system of parks, operated by multiple government agencies, does not adequately provide informational services to a growing Seattle population of residents and tourists. Through a highly accessible information and experience center in downtown Seattle, this thesis investigates the interaction between architectural and landscape scale to enhance the experience of obtaining Washington parks information.

Figure 1: Gothic Basin, DNR managed lands

SCALE EFFECT

Experience of Scale in Natural Landscapes: A Washington Parks Information Center on Seattle's Waterfront

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Figure 2: Mossy groundcover, Olympic National Park

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01 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction: This thesis is fundamentally interested in the current social, environmental, and political state of parks and public lands in Washington State. It posits that the current system of national, state, Native American, DNR run, county, and city parks do not adequately provide informational services to a growing Seattle population of residents and tourists contributing to a shortage of funding, improper park etiquette, and lack of park regulation knowledge, ultimately creating insufficient support for the system. This thesis proposes that increasing access to and awareness of all Washington parks and public lands information, including their political, environmental, and infrastructural issues, will embolden Seattleites to take interest in and advocate for proper parks funding. Moreover, it speculates that Seattleites visiting a local parks and public lands information center are more likely to visit far away parks if they are presented the information and resources necessary to do so. The majority of Washington's parks and public lands resources are physically located in isolated or remote places where they are detached from urban areas or on multiple cumbersome websites where one doesn't experience the information unless intentionally seeking it out. This isolation has distanced Washingtonians from the many issues plaguing the system. This thesis also hypothesizes that tourists visiting Seattle may be more inclined to visit Washington parks and public lands if a highly visible resource of information center was locally available to arm them with what's needed for their excursions. Finally, this thesis speculates that awareness of such topics is best encouraged through a highly accessible, urban information center for Washington parks and public lands in downtown Seattle.

By locating a Washington parks and public lands information center in a dense urban environment, the parks system can:

- Improve public knowledge of parks related history and issues to foster awareness and action by:
    - . Increasing public exposure to parks economic and political issues
    - . Increasing public exposure to growing environmental concerns
    - . Providing volunteering opportunities
    - . Increasing public exposure to park systems' crumbling infrastructure
    - . Providing proper parks etiquette and safety information
- Improve park and public lands visitor experience by:
    - . Increasing general visit planning resources
    - . Providing specific activity planning; kayaking, bicycle touring, etc.
    - . Providing local parks experience for those unable to visit distant parks
    - . Educating visitors in park ecologies to enhance park visits

1.2 Proposition and Organization: The overarching purpose of this thesis is to improve experience of and promote funding for Washington parks and public lands. It begins by exploring key political, environmental, and infrastructural issues surrounding Washington parks and public lands in order to propose architectural solutions that aid in raising awareness of these issues to the general public. This thesis then proposes architectural solutions that aim to maximize their influence in an urban context through the thoughtful design of an information center using key architectural concepts of "portal experience and resource." Through the fundamental combination of these design and program elements, the architectural solution envisioned should engender social interest, responsibility, and action among citizens for Washington parks and public lands.

Figure 3: Foggy hills, North Cascades National Park

02 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Washington Parks Issues, Past & Present: National Parks began with the democratic promise that any person has the right to experience the splendid nature of the United States of America.

> This country presents to its citizens an opportunity to grow mentally and spiritually, as well as physically. The National Park System and the work of the National Park Service constitute one of the Federal Government's important contributions to that opportunity. Together they make it possible for all Americans--millions of them at first-hand--to enjoy unspoiled the great scenic places of the Nation.[1]

Born of this spirited national movement, parks at all levels of government have provided many a splendid escape from urban life.

In the state of Washington, as in others, what began as a national movement has grown to encompass various national, state, Native American, DNR run, Fish and Wildlife, county, and city parks and protected natural lands. For the purpose of this thesis, these places will be generally referred to as "Washington parks."

2.1A History, Politics, and Political Agencies: With support of key American figures and their reverent ideology, the first national park, Yellowstone National Park, was created in 1872.[2] This point marks the beginning of federal governments setting land aside for public

Figure 4: Pioneers of the parks; Teddy Roosevelt and John Muir

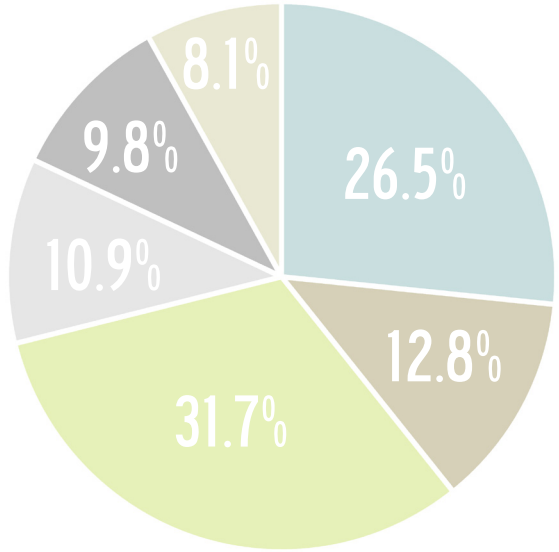


Figure 5: Washington State Parks budget, 2013 to 2015

recreational use. By 1899, three more national parks were created and in that year, Mount Rainier National Park became the fifth established.[3] In 1915, the state of Washington voted to approve the first two state parks. The park system in Washington continued to expand and in 1933, during the Great Depression, the C.C.C. built many facilities in Washington parks that are still in use today. However, many have fallen into disrepair over time and need repair or replacement. By the late 1960's, the park system had grown to 130 properties and was in great demand by Washington residents. Following the 60's, Washington's up and down economy stretched park funding and by the mid 2000's, centralized government funding began dropping significantly as the introduction of user fees were introduced.[4]

> The percentage of state parks' budget that came from the state's general fund dropped from more than 60 percent in 2007 to 30 percent in 2008. For the 2011-13 biennium it was at 12 percent. That number continues to drop and is now at about 7 percent. Overall, state parks have seen a $26 million shortfall since 2009.[5]

The Discover Pass, a yearly fee for parking vehicles at state parks, has become the primary source for regaining fees no longer obtained from government sources. Since 2011, the Discover Pass' first year of implementation, fees haven't met the estimated needs for park maintenance. Park officials originally predicted the pass would account for $27 million per year. It currently averages $14 million per year. However, in its latest reporting period, 2013, sales were up 23 percent.[6] While the Discover Pass may never account for its originally estimated share of $27 million, sales have demonstrated that increased buy-in is

achievable if information about and access to purchasing the Discover Pass is increased.

The Discover Pass isn't the only pay-for-use pass for Washington parks. The varying park systems and land management organizations including the National Parks, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, Washington State Parks, Department of Natural Resources, and the Department of Fish and Wildlife also have different passes for a variety of uses including camping, climbing, water activities, snow activities, company picnics, family reunions, firewood, etc..[7] While all of these passes and permits help to fund Washington's parks, with so many, knowing what passes are needed can be difficult for park users. This has led to confusion, causing problems for park staff.

"The heavy emphasis on the collection of the fees, that takes staff time.

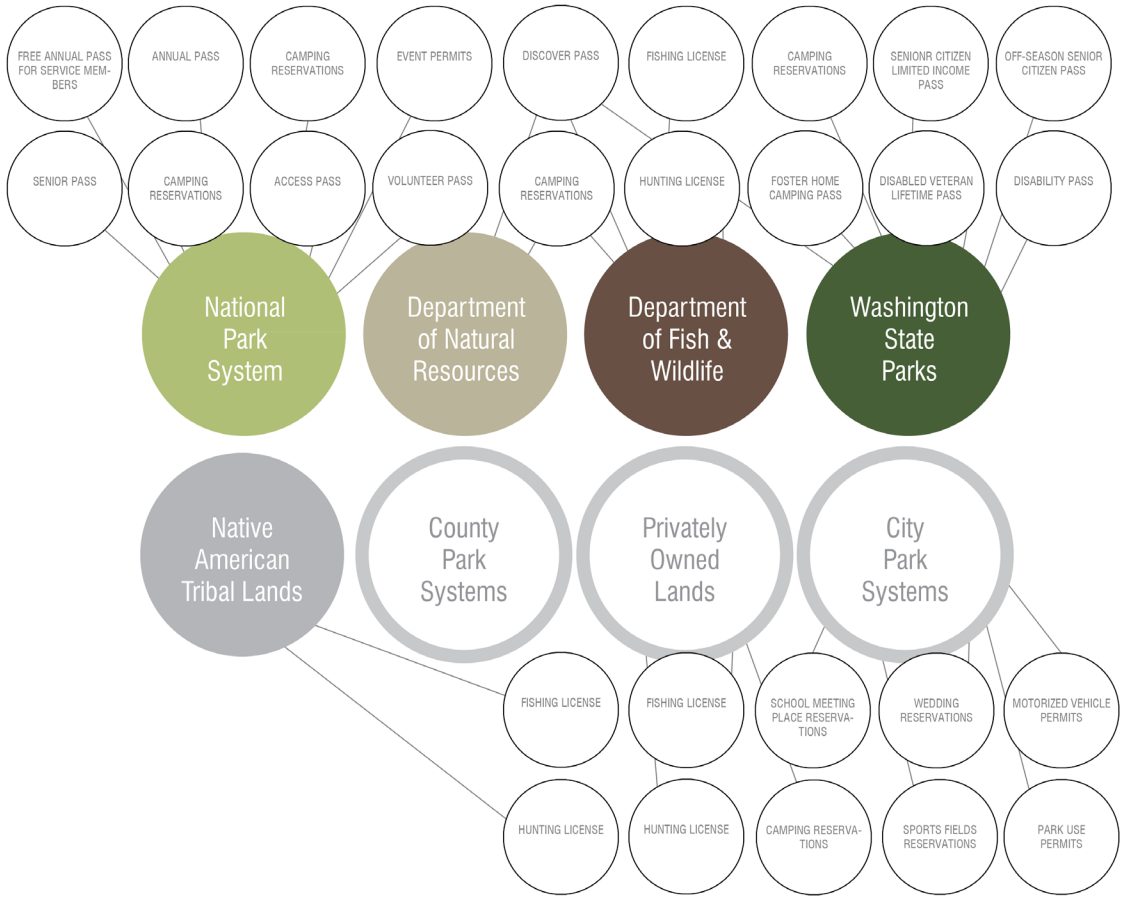


Figure 6: Park system complexity. Washington parks are maintained by a host of government entities leading to a tangled web of permits, fees, and license requirements for park usage.

We have less contact with the public, and the contact we do have is in more of a negative manner. I guess you could say we have gotten more into a law-enforcement mode on our contacts, from a friendly mode."[8]

In this network of passes and permits where certain passes are needed in some locations but not others and some passes override different passes, a centralized place for understanding what's needed for any given park would provide users a clearer understanding while potentially minimizing park staff time spent on ticketing, allowing more time for park maintenance and restoration.

2.1B Parks and Ecological Conservation: While global climate change awareness has dramatically risen in recent years, little is publically recognized regarding the effects of climate change in the state of Washington. "Washington State is particularly vulnerable to a warming climate — especially our snow-fed water supplies that provide our drinking water, irrigation for agriculture — and nearly three-fourths of the electrical power we produce."[9] One issue: the effects of climate change are seen in areas far from urban living. This thesis suggests that information regarding effects of climate change and ongoing efforts toward "energy efficient and climate friendly practices"[10] should be more accessible to the general public, fostering a sense of awareness, social responsibility, and advocacy for sustainable practices.

2.1C Cultural Threats to Washington Parks: Modern American culture is rapidly changing and park systems have recognized these changes while currently struggling to adapt their message to America's changing society.

Digitally based lifestyles have begun and will continue to affect the parks and the public's experiences in them. A 2003 National Park Service focus group identified the need for increased digitally based signage, visitor center experiences, and interactive park maps. The group even noted that to stay competitive among tourist destinations, IMAX theaters and interactive entertainment should be included at park locations to engage the next generation of park users.[11] This ideology directly contrasts growing trends of staunch ecological preservation at park sites. This thesis understands these forms of entertainment venues have been identified by park authorities as necessary elements to stay relevant among modern tourists. However it postulates the parks themselves can be separated from these entertainment experiences that can be kept in an urban environment where they have the ability to affect a greater portion of the general public on a more consistent

basis. By locating itself in close proximity to where people work and live, a parks information center can create greater connections between urban citizens and nature by serving as a daily reminder of the parks' presence.

2.1D Park Logistics and Introductory Experience Issues: Statewide, there are 5.6 million acres of DNR run sites, nearly one million acres of Department of Fish and Wildlife run sites, 119 state parks, 200 King County parks, and 430 city of Seattle parks that encompass historical parks, national monuments, a variety of recreation types, battlefields, seashores, parkways, lakeshores, and reserves. The parks span from some of America's highest peaks including active volcanos, to lowland marshes and desert plateaus. This thesis posits that to better access the breadth of this system, a public place providing access to park information

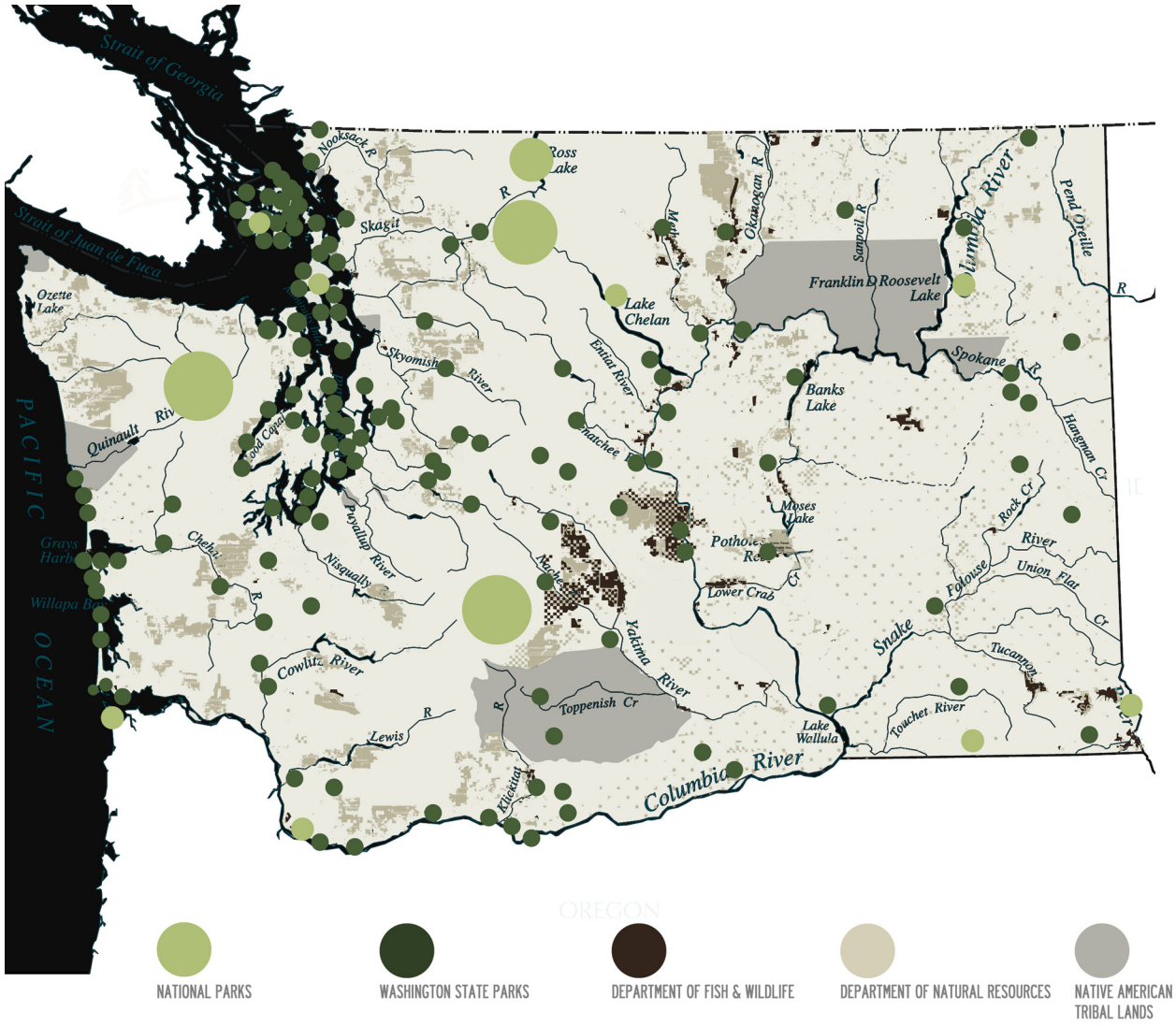


Figure 7: Washington parks and public land locations

could better advertise what is available to visit than the current web-based system. Providing a common place for park visitors also creates a place where people can question park officials about near and far locales, safety and etiquette issues, or specific activity planning such as kayaking or bicycle touring, offering greater assurance and insight to their experience.

