

Ballard Bridge Park: Preserving Place for Transient Populations in Gentrifying Urban Spaces

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ABSTRACT

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Public spaces are meant to serve and accommodate the needs of a diverse populace. These spaces are created in order to improve overall quality of life through access to open space in increasingly dense urban communities. In 2013 Seattle grew faster than any other city in the country (Seattle Times, 2014) further highlighting the need for this public amenity. Particular districts within the city of Seattle have experienced higher rates of growth than others, with the Ballard neighborhood being the frontrunner. This thesis focuses on designing a public space that responds to the growth of Ballard, particularly the impact this has had on the homeless population that has resided within the light industrial zoned area of the neighborhood since as far back as the late 1970's.

While Seattle prides itself as a city heavily invested in the public process regarding how public spaces are created and managed, the homeless population has been omitted from this discussion.

Furthermore, public spaces are increasingly systematically designed with the intention of removing this population, which arguably has more needs for this space than any other.

My thesis explores this situation as it relates to the Ballard neighborhood of Seattle and demonstrates a design of one small space that focuses on the integration of the low- income and homeless population with the greater Ballard community. I chose to use a portion of the area underneath the Ballard Bridge as I felt it was well situated to achieve these goals. This integration is encouraged through a design that provides services that address the needs of a greater number of user groups than most public spaces, while improving the aesthetic and environmental quality of the underutilized portion of the site beneath the Ballard Bridge.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE	10
1. INTRODUCTION	12
CRITICAL STANCE and CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATION	23
BALLARD	26
HOMELESSNESS OF BALLARD	33
THE SITE	35
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	42
3. PRECEDENT STUDIES	65
4. DESIGN	81
5. REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSION	119
6. BIBLIOGRAPHY	122

FIGURES

FIGURE 1.1	Edith Macefield House Souce: Meghan Walker (2012)	12
FIGURE 1.2	National Gentrification Rates	14
FIGURE 1.3	Corporate Site	18
FIGURE 1.4	Ballard Residential Vehicles	18
FIGURE 1.5	Ballard Character montage	19
FIGURE 1.6	Ballard Urban Form	26
FIGURE 1.7	Ballard Map	27
FIGURE 1.8	Pre- Ballard Blocks 2	28
FIGURE 1.9	Jeff	28
FIGURE 1.10	Ballard Development	29
FIGURE 1.11	Ballard Demographics	30
FIGURE 1.12	Ballard Zoning	32
FIGURE 1.13	No Parking Restrictions	34
FIGURE 1.14	Ballard Norwegian Parade	35
FIGURE 1.15	Gentrification of Old Ballard Avenue	35
FIGURE 1.16	Ballard Growth	36
FIGURE 1.17	Ballard Development	37
FIGURE 1.18	Site Context	38
FIGURE 2.1	Homeless locations	43
FIGURE 2.2	Fredrick Law Olmstead	50
FIGURE 2.3	Site context- shifting built environment	54
FIGURE 2.4	Homeless Deterrents in Guangzhou China	56
FIGURE 2.5	Triangulation Diagram Source	60
FIGURE 2.6	Ballard Condo Growth	60

FIGURE 3.1	Katz Chaio Diagram 1	65
FIGURE 3.2	Katz Chiao Diagram 2	66
FIGURE 3.3	Lafayette Square Park	67
FIGURE 3.4	Lafayette Square Park Arial Image	68
FIGURE 3.5	Lafayette Square Park Diagram	68
FIGURE 3.6	Underpass Park	69
FIGURE 3.7	Underpass Park	70
FIGURE 3.8	Battery Park City 1	71
FIGURE 3.9	Battery Park City 2	72
FIGURE 3.10	Battery Park City 3	73
FIGURE 3.11	Victor Steinbrueck Park 1	74
FIGURE 3.12	Victor Steinbrueck Park 2	75
FIGURE 3.13	Peoples Park	77
FIGURE 3.14	Peoples Park Pamphlet	78

