

**SEEKING A PLACE** A HOSTEL IN SEATTLE

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**Abstract**

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This thesis investigates the hostel as a place that is about allowing travelers to form a community of their own while bringing the city into the hostel. The intent to design a hostel in Seattle comes from reflections of the desire to travel, the movement of travel and how travel accommodation plays a role in the experience of a new place for the traveler.

The importance of travel in today's culture surrounds us, reinforced through popular culture, literature and story-telling. The desire to go moves people to leave their homes and wander; people like to travel. Travel does not just encompass visiting foreign lands and taking a few pictures, but is about adventure and interaction.

Part of traveling is about interaction, experience, adventure and rest. These four priorities for the traveler become part of the focus of this thesis. The other part, is creating a place that allows travelers to Seattle to engage with locals of Seattle. Travelers and locals can be separate in a city, moving in parallel paths while rarely engaging with each other. In this thesis, I explore a hostel as a place where these two groups of people can meet and engage during a moment of their travels and where the priorities of a traveler, interaction, experience, adventure and rest, can be met.

# SEEKING A PLACE

## A HOSTEL IN SEATTLE



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Figure 1. The location for a new hostel marked on a section through Lake Union looking south toward downtown Seattle.

*"I saw in their eyes something I was to see over and over in every part of the nation - a burning desire to go, to move, to get under way, anyplace, away from any Here...I saw this look and heard this yearning everywhere in every state I visited. Nearly every American hungers to move."*<sup>1</sup>

*John Steinbeck  
Travels with Charley In Search of America*

## WANDERLUST

The intent to design a hostel in Seattle comes from reflections on the desire to travel, the movement of travel and how travel accommodation plays a role in the experience of a new place for the traveler. There is a constant movement of people, crossing borders and tasting new cultures, and with all the newness that traveling brings, there are certain priorities that a traveler consciously or sub-consciously has in mind: interaction, experience, adventure and rest. These four priorities meld together to form the travel memories and stories that the traveler cherishes. These priorities have defined the experiential and design objectives for the hostel that best facilitates these needs. The urban youth hostel is the travel accommodation typology that currently responds the best to all four of the traveler's priorities. While most foreign countries are familiar with the urban youth hostel, America has not yet fully embraced the culture of youth hostels. The youth hostel has filled almost every nook and cranny of foreign cities; one can find them in old warehouses, in apartment buildings, in barns and even in new buildings, squeezed between the folds of the urban fabric. Yet despite the prominence of the youth hostel abroad there is no formal architectural typology to help define what the hostel is. The program description, experiential qualities, the goals and functions of the hostel, all seem to be variable. While there are broad, common characteristics exhibited by hostels, such as checking-in, eating, sleeping, socializing and information gathering, many specifics of what a hostel should embody for this thesis have derived from personal memories of hostels and conversations with others who have stayed at hostels.

This thesis is an exploration of how the hostel is a place that is more than just cheap travel accommodation for a traveler and looks to break through stereotypes and stigmas of hostels as dirty, dingy places for young urban backpackers. Instead, the hostel has become an ideal place for the traveler to get

a taste of the local culture and character, bringing the city into the hostel, creating a sense of experience and adventure within. By bringing in local culture, the locals will follow, making today's hostel a place of community for travelers and locals to interact. Through comparisons to other known travel accommodations such as the motel and hotel, the hostel is distinguished from other forms of tourist accommodations because it provides communal, public spaces to promote interaction between travelers and locals. The motel and hotel are about privacy and rest, a one-night room, where the door can be shut to the routines and the people of the outside world. The hostel on the other hand, embraces itself as a pivotal place between the traveler and the host city, and between the traveler and their fellow travelers. The most basic function of the hostel is to provide a "bed for hire," relating to the constant need for rest, but more than that, to provide spaces that support the other three priorities of travel: interaction, experience and adventure. These types of spaces for socializing, is the attraction of the hostel.

Historically, the hostel was conceived to be in rural settings, promoting an active, outdoors lifestyle. Now, modern hostels are located in urban settings seeking to provide activities that relate to the local city culture and become attractive social gathering points. The opportunity in this project is to define a hostel that serves as a comfortable and familiar place to rest for any type of traveler or travelers, but more importantly provides the spatial qualities that responds to the adventure of traveling, not only for the traveler but also for the non-traveler, the locals, to help overlap the separation of the traveler from the city.

*"We do not travel in order to go from one hotel to another, and see a few sideshows. We travel, perhaps, with a secret and absurd hope of setting foot on the Hesperides, of running up a little creek and landing in the Garden of Eden."* <sup>2</sup>

D.H. Lawrence

## PREPARATION

The urge to travel has stricken many people and entire genres of culture and American literature express the desire to wander. The word travel shares the same root as the word travail, meaning painful or laborious task. "Real travel... is no vacation."<sup>3</sup> The act of travel is adventurous and exciting, yet can be filled with anxiety for the unexpected and the unknown. Travel includes many mundane, isolating qualities: uncomfortable and disoriented, planning for the unexpected, and approaching strangers; all to wander towards something unfamiliar, which is sometimes just as simple as an adventure. "Travel is action, not a passive motion."<sup>4</sup> The desire to travel is deeply embedded in our society and culture, and perception of who we are. Travelers who have not gained new personal memories and encounters may feel they have fallen short of their purpose. Despite the task of travel with all its planning, unknowns and anxiety, every day travelers set out on new adventures.

Although traveling can be an isolating task, one of the goals of the traveler is to engage with strangers along their route. The traveler can typically have a sense of distance or separation from a new city and usually the traveler looks for ways to narrow that distance by attempting to meet and interact with locals and local events. As John Steinbeck once stated, "I soon discovered that if a wayfaring stranger wishes to eavesdrop on a local population the places for him to slip in and hold his peace are bars and churches."<sup>5</sup> For the purposes of the traveler, these community spaces are important to facilitate social interaction between strangers. Where hotels and motels set specific boundaries for what spaces are public and which are private, the hostel blends those boundaries of private and public, and creates spaces of interaction and socializing.

The constant thought of rest is the basic utility that travel accommodations

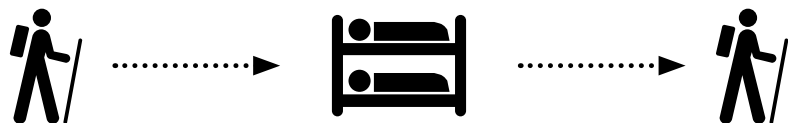


Figure 2. The pace of travel is defined by movement and rest.

serve. While travel methods and transport have evolved and the purpose of travel is unique for each individual, the consideration of where to stay is a constant thought; “after a long day on the road, every traveler seeks respite.”<sup>6</sup> Travel accommodations make up a significant portion of the economy, and are an important aspect of travel. Whether the traveler plans ahead and makes reservations, or goes out on a whim and searches for the “Vacancy” sign, every night the traveler seeks a place to rest. The need for the traveler to have a place to rest is as important as the movement of travel. The two opposite actions of movement and rest define the pace of travel. (Figure 2) This need to move through and pause in unfamiliar spaces links travel to architecture at an unconscious level and displays the importance of how architecture can facilitate travel.

To better understand travel culture and the traveler's, we can refer to American travel literature to better understand the expectations travelers might have and their priorities in their travels. The diverse priorities that travelers may have, help to form the four priorities of travel that are being focused on for this thesis: rest, interaction, experience and adventure. These priorities, or actions, demonstrate the key characteristics of how architecture plays and important role in travel, “... all travel conventions bear upon human movement through culturally conceived space, movement which is deliberately undertaken in order to yield meaning pertinent to the travelers and their publics.”<sup>7</sup> The hostel can provide that space for the public interaction, in terms of adventure and experience, and also the private priorities, of movement and rest that the traveler needs.

The urban context of a hostel in Seattle is important to consider. The decision to use an urban site influences the design decisions of a hostel in a city. In urban

settings, there is a diversity of travel mediums; foot, car, metro, air and ferry just to name a few. The understanding of these different infrastructures and how these networks overlap with Seattle's neighborhoods and the different characteristics of different parts of the city, have all influenced the hostel site location. These considerations, overlapped with neighborhood urban street-life and culture, have played a role in where to locate a new hostel in Seattle. The design objectives stem from analyzing the site and the neighborhood in which the site exists, to accommodate the hostel to fit the personality of the neighborhood and how these aspects overlap with the traveler's culture and priorities. The analysis of the city's qualities and the traveler's needs and how they overlap, can display different types of activity and how different types of space will accommodate to these qualities and needs. The goal for this thesis is to design an American hostel in Seattle and to choose a site in Seattle that best responds to the needs of the traveler and is also a place of culture and connections to the city.

This is a thesis about exploring the typology of the hostel and understanding what a hostel today is for the traveler. This thesis will explore the typology of the hostel, looking at what kind of accommodation the hostel has been and is becoming for travelers. This is an exploration of the hostel as a place for socialization, interaction and adventure for the traveler; and also a place of culture and identity of the city, all the while still being a resting spot for a large demographic of travelers. The hostel is more than just a place to rest, but is a place to congregate. As travelers set out on their journey to gain memories and adventure, the hostel is a place for the travelers to meet and to share their stories and experiences and learn from each other.



Figure 3. Locals and travelers move in parallel to each other.

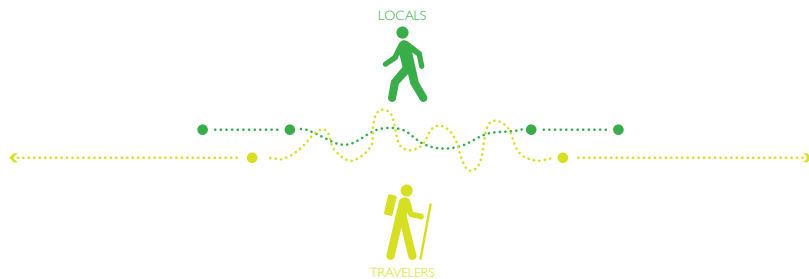


Figure 4. Where can locals and traveler overlap paths?



Figure 5. Graphic study of hostel icon system.

## MAPPING

What does a hostel provide that other existing accommodations in Seattle do not already provide? Through analyzing and comparing hostels to motels and the hotel, the hostel differentiates from other types of travel accommodations because it responds to the priorities of travel outside of rest; the hostel encourages adventure, experience and interaction through the times of program and spaces that it is defined by. The hostel is a space that is for the travel community to engage and interact with one another, to share stories and experiences and most importantly for the traveler to meet people, whether it be fellow travelers or locals.

The youth hostel was first proposed in 1909 in Germany, the jugendherberge or “wandering house” in rural areas for students to go on the weekends.<sup>8</sup> The first one was opened by Richard Schirrmann. (*Figure 6*) With the onset of the Industrial Revolution, the cities were getting progressively dirtier, and Schirrmann had the idea of opening up public houses in rural settings to get youths out of the city and participating in outdoor activities.<sup>9</sup> By the 1930s, there were over 2000 youth hostels in Europe that were accounted for as part of the Hostelling International organization at that time.<sup>10</sup> There is little documentation of the extent that these hostels are still currently used as hostels, but we do know that some historic rural sites are still in use, such as the first jugendherberge, the Altena Castle Youth Hostel of Altena, Germany. (*Figure 7*) This hostel was the first Germany youth hostel opened and directed by Schirrmann in 1912.<sup>11</sup> This hostel consisted of the basic spaces that would become a baseline for hostels; two dormitories (one for girls and one for boys) with bunk beds, a kitchen, a mess hall, washrooms and a shower bath.<sup>12</sup> Each room was a communal room, and the guests had chores to help keep the spaces clean for their fellow peers. Youth hostels at this time across Europe were each run independently of each other;



Figure 6. Richard Schirrmann



Figure 7. Altena Berg Jugendherberge



Figure 8. Isabel & Monroe Smith, Northfield, MA 1934

however followed many of the same management rules.