Logistically, simply getting to Washington parks can be difficult. Moreover, as areas urbanize[12] and more Americans move toward car-free lifestyles,[13] access to far away parks becomes increasingly more difficult. Currently implemented car-share programs offer a means to vehicles but require costly fees to rent them for anything longer than a few hours. This thesis suggests that a central meeting place or coordinating center would benefit Seattleites looking to share resources in order to visit non-urban parks more frequently.

2.1E Park Volunteering: Since budget cuts and maintenance backlogs have increased for Washington parks, so too has their need for volunteers. National Parks as well as Washington State Parks rely on hundreds of thousands of volunteering hours.[14] An urban parks information center would provide the parks a place to encourage and advertise their need for volunteers.

2.3 Architectural Typology Comparisons

2.3A Libraries: Visitor information centers, be it from books, pamphlets, maps, or digital displays are purveyors of information. They store material much as libraries and museums do. By analyzing storage and communication of literary and graphic information in libraries and museums, a greater understanding of information's design implications can be gained.

For centuries, libraries have been institutional buildings; physical archives of printed material. In modern technological society, however, digital records are increasingly common, questioning the need for physical archives. Aside from archival space, libraries are also places of interaction, whether it from books, digital sources, or other people.[15] "Usually devoted to reading or meeting, such spaces served and still serve symbolically to reinforce the spirit of learning and to imbue the knowledge-interaction experience with a powerful sense of importance."[16] Even in a digital age, this thesis posits that people still desire places to learn and engage with information in addition to having it readily accessible through personal computing devices.

And while libraries of tomorrow may be predominantly digital, they still contain mixed media types today including books, magazines, periodicals, film, web access locations, and electronic media stations.[17] In this sense, libraries, and places dedicated to the collection and presentation of information, should accommodate various forms of information display. This may result in architectural spaces that are ambiguous in nature, needing to provide adequate room to change over time as the means through which information is displayed changes.

As libraries continue to change, they may become less about storage and more about "bibliographic control."[18] This term refers to searching through vast amounts of data, records, and information to correctly locate pieces of information most pertinent to a given research topic. Parallel to this notion, availability of resources and staff to locate specific parks for specific activities would benefit many park go-ers. As in libraries, "there will be considerable need…for the development of portals, tools, and strategies customized for precision research." In a parks information center, for instance, kayakers could more easily track river-runs equal to their experience level through the help of a guided digital experience prior to arriving at the parks themselves.

2.3B Museums: Contrasting library design, an urban parks information center may more closely resemble a museum in terms of content display. Library design predominantly stores information in an archival fashion, minimizing a guided experience for visitors. Museums, however, focus on experiential display of their content, minimizing informational re-

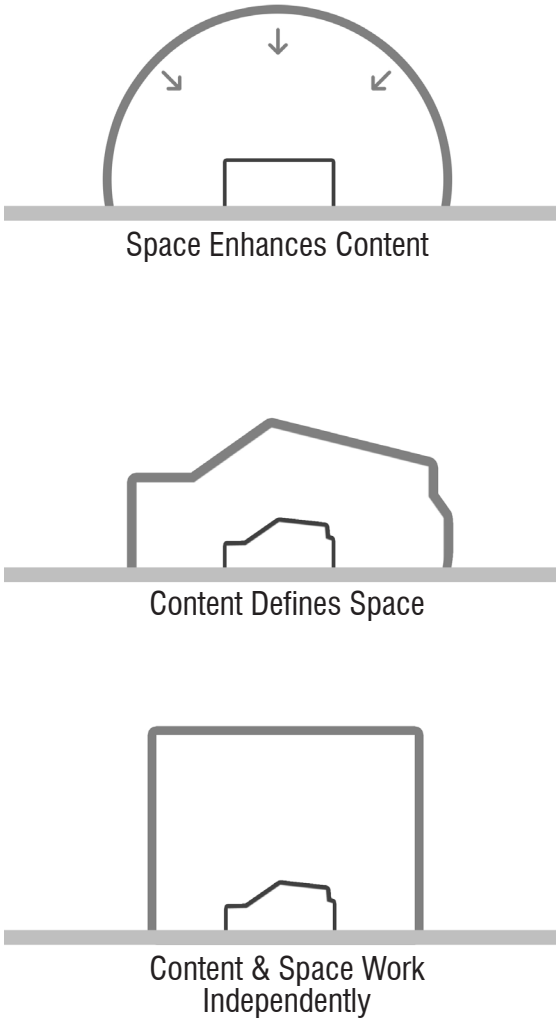


Figure 8: Museum design typologies

sources about the content. This affects the architectural design of museum spaces. Museum design can be organized into three categories: where space enhances museum content, where content defines museum space, and where content and museum space work independent of one another.[19] Similar to libraries, however, integration of digital tools has risen in recent years, altering the relationship between museum and content. The changing nature of digital objects and their need for upgrade and replacement require spaces be flexible to new technologies. To integrate these elements, defining singular function or long term installations from temporary exhibits is crucial to a building's design over time. In these cases, multipurpose or interchangeable sets of spaces provide more flexibility of use over time. However, information/visitor center design is often rooted in place, time, history, and sense of permanence, providing challenges to the building's design where contradiction between concepts of permanence versus ubiquitous, flexible space occurs.

2.3 Architectural Typology Comparison Conclusions: Libraries provide insight into information center design by managing the display of information through mixed media types. In today's digital world, they display curated information while providing staff support services and digital research computing stations.

Regarding museum typologies, the parks information center should allow landscape elements or "museum content" to define architectural form in order to provide optimal environments for constructed landscapes.

2.4 Visitor Center Precedents: Studying existing and proposed information/visitor centers with differing site relationships can provide insight into how an urban parks information center could look, feel, and operate.

2.4A Educational Center in Kenya's Karuna Forest: This education center provides a precedent study of program for a parks information center. While the location of this facility is in a natural forest setting, one can analyze the building's spatial relationships to gain perspective on program elements that make up an education center about forests.

The building components are spread out in this scheme, allowing the natural setting to visually penetrate the building. Large amounts of glazing aid in this concept where translucency and wood screening elements allow the building to blend with its environment. However, the

Figure 9: Karuna Forest Education Center rendered image

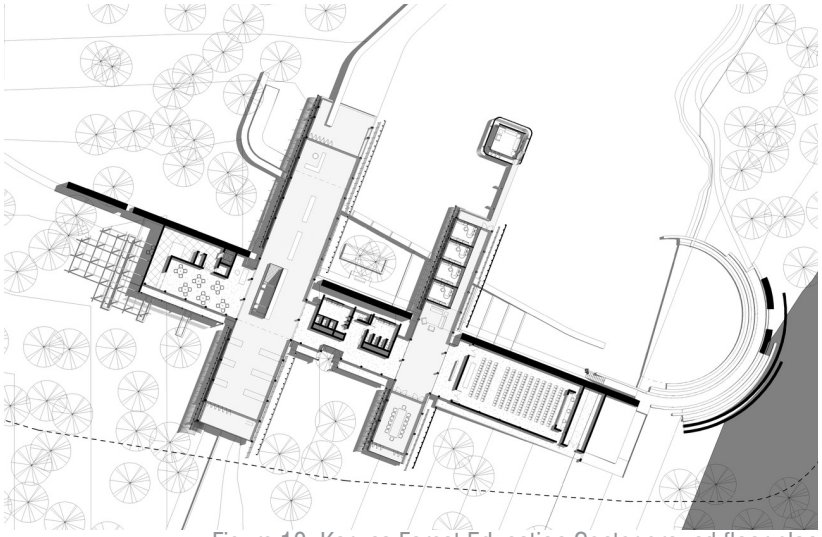


Figure 10: Karuna Forest Education Center ground floor plan

building physically lifts itself off the ground plane, creating a clear distinction that it is a human-made structure and should have as little impact on the forest floor as possible.

Programmatically, the building contains a permanent exhibition space, temporary exhibition spaces, an electronic based library, an auditorium, conference rooms, cafeteria, and gift shop. Outdoors, an amphitheater, viewing platforms, and processional walk define user experience.[20]

2.4B Bergen Visitor Center and Fish Market:

In Bergen, Norway's city center and port, this small, linear center strongly roots itself in its local place. Surrounded by some of the oldest buildings in the city, the center is predominantly composed of glass façades. Not only does this provide a sense of openness and public dominion, it sets the building apart from its surroundings, distinguishing

the building as unique in character. While the building stands out, it also strongly embeds itself in its context. Alongside the local fish market, the first floor of this facility is a retractable glass paneled expansion of the market linking the building with the surrounding fish industry. The colored wood panels lining the building's upper level echo a color pallet of nearby historic wood structures as well. The generous stair to the upper floor visitor center also makes a bold claim that the space is the public's to use freely.

2.4C Brooklyn Botanic Garden Visitor Center: Differing from the Bergen Visitor Center, programmatic space is barely noticeable at all, allowing landscape to dominate the architectural endeavor. This approach requires an already heavily landscaped site. In an urban location, urban street walls should have more guidance over the design than in a building of

Figure 11: Bergen Visitor Center perspective at the street

Figure 12: Bergen Visitor Center ground floor plan

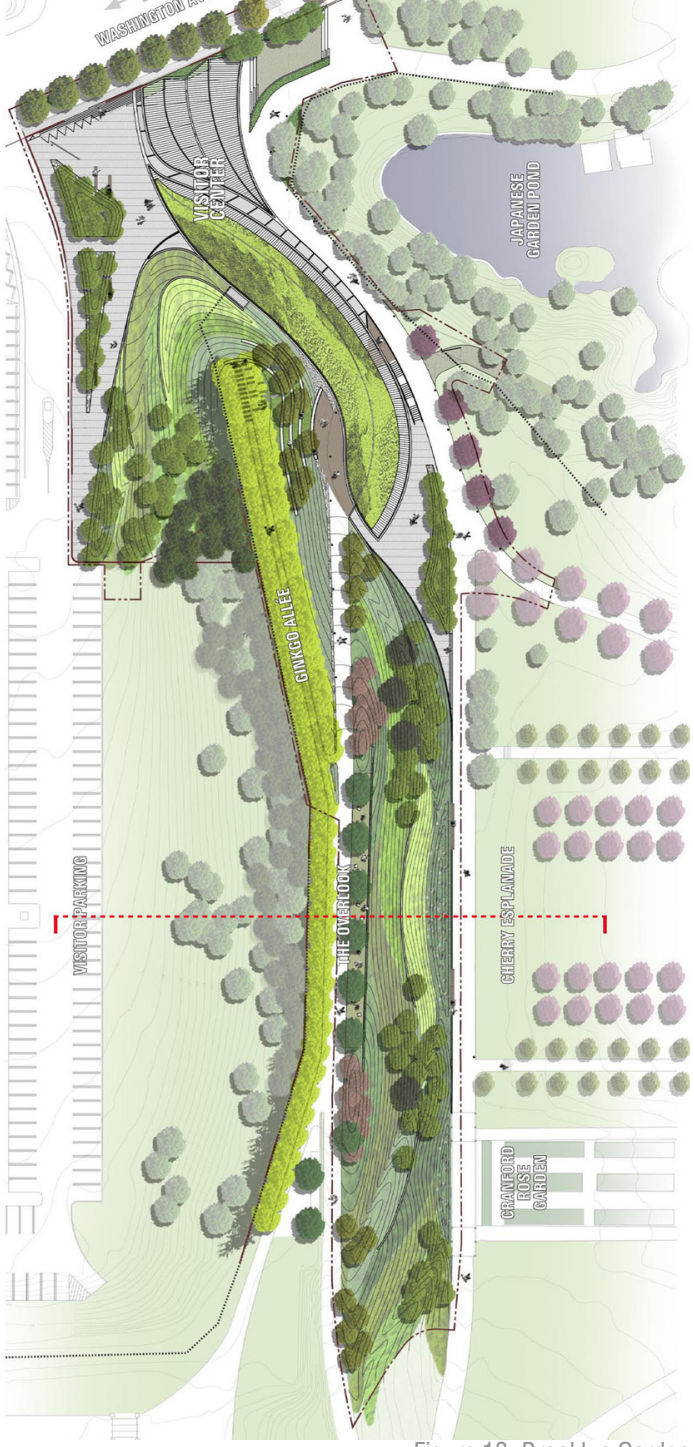


Figure 13: Brooklyn Garden Visitor Center site plan

Figure 14: Brooklyn Garden Visitor Center perspective

Figure 15: Brooklyn Garden Visitor Center aerial view

this approach. Here, the building becomes more landscape than architecture as it pulls away from the urban context into more of a park condition.

2.4D Craig Thomas Discovery and Visitor Center: Most visitor centers have extremely integrated design relationships with their surrounding natural environments. The Craig Thomas Discovery Center in Grand Tetons National Park embodies an historic national park aesthetic: rough-hewn log construction. The design creates a forest of columns within the building while its roof design resembles the local mountain range, drawing inspiration from the building's surroundings. In an urban visitor center in Seattle, balancing a design that connects the building with nature while rooting it in an urban setting should strongly guide the project.

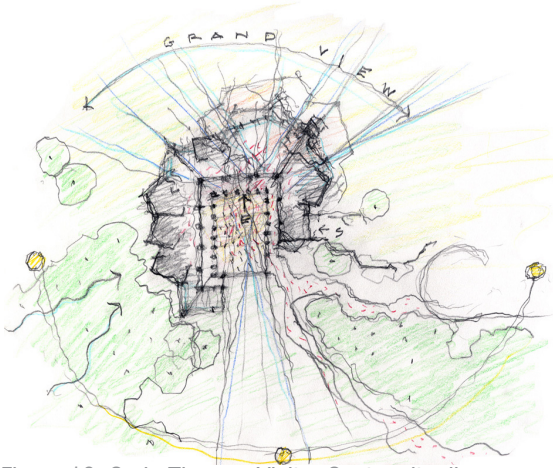


Figure 16: Craig Thomas Visitor Center site diagram


Figure 17: Craig Thomas Visitor Center perspective

2.4E Precedents Conclusions: The most common trend among all precedents is the strong connection between building and local site. Design strategies included matching locally harvested materials, mimicking natural scenery through visual devices, unifying building and landscape, distinguishing building from landscape, and referencing local history through design interpretation. Utilizing these visitor center design relationships in coordination with site and building concepts, a design approach for an urban Washington parks information center can be conceived.

03 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Thesis Goals: Improving park experiences and increasing informational services for all Washington parks and public lands regarding their political, environmental, and infrastructural issues is identified as the primary aim of this thesis. By making these improvements, Washington parks can increase their importance among citizens. The proposed information center would then become a representative for the parks, ultimately advocating for funding and support to maintain and grow the park system.

3.2 Conceptual Position: In order to achieve the goals established in this thesis, an urban information center for Washington parks can be conceived as both portal experience and informational resource. When these elements combine they create a larger gateway experience into the Washington park system. In this sense, a portal experience without content is merely a starting point along a path. A resource without a prominent entry experience is merely an archive. By combining the two concepts in an urban setting, this thesis proposes the creation of a centralized gateway hub focused on Washington parks awareness.