PREFACE

Originally I had chosen to focus my thesis on New York City for a design site, both because it is my home city and because I felt that the effects of gentrification and displacement are highly evident and exaggerated due to the level of diversity of the inhabitants, the high housing costs, and the relatively small amount of personal private space leading to an increased usage of the public domain. I realized over the course of the summer of 2013 that the effects of gentrification, displacement, and design for one set of users were evident in almost every urban landscape, including Seattle, and it was impacting my immediate context in just as drastic a manner as in New York. I also became mildly obsessed with disregarded and derelict urban spaces, most often the result of urban infrastructure and currently, becoming some of the only open spaces left in urban areas. I found myself constantly drawn to these environments on my running routes, observing the social dichotomy of these spaces, photographing them and creating a mental catalog of each in the back of my mind.

These forgotten spaces take up a large amount of land area within Seattle, and as densification continues, better management and care for these areas will be crucial in improving our public realm. As UN-HABITAT Executive Director Joan Clos I Matheu stated “What defines a character of a city is its public space, not its private space. What defines the value of the private assets of the space are not the assets by themselves but the common assets. The value of the public good affects the value of the private good. We need to show every day that public spaces are an asset to a city.”¹

It became abundantly clear in observing these spaces that the “homeless” population was the one group of people using these spaces and to a large degree. Transient populations are the hardest hit when public spaces are impacted because these spaces are their homes. Is there a way to improve the quality of these spaces without displacing the one group that has made use of them?

As designers I think we often feel we lack the power to make social changes in the urban environment. There is a sense that our lack of market understanding prevents us from truly impacting large-scale social issues. In my initial thoughts about this project I knew I wanted to find a way to use small-scale design tools to create spaces in the urban setting that would effectuate the use of spaces by all user groups and bring attention to those user groups that call these sites home. I hold to my view that by designing sites that reflect the needs of transient populations while being aesthetically pleasing to a greater population, it is possible to alter the strong negative perception many carry of those users.

1 Joan Clos I Matheu, “Placemaking and Future of Cities” <http://www.pps.org>, (June, 2014).

INTRODUCTION

All communities grow and change, both in terms of their physical and social composition. This is not a novel concept, nor something that should be taken issue with. However, it is important to take action when these shifts demonstrate a negative impact on a portion of that community. The Ballard neighborhood of Seattle has developed at a highly accelerated rate over the course of the past fifteen years and in doing so, has become a cost prohibitive place to live for many (Howe, 2011). Furthermore, the increased scale of development has minimized open space and is threatening the light industrial zoned area that has been the blood of the community since its modern birth. With the loss of affordable housing and workspaces, a number of dynamics and historic physical characteristics of the beloved community are being replaced by expensive, homogenous structures that suit the needs of a much higher income demographic.

One of the populations at risk in this transition is the homeless who have found a safe haven among the low-rise warehouses and historic docks that rim the community. Seattle, and Ballard in particular is experiencing a rise in land values and an increasing homeless population all while the amount of open space diminishes. It was my aim to design a space that responded to these challenges and led me to better understand the complex relationships at place in a community in flux. Through the course of this thesis I explored a number of questions related to this topic:

1. What has recent contextual history demonstrated in regards to the shifting dynamics of public space and the concerns of the right to public space for marginalized groups?
2. What is the general perception of the homeless, where does this perception stem from?



FIGURE 1.1: Edith Macefield House Source: Meghan Walker (2012)

3. How has gentrification changed the urban morphology of Ballard, specifically the role and presence of public space?
4. How have changes in our legal system regarding public space served to formalize existing patterns of marginalization and exacerbate the issues created by displacing homeless from their community?
5. What roles have landscape architects historically played in addressing the needs of marginalized urban populations?
6. How have more recent urban projects in similar site locations handled the issue of gentrification and displacement of lower socioeconomic groups? What can be learned from these examples?