Many things have changed in the expectations of hostels from then to now. Initially these first European hostels set very specific expectations of guest etiquette and requirements; there were house chores, "age restrictions, strict curfews, and other rules imposed on the hostel guests by hostel 'wardens'."<sup>13</sup> These expectations were put into place at the time mostly to emphasize youth guests only and the regulation of them, but also to develop the community minded setting. As the popularity of backpacking grew to encompass multiple demographics of travelers in the 1960s and 1970s,<sup>14</sup> the initial regulations of hostels began to drop away (youth only, outdoor activities, membership requirements) and hostels began to shed and broaden the range of guests they allowed. While the community-minded nature of hostelling is still the main priority in current hostels, most modern hostels no longer have age restrictions, chore lists, or wardens running them. However, few hostels do intend to have

guests who are travelers only and can have a "no locals" rule where guests must have an international passport to stay.<sup>15</sup> Despite the strict restrictions of youth hostel management and regulations, youth hostels were so popular in Europe that it spread around the world to foster the mentality of joining together through travels and build community.

The hostel first came to America in 1934, and was founded in Northfield, Massachusetts by Americans Isabel and Monroe Smith, (Figure 8) who modeled the American hostels after Schirrmann's Germany jugendherberge.<sup>16</sup> American hostels grew under the America Youth Hostels (AYH) organization through the 20th century. These first American youth hostels were also typically set in rural locations, with age limits, curfews and house chores and located along bicycle vacation areas to promote an outdoor lifestyle. By the 1960s, AYH operated 109 hostels in 23 states, most of these accommodating to students.<sup>17</sup> Currently, AYH, now known as Hostelling International USA (HIUSA), has nearly 60 operating

hostels in the US.<sup>18</sup> While the number of HIUSA hostels has decreased, there are numerous other independently run hostels throughout America, being affiliated with other hostel organizations, most of which are located in major cities. These original American youth hostels were managed on an understanding of community and interaction; every guest had a chore to support the hostel whether it be washing dishes, maintenance, running the desk, or doing laundry.<sup>19</sup> While these sorts of tasks and activities made the youth hostel more like a camping lodge, the community qualities of the youth hostel are ingrained into the typology and distinguished the youth hostel from other forms of accommodation. American hostel's management and regulations have evolved very similarly in parallel with European hostels throughout the 20th century. Chores, age restrictions and curfews have fallen away as American youth hostels are looking to attract a wider range of traveler demographics.

Currently the term "youth hostel" has fallen by the wayside as the demographics of travelers that stay there has diversified. As older travelers are becoming the norms as guests, "the term 'youth hostel' is becoming obsolete in most places, being superseded simply by the 'hostel'."<sup>20</sup> The presumption that hostels only attract the "backpacker" traveler is also becoming a thing of the past, as the term "backpacker" now in the travel industry no longer refers to "drifting nomads, or vagabonds...it is sometimes hard to differentiate between backpackers and other types of tourist, let alone distinguish between types of backpackers."<sup>21</sup> To keep up with the trends of travel, hostels have now diversified their accommodation offerings to attract the widening array of travelers, by providing different types of rooms. The dormitories are still expected at hostels, but most hostels now offer private rooms with private baths and still maintain the community minded spaces such as communal kitchens, common eating and lounge spaces, and public

washrooms.

Other popular types of travel accommodations, such as the motel and hotel, do not provide the communal and social qualities and characteristics of space that the hostel maintains. To help define and establish how unique a hostel is because it provides socially interactive spaces, we can compare hostels to the American motel, the most used type of travel accommodation in America, and also compare the hostel to hotels, which are the most prevalent travel accommodation globally.

Hostels and motels are typically compared in the tourist accommodation world because both are low-budget travel accommodations. The American roadside motel, stripped away of the bright neon signs, the kitsch themes and interiors, can be considered the most utilitarian of the built tourist accommodations. The American motel is simply about the room. Formal architectural studies on the development of space for the American motel highlight the importance and repetition of the room, a place for the individual traveler to enclose oneself and shut out the world.

The American motel is a ubiquitous object against the mundane backdrop of the American road. However, it is a standard for travel accommodations, especially in North America. It is a building type that was developed for the road. Without the road, the motel would not exist. It is architecture with no place, "...where nowhere is a place and nothing takes place."<sup>22</sup> A contraction of "motor" and "hotel," the motel is known by many names: motor inn, motor court, motor lodge, travel lodge, tourist cabins, auto camps, auto court, etc.<sup>23</sup> Motels began as auto camps, which came about "as an alternative to hotels."<sup>24</sup>



Figure 9. Postcard of the Tropical Palms Court Motel.

These auto camps evolved into cabin camps, which evolved into cottage courts and then finally into the motels that we know today, following “set prototypes introduced and popularized over decades.”<sup>25</sup> The simplicity of amenities and the low-budget accommodations has shaped the American motel into a standard utilitarian architectural typology. What distinguishes the motel from a hostel is that individual private rooms for individual travelers define the motel, and the hostel provides dormitories and community spaces. The motel is different from the hotel by the orientation of the rooms to the parking area as seen in the postcard of the Tropical Palms Court Motel in figure 9. Typically each motel room has “an exit to the outside from each individual unit...”<sup>26</sup> The motel consists of a series of rooms with specific furnishings that are considered standard for all motels: repetitive private rooms with a bed, television, and table and chairs, a private bathroom per room, one office space for check-in and check-out, and an ample parking lot. Additional amenities for a motel beyond these basics can vary from place to place, pools, vending machines, kitchenettes per room, etc. In contrast the hostel provides dormitories with up to 18 bed in some cases, shared washrooms and bathrooms, communal kitchens, typically an indoor and outdoor communal socializing area, and a communal eating area. All of these spaces in a hostel were conceptualized for group use, while the spaces of the motel are for private use.

Understanding of the American motel as a typology and precedent can help to explain what an American hostel can provide to the American travel culture. The ideas of privacy and public, community, car travel and proximity to public transportation all play roles in what a hostel can be in America. Where the motel “is an interface with the private automobile, further cocooning and protecting the traveler away from home,”<sup>27</sup> the hostel is much more in that it provides

more opportunities of diverse types of lodging and social interaction for the versatile traveler. Whether the traveler wants to be a recluse or mingle amongst strangers, the modern hostel can provide the spaces, either dormitories or private rooms, for whichever type of activity that the traveler so desires at any time.

Another comparison to consider is the hostel versus the hotel. While the motel and hostel are similar because both are categorized as low-budget accommodation, the hostel and hotel are comparable because both are nestled in the urban built environment, associated with urban amenities and access. However, the uses and the program spaces are very different between the hostel and hotel.

Hotels can be considered the most “pervasive and commonly utilized by the traveling public” of the three different types of travel accommodations compared in this thesis.<sup>28</sup> Hotels and inns can be traced back to the Roman Empire, where inns and lodges were established along the Roman highway system. While they have seemingly always existed, hotels and inns “became more commonplace after the advent of the railroad in the early 1800s.”<sup>29</sup> Both in Europe and in America, large hotels were built near railway stations and in city centers and were constructed along the railway that linked cities together. Currently, hotels are still “an integral element of the urban landscape in all parts of the world today,” found along the road, close to airports, in city centers and throughout any city or town. Today, the hotel and motel might seem very similar and the names used interchangeably, because both consist of a series of the private room and provides basic accommodation, including an en-suite bathroom. However, traditionally the hotel is not considered a low-budget accommodation by

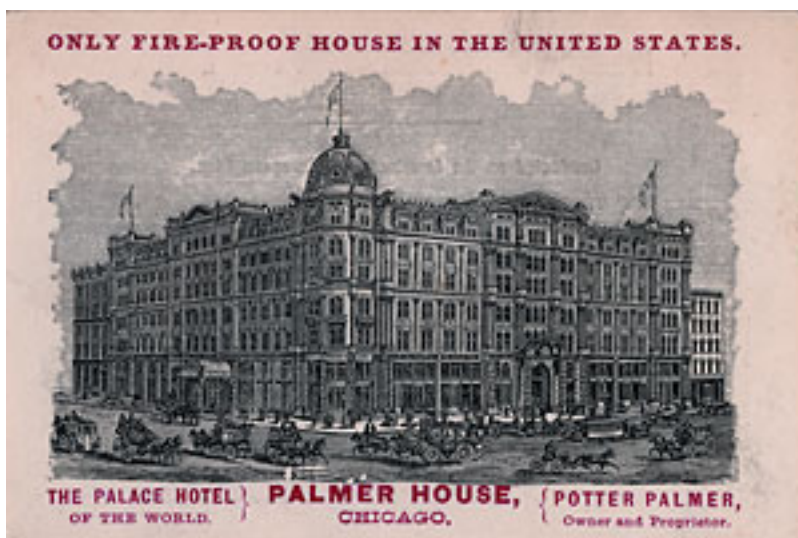


Figure 10. Postcard of the The Palace Hotel.

definition and typically offers a large array of amenities such as swimming pools, saunas, spas, exercise rooms, valet parking, conferment centers, restaurants or pubs.<sup>30</sup>

Like youth hostels, the hotel was conceptualized as a place for travelers to stay and as a place of community. However, it was a different sense of community that the hotel was referring to. While youth hostels attempt to create a community for the traveling guest within the hostel, the hotel was looking to reach out to the community of its locale by offering a restaurant or pub. This area of interaction within the hotel is not the same as the interaction areas of the youth hostel, because historically the hotel is a high-end accommodation, the hotel's restaurant and pub typically attracted the upper class social elite.<sup>31</sup> Also, a notable difference is the spatial characteristic of these "community" spaces of the hotel. The restaurant and pub of the hotel are typically more enclosed and separated from the hotel lobby, while in the youth hostel any space for eating and drinking usually overlaps with lounge spaces through an open floor plan.

Hotels are also laid out differently from motels. While both the hotel and motel consist of the repeated room and similar floor levels, the hotel is organized by internal circulation, unlike the motel where rooms have private outdoor access directly to the parking area. The hotel rooms and amenities are oriented and accessible by the lobby and front desk. Private and public spaces are kept separate, and the rooms are "individuated private spaces... separated from the more public functions of the hotels by being placed on upper floors or in separate wings."<sup>32</sup> The public spaces are typically on the main floor with the hotel lobby and front desk. Typically, patrons who are gathering at a hotel to only visit the restaurant or pub will have to pass by the lobby. The control point between

the private and public spaces is the lobby and front desk. This configuration of spaces being organized around a main control point is seen in the spatial organization of most modern hostels, most likely following the hotel precedent. The control point is the main security point, where guests and visitors much pass through while on their daily routines.

Comparing the hostel to the motel and hotel, displays how unique the hostel is in the travel accommodation industry. While it has few commonalities with the motel and hotel, the differences that the hostel has is that all the spaces of the hostel are intended for communal and group use, from the sleeping areas to the lounge areas. The hostel is an important type of accommodation for the traveler, because it can provide community and interaction to a new place for a wider array of the budget-conscience traveler. However in America, the roadside motel and the hotel are the most common and popular accommodation for travelers. The modern hostel is a low-budget accommodation that can also provide private rooms along with the prototypical dormitories and also maintains spaces for socializing and community. Because the hostel has these private and public spaces, it caters to the priorities of the traveler: rest, interaction, adventure and experience. Because the hostel acknowledges these four constants, it is the ideal type of travel accommodation for the traveler.

There seems to be no real formal architectural analysis of the hostel, so defining the programmatic elements of the hostel relies on looking at current and successful precedents of modern hostels that are pulling away from stereotypes of the hostel being for backpackers and vagabonds. Existing hostels that overlap the traveler's experience with the identity of the host city are The KEX Hostel in Reykjavik, Iceland, YHA (Youth Hostel Australia) Sydney Harbour in Sydney,



Figure 11a

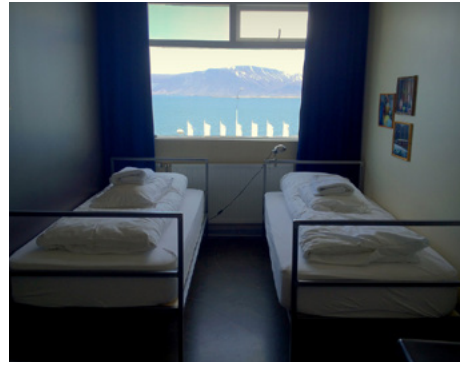


Figure 11b



Figure 11c



Figure 11d

Figure 11. The KEX Hostel, Reykjavík, Iceland.