 Figure 18: Conceptual position diagram

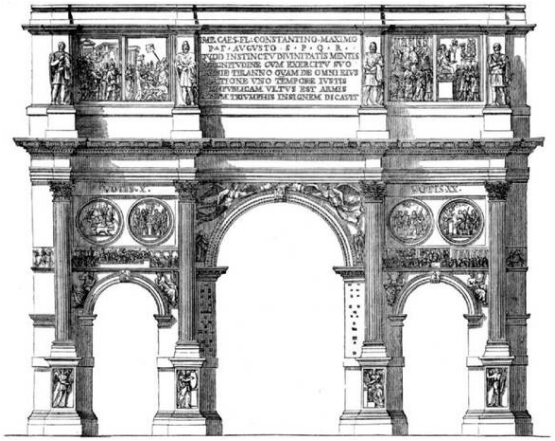


Figure 19: Architectural gateway: Arch of Constantine front elevation, Rome

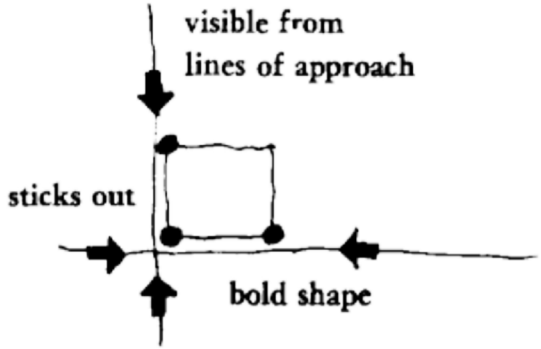


Figure 20: Fundamental entry design sketch

3.2A Portal Experience: Because a large amount of Washingtonians live in cities, an urban center for Washington parks could often be the first place of interaction between users and the parks themselves. In this scenario, the urban information center becomes the entry to Washington parks. Therefore, fully analyzing and understanding architectural concepts of entryways, portals, and gateways is paramount to realizing this thesis.

At their most basic function, portals and gateways mark locations along boundaries between spaces.[21] Gateways create separation between areas that allow people to understand where they are and where they are going. The boundary created between spaces intensifies user experience of those spaces. In this study, delineating what is nature or parks experience versus urban experience should be definitively divided and designed:

> Make the gateways solid elements, visible from every line of approach, enclosing the paths, punching a hole through a building, creating a bridge or a sharp change of level – but above all make them "things."…Whenever possible, emphasize the feeling of transition for the person passing through the gateway.[22]

These concepts are design elements that can foster a greater sense of spatial change as well as arrival.

Fundamentally, gateways respond to people and their desire for movement. For a gateway to be relevant and useful in an urban context, it must be accessible to the people using it. In this sense, the gateway is the most social aspect of a building. "Many emotions about social interactions are connected to spatial thresholds and doors. At doors, the state of

our life is changing from what we have done before to what we will do in the future… Further, the door is a space of activity, of movement of potential social contacts."[23] Here, gateways are places of meeting where people come together then move from one space in time to another. Through the correct implementation of gateway design elements, the proposed information center can encompass these concepts of meeting, activity, and movement.

Part of being the most socially distinguishable part of a building or entrance to a city, gateways must be visually distinguishable and stand out from their context. For a Washington parks information center in an urban context, the building should distinguish itself from its urban surrounding.

Additional to being visually distinguishable, a gateway is the point of operability where choices between transparency and openness contrast closed or impermeable characteristics.[24] Classical triumphal arches are traditional examples of public gateways, representing path and place simultaneously while maintaining a sense of openness and ease of passage. The proposed visitor entry should embody these classical principals through contemporary design elements.

3.2B Resource: Resources in the proposed information center begin with the necessary maps, travel safety information, accommodations information, food information, and any of the standard travel information needed to enjoy park visits. However, much of the informational resources currently available pertain to traditional methods of park visitation. Kayak and bicycle touring trips, for example, require large amounts of planning. Current Seattle visitor information locations provide little informational support for these types of excursion. By providing suggested routes, accommodation instructions, and staff onsite for fielding questions, the proposed information center can better support the wide range of recreational activities available at the parks.

Resource information also includes the public display of parks' political, infrastructural, environmental issues, and volunteering needs. Without public display of these topics, information is only available online where people are not made aware of their presence.

Lastly, as a means to further improve parks experience, improved access to environmental education information can be displayed

within the information center. Understanding large and small scale ecological factors can improve visitor experience of park landscapes. For instance, not all park goers are bird enthusiasts. However, if a visitor planning a park visit was shown that a certain type of bird may be visible at that park, he/she may begin looking for the specific bird. In doing so, they're recognizing a finer detail to the park landscape, ultimately enhancing their experience. With this type of environmental education information only currently available online, park goers are not presented the information, they must seek it out themselves. Thus, little information is conveyed to casual park visitors.

3.3 Design Process: By designing a gateway condition in an urban context with informational resources for the Washington parks, a place of simultaneous passage and arrival

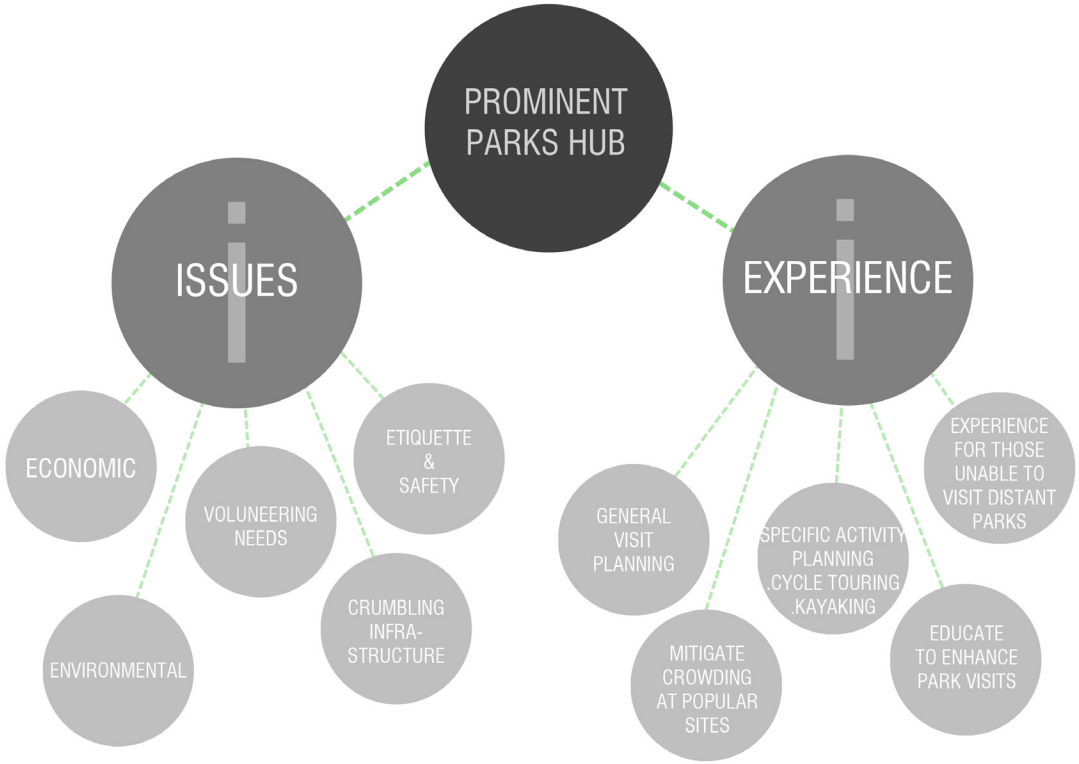


Figure 21: Parks issues information diagram

occurs. After establishing these large programmatic elements, a further analysis of specific program elements is necessary to identify how portal experience and resource information spaces should relate to one another. Then, integrating the program of spaces with the specific site is critical. As demonstrated through precedent studies, information/visitor centers are strongly tied to the sites they represent. After then locating the information center site, appropriate architectural design concepts of portal experience and resource can be correctly integrated.

3.4 Measures of Success: The architecture and landscape response should effectively demonstrate and exemplify Washington parks ideology as a conceptual gateway experience.

As a design exercise, the urban information center should remain visionary in nature while still conceptually providing Seattle residents, tourists, and Washington parks, an information center that improves park visitor experience while publicly displaying park issues. The final design should err on the side of "what if" but not be so conceptual that the idea is unbelievable.

Sound concepts of urban space planning should enhance the soon-to-be-built Field Operation's Seattle Waterfront Master Plan and demonstrate that by adding programmatic elements along the waterfront, user experience would enhance.

This thesis also aims to provide a discussion regarding the balance of digital and natural elements in American daily life. Many Washington park resources, maps, travel information, history, and current topics are already available through multiple park entity websites. The design should aim to merge digital technology interaction with architectural and landscape experience. Through design investigations, relationships between natural and digital elements should be effectively resolved.

3.5 Limitations: The site chosen for this urban information center is Seattle's downtown waterfront district. However, this district is in the midst of infrastructure, transportation network, and public space reconstruction on an immense scale. James Corner and Field Operations are currently redesigning Seattle's waterfront. The planning process is ongoing but many components of the design proposal have been accepted and approved by the city and its residents for construction. This plan, laid over Seattle's existing waterfront, will serve as the site context for the Washington parks information center. Part of the seawall and SR-99 tunnel are currently under construction. The proposed project

responds largely to what Seattle's waterfront will be, as well as what it has been in the past.

3.6 Methodology Conclusions: The proposed Washington parks information center should provide informational resources concerning the two primary categories of parks related issues: visitor experience issues and park system political, environmental, and infrastructural issues. Through principles of portal experience and informational resource, these issues can be addressed through the architectural implementation of an informational center on Seattle's waterfront.

Figure 22: Field Operations' Future Waterfront Master Plan

04 ESTABLISHING A PROGRAM

4.1 Program, Design Goals & Objectives

4.1A Democratic Ownership: As Washington parks are public lands, they retain a sense of democratic ownership. So too then should the proposed information center embody this sense of a shared collective. While program pieces vary in need of privacy, the entry to the building should be legible and embody a sense of openness. Spaces abutting the entry should be designed as public realm, allowing anyone to pass through the site, furthering a sense of citizen ownership. In general, large amounts of operable glazing elements will increase a sense of open entryway and public ownership. Many information and resource gathering tools in the project should be located in these public or semi-public realms. Here, any visitor can quickly gather information without needing to penetrate layers of program space.

4.1B Portal Experience and Resource: Organizing spaces between the two large programmatic elements of portal experience and resource center should define the building layout. While resources should be dispersed throughout the project, public areas adjacent to the building entry should have access to significant portions of the project's resource information. Simultaneously, more in-depth exhibits should occur in specific, less public museum-like spaces. In terms of resource, the built site can become a resource itself. Landscape elements can become teaching tools while also providing Washington park experiential qualities.

4.1C Responsiveness to the Site: Along Alaskan Way, the site consists of layers of city, nature, and history. The topographic nature of Seattle's waterfront can provide stacking of program elements that relate to the topographic nature of the site. The building design should engage these site characteristics while connecting to the greater region, framing views of Puget Sound, the Olympic Mountains, and Mt. Rainier.

4.2 Program of Spaces: The program of spaces begins as portal experience and resource center. From there, the resource center can be defined by a long-visit information center and short-visit information center. Short-visit information is the portion of program aimed at

engaging people that are simply passing by or are looking to enter the facility, gain the information needed and move on. This area should be dedicated to the most public areas of the site.

The long-visit information area provides spaces for lengthier educational experience. A large auditorium, display space, conference room, and offices provide space for lectures and meetings for groups of any size. This portion of the project should remain adjacent to the short-visit information area but remain semi-public in nature.

The portal experience center is an area dedicated to providing parks experience. Varying levels of public and private landscape experiences should occur in this zone as they do in parks themselves. These areas will function as a series of learning spaces to advance ecology awareness. With varying

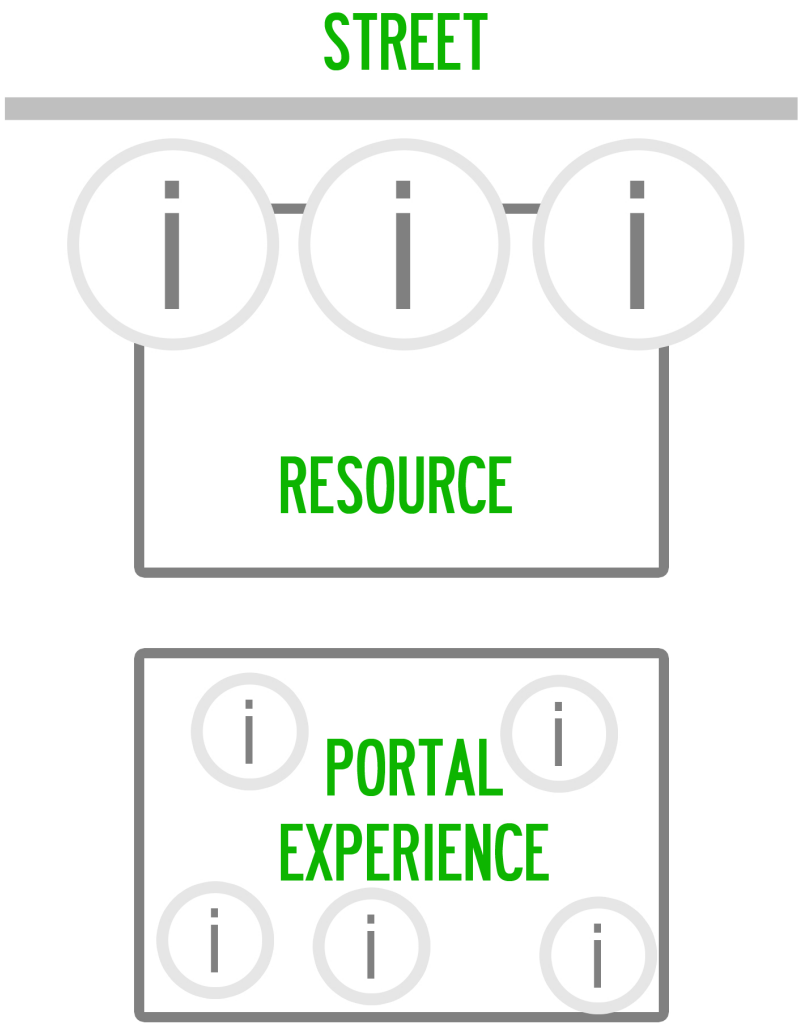


Figure 23: Basic program relationships diagram. “i” represents locations where direct information resource interaction occurs.

levels of privacy needed, this portal experience center should remain easily accessible at its entry point but distance itself from public areas of the site to create alternate private experiences. This portal experience center allows the information center, as a whole, to become a destination center where visitors can learn about and experience the variety of landscapes available in Washington State.

4.3 Program Conclusions: The program of spaces can be viewed as a series of completely public spaces varying in levels of privacy or solitary experience, ultimately echoing a sense of democratic ownership of the building. By allowing the design methodology to guide the program of spaces, a strong conceptual position to the building's design can be applied to the project site.