These are highly challenging and complex questions that do not have one answer. However, designers have the unique opportunity and ability to re-envision and adapt our surroundings in ways that address these concerns rather than contribute to the further marginalization of people. The aim of my thesis is to redesign one small space within Ballard's post industrial landscape, the area underneath and surrounding the Ballard Bridge underpass in a way that achieves a clear set of strategies focused on improving the space for all current and future users of the site, including those who are marginalized.

The numbers of those in need in American cities are growing even though our cities themselves are becoming wealthier; the distribution of this increasing wealth is growing continually more disproportionate. (2010 Census). Washington state has a top-heavy income and wealth distribution, with over half of the income going to the top 20% of households and over half of the wealth going to the top five percent of households (OFM, 2010). According to the most recent census data, the top fifth of Seattle households earn, on average, 18 times more than the bottom fifth.

Americans have started to realize that the growth patterns and living environments of post WWII are often not the types of spaces that promote a healthy and sustainable way of life and have therefore begun returning to urban centers in droves. Seattle has been one of the most impacted of American cities, now with the second highest rate of low price tract gentrification. This means that the most affordable land areas in Seattle are becoming unaffordable more quickly than in any other city (see figure 1.2, next page).

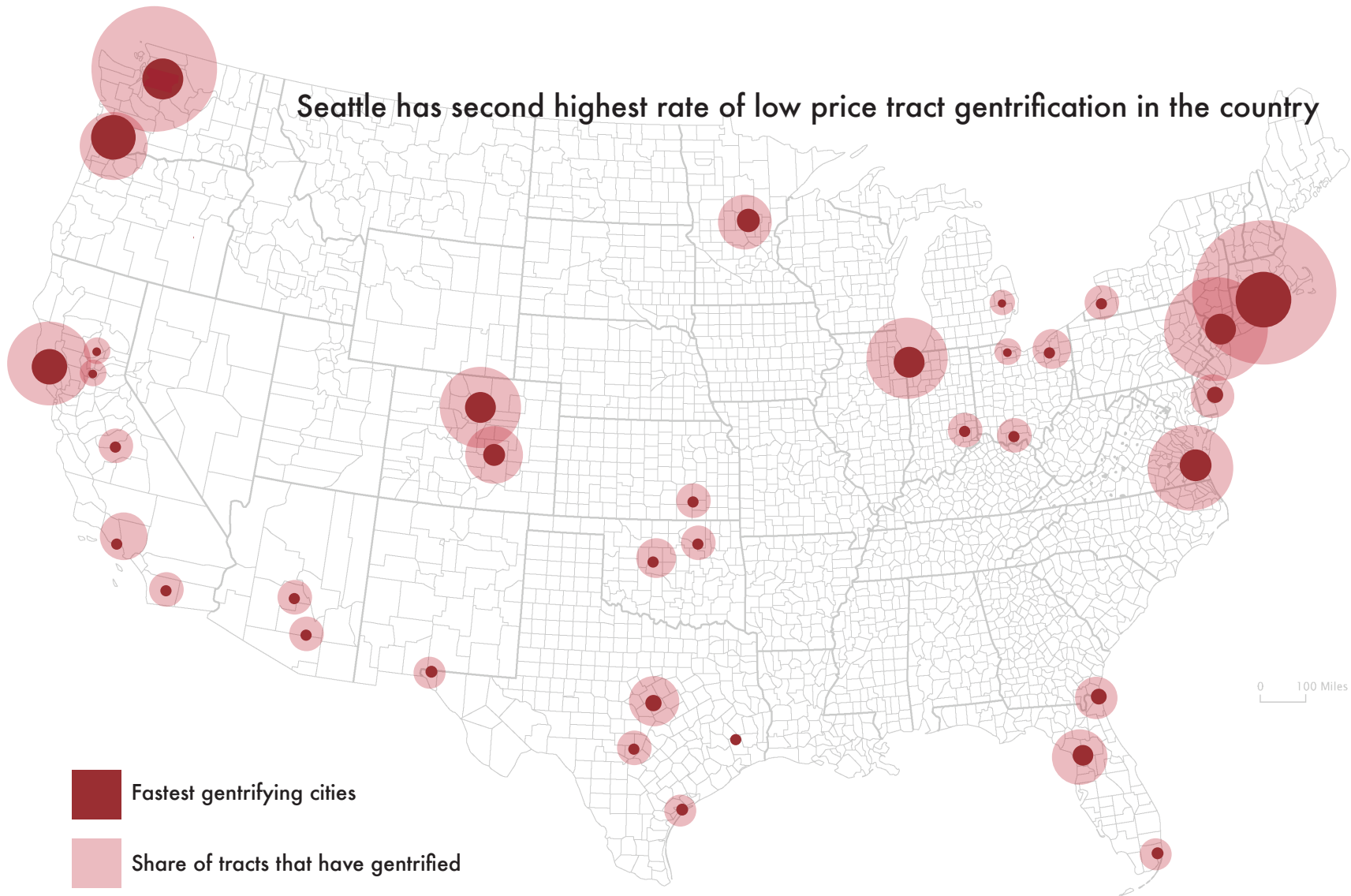


FIGURE 1.2: Gentrification Rates: Data Source. <http://www.cleveland.org/research/trends/2013/113/01regeco.cfm> (2014)

Ballard like many urban neighborhoods is the recipient of this movement and has grown by 24% since 2000, aiding in the concerns of gentrification as seen in figure 1.2 (Ballard News Tribune, 2012). Signs of gentrification in Ballard can be seen largely by the rise of the “creative class”, a young upwardly mobile, white collar demographic whose work centers on the production of new ideas more than new physical products (Florida, 2008).

Historic preservation tactics in the community stem from the desire to maintain the Scandinavian “authenticity” in Ballard, which has now unfortunately become a façade to give Ballard a unique dimension and increase the community’s real estate value. Unfortunately placing landmark designations over a small portion of the neighborhood is not enough to combat the negative impacts of gentrification or preserve the character of the community; in fact