Australia and the Freehand Miami, in Miami, Florida. These are existing, popular hostels that use their site and the city's cultural events to tie them to their city and provide distinct types of spaces for social interaction. The success and architecture of these precedents display how the spatial concepts previously depicted by hostels, hotels and motels are used to define the success of these modern hostels.

The KEX Hostel is an interesting, popular hostel in Reykjavík Iceland. (Figure 11) Established in an old biscuit warehouse along Reykjavík's waterfront, the KEX has become a popular accommodation for travelers, but also a popular social gathering space for locals of Reykjavík. The main public space of KEX is a lounge space that includes a bar and restaurant and also hosts weekly music shows from local bands. The bar and restaurant attract locals and travelers throughout the week, as the restaurant has become a popular eating destination in the city. The spatial organization of the KEX hostel is very similar to a hotel, with public

and private spaces being separated from each other but connected by the control point, or front desk. The public spaces, such as the lounge, the restaurant and bar, is a very active space with a steady stream of people moving in and out throughout the day, all coming and going depending on whatever is happening within the space. Whether the users of the lounge are guests of the hostel or locals of Reykjavík, both groups must pass by the lobby area to congregate in the lounge space. The lounge space is the main point of interest here, it is where locals and travelers are constantly interacting in the public lounge and bar on the main floor. Despite that the KEX Hostel is laid out and organized like a hotel, with access to spaces from the front desk and public and private spaces being separated, it is distinctly a hostel because its travel accommodation spaces are mostly dormitories furnished by bunk beds and shared washrooms and toilets. The KEX does offer a small number of private rooms with private baths, but those rooms are intermingled along the double-loaded corridor with the dormitories. The rooms are located on upper floors, with key-card access points



Figure 12a



Figure 12b



Figure 12c



Figure 12d

Figure 12. Freehand Miami; Miami, Florida

so that locals who are only at the KEX for the food or music do not have access to those areas. Communal kitchens are located on each floor, at the end of dormitory corridors and are for guests only. This is unique confluence of guests and locals is what attracts people to stay at the KEX, and many hostels do not attempt or succeed at attracting local crowds. The constant flow of bands, events and locals through this public space of KEX also attracts people to the hostel.

The Freehand Miami in Miami, Florida (Figure 12) is very similar to the KEX Hostel, because it also has become a popular destination for travelers and locals of Miami. The Freehand is an important precedent because it displays that the hostel can be successful in America, by being a place for cultural interactions and bring local culture, events and people in. This hostel provides dormitories and private rooms for guests, and has eventful public spaces. The hostel hosts a series of events that are open to guests of the hostel and locals: art classes, poolside barbecues, and music shows, just to name a few. The Freehand is also runs a

restaurant and bar that is run by a local restaurateur of Miami, again introducing local food culture into the hostel. While no information on spatial configuration is published of the Freehand Miami, images display that the main front desk links the private areas and public area.

The YHA Sydney Harbour, is a hostel that is part of the YHA Australia network of youth hostels, one of the most successful and popular hostel organizations as Australia boasts a strong backpacking travel culture. (Figure 13) The YHA Sydney Harbour Hostel is strongly connected to its site by being built over an archaeological site in the historic district of the Rocks in Sydney, with the architectural design intentionally interweaving circulation of the hostel through the archaeological site. The initial entry into the hostel has the visitor walk around the ruins before moving up to the lobby. At different points throughout the hostel, visitors can overlook historic ruins, as well as having views out to the Harbour and Sydney Opera House. These visual cues are constant reminders of



Figure 13a



Figure 13b



Figure 13c

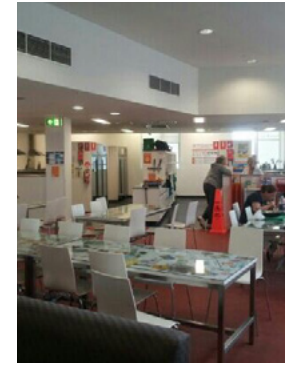


Figure 13d

Figure 13. Australia Youth Hostel at The Rocks, Sydney, Australia.

place, and part of the story-telling quality of traveling. The spatial organization of this hostel is also very similar to hotel layout, with private spaces being separated from public spaces. The floor level that hosts the lobby and front desk is also where the communal kitchen, computer desks and lounge spaces are located. These spaces are connected by an open floor plan, most likely for security. This hostel, unlike the last two precedents, maintains that its public spaces are for hostel guests only, with no events or activities that attract locals of Sydney. The only connections that the YHA Sydney Harbour has to its locale is the visual cues to the historic site it sits on and the location amongst the historic neighborhood, the Rocks, in Sydney. The dormitories and private rooms are located in their own separate wing, accessible from the lobby and check-in, with security access for the hostel guests only. This hostel offers dormitories that share washrooms as well as private rooms with washrooms en-suite.

All travel accommodations, hostels, motels and hotels, at their most basic

utilitarian level, are responding to the travel constant of rest. Comparing these three types of tourist accommodations, displays that the key distinctions of the hostel that differentiates it from hotels and motels is that the hostel emphasizes the community and socially minded activities that overlap with each other in the hostel's public spaces. Hotels and motels specifically advertise to the individual guest while the hostel advertises to the group or the individual looking to be a part of a group. The confluence and interaction of the travel and local community that the hostel responds to is why choosing to design a hostel is important to this project and displays how hostels responds to the interaction, adventure, experience and rest. Through the hostel's community spaces, is where travelers can engage in other parts of travel and interact with each other and talk about their own experiences, share stories and seek adventure.

Hostels have the opportunity of providing space that hearkens to the individualistic romantic desires of travel. The important of hostels in American

cities is that they can provide places for mingling and community, not just for travelers, but for locals as well. Hostels can provide the practical needs and amenities that the traveler needs, but also can provide the social and communal needs that the traveler seeks. What the traveler seeks differs for each individual, but the acts of moving and seeking companionship, even if temporary, are all part of the adventure of travel. The interest of designing a hostel is to make a place that heightens the experience of journey of the traveler, by being a place that is for the community of the city and neighborhood the hostel is located in.



Figure 14.  
Image of thesis site from  
Google maps

## ITINERARY

A hostel in Seattle can provide city and local culture to the traveler of the Pacific Northwest, through community and interaction in a way that other types of travel accommodation are not design to do in this city. This thesis proposed to establish an overall narrative program of what the America hostel can provide, and then applied the appropriate programmatic elements to an urban site in Seattle. Choosing a site for the hostel is interesting because a hostel can be a hostel almost anywhere; this can be seen just by looking at the history of hostels and the precedents listed earlier: a castle, a biscuit factory, an old hotel, and an archaeological site. The choice of site for this project relies more on the connection and proximity it has to events, activities and culture. A hostel can exist anywhere, but by analyzing the surrounding area, the right programmatic activities can be chosen for that hostel.

Currently in Seattle, there is a large number of hotels, motels and inns. (*Figure 15*) Driving through Seattle's downtown neighborhoods Belltown, South Lake Union, and the Seattle Center, there is a travel accommodation on almost every block. This is just one small handful of the large amounts of motels and hotels that litter the travel accommodation world in the greater Seattle area. However, in Seattle there are only four operating hostels. (*Figure 16*) The furthest south, in the International District is the HIUSA hostel. Downtown, there are two hostels, the Green Tortoise and City Hostel, both located in Belltown, and the Hotel Hotel Hostel in Fremont. While all these hostels are in reasonable locations in Seattle (proximity to public transportation, city landmarks and day and night activity), these hostels provide little interaction with their neighborhood in terms of being a place for travelers only to rest and not places for Seattle residents are encourage to interact at. After talking to many residents of Seattle, little was known of the existence of these hostels.

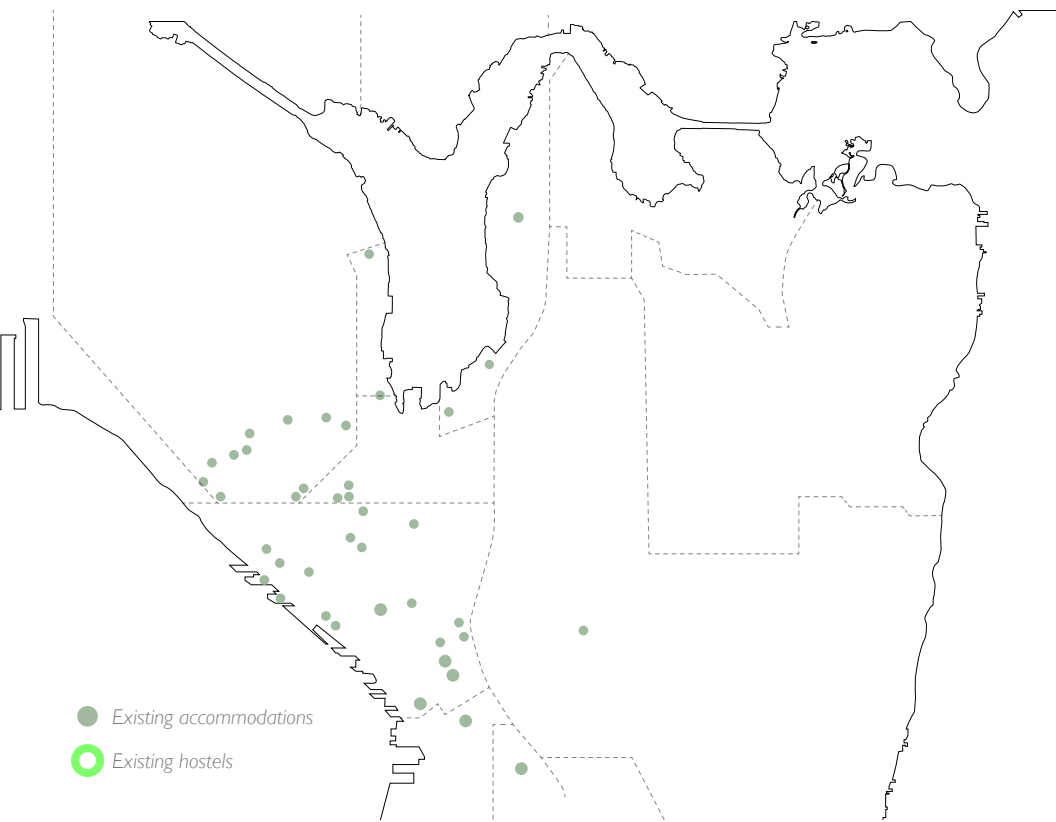


Figure 15. A handful of the existing motels, hotels and inns in Seattle.