Service Desk..... 400 sqft
Coffee Bar..... 200 sqft
Paper Media..... 600 sqft
Digital Display Boards..... 300 sqft
Digital Media..... 200 sqft
Travel Library..... 700 sqft
Temporary Exhibit..... 700 sqft
Restrooms..... 400 sqft
Mechanical..... 1,000 sqft
Storage..... 800 sqft
Offices (2)..... 250 sqft
Conference Room..... 300 sqft
Classrooms..... 1,000 sqft
Auditorium..... 1,500 sqft

Portal Experience Exhibits..... 10,000 sqft
Park Systems Exhibits..... 4,000 sqft
Gallery/Event Space..... 2,000 sqft
Overlook Terrace..... 300 sqft

 Figure 24: Program List

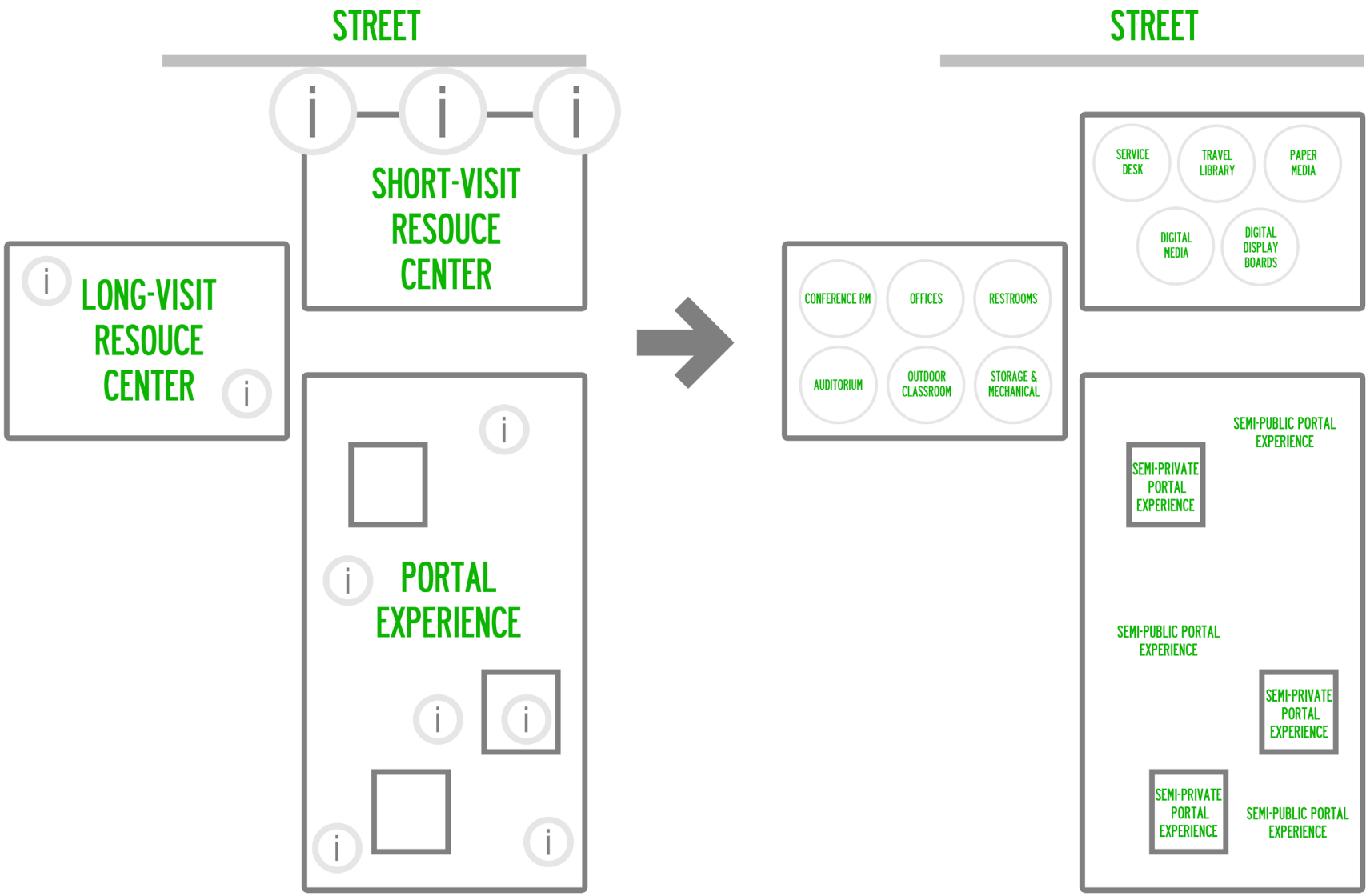
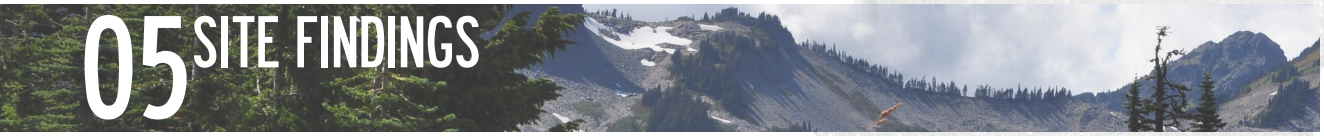


Figure 25: Advanced Program Relationships Diagrams

05 SITE FINDINGS



5.1 Site Analysis

5.1A Site Selection and History: This thesis supports Washington parks' need for informational resources available where people live and work. By locating this project in an urban setting, more citizens can be exposed to Washington parks information. Downtown Seattle is an ideal location for this project where an information center could also benefit from Seattle's downtown tourism industry.

As a port city, Seattle's waterfront reflects the primary objectives of this thesis; the waterfront is both a portal to the city and a resource for public entertainment, education, business, industry, and natural beauty.

Historically, the port of Seattle has long been the center of the city. Focused on industry since the city's beginnings in 1851, timber logs were shipped from what is now Alaskan Way out of Puget Sound.[25] At this time, the downtown waterfront looked drastically different from what it does now. Much of the area consisted of mud flats, marshes, beaches, and waterfront. Between 1916 and 1936 Seattle built its still functioning sea wall to accommodate large shipping vessels, establishing the city as a major trade port to San Francisco, Alaska, and the Far East.[26] Today, any trace of the original landscape has been completely buried.

 Figure 26: Aerial Map of Seattle

Figure 27: Union Street at the waterfront circa 1935


Figure 28: Pier 58 & Waterfront Park, present day


Figure 29: Aerial rendering of Field Operations' future Waterfront Park

After the seawall was installed, old wooden streets were replaced and paved with concrete. Cars, trucks, trains, and ships all met at Alaskan Way, creating a large amount of traffic and congestion. By 1950, construction had begun on the new SR-99 viaduct, allowing vehicular traffic to bypass congestion along Alaskan Way.[27] At that time, Seattle's waterfront was a place of industry where a deep harbor port meant prosperity for a city. While waterfront property has long been a commodity as a connection to nature and scenic views, "dockland areas gradually became larger and larger as vast railway terminals were constructed on waterfronts to transport incoming ship freight. In addition, huge warehouses were also built to store the vast amounts of goods that flowed into port cities. This resulted in many cities losing their waterfronts as public spaces."[28] By the 1960's most of the shipping industry in Seattle moved south of Alaskan Way, leaving the viaduct a barrier between the city and its waterfront.[29] After the Nisqually earthquake in 2001, the viaduct and aging seawall were discovered to be structurally deficient in the event of another earthquake.[30] Today, a new seawall and underground SR-99 tunnel is scheduled for completion in 2016. These efforts provide a new opportunity to relink downtown Seattle back to its waterfront.

In 2010 James Corner and Field Operations Studio were hired by the City of Seattle to re-envision Seattle's waterfront. While specific aspects of the plan continue to change, an extensive bike and pedestrian path will stretch the length of the waterfront from Washington Street to Piers 62 and 63 with a variety of event spaces, parks, and pedestrian experiences lining the path.

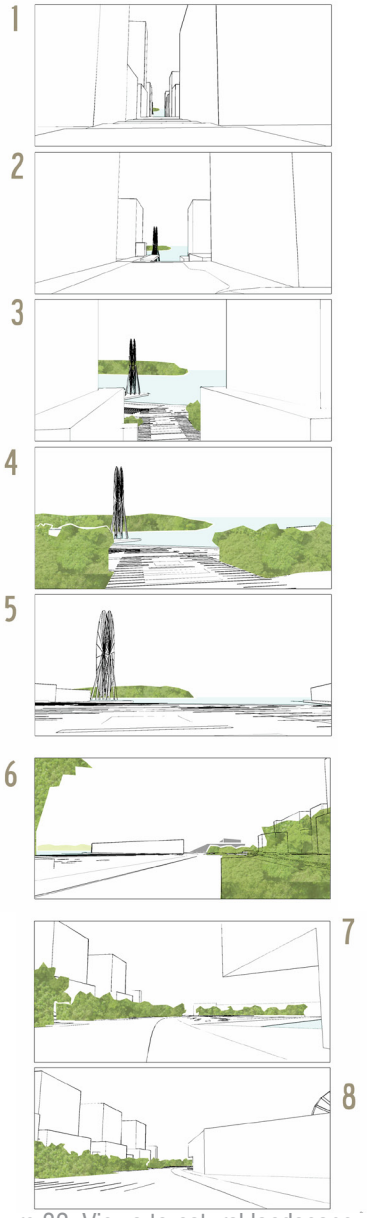


Figure 32: Views to natural landscape from the city to the waterfront

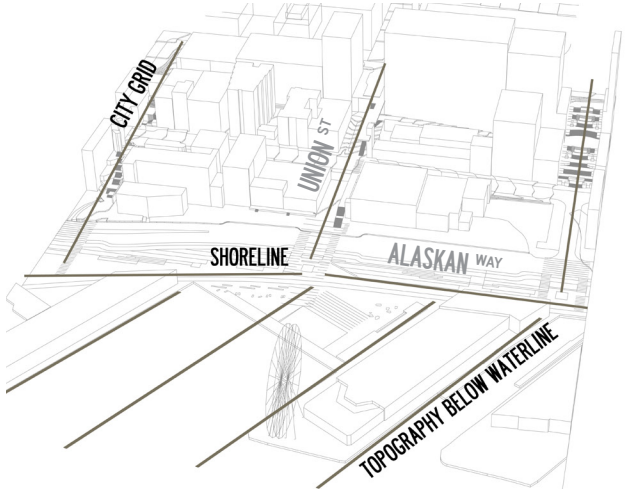


Figure 30: Site geometries diagram

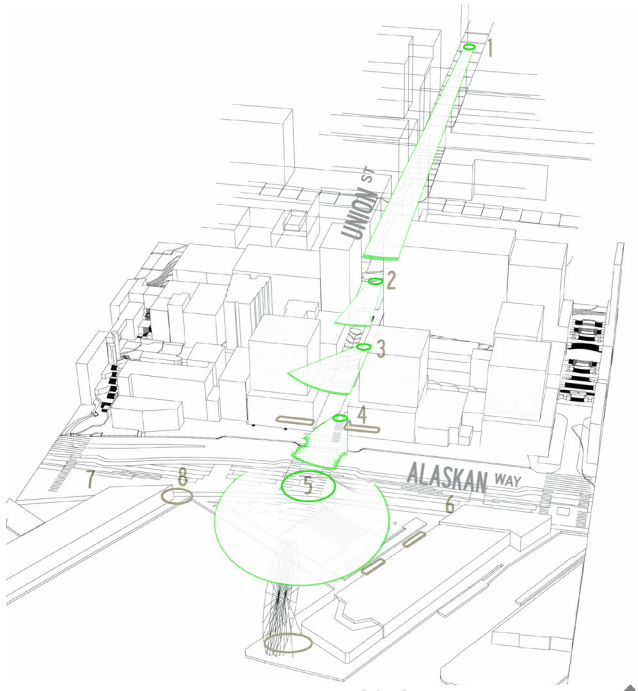


Figure 31: Site views diagram

Currently recognized as the future of the Seattle waterfront, Field Operations' Master Plan, the upgraded seawall, and underground SR-99 tunnel will serve as accepted site conditions for the Washington parks information center.

5.1B Building Site: More specifically, this thesis postulates that the termination of Union Street at Alaskan Way could greatly benefit from a catalytic design project. From deep within the city center, Union Street provides views down to the waterfront and out to Puget Sound and the Olympic Mountain Range. This contrast of city to natural landscape scale provides a strong visual corridor to the waterfront at the end of Union Street.

In Field Operations' Master Plan, a large public plaza will mark the end of Union Street and become a central hub for the new

waterfront design. Through many public meetings, the city of Seattle has defined this plaza as a place for a variety of urban space activities, from markets, to playgrounds, to concert venues. This plaza will serve as a central waterfront plaza for all of Seattle. The plaza should remain a critical urban element in the design of the parks information center.

However, the currently planned plaza proposes little in the way of programmatic activity. The triangular shaped site depicts all three sides lined by landscape elements. The parks information center should provide architectural edges to the plaza that encourages visitation of residents and tourists, thus activating the adjacent plaza.

Figure 33: Aerial rendering of Field Operations' future Waterfront Park

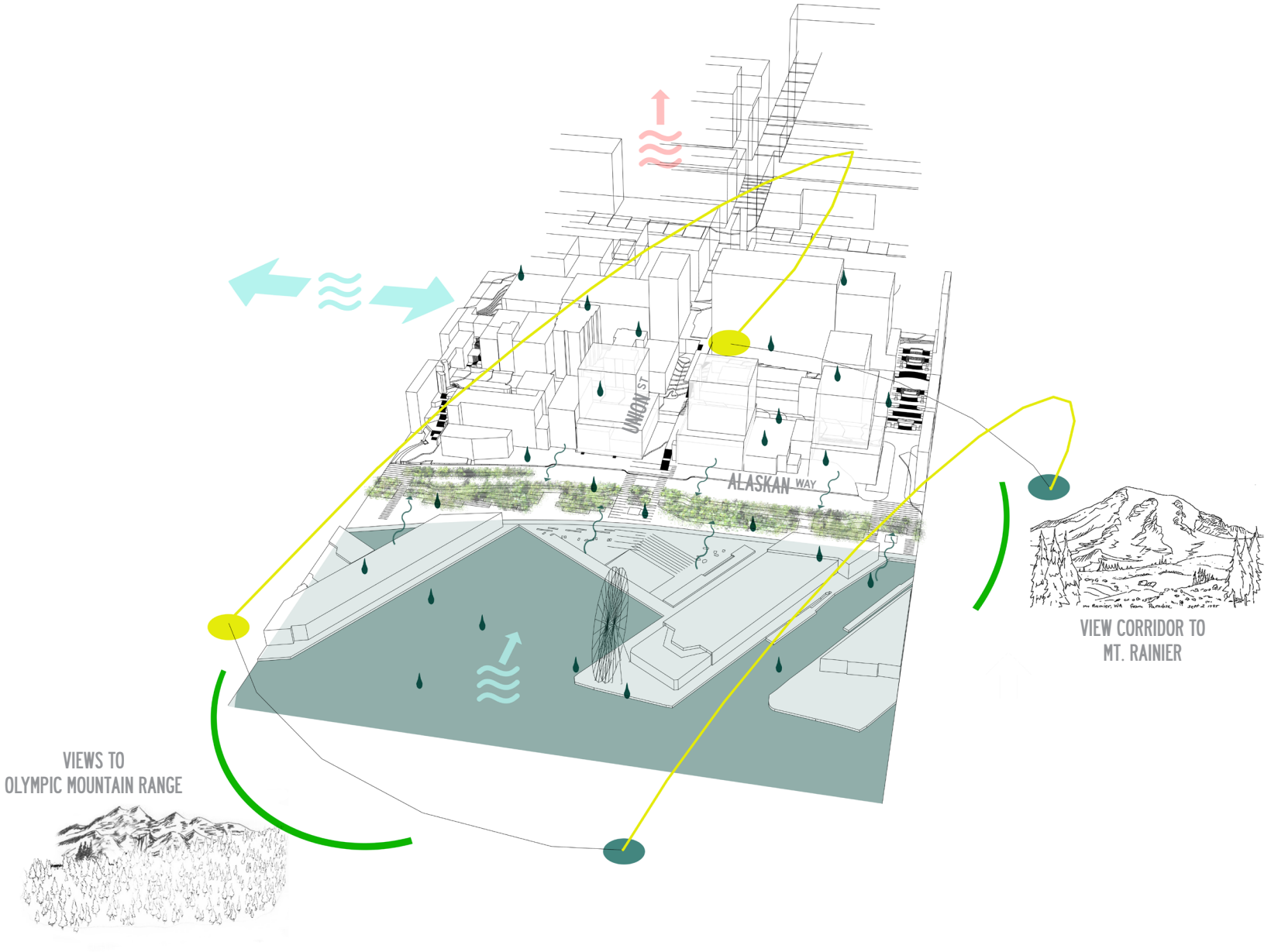


 Figure 34: Environmental and experiential site characteristics diagram

5.1C People: Seattle's central waterfront attracts large numbers of pedestrian visitors already and with the removal of the SR-99 bridge, even more are expected. While street parking is available, the highly pedestrianized nature of the site should strongly influence the design of the parks information center. With many businesses along the waterfront and housing complexes between the waterfront and business sector of the city, many Seattle residents use this portion of the city. As previously state, the waterfront is also heavily influenced by tourism. The parks information center should address the need for informational support for highly experienced Washington park goers as well as new visitors and tourists.

5.2 Site Goals and Objectives

5.2A Create Democratic Ownership: To create an urban center for Washington parks, the project must accurately identify and convey a sense of democratically owned and experienced space. By integrating a public plaza that responds to the parks building, a sense of public space is shared between the urban realm and information center.

5.2C Responsiveness to Site: A Washington park provides direct place experience with its own site and context; these experiences are specifically why visitors attend the parks. The parks information center should directly relate to the waterfront, the site's sloping topography, its natural history, and/or its viaduct history. As an information center representing the Washington parks, the center should also reference the parks themselves. Visitors should immediately understand and engage all of these references upon entering and moving through the site.

5.3 Site Analysis Conclusions: Site characteristics primarily include the Union Street connector path, North/South pedestrian path along Alaskan Way, Elliott Bay, park plaza, existing wharf vernacular, and views to the natural landscape beyond. In designing the information center, strong emphasis should be placed on relationships with the natural landscape and water while recognizing the city's influence on the site.