they can contribute to the problem. Recently urban public spaces have received a great deal of attention and funding to create well designed spaces but often these designs do not reflect their user group. Some examples include the waterfront park on the east side of Manhattan, Hunter’s Point South, and the proposals for the Brooklyn waterfront all arguably lack designs that resonate with those who occupy the space and have been designed for those whom it is hoped will occupy the space in the future. While it remains a severe issue to retain affordable housing stock, place attachment in urban centers is often just as noteworthy due to our time spent in the public realm. The loss of public spaces that reflect the cultural landscape and history of the community in which they are located needs attention in conjunction with affordable housing efforts.

Gentrification can cause the displacement of working and lower class people as housing costs rise and places of employment move elsewhere. Numerous studies have shown that gentrification has occurred throughout many of our urban areas at unprecedented rates since the end of the 1990s (Brookings, 2001, Hamnett, 2010). While displacement is not an easy circumstance to measure, it has recently gotten increased attention, specifically regarding particular health implications. With this exposure, we are developing a greater understanding of just why this issue deserves our attention.

The numbers gathered pertaining to gentrification are arguably smaller than in reality as they do not take into account displaced people who left the city, but only those



who were displaced and remained within the city limits. Furthermore those who were most vulnerable and wound up homeless, living with family or friends or shifting from one shelter to another are also not included in most datasets and must be analyzed separately.

Particular neighborhoods within many cities have re-emerged as sought after areas, as is the case in Seattle. Generally this has meant positive changes for many Seattlites, as higher tax brackets have led to more funding for capital improvements, better education systems, infrastructure, parks and other public amenities. Unfortunately not all residents within these communities benefit from these changes. Often improvements have meant increased land values and gentrification (Hamnette, 2010), in effect leading to displacement of those who have historically resided in these areas. When urban communities make these shifts public spaces often change too. They are usually scrutinized for their unsavory condition and in turn, altered to an “improved state”, often meaning the user group that had historically occupied the space — the homeless — have been removed.