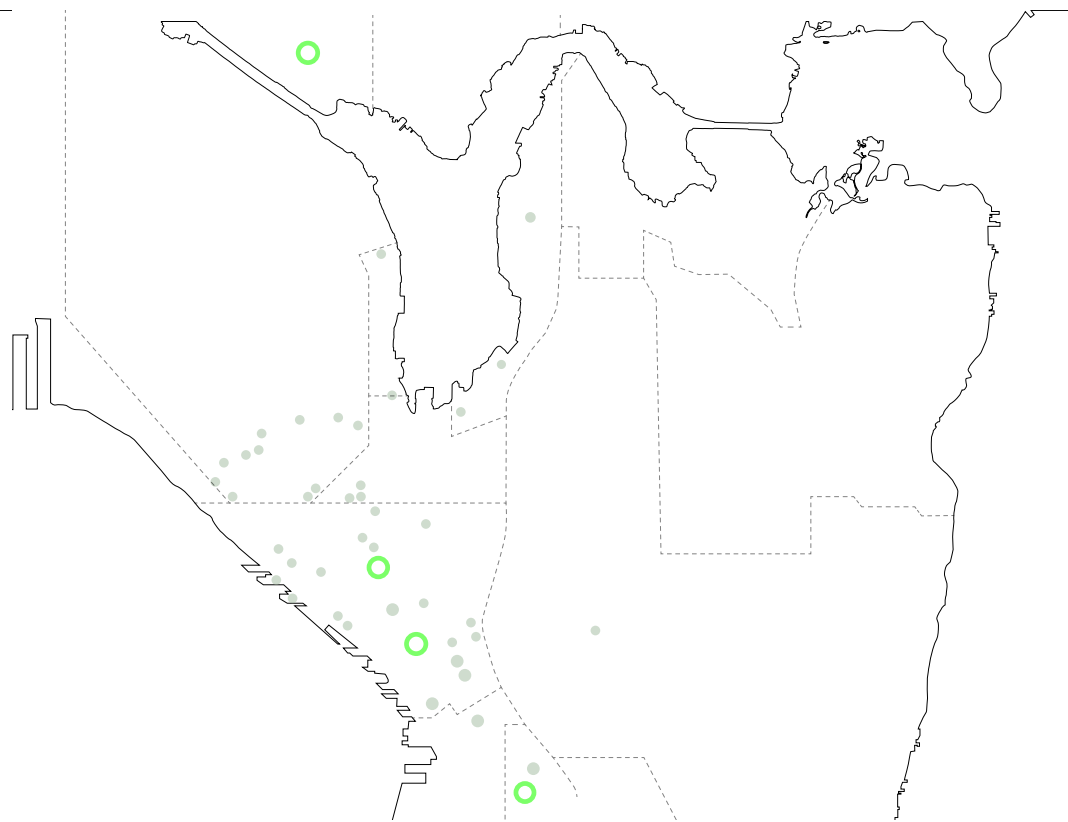


Figure 16. The location of the four existing hostels in Seattle.

The project site for this thesis that explored a new hostel in Seattle is 1801 Fairview Avenue East, located in the Eastlake neighborhood on Lake Union. (Figure 14) Two large wooden piers that extend out into Lake Union define this site. It is neighbored by Lake Union Drydock Company to the south and the quaint Terry Pettus Park to the north. The site is currently zoned for industrial use, as it was home to the national Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) for over 50 years. In 2006, NOAA moved its operations to the coast of Oregon, leaving the site and the site's future use unknown. Currently, the site is underused and up for sale, with only a temporary tenant leasing the site. The site also houses two warehouse/office buildings for the operations. Cheap and economically constructed, both buildings are insignificant and a distraction. The buildings separate and block the water and the downtown view from Fairview Avenue East.

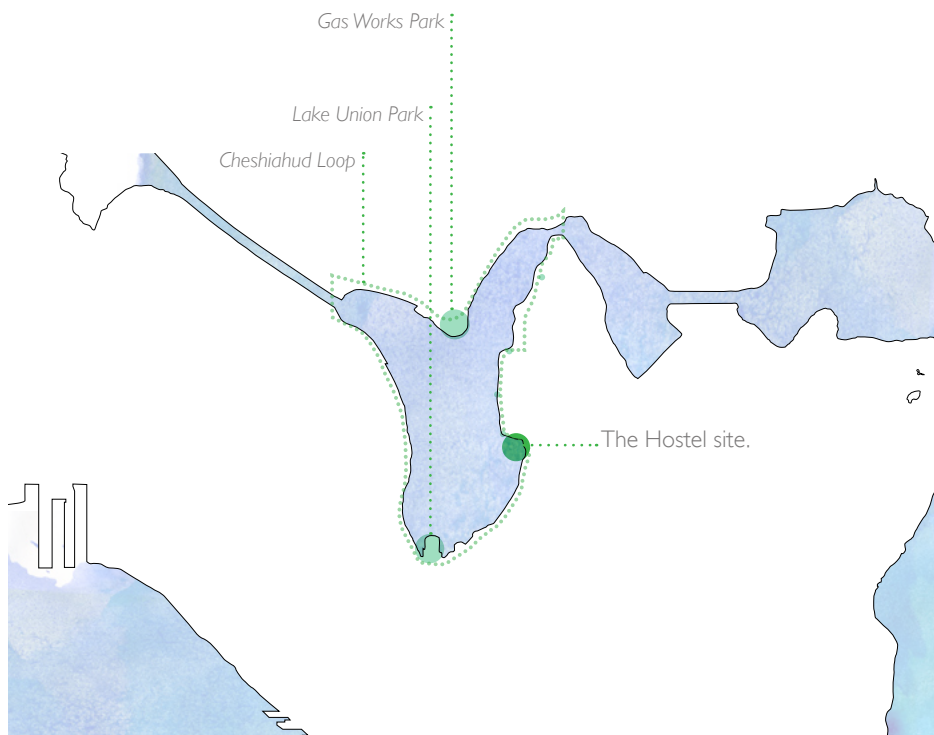


Figure 17. Location of site and other prominent parks around Lake Union. Cheshiahud Loop is also marked.

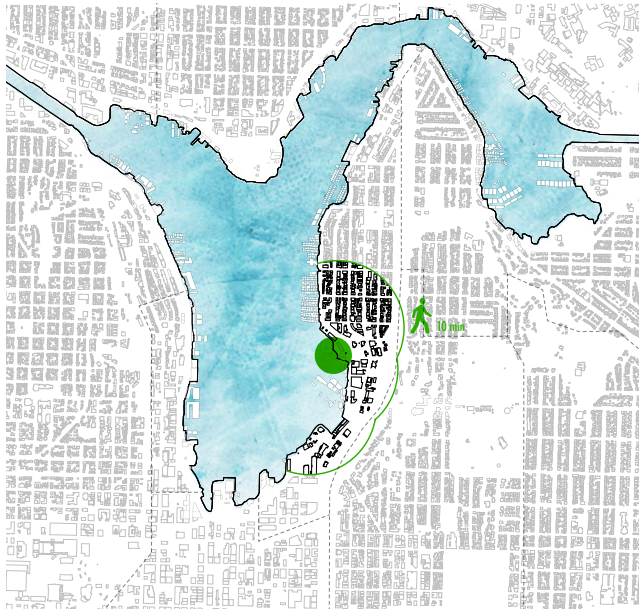
Fairview Avenue East is a mundane road, easy to overlook and changes in vehicular speed, scale and character. Running along the east side of Lake Union, Fairview Avenue connects the Eastlake neighborhood to the booming South Lake Union neighborhood. To an outsider's perspective, Fairview Avenue East might appear to be a secondary vehicular route. However, pedestrians and cyclists of Seattle use this road actively, as a walking and bicycle trail, named Cheshiahud Loop. Cheshiahud Loop circulates around Lake Union (Figure 17), connecting to the Burke Gilman Trail at the north of the lake. This connects the site to Seattle neighborhoods around Lake Union and is an active urban path that brings people by the site. The connection that this site has as being on Lake Union provides a visual, active and ethereal connection to Seattle.

This site on Fairview Avenue East is bounded to the north by the residential

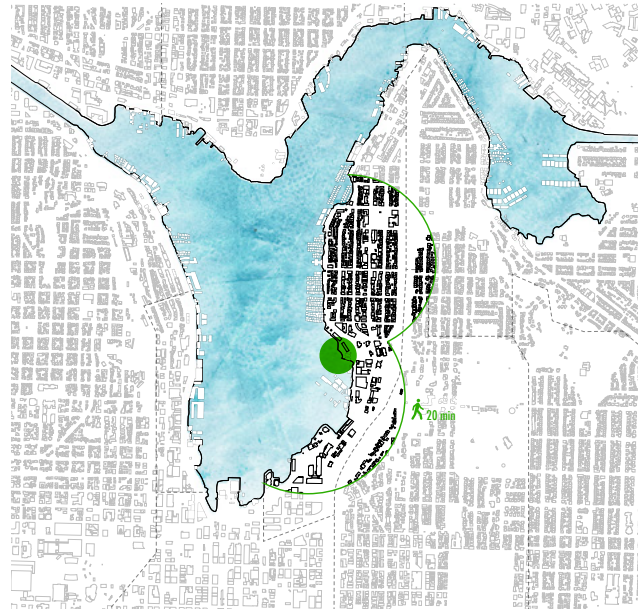
and commercial neighborhood of Eastlake to the north and east. The Eastlake neighborhood is made up of new and old condos and apartments and single-family homes. Most notable of the single-family homes are the houseboats that are an established community in Eastlake. The Eastlake houseboats are located just north of the site, separated from the site by Terry Pettus Park. One block to the east of the site is the main arterial through the neighborhood, Eastlake Avenue East. This main arterial is a mostly commercially zoned, with a number of restaurants and bars opening along Eastlake Avenue East. This is also the main through-way for Seattle metro, connecting Eastlake to downtown by bus. The I-5 corridor runs two blocks east of Eastlake Avenue East, separating Eastlake from Capitol Hill.

The location of this site with its proximity, accessibility, experience, neighboring community and views is why this site would be an ideal location for a hostel. *(Figure 18)* Connecting the site through the hostel program and back to the Eastlake neighborhood, could help the site develop into a gathering place for Seattle residents and travelers visiting Seattle.

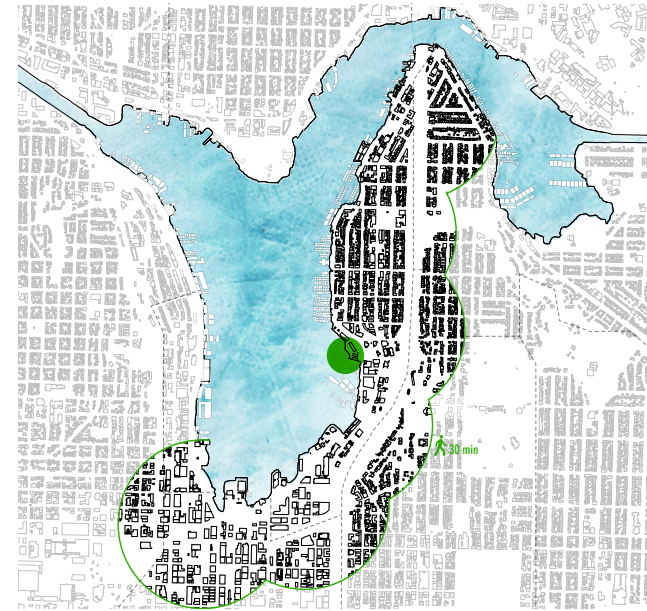
Two large wooden piers that extend out into Lake Union define the site. These wooden piers were built for large boats operated by NOAA to dock here, and the two piers extend out into Lake Union about 200 feet. The pier deck is about 8 feet above Lake Union's water level, giving these piers a sense of permanence at this location. The piers join together and meet the shore at the most southeastern point of the site, meeting the intersection of Fairview Avenue East and West Blaine Street. Fairview Avenue East, defines the eastern portion of Cheshiahud Loop and the eastern edge of the Site. Pedestrians and cyclists from the Eastlake neighborhood and other neighborhoods that surround the lake,



10 minutes



20 minutes



30 minutes

Figure 18. Walking distances from the site.

move along this loop, passing by the site everyday. Vehicular traffic slows along Fairview Avenue at this place, as dog-walkers, parents with strollers, runners and cyclists activate this mundane road, especially on sunny days. This kind of activity on Fairview juxtaposes the industrial character of this site.



Figure 19. View of site from Fairview Avenue East.

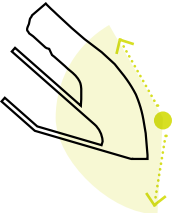


Figure 20. View looking west, between the two piers.

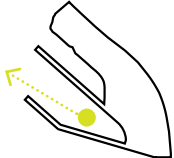




Figure 21. View at the end of the piers looking downtown.

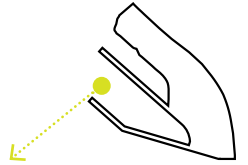
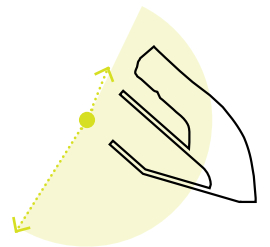


Figure 22. Looking back towards the site.