06 PRELIMINARY APPROACHES

6.1 Rendered Visualization: The design process began by graphically visualizing the activities, types of spaces, materiality, and general architectural character of a portion of the to-be-designed project.

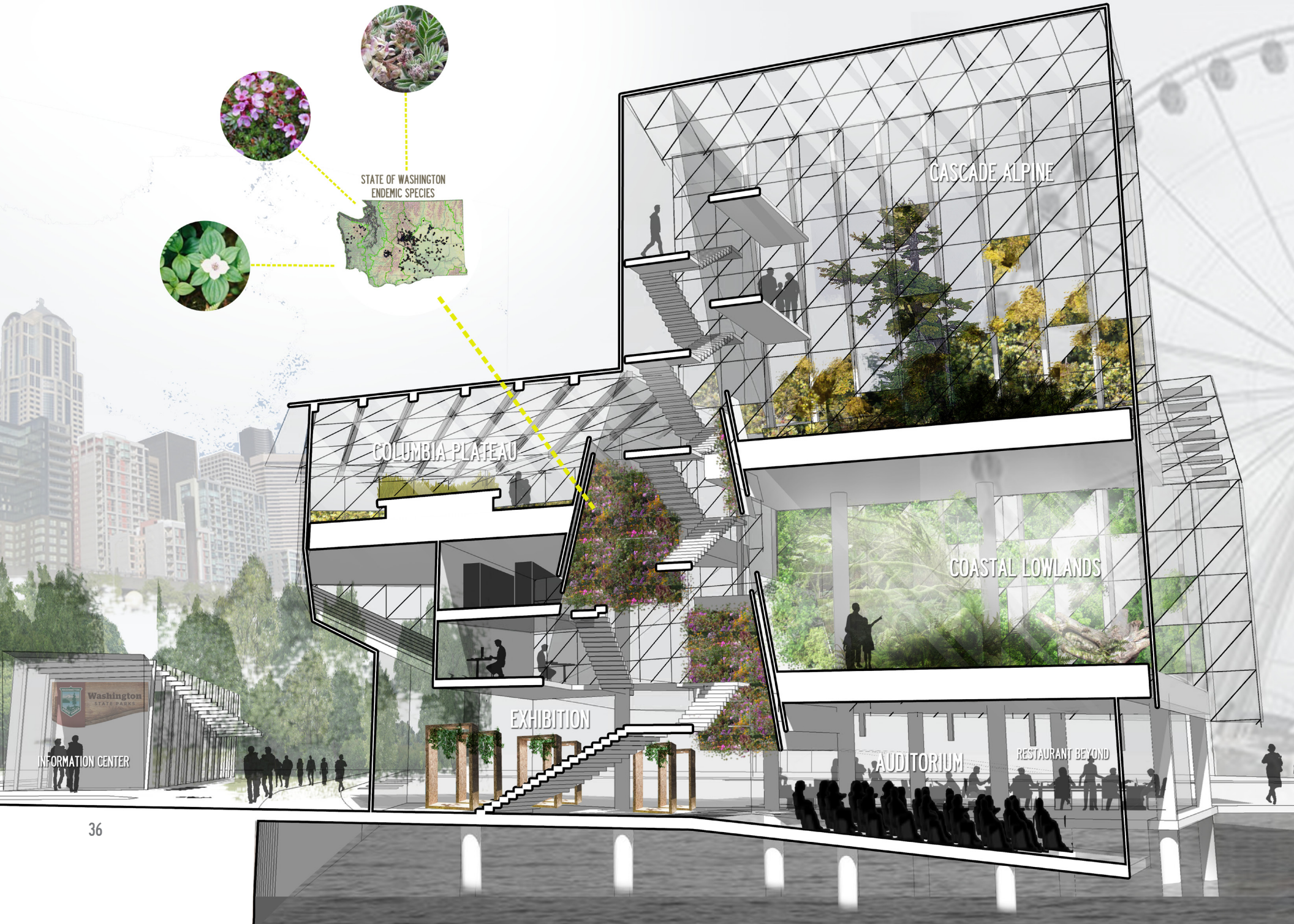
Here, a visualization of the project began with a connection to nature. Composed fragments of natural landscapes are framed by architectural elements allowing the viewer to appreciate the natural beauty of a composition of trees and groundcover. Also visualized is a connection to the larger landscape abound, where sunlight pierces a skylight and windows.

User experience is expressed through ideas of long versus short-stay activities. A travel library is shown as a place away from the bustle of a more active first floor where visitors can quietly discover places to visit. At the ground level below, passers-by can quickly pick up any reference material needed.

In terms of informational resources, both digital and conventional print materials are represented. A large digital display suggests that much of the information regarding Washington parks is still online but if this information were displayed publically, passers-by could take more interest. These public digital displays would also create a place where social media photos and events are displayed, offering a greater personal connection to the parks.

Figure 35: Interior rendering of preliminary building concept

Figure 36: Sectional perspective rendering of potential preliminary building approach



6.2 Sectional Perspective: In this graphic representation of a potential information center, experience of Washington landscapes is not thought of as singular natural elements in a building, but entire environmental biomes. This image demonstrates three major categorical biomes in the state of Washington: Coastal Range Forest, Columbia Plateau, and Alpine Regions.

Relationship of landscape to architectural environment is treated differently here where, in a glazed environment, the sheer size of the constructed biomes begin to invoke a feeling of presence in that environment. However, at this size, with large amounts of glazing needed, one is constantly reminded of their location in the city.

This visualization also delineates earth from architecture where large concrete piers extend up into the building, supporting large concrete floors to retain planting soil. Contrasting this sense of heaviness, a light and glassy skin wraps the biome environments.

6.3 Conclusions: The architectural visualization exercises were successful in graphically representing scales of landscape elements designed into a building. Any plantings to be incorporated in the design of a parks information center must have adequate sunlight and planter depth to accommodate root-ball thicknesses. As these images identified, the size of designed natural landscapes can greatly influence the architectural response of the project in terms of scale, materiality, and structural needs.

07 FINAL RESPONSE

7.1 Site Design: There are six primary design factors that should influence the parks information center at this site: water, the Union Street connector path, North/South pedestrian path along Alaskan Way, the public plaza, views to the natural landscape, and the existing wharf vernacular architectural style. In beginning the design of the site, influencing pedestrians' view as they proceed down Union Street was a primary design objective. As pedestrians walk down Union Street from the city center, views of Elliott Bay, the Puget Sound, and the Olympic Mountains interrupt their experience. As they approach the waterfront, the parks information center appears, providing a visual link between the building and the natural elements beyond.

7.1A Built Response: Upon crossing Alaskan Way, the parks information center provides an abrupt end to Union Street and becomes a terminating focal point during one's progression to the waterfront. By terminating Union Street into a building, the casual pedestrian is forced to either enter the building or make their way around the building to reach the water's edge. By disallowing a view to Elliott Bay upon immediately entering the waterfront pedestrian zone, pedestrians are encouraged to walk around the building and through the public plaza to reach the grand view west. This not only offers an experience of exploration but activates the public plaza by rewarding pedestrians with a view at the end of the plaza.

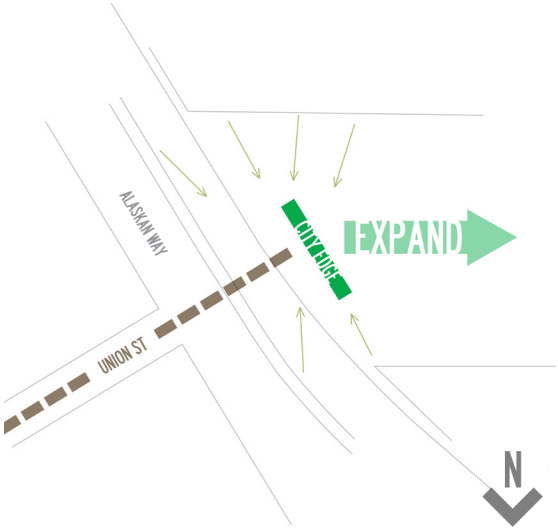


Figure 37: Final site design approach diagram

Figure 38: Rendered site plan

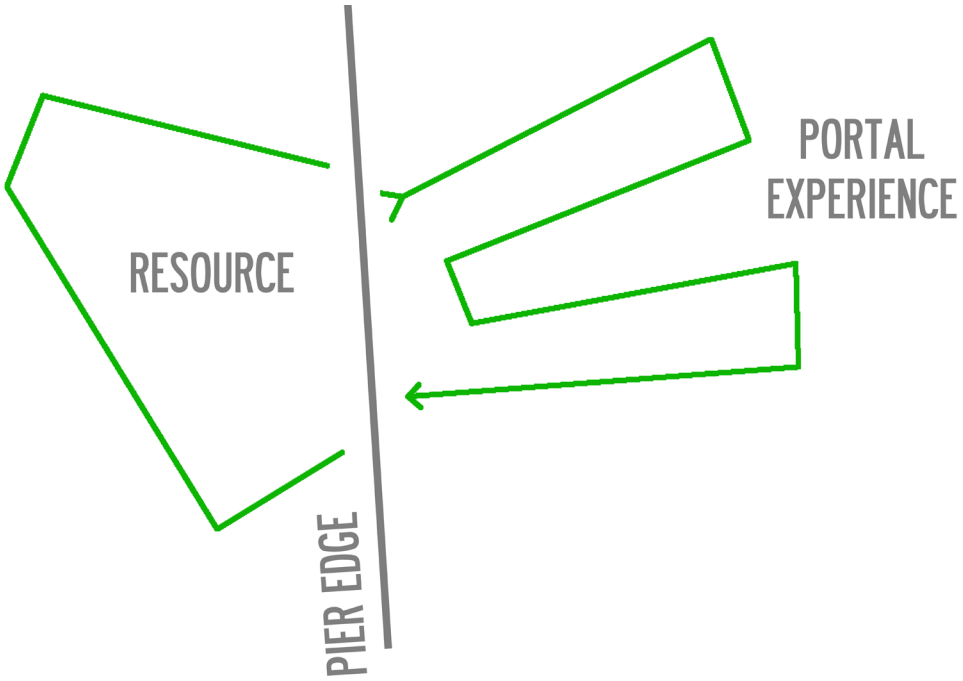
As pedestrians approach the end of the plaza, the parks information center visually extends toward the water. This provides views into the building, revealing a diverse landscape within the building complex, furthering a sense of exploration for the visitor.

7.1B Architectural Edges: By siting the project adjacent to the plaza, a critical architectural street edge is gained by the plaza. To further define its edges, a retail location is placed at its northeast corner, providing another place where people can linger around the plaza, aiding in its activation. As this retail location is on public land, the building can be owned and operated by Washington parks, providing leasable space for additional parks income.

7.1C Landscape Response: The Field Operations Master Plan provides an abundance of densely landscaped park spaces along the

 Figure 39: Approach from pedestrian bridge at Western Avenue and Union Street

Figure 40: Perspective view looking northwest. A glassy object in space, the building provides an architectural edge to the public plaza while providing an inviting entry along the pedestrian path. At the building's primary entrance to the right, the lowered entry point creates a portal experience for visitors.



waterfront pedestrian path. To increase visual presence of the parks information center, adjacent landscape elements should differentiate from that of the overall master plan. By providing a landscape of low grasses, the tree-filled master plan opens up to the large plaza and parks information center. This openness allows the information center to prominently stand separate from the master plan design, providing a unique experience along the master plan's path, ultimately creating a sense of destination for the parks information center.

7.1D Site Conclusions: By creating a figural object along the waterfront and minimizing the size and complexity of the surrounding landscape, the parks information center distinguishes itself from the surrounding context of pier buildings.

7.2 Building Design: As previously established, a successful gateway experience to Washington parks includes the interplay between portal experience and informational resources. The first interpretation of portal experiences begins at the entry to the building. A visually open, glazed entrance is topped by the mass of the building. This mass, conceptually wrapped in a wooden screen, folds into the building at the en-

 Figure 41: Building concept diagram

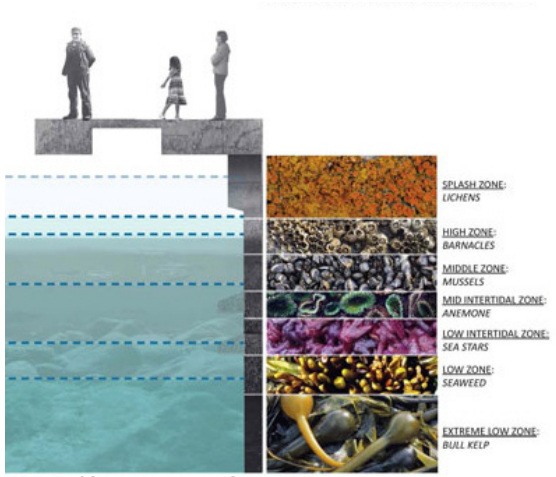


Figure 42: Waterfront Seattle diagrammatic section at seawall

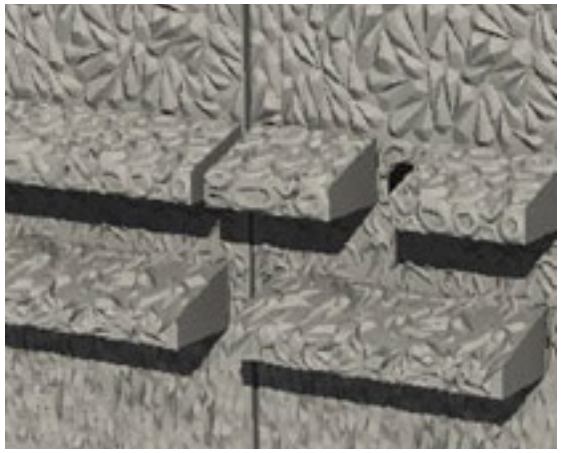


Figure 43: Waterfront Seattle seawall rendering

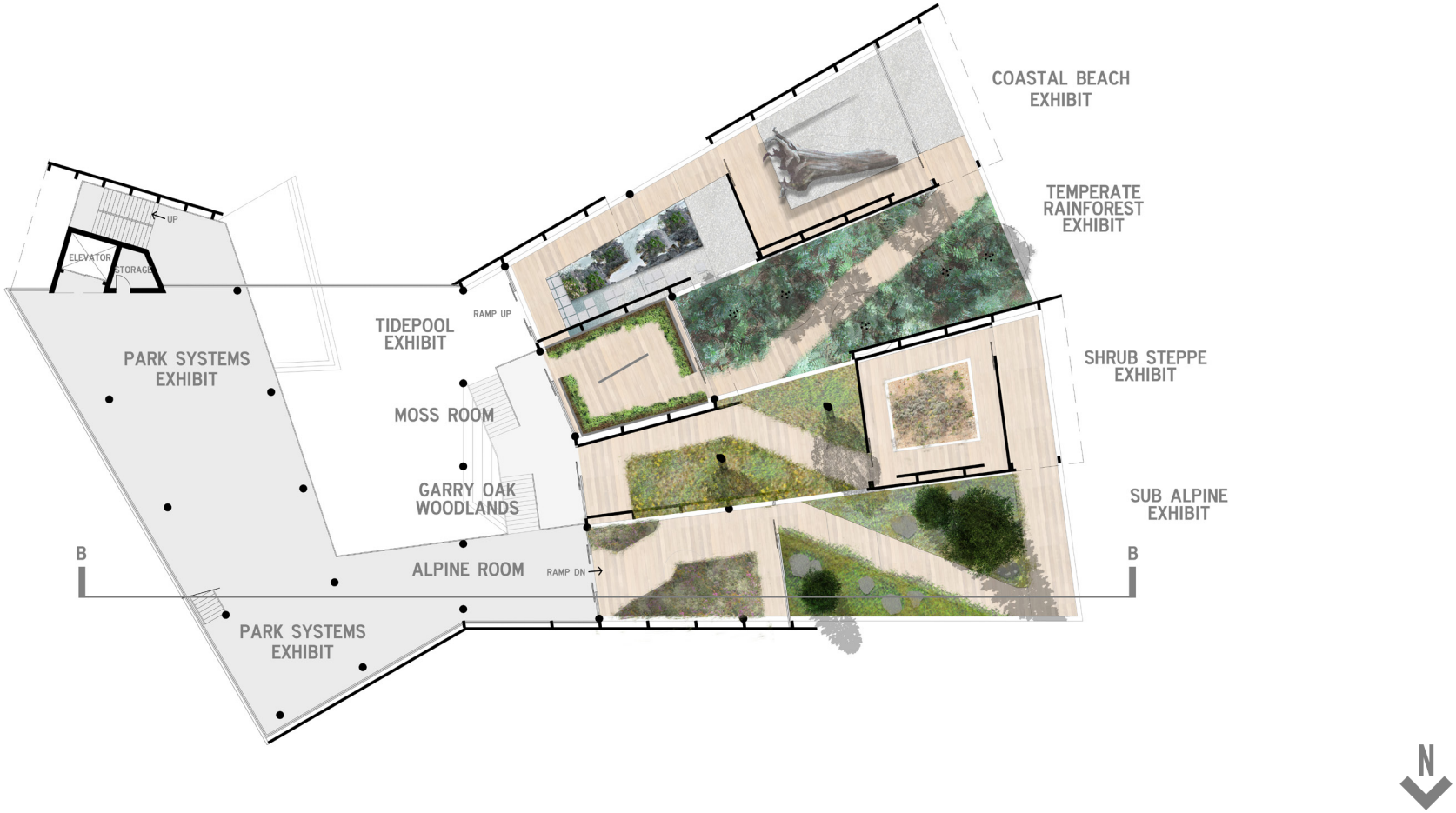
try creating a sense of compression upon entering. Once inside, the wood screen soffit lifts toward the central lobby, opening visitors into the Washington parks realm (see Figure 49).