## PACKING LIST

### TRAVELERS

Backpackers (ages 18 - 35)  
College Students (18 - 25)  
Families (nuclear: parents and children)  
Old couples (seniors)  
Young couples (honeymooners)  
Student groups - K-12

### PUBLIC SPACES

Lounge (Indoor & Outdoor)  
Bar  
Cafe  
Restaurant  
Public Restrooms  
Kayak Rentals  
Marina

### SEMI-PUBLIC SPACES

Security Room  
Communal Kitchen  
8 bed Dormitory x12 (96 beds total)  
Common Bathrooms x12  
Multi-Purpose/game room

### PRIVATE SPACES

Family Rooms (with en-suite washroom and toilet) x4  
Double room (with en-suite washroom and toilet) x4

Miscellaneous  
Circulation (stairwells and elevator)  
Electric Rooms  
Mechanical Rooms  
Laundry Room

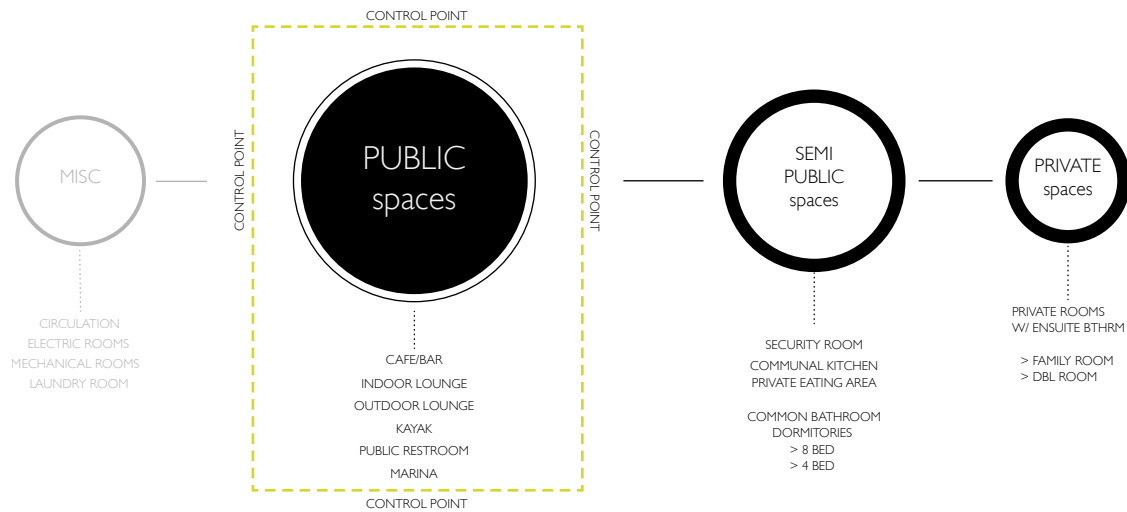


Figure 23. Program diagram.

Due to the lack of formal analysis of hostels, this program narrative is developed and formed from the successful spaces of the hostel precedents previously depicted. The users of hostels vary, as travelers are not necessarily defined as one thing or another. Part of defining the users is based on understanding who has predominantly been staying at hostels and who hostels can attract.

The stereotypes of the guests of a hostel come from the history of youth hostels. (Figure 24) Typically, the main guests at hostels are college-aged (18-25) travelers, or the solo urban backpacker. These user groups are similar in that they are typically on a low budget and require few amenities, however their priorities in travel vary just as much as any other demographic of traveler. The hostel, because of the communal and social spaces it can provide, should also attract travelers from all age groups. This includes the nuclear family, school groups, and all couples (honeymooners to seniors). The different spaces within the hostel and the diversity of the uses of those spaces make the hostel an ideal gathering space for

such a diverse user group.

Defining the program of spaces is easier to understand by breaking it up into three different types of spaces: public, semi-public and private. (Figure 23) The public spaces include the lobby, large and small gathering spaces (indoor and outdoor), bar, café, restaurant spaces, public restrooms, and kayak rentals. The public spaces are truly public, meaning that they are accessible by guests and non-guests of the hostel. The lobby is the main entry to the hostel. All guests and non-guests should have to pass by this point. This is the point of contact to the hostel, for check-ins, and should be a control point between the lobby spaces and the guest rooms. The gathering space is a public space that is for guests of the hostel and non-guests. The bar or café area is also for hostel guests or for anyone passing by and stopping into the explore the site. The bar and café area, can be managed by the hostel, or managed by local businesses. By bringing in local businesses that already exist in the city, it creates intrigue and interest for locals

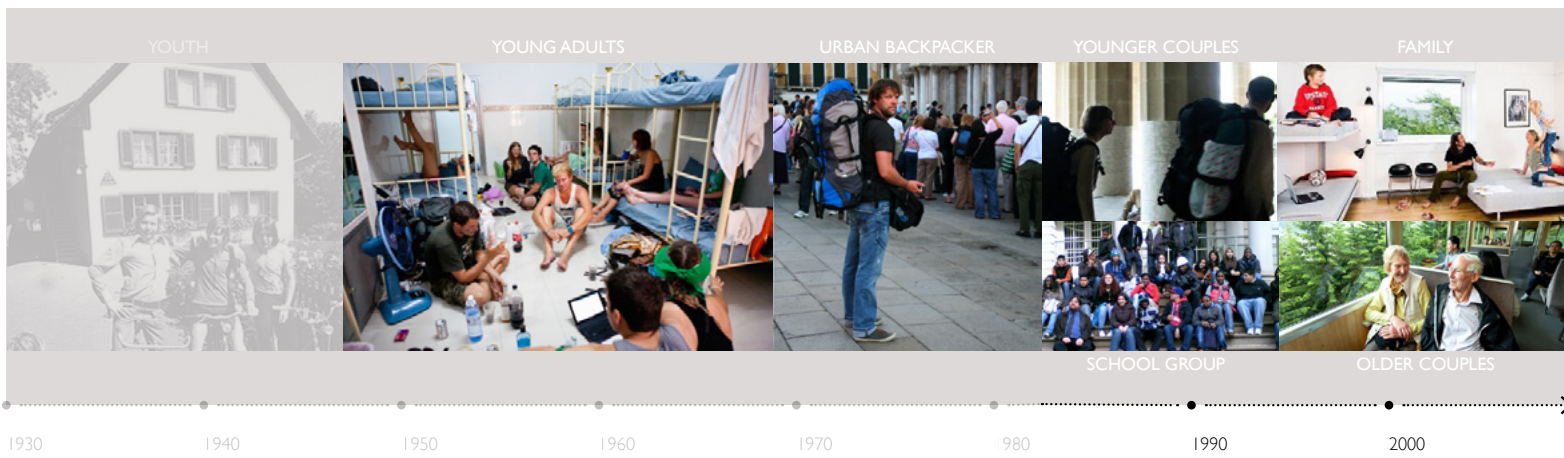
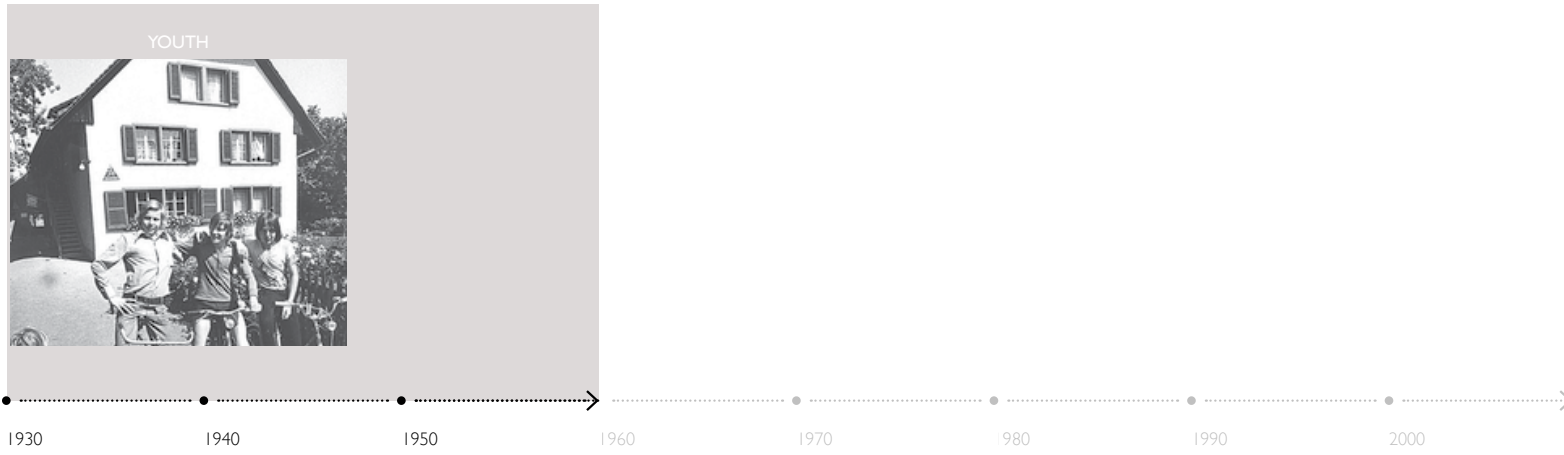


Figure 24  
Changing users of hostels  
during the 1900s.

to want to stop by the hostel and interact with the location and with travelers.