7.2A Resource Center Concept: Once in the central lobby, defining resource from portal experience becomes the primary programmatic organization of the building. In defining this relationship, clueing into the site's connection to natural elements became the starting point for the design. By delineating the water's edge and providing differing programmatic experiences on either side, a greater sense of the water's edge can be felt by visitors. Here, park resources and larger scale regional information are located toward the city. These programmatic pieces relate to the city because they involve visitor interaction with other people and the methods or tools in which humans engage with parks and the natural environment. This includes the park system's history, politics, human infrastructural issues, and any physical park documents including maps, brochures, etc. This portion of the program also occupies the most public portions of the site, allowing visitors to engage with parks information immediately upon arrival.

7.2B Portal Experience Concept: With the primary resource center conceptually on land and adjacent to downtown Seattle, the portal experience portion of the design responds differently, instead extending out over water. Parks experience is broadly about exiting urban life to experience nature. Extending the portal experience portion of the design over the water mimics this fundamental parks experience while intending to provide some separation from urban experience within the information center itself.

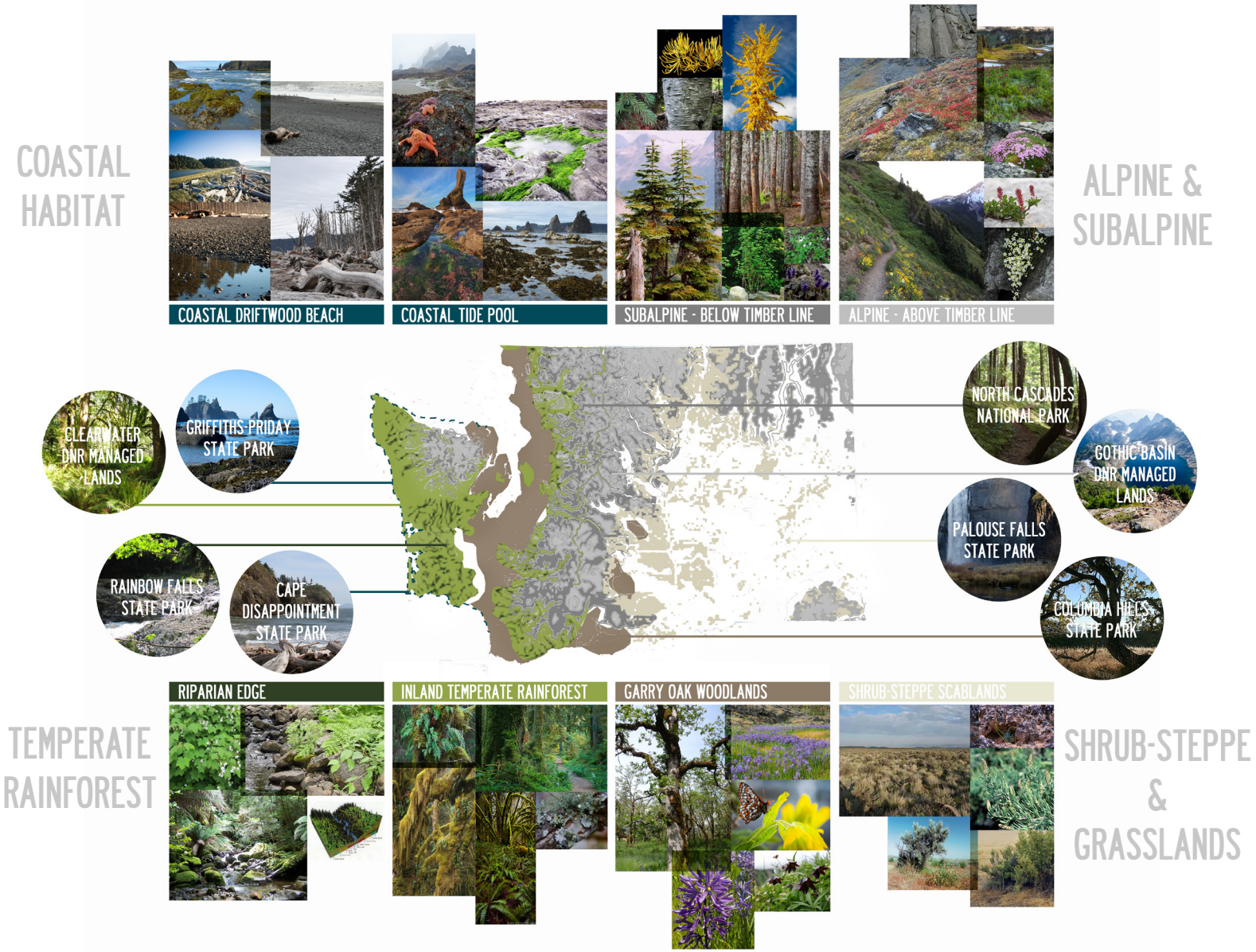
7.2C Resource Center: This portion of the project can be further broken into categories based on types of visitors at the center. To address short-visit users, a centrally located service desk, coffee shop, park maps and pamphlets, computer access, and digital display walls are all adjacent to the primary entrances of the building. This puts the act of gaining information to the parks for visitation at the most public portion of the project; encouraging this activity.

 Figure 44: Washington parks information center ground floor plan

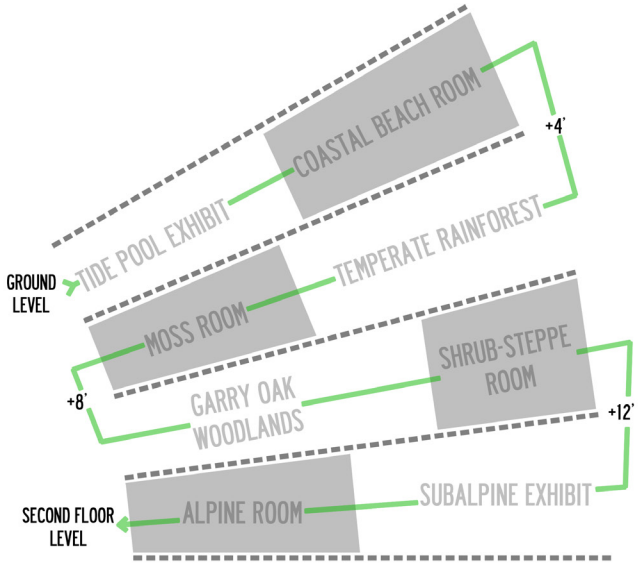


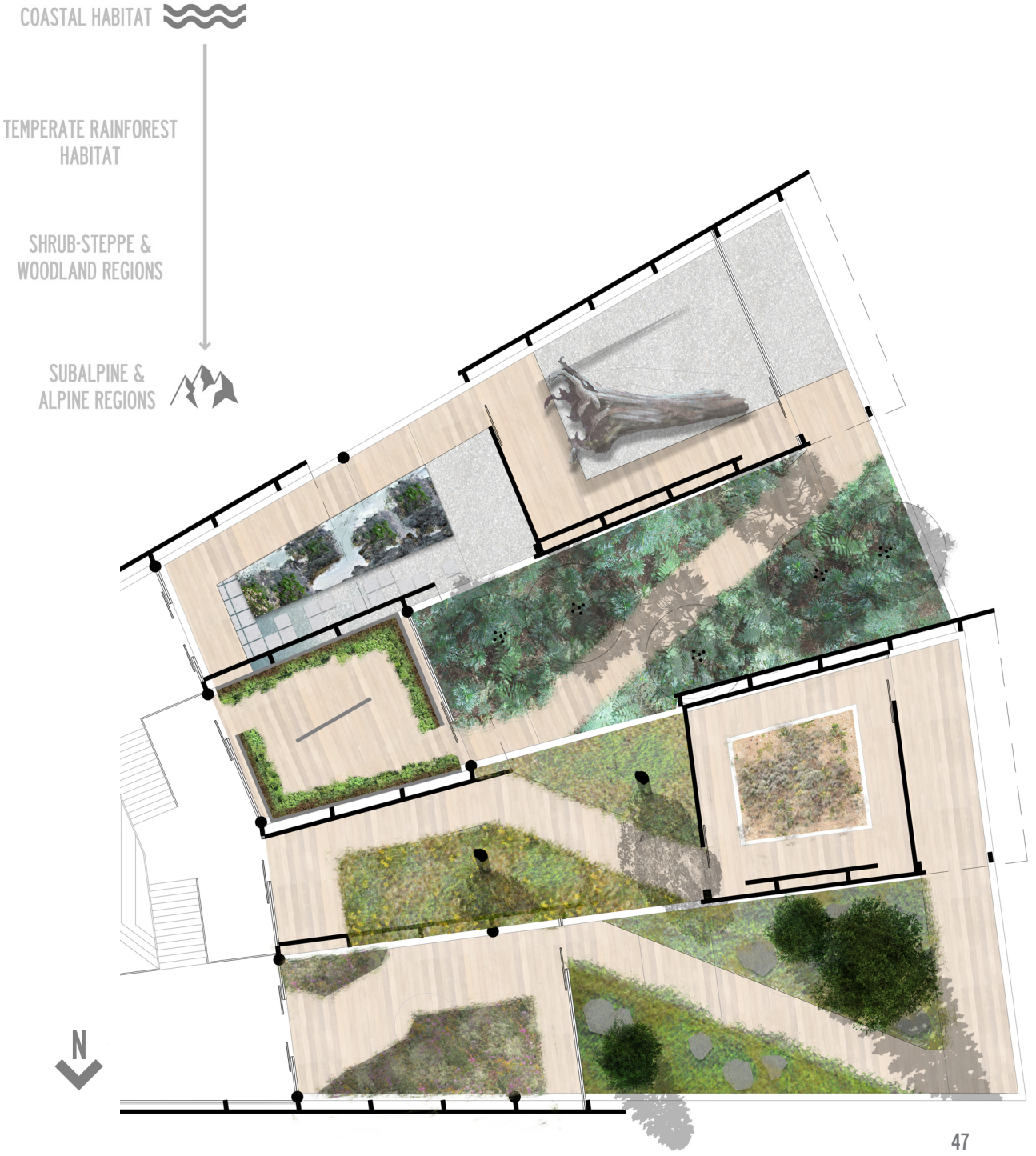
Long-visit information is provided along the north edge of the building. Along with various storage and mechanical uses, this portion of the project houses amenities for various park program uses. Here, the long bar of program is terminated by an auditorium space with a dramatic view to Puget Sound. Flanking the building to the North is a path leading down to a floating outdoor classroom space. From this platform, one can walk to the seawall and view the various types of barnacles, mussels, and kelp attached to the soon-to-be implemented seawall (see Figures 42 and 43).

Figure 45: Washington parks information center second floor plan



46 Figure 46: Washington ecological zones diagram





Above, Figure 47: Portal experience exhibit diagram
Right, Figure 48: Partial enlarged second floor plan

Largely, the ground floor resource center is designed to be open and inviting, providing maximum visual connection to the parks through digital and analog display methods. By providing these resources along the pedestrian street, the information center can become a concentrated place of activity and excitement about the parks.

7.2D Portal Experience Path: In designing the portal experience portion of the project, the concept originated with the sensation of hiking along a path. In this design concept, the path developed into a series of switchbacks, gradually elevating visitors along the way. By the end of the path, enough elevation is gained for the long-visit information portion of the design to fit underneath the path.

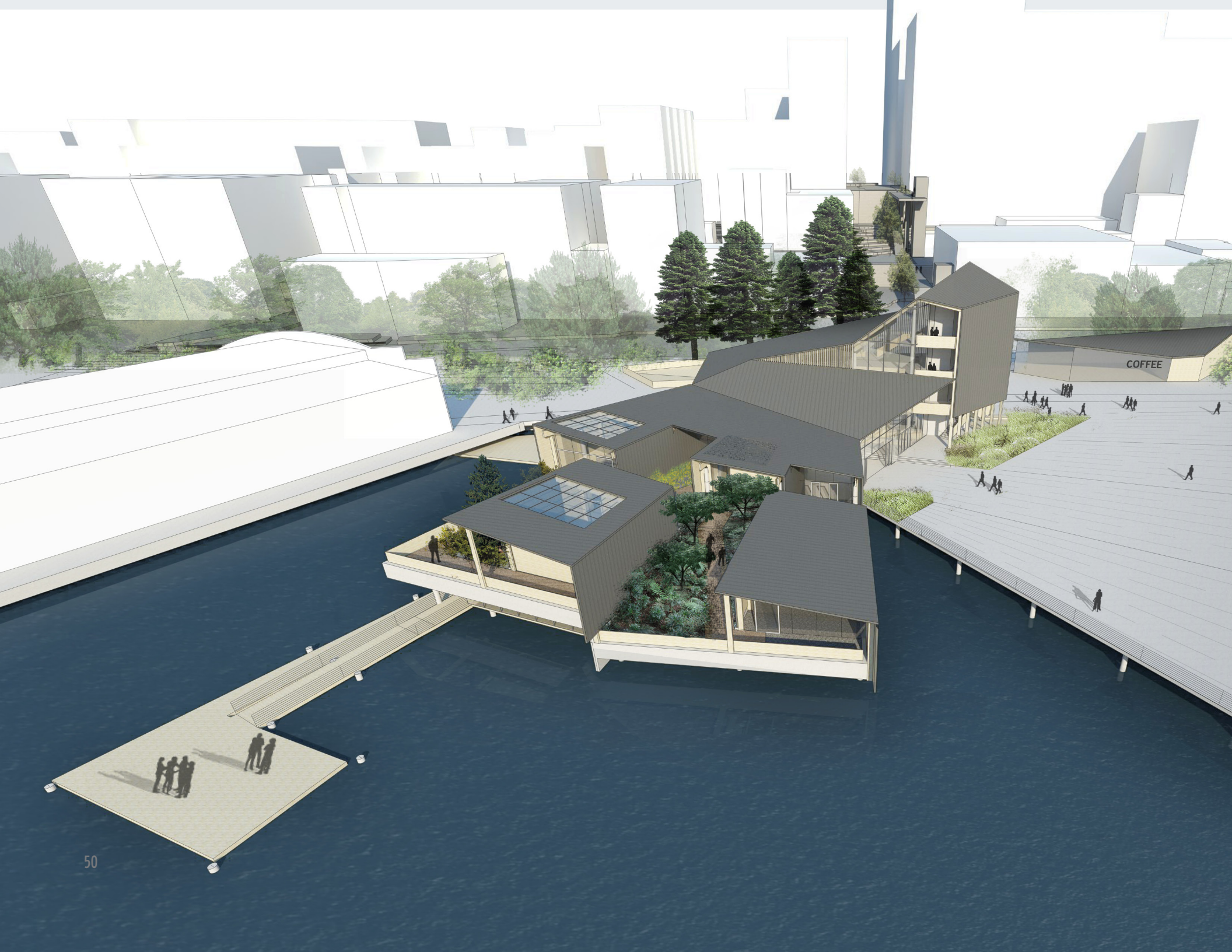
The path is divided into four primary ecological zones: coastal habitat, temperate rainforest, shrub-steppe and grassland, and subalpine and alpine regions (see Figure 46). Along each of these legs of the path, a transition of scales occurs. Each leg includes an interior and exterior space. In each of the interior spaces, a juxtaposition of architectural and natural landscape scale occurs. Here, fragments of natural

 Figure 49: Building Section A. See ground floor plan for cut location

landscapes are isolated in each of the rooms (see figures 47 and 48). Washington parks provide some of the most sublimely beautiful large scale landscapes on Earth. However, natural beauty in Washington parks can also be experienced at a much smaller scale. By isolating parts of the landscape in each of the rooms, this smaller scale beauty can be showcased, educating visitors and enhancing their next park visit.