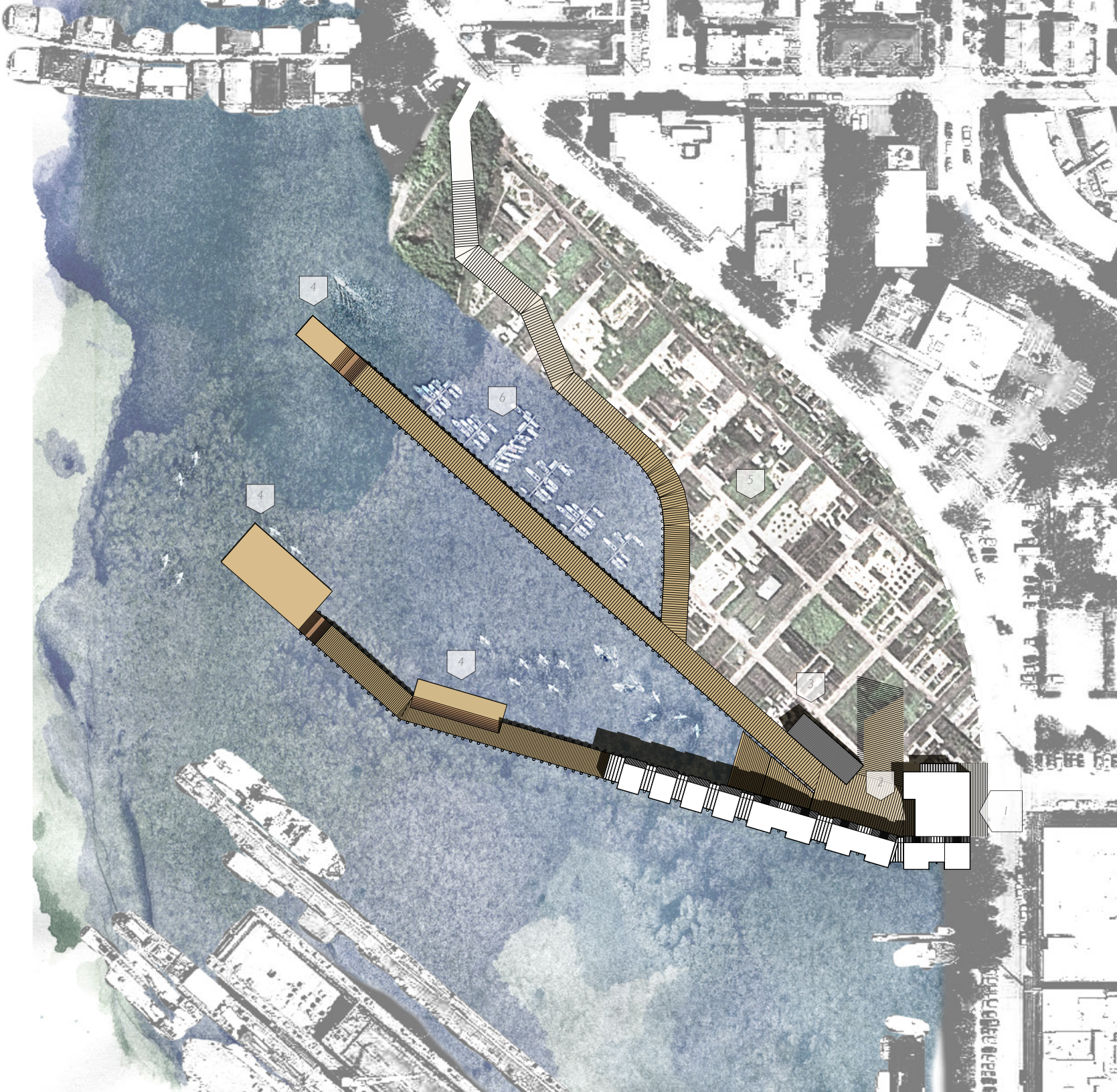
The hostel will also provide public areas that is primarily for Seattle and Eastlake residents. A marina, kayak rentals and a P-Patch and a space for a farmer's market to come to the Eastlake neighborhood, will attract also attract Eastlake residents to the site. The inclusion of these programmatic elements has direct relationships to surrounding activity and the configuration of the existing site. A marina for small boats will bring water activity to the site, and provides a new public place for boats to dock. The marina can also be used by the Center for Wooden Boats, a non-profit boat foundation that is located at the south end of Lake Union. The Center for Wooden Boats offers sailing classes, boat-making classes and other boat centered activities. This new marina as part of the hostel, can be another node along Lake Union that the Center for Wooden Boats can access and dock at during sailing classes or other events. Kayaking on Lake Union is a popular activity, however there are currently only two locations for kayak rentals: the Northwest Outdoor Center on Westlake and Agua Verde, a Mexican-American style restaurant to the north of the lake by the University of Washington. Including a new location in Eastlake for kayak rentals will not only benefit Seattle residents who want to get on the water, but also travelers staying at the hostel. The P-patch and farmer's market introduction to this site relate to activities for locals but can benefit the experience of the stay for travelers at this hostel. Currently, Eastlake has no grocery store or neighborhood farmer's market, and this residential neighborhood could benefit from it. This would bring food culture onto the site, overlapping with spaces for the communal kitchen where travelers could pick up locally grown produce and other food items from the market and cook for themselves in the hostel kitchen.

The semi-public spaces include the security room, the eating room, communal kitchens, the dormitories (ranging from 2-8 beds) and the common bathrooms. They are semi-public in that any guest of the hostel can use them, but they are not accessible by the non-guests. There should be a control point between these spaces and any truly public space. The locker room is a secure room, adjacent to the lobby, and is specifically for guests arriving before check-in time who need to stash their belongings, or are checking out but not leaving the city until later in the day. The eating room is made up of communal tables and chairs, but is specifically for guests of the hostel. It's a space where if there is a large school group, anywhere from 15-50 school age students staying at the hostel, they have a place for meals and meeting that is separate from the public spaces for privacy and to decrease interruptions of activities in the public spaces. The communal kitchens are located adjacent to the eating area, and have multiple large cooking prep and cleaning stations for different users. Large refrigerators for guests to store food are here also. The dormitories will range from having two to eight bunk beds, with equal amount of lockers to bed, and a place for sitting and interacting. The dormitories should be in close proximity to the communal baths. The communal baths will consist of washbasins, toilets and shower stalls. There should be two per floor, one female and the other male. All the semi-public spaces should be in relative close proximity to the public spaces, for easy circulation flow, yet have a control point separating public and semi-public.

The private spaces are mainly the private guest rooms: the family room and double rooms. These spaces each have their own en-suite bathroom. The family rooms are identifiable by having a full bed and a bunk bed, the double room has a queen-sized bed, and the single room a twin bed. Each room should also have a table and chairs for the room guests to use. The private spaces should be

oriented away from the public spaces, as the users of these spaces might desire more privacy from outside activities.

The intention for such a vast range of programmatic spaces is to facilitate to a diverse user group with different activities and priorities in their travels. The combination and organization of spaces will help to enhance social interaction where it is desired and to create private, reclusive areas if so desired by the traveler.



1. HOSTEL
2. PUBLIC PLAZA
3. KAYAK RENTALS
4. FLOATING PLATFORMS
5. P-PATCH
6. MARINA

Figure 25  
Site Plan.

## THE JOURNEY

A hostel on a pier. This is the essence of this thesis. At its most basic level, this thesis is taking an underused, yet ideally located site, and placing a hostel on the existing structure of the piers so that guests and people can come out and experience and use the entire site and the views it offers. The design of this hostel merges all together the ideas of travel, rest, movement, experience and place.

The design of the hostel responds to the experience of travel and the basic hostel accommodations by meeting the program outlined in this project. It also responds to the conditions of the site and the piers to create a sense of place that reinforces the characteristics and existing conditions of the site. Using the existing pier structure and material as the foundation for the hostel, the design of the hostel explored creating a new layer of shelter onto the piers. The hostel is an extension of the piers, and emphasizes the materiality, function and quality of the site and the existing structure.

The site planning works to bring the activity along Cheshiahud Loop onto and through the site, moving pedestrians and cyclists off of Fairview Avenue East. This move activates the site and allows for residents and locals of Seattle to be inclined to come onto the site and explore. The non-pier, ground area of the site becomes a community garden or p-patch for the Eastlake neighborhood. This program activity of the p-patch is included in the site planning, because considering the demographics and personality that the Eastlake neighborhood is, residents of this area would have a reason to come to the site and make it their own. This site program provides an activity specifically for Seattle locals and residents to engage with the site.

There are new moments designed onto the piers to bring different ways of

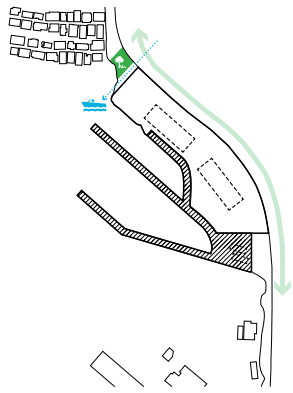


Diagram 1: Pre-Existing conditions around the site.

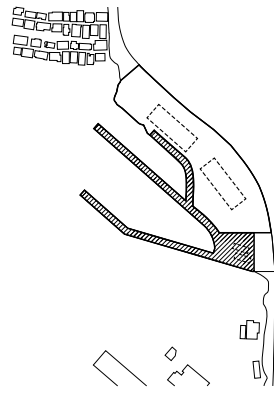


Diagram 2: Existing dock area marked by the hatch.

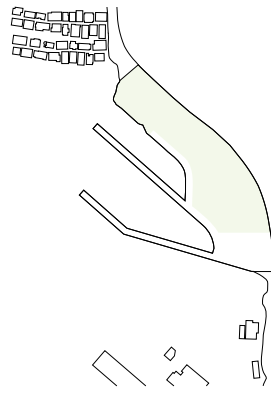


Diagram 3: The new community garden area.

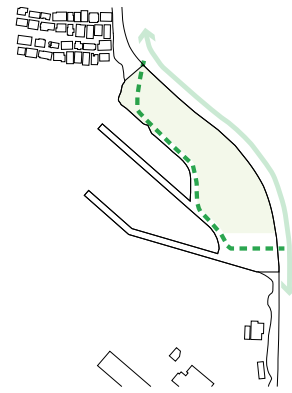


Diagram 4: Bring Cheshiahud Loop onto the Site

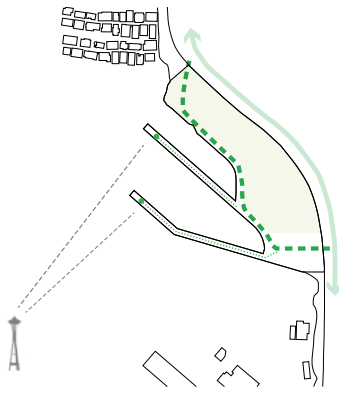


Diagram 5: Allow for public access out to the piers.

Figure 26: Site diagrams.

experiencing the water and water activities. When one first walks out onto the site, then can move straight towards a new part of the pier that extends down to the water to a floating platform, flanked by the two existing piers. This platform is where kayakers can launch their boats, protected on the water by the two out-reach arms of the piers. Moving further down the piers, parts of the pier are removed to add new floating platforms that travelers and locals can meet on. The new floating platforms become ways to occupy the pier differently than simply walking on top of the tall pier structure. One can walk down to the different floating platforms, each facing a different direction for different experiences.

The main goal for the design and configuration of the building to pier, is to create areas of overlap between travelers and locals. The hostel areas are designed as extensions of the pier structure. Using the areas that already exist as the wooden piers, the hostel spaces occupy this area, creating movement of travelers through hostel functions, while separating out different activities and creating overlap in

areas where locals can use parts of the hostel. To facilitate interaction between these two groups of people, different types of spaces were looked at to overlap; indoor and outdoor space, private and communal spaces, and hostel and public spaces. An outdoor public plaza from semi-public and private hostel spaces separates the public spaces of the hostel. This plaza acts at the main threshold onto the site. The hostel spaces define the south edge of the site and the south pier, creating a buffer between the industrial Lake Union Dry Dock Company and the activity that will happen at the hostel. Letting the piers remain and emphasize reaching out toward the lake the view of downtown, entices guests to walk out to the ends of the pier.

Overlapping movement between travelers and locals, meandering back and forth around the site and sharing in an experience of being at a place is part of the main idea for this hostel. The other park is letting the hostel function as a hostel, where the public cannot enter the hostel's semi-public and private space, help

guide other design decision.

The design of the hostel focuses on creating a functioning hostel where a traveler can arrive, check-in, drop off their belongings and move out onto the site to take in their surrounding and seek adventure. The hostel dormitories and guest rooms are lifted up above the pier, so that the existing piers can remain open to the public to be able to walk out on to. The additional hostel spaces fill in below the guest rooms and between the public bar and café. The public bar and café are separate from the hostel, as these spaces are open to the public, and anyone can use the services and refreshments provided there. The bar and café are separated from the hostel by the open public plaza on the pier, but are connected to the hostel spaces overhead, by a large multi-purpose room. The large multi-purpose room overhead is a space where games, movies, events, classes, or meals can happen. In the morning, breakfast for the guests can be prepared in the café and moved up to the multi-purpose room above for guests to congregate and enjoy their meal. In the evening, musical guests or other evening activities can be performed in the space.