The various landscape experiences offer points of ecological education along the path. Traditional placard displays are integrated along the path to provide ecological information. Additionally, small digital displays (graphically represented as a circled “i”) are utilized as well to provide nodes along the path where park locations coordinating with the displayed ecological information can be viewed. It is intended that these digital touch-display points can provide a wealth of informational knowledge available online as well as highlighted points of interest involving the specific environmental zone being viewed. By providing multiple small digital nodes, interaction with digital devices mimics society’s current relationship with technology. Here, visitors can immediately download park maps and ecological information to their personal

Figure 50: Building Section B. See second floor plan for cut location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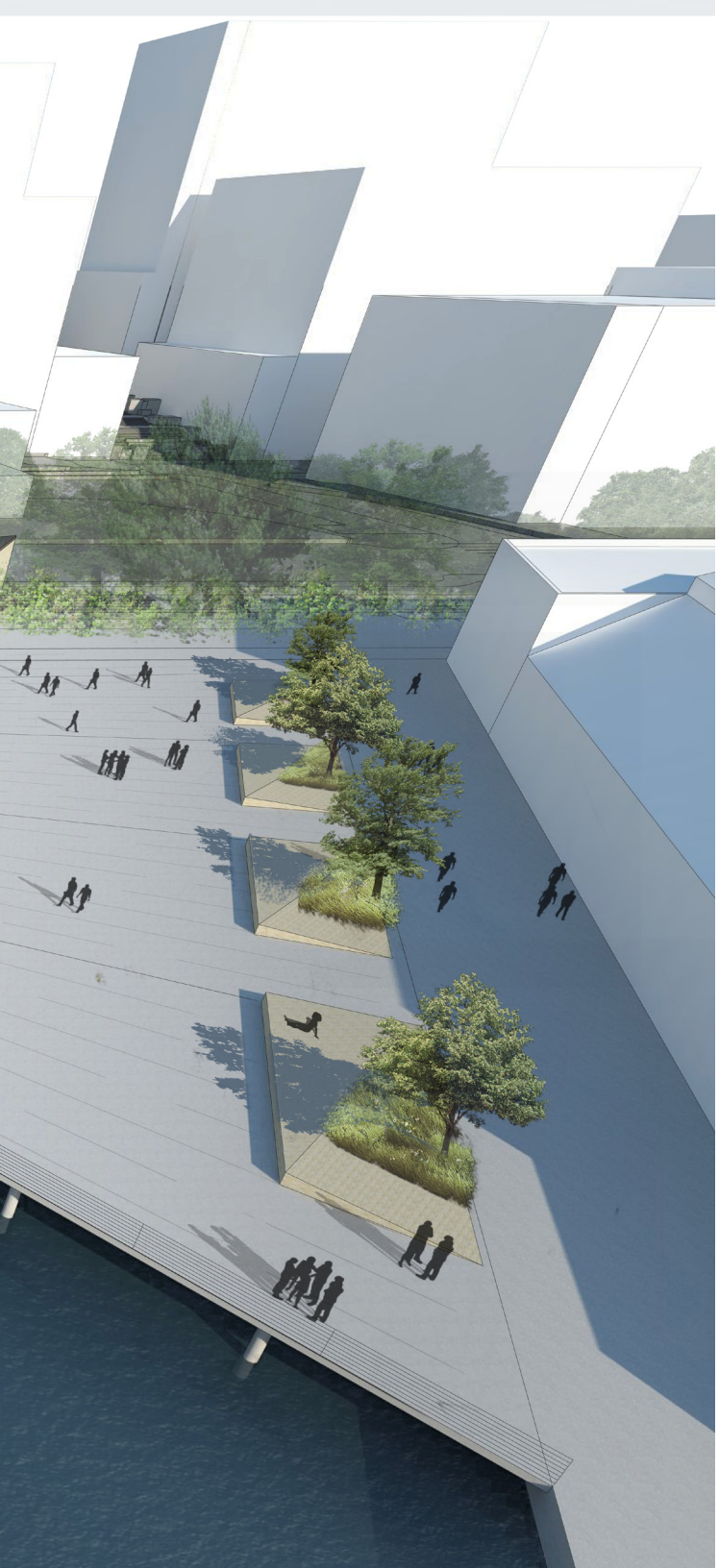


devices while they're experiencing the path. Ecological information is often difficult to locate online. By linking this information with the path, visitors can casually engage the information in a park setting, away from the cumbersome nature of researching data online.

Upon completing the path's journey, the visitor arrives back in the building and into the park systems exhibit on the second level of the building. Here, visitors are provided information about the system in general, it's history, political issues, funding issues, infrastructural issues, and volunteering needs. By providing this series of information toward the end of the path, visitors are left with the means to act for their parks.

After the park systems exhibit, the path continues up to the third floor, past a gallery and event space. This room provides the park systems a place for donation events and rental opportunities; another means for revenue generation.

The path then continues up to its destination, a lookout terrace facing west to the horizon, western sunset, Olympic mountain range, and the Olympic National Park. From this vantage point, visitors are able to view down on the switchback path, providing a place to identify moments along the path just traversed and the differing Washington landscape typologies; once again enhancing awareness of a finer grain of detail in Washington landscapes.

Figure 51: Aerial view looking east

7.3 Form and Materiality: In designing the portal experience as a path up the building, the overall form of the building began taking shape by simply following the path. In responding to the strong character of adjacent wharf buildings, the form begins as a low sloped shed roofed-structure at the water side of the building. As the portal experience path rises toward its final location at the lookout terrace, the roof pitch becomes more pronounced, emulating alpine vernacular roof forms. However, as visitor experience along the path varies from indoor to outdoor space and back, the larger, singular form began to visually disappear during the design process. As in museum design, each of the path experiences, like pieces of art, require different lighting characteristics, ultimately adding complexity to the building form thus weakening the strong character of the larger form even more. To retain the singular form of a wharf roof vernacular transitioning to an alpine roof vernacular, a singular use of cladding was utilized; visually unifying the forms. Symbolically, all the park experiences then become united, echoing the scope of the project: providing sets of park information in one place. This singular roof element is then bent, folded, punctured, and dissolved in various ways but remains a singular cohesive design aesthetic to create a singular building object form.

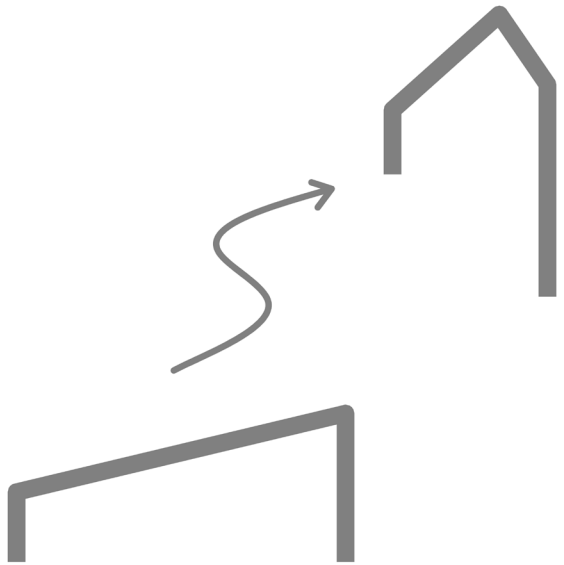
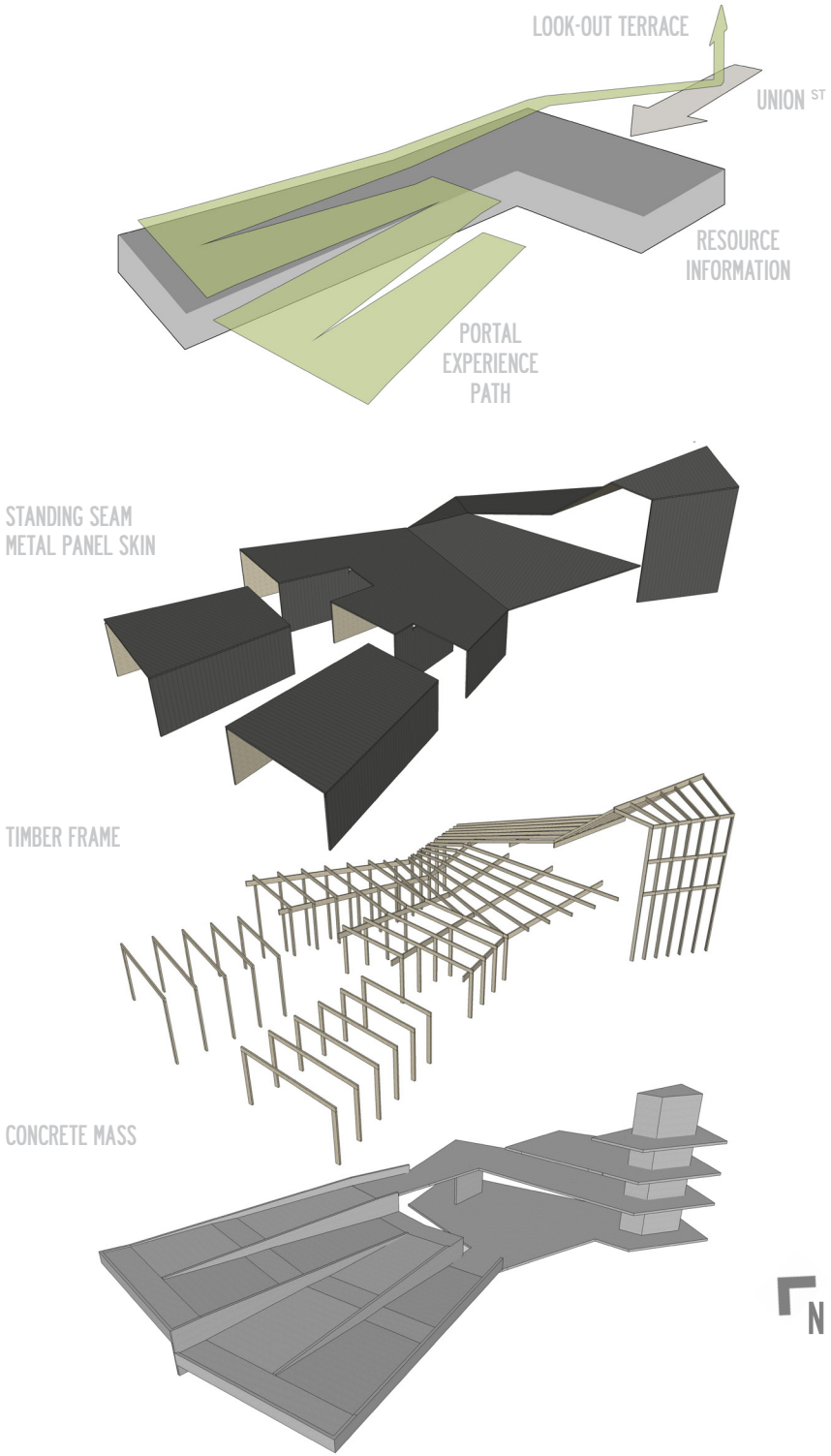


Figure 52: Building form concept diagram

Throughout the project, walls and roof are then designed as a singular element, where a wood frame is wrapped in wood tongue and groove decking to minimizing differences in materiality so the parks experience of plants and ecological information stands out and the building becomes background. The metal standing seam cladding then differentiates

itself from wood elements where it's treated as shell or of the outdoors, while wood elements represent the indoors. Darkened standing seam panels are then used, as planted landscape elements visually stand out against darker colors. At a larger scale, however, this tectonically light roof element is then juxtaposed against the visually massive concrete ground plane throughout the building, ultimately creating a design that is unified in form while simultaneously distinguishing mass and earth from frame and skin.



Top Right,Figure 53: Building path and resource center diagram

Right, Figure 54: Building tectonics diagram

08 PORTAL EXPERIENCE PATH WALK-THROUGH

The portal experience portion of the program was conceptually designed as a hiking path meandoring through many Washington State ecological typologies. Through a visual walk-through of these spaces, a greater understanding of the building's design and its architectural relationships with the landscape areas can occur.

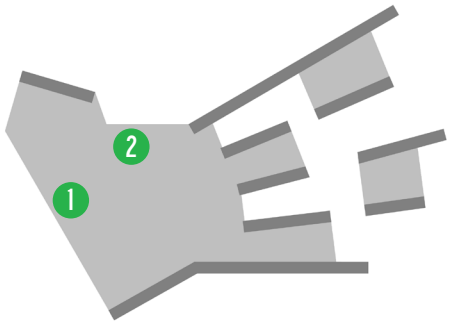
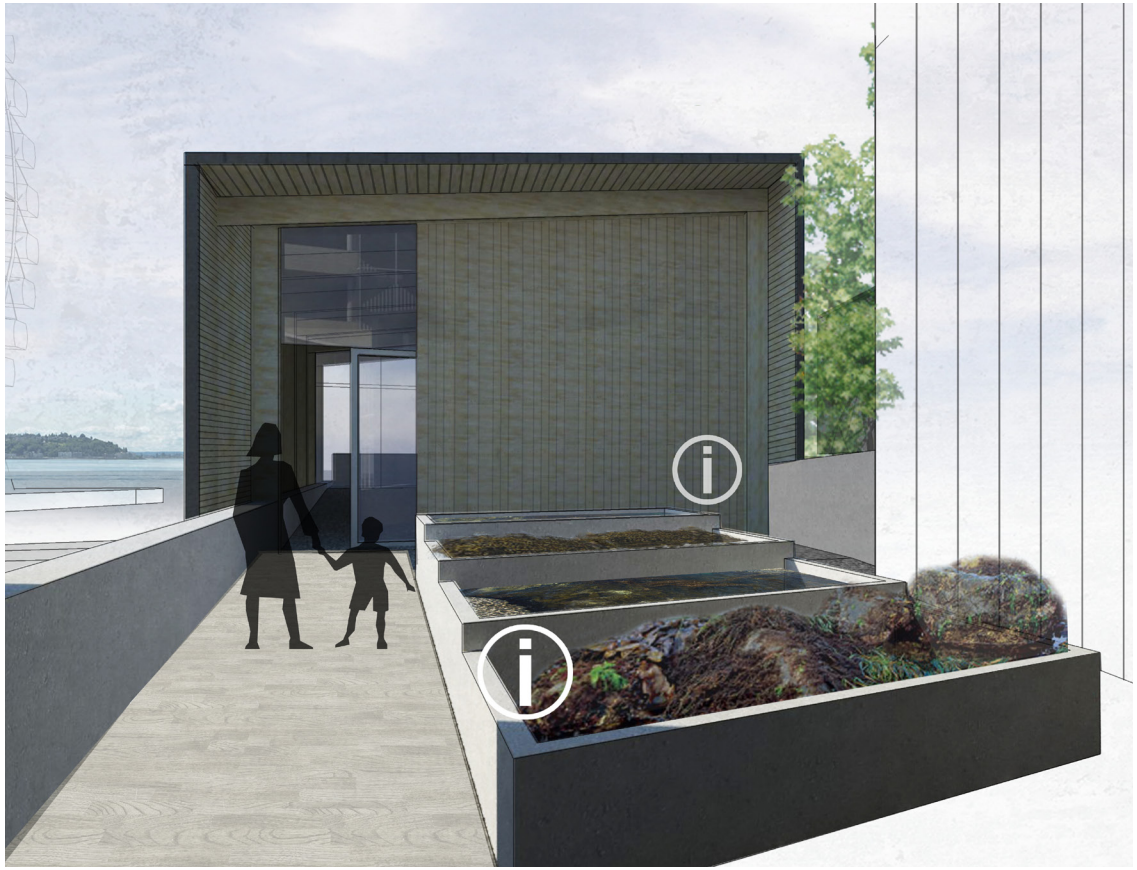


 Figure 55: Building Entry

8.1 Building Entry (Figure 55): Upon entering the building, a lowered wood screen soffit guides visitors toward a service desk to the left and coffee bar to the right. Beyond, the expansive lobby and temporary exhibit space contain large interactive digital display boards for information gathering.