The hostel is designed to allow for the arrival process to be linear and straightforward, so the check-in and initial circulation paths follow a direct route. When a traveler first arrives at the hostel, they move into the Check-In and lobby area from Fairview Avenue East. Here they catch their bearing and either move up towards their room, or stash their belongings in the locker room and continue on to explore the site and city. If they move up towards their room, they can take a breath, enjoy the views and surroundings from their room and clean up in a bathroom and then move back out towards the site. There are control points between each grouping of rooms, so that a hostel guest does not have to pass

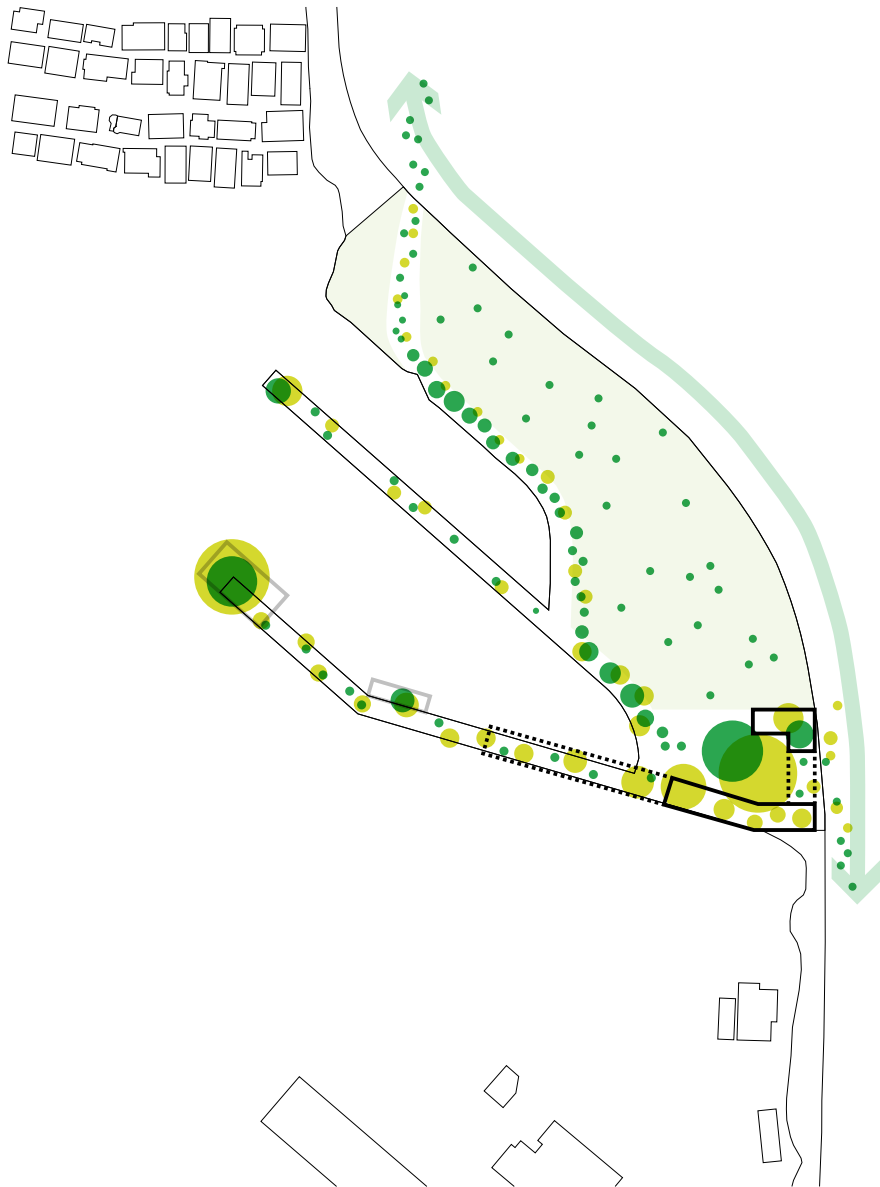
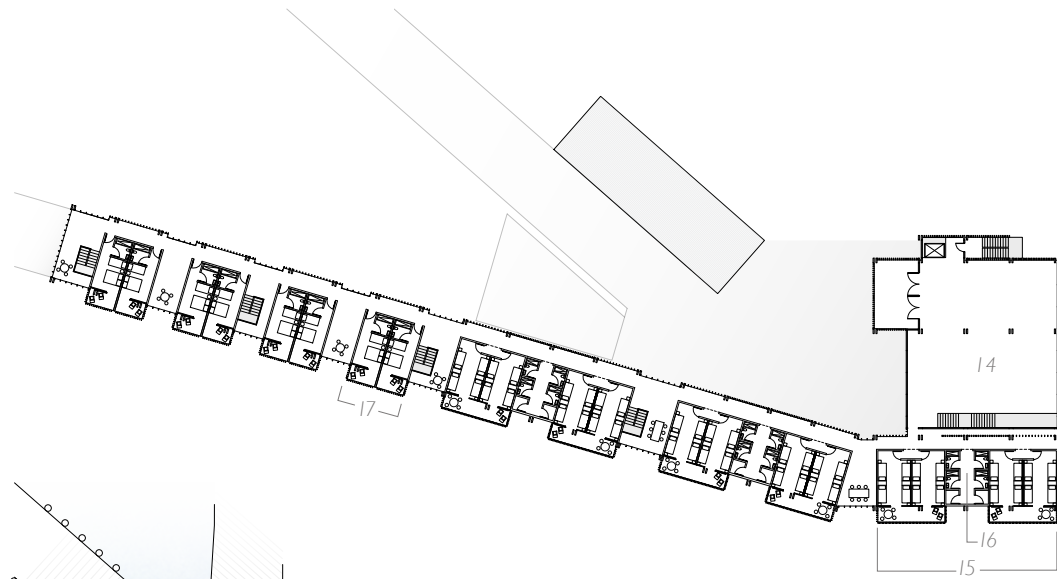


Figure 27: Interaction & circulation diagram



UPPER LEVEL PLAN

- 14. MULTI PURPOSE ROOM
- 15. 8 BED DORMS CLUSTER
- 16. UNISEX BATHROOMS
- 17. FAMILY/DOUBLE PRIVATE ROOM



PIER LEVEL PLAN

- 1. CHECK-IN/LOBBY
- 2. MANAGER'S OFFICE
- 3. STORAGE ROOM
- 4. MEN'S TOILET
- 5. WOMEN'S TOILET
- 6. LAUNDRY
- 7. SITTING AREA
- 8. COMMUNAL KITCHEN
- 9. EATING AREA
- 10. BAR/CAFE
- 11. KITCHEN
- 12. PUBLIC PLAZA
- 13. KAYAK RENTALS

Figure 28  
Floor plans.

by the front desk every time they arrive, but can move onto the piers, see what other people are doing before moving back up to their room.

The material and structure that define the shape and form of the hostel is intended to modestly reflect the materiality of the piers. Wooden double columns graft onto the existing pier pilings, to support the hostel up above the piers. Wooden slats envelope the hostel, and are spaced in response to visually connections and type of activity. Areas where the wooden slats are wider apart are covering hostel spaces that are more public in nature, and where the wooden slats are closer together, shield more private spaces, such as in front of the communal bathrooms and rooms. The rhythm of the wooden slats covering the hostel lets the hostel read as an extension of the pier.

All the decisions from site configuration, program arrangement, movement through the site, and materials and structure were all made to promote the original idea of creating engagement and interaction between travelers and locals to this hostel. Each design decision reinforces the main idea of the hostel: a place of community for travelers that brings in the local culture and people to coax interaction between these two typically separate groups.

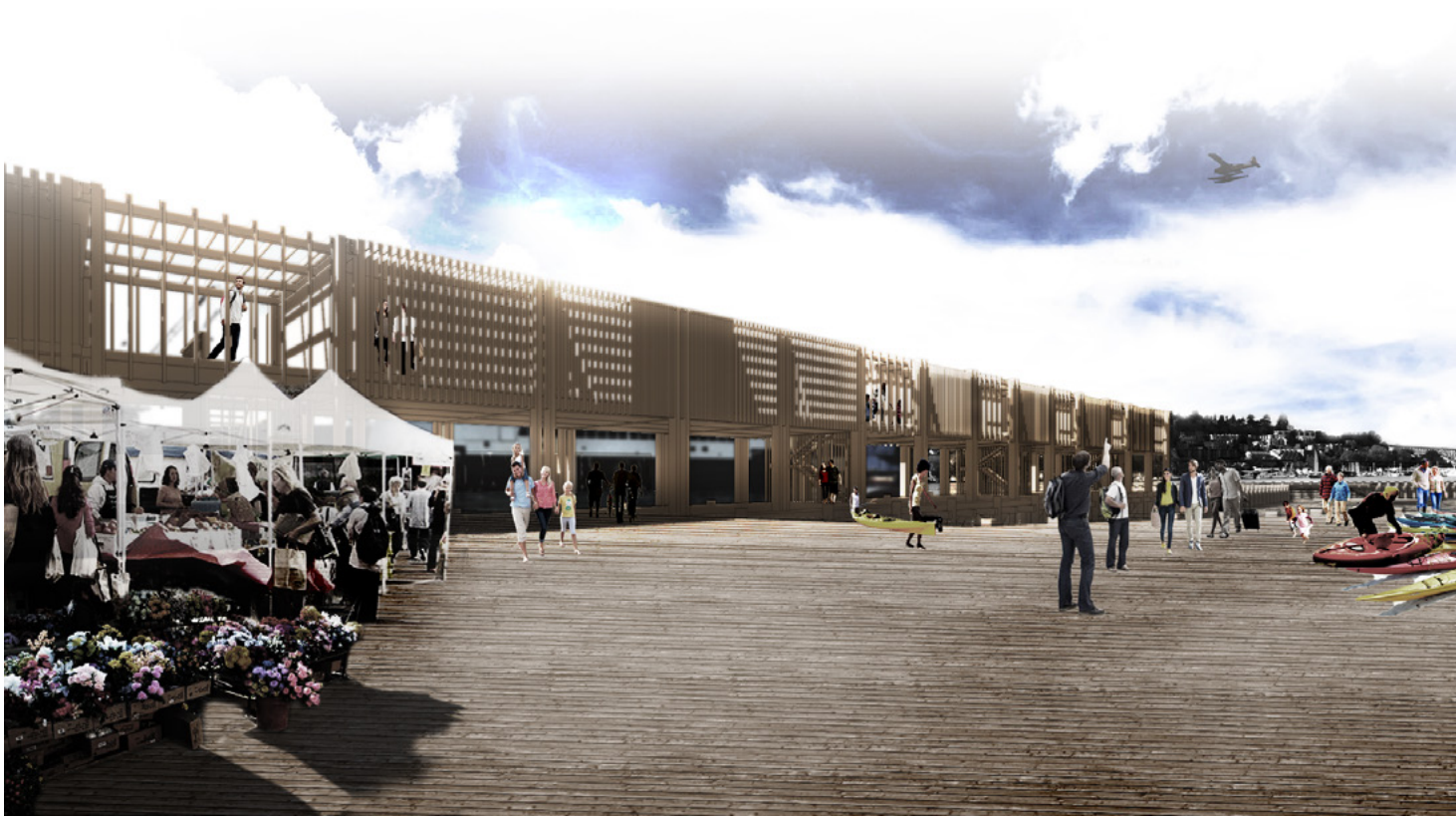


Figure 29. View on the public plaza looking towards the hostel.



Figure 30. View on one of the new floating platforms.