8.2 Lobby/Temporary Exhibit Space (Figure 56): Once in the lobby/temporary exhibit space, legibility of the building becomes clearer as access into the portal exhibit spaces becomes apparent to the left. The structure too begins to reveal itself where timber framing members and tongue and groove decking floats atop tapered concrete pillars.

Figure 56: Lobby/Temporary Exhibit



8.3 Tide Pool Exhibit (Figure 57): Concrete planter boxes extend from the ground plane providing differing tide pool habitats in each of the planters. This region echoes the tide pool landscapes along the West coast of the Olympic Peninsula. Open to the public plaza south, this beginning portion of the path allows visitors to orient themselves along the edge of the waterfront. Information points (circled “i”) denote places where ecological information and specific park locations related to this exhibit can be visited.

Figure 57: Tide Pool Exhibit

8.4 Coastal Beach Exhibit (Figure 58): Upon entering this indoor exhibit, scale of the natural environment becomes apparent immediately where a large piece of driftwood fills the room. Information points demonstrate how these enormous logs float down the Columbia River and wash upon the Olympic Peninsula coast. In the empty room, the log consumes the space and its roughhewn texture is immediately apparent against the finished wood structure behind. An extended canopy toward the water allows rippled reflections to extend into the building, referencing the coastal habitat of a driftwood landscape.

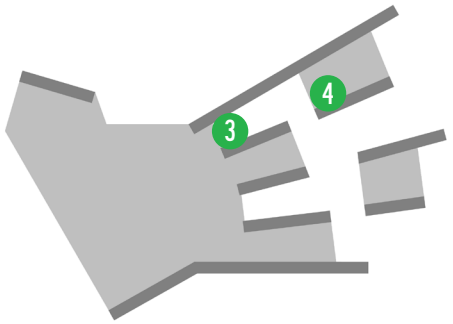
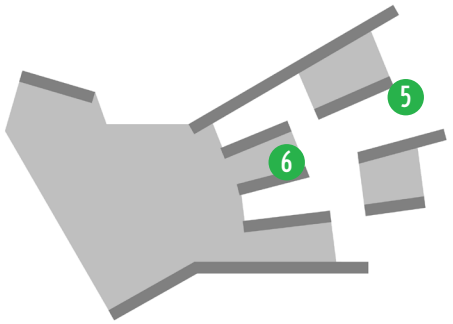


Figure 58: Coastal Beach Exhibit

8.5 Temperate Rainforest (Figure 59): After exiting the coastal environment, submersion into the temperate rainforest environment occurs. Vine maple trees provide a sense of overhead canopy coverage while ferns and various groundcovers fill the ground plane. Visitors are encouraged to walk along paths into the landscape to view information markers. As the visitor walks further along the path, less and less of the city is noticeable as they are increasingly surrounded by natural landscape elements.

Figure 59: Temperate Rainforest

8.6 Moss Room (Figure 60): The next indoor space isolates a plant typology and instead of providing a singular object in space as in the Coastal Beach Exhibit, it wraps the space in material. This moss room highlights the over one hundred types of moss existing in Pacific Northwest temperate rainforests. Filling the small room with an extremely diverse range of mosses highlights the extremely large scale of plant typologies this region contains. A perforated metal canopy architecturally simulates a forest canopy overhead and allows light into the moisture-laden room.



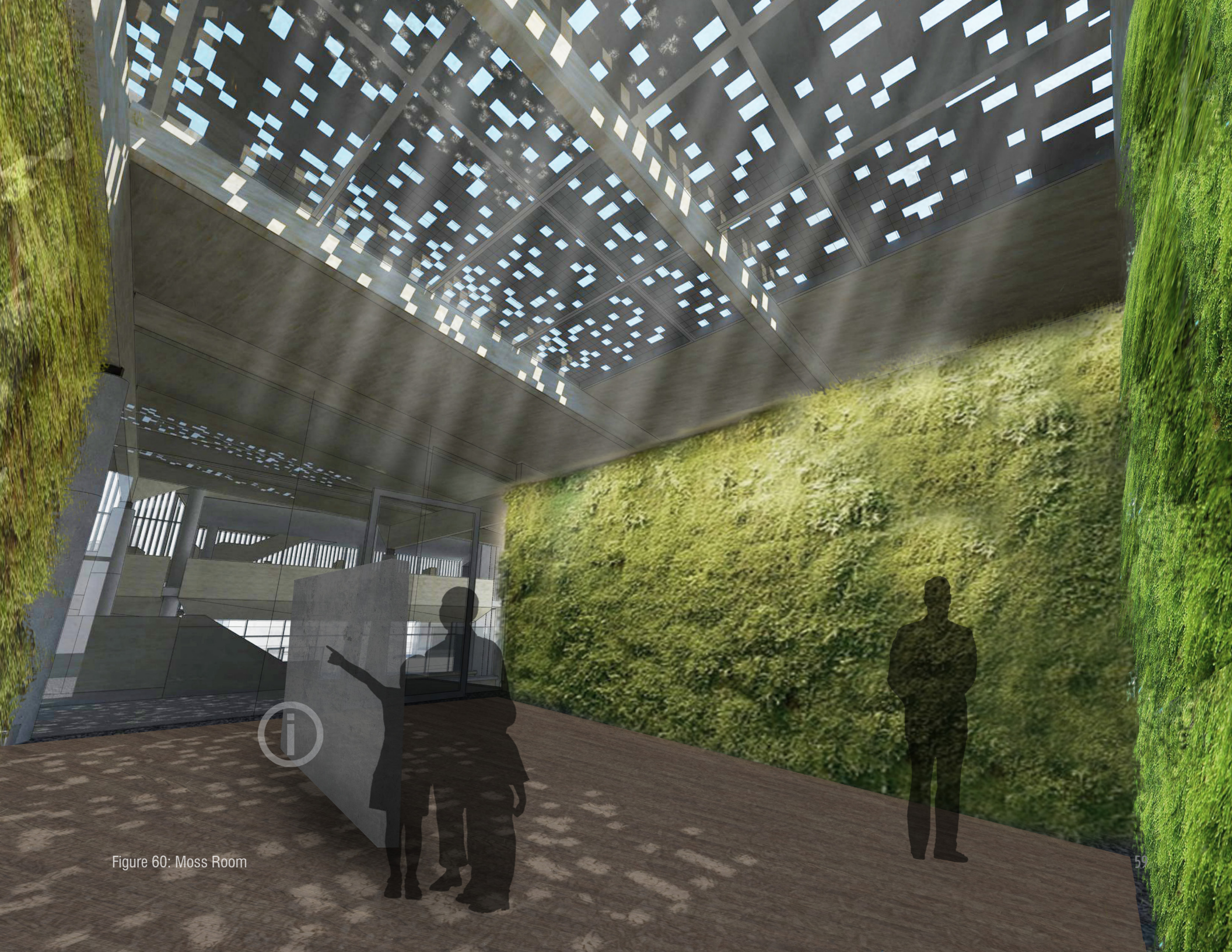
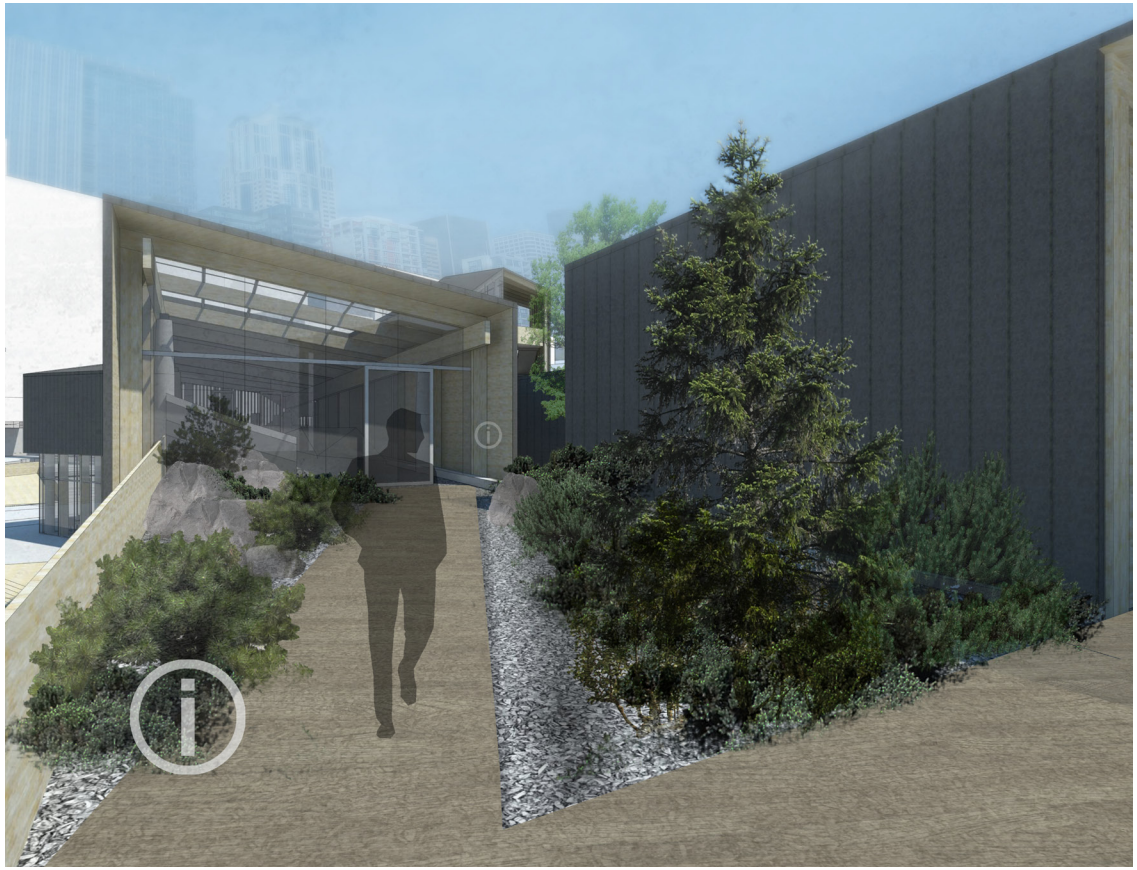


Figure 60: Moss Room

 Figure 61: Shrub-Steppe Exhibit

8.7 Shrub-Steppe Exhibit (Figure 61): With the representation of a garry oak woodland beyond, the indoor Shrub-Steppe Exhibit has a large skylight overhead creating a dry climate indoors where a raised planter exhibits the Earth's crust of the region. Cryptogamic crust made up of algae, lichens, fungi, mosses, and cyanobacteria coat the surface floor.[31] The large flat planter echoes the landscape of the Columbia Plateau region while its raised height allows for visual examination of the crust.



8.8 Subalpine Exhibit (Figure 62): After exiting the Shrub-Steppe Exhibit, visitors reach the northwestern-most corner of the path. With no landscape or architectural coverage, the exposed scene mimics the exposed characteristics of being high in the subalpine region where groundcover becomes much more minimal and tree lines become coniferous species of Douglas Fir and Western Hemlock.

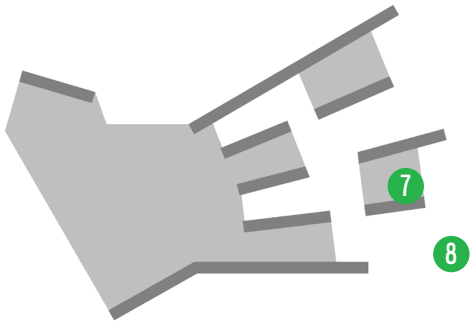


Figure 62: Subalpine Exhibit

 Figure 63: Park Systems Exhibit

8.9 Park Systems Exhibit (Figure 63): Turning back into the building, the path exits its singular environment experience, and becomes the Park Systems Exhibit. Here, park history, politics, funding issues, infrastructural issues, and volunteering needs are on display. The building's façade opens at this location, revealing the city beyond. This gesture relates to the exhibit noting that parks issues are fundamentally human-made issues overlaid on existing natural landscapes.

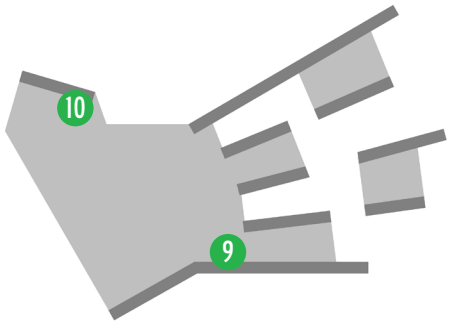


Figure 64: Look-out Terrace

8.10 Look-out Terrace (Figure 64): After the Park Systems Exhibit, visitors are directed toward the highest point in the building, a look-out terrace. Here, the scales of landscape interventions in the building are dwarfed by the expansive Elliott Bay and Olympic Mountain Range landscape beyond. The look-out also provides visitors a place to visually locate stops along the walking path below while identifying clashing ecological regions adjacent to one another.

09 CONCLUSIONS

9.1 General Conclusions: This thesis began with an exploration of the dynamic history of the National Park System. Upon further research, the depth and beauty of the Washington park system became apparent. However, this required extensive time spent on a computer. This thesis emerged from a personal desire to obtain parks information in a more experiential way, apart from the digital devices many people go to parks to escape. While information gathering via digital devices is, without question, the standard means of obtaining data, this project seeks to provide an experience while gaining information, similar to that of a library. As the design project evolved, I began visualizing it as a form of "central library" for the parks system. While most people do not need to visit a library to obtain the information it holds, the simple act of spending time at public libraries is a cultural act still very prevalent in today's digital society. Similar to a central library, this project aims to provide an experiential place for gathering information. Public libraries become community centers and can become architectural manifestation of the communities they represent. Seattleites hold their public parks in high regard. By providing a highly visible parks center in downtown Seattle, a Washington parks information center can become a representative of this city and its ideologies.

9.2 Designing to Scale - Architecture & Landscape: The parks information center shown in this thesis provided an exploratory approach to the project. However, finding the correct project scale was often a struggle. In a realistic scenario, the center most likely would be greatly reduced in size. This fact was expressed throughout the design process but often limited the exploratory purpose of the design.

Investigating the interplay between landscape and architectural scale ultimately defined the portal experience portion of this project and was the most difficult portion of the design process. In the first preliminary design option, small landscape scenes were applied to the building without direction or a specific narrative. The second preliminary design option identified major environmental ecologies at a scale so large they overpowered informational resource centers of the project. In the final design, specific landscape moments were intentionally iso-

lated to provide a narrative between architectural and landscape scales. These portions of the design provided successful moments depicting nature as sublimely beautiful place. However, too much complexity was added to the design between these rooms. By minimizing these complexities, a reduced project size would better reflect park ideologies of resource conservation while simplifying the design of the building.

9.3 Closing Statement: Seattleites have a strong connection with their public parks. Despite this connection, many political, environmental, and infrastructural issues exist. By providing this information in a public place while improving the parks information gathering experience, Washington parks can gain an even deeper level of connection with Washington residents, ultimately strengthening its base of citizens and emboldening them to not only enjoy and experience the parks but advocate for them as well.

Figure 65: Forest, Mt. Si, Washington State Park

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http://www.hikingwithmybrother.com/2012/09/gothic-basin-via-weden-creek-trail-724.html

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http://exotichikes.com/the-5-easy-day-hikes-in-the-winter-rain-of-the-olympic-national-park/

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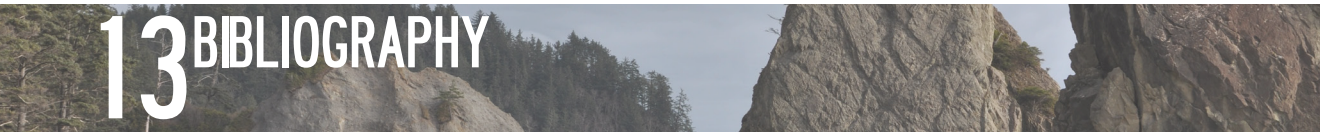

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