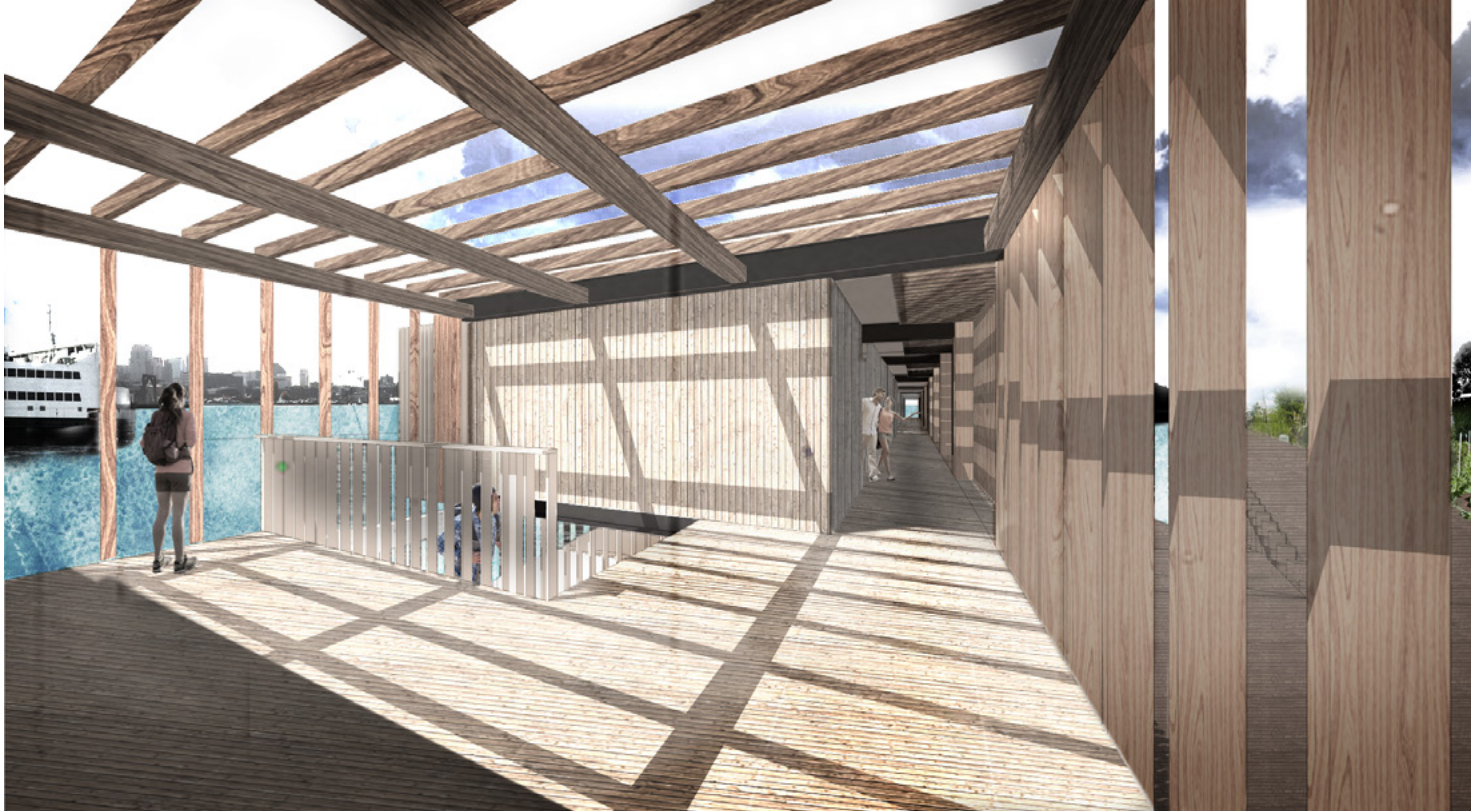


Figure 31. View looking into hallway and circulation areas.



Figure 32. View into one of the 8 bed dormitories.



Figure33. Section perspective through the piers and hostel.

## REFLECTIONS

This thesis began with a curiosity of wanderlust. What is it that beckons people away from their homes and what do they hope to find? We are all seduced to travel, after hearing stories from others of the places and experiences that they had in foreign lands. Literature, film and art help to form the curiosity that grows and makes us wonder what else is out there. However, we often see the grass as greener on the other side and forget that people wonder the same thing about our home. This thesis is making a place in Seattle, where travelers and residents can interact and potentially gain insights from one another. Through interacting with others, we learn about new things and new places, and we also get to hear from an outsider's perspective what it is about our city that beckoned them here. Around the world, people share these experiences in hostels, a place that is for travelers and their needs. In hostels today, the city's character comes in and defines the experience of the hostel. With this thesis, I explored the hostel as a place that represents the identity of the city through views, activity and interaction.

The design of this hostel responded to the movement of travel through rest and adventure, offering spaces where a traveler can find both. Upon review of this thesis, some might imply that the design of the hostel could have been more aggressive and that the design could have across more of the site. However, there was specific intention to keep the design simple and straightforward. The design of the hostel was intended to be simple to be a backdrop to the experience of the site and highlight the views available from the site. The other reason for keeping the hostel design modest is because hostels are budget accommodation, and to design something grandeur seemed to contradict with the root idea of what a hostel is or ever has been.

Despite the popularity of hostels abroad, they are still not a popular place for the American traveler to stay at in America. A lot of this has to do with the stereotypes and stigmas that the American traveler tends to have towards hostels as a places for vagabonds and hippie urban backpackers. To break these stereotypes and stigmas, if we let hostels become a place to host city cultural events and activities, more American travelers will see hostels as familiar places, where they can go to in new cities to participate in new experiences and adventures, and hopefully meet some friendly strangers. Hostels will be more then just a cheap bed to sleep in, but a place where people can seek the adventures that make the stories they take home with them.

The hostel in this thesis is one ideal vision of one ideal hostel in Seattle. This thesis tries to stretch the limits of what a hostel should be, and really tries to see hostels as more then a place that offers a bed for a night to a budget traveler. The opportunity in this thesis is seeing how American cities and society can embrace hostels as part of our communities. A hostel is a place where a city can show off its best qualities to our guests.

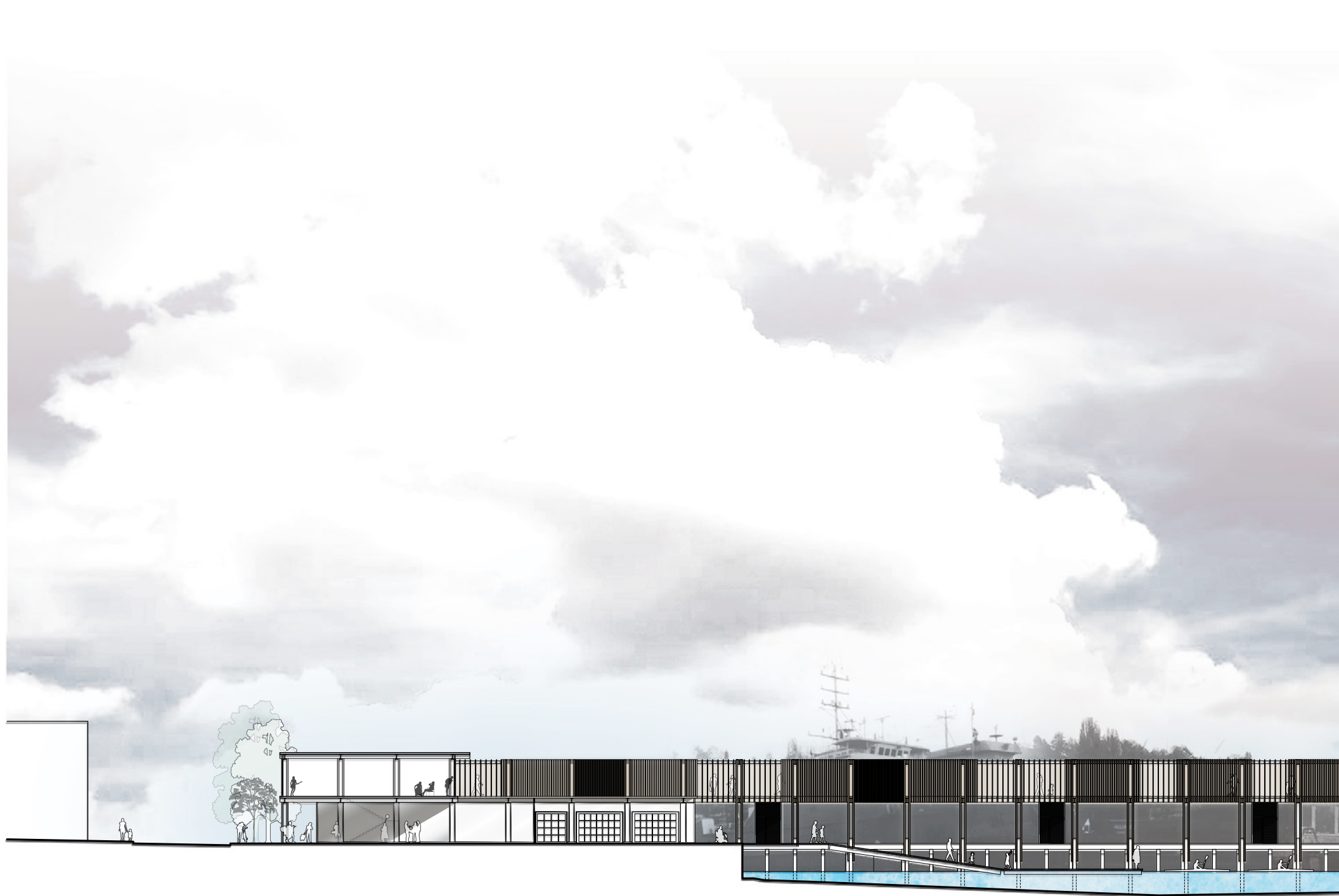
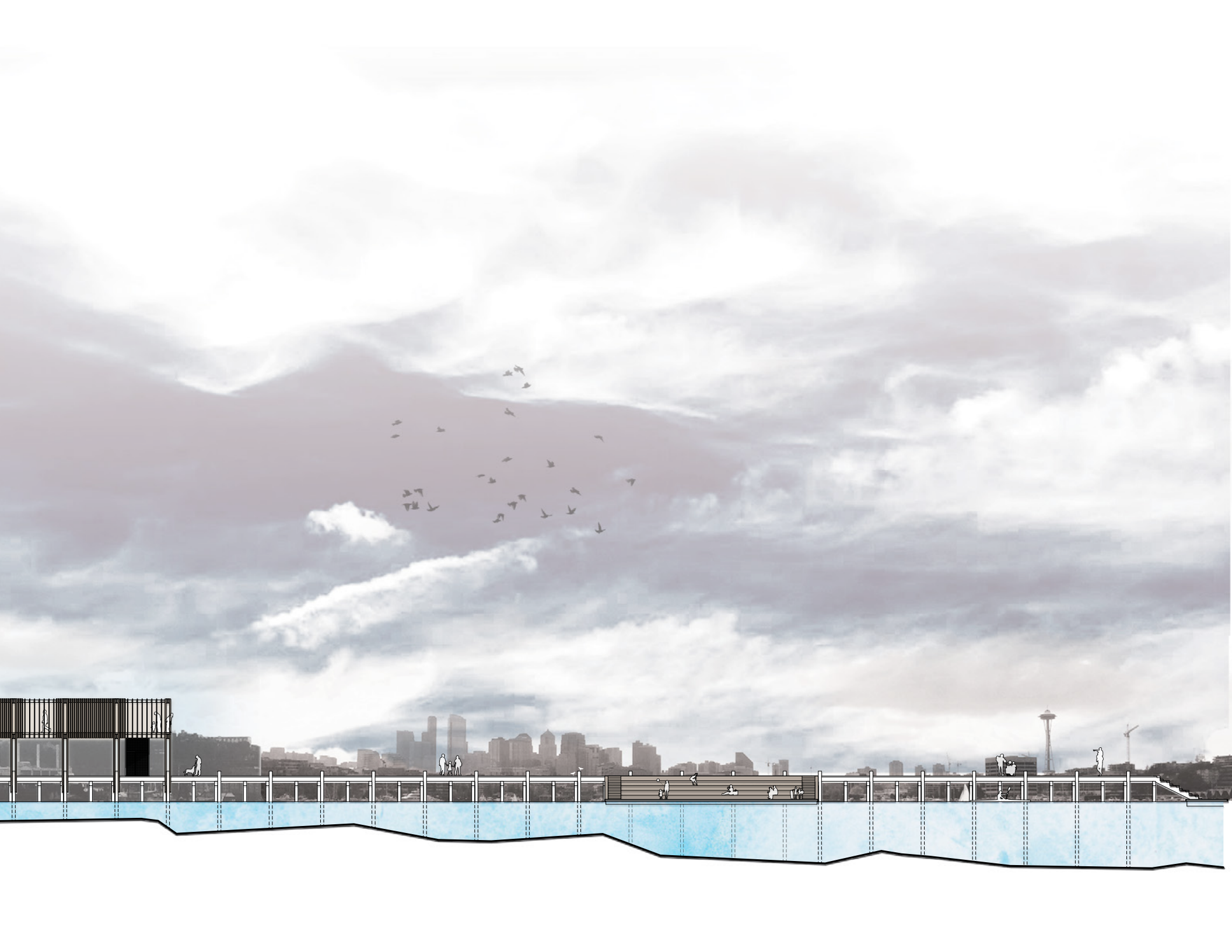


Figure 34. Site section through piers.



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