Unfortunately, these new public spaces are also much more controlled and exclusionary in their management (Bancroft, 2011), For example, Seattle has a trespass program where being banned from one parking lot bans the person from 320 other downtown core parking lots (Beckett & Herbert, 2008).

Zones of Exclusion 69 Seattle’s Park Exclusion Code states:

A. The Superintendent may, by delivering an exclusion notice in person to the offender, exclude from a City park zone or zones, anyone who within a City park: ...The offender need not be charged, tried, or convicted of any crime or infraction in order for an exclusion notice to be issued or effective. The exclusion may be based upon observation by the Superintendent or upon the sort of civilian reports that would ordinarily be relied upon by police officers in the determination of probable cause. (Seattle Municipal Code, 1997-2011)

Regulations such as this cause the displacement of populations, that could benefit

most from their improvement are instead displaced further to the urban fringe. Here in Seattle, homelessness is a visible issue across the urban landscape. The 2012 “One Night Count” which took place on January 27th identified 8,830 homeless individuals. Of these individuals, 6,236 were found in shelters and transitional programs. This year, the number of people who were surviving outside without shelter increased from 2,594 individuals in 2012 to 2,736 in 2013 (2014 One night count). Additionally, there are more homeless individuals or families throughout Seattle and King County who were not counted on the night of the count either because they were hidden from volunteer counters, are living unsheltered in areas of the county not included in the count. As the city morphs into an every stronger economic center the homeless population continues to grow, leading to their increased presence in public spaces. This growth is met by an increasingly adverse response by the gentrifying populous.

In addition to the increase of exclusionary laws and regulations aimed at homeless individuals, the design of our public spaces has also become problematic in regards to this population. Designs that only suit the needs of upwardly mobile groups are missing an opportunity to address a myriad of needs that exist in urban areas. Through this process public spaces are no longer reflective of the entire population nor are they public but simply a gated community titled something different. Additionally, many of these newer designs are unreflective of the cultural conditions in which they reside and therefore often lack a local character, and no longer demonstrate the values and needs of the more diverse cultural groups of the original community, creating urban landscapes that lack singularity or historical perspective.

The economic forces at play in shaping our public domain are also not to be underemphasized. The privatization, and increased control of public space has created a defining shift in the use and design of our public spaces. Decreased funding in the public sector, and incentives for developers to provide public amenities for greater on site development potential has led to a decreased percentage of open space that is government operated. This means in effect that private entities have greater say over who uses these spaces and for what purpose. Often this leads to strict guidelines of activities that are permissible in a site. These regulations generally prevent the types of uses that

would allow for and encourage people to linger in a space, particularly if those people are don't appeal to the property management.

The response in the design world to the perceived danger of the urban has created highly sterilized spaces. These areas detract from the normative interactions public spaces have historically provided, whether that be simply people watching or stopping to chat about an activity of interest. If all people who look or act differently from one particular sector of the population are removed from a space there are no longer opportunities for others to become comfortable and understanding of those differences, reinforcing the irrational notions at hand.

There are numerous tactics that have been used in order to rationalize the increased control of space. At the root of these is the societal demonization of the urban, projections of cities as places "incubating every conceivable evil" (Macek, 8). America has a long history of highlighting cities as places that are aggressively unclean and dangerous in character and therefore people must stay be highly aware and protective of their and others safety at all times. The media's negative portrayal of urban areas has in part stripped our urban spaces of the social qualities we are now very trying desperately to recreate.

It is this perception that has led to the design of public spaces that are uncomfortable, cold and uninviting, entirely counterintuitive to their role in urban life. An example is the secondary Google campus in Seattle's Fremont neighborhood. When Google opened an office in Fremont they displaced a number of historic homes that offered affordable housing along the waterfront and were frequented by local artists and tradesmen. Today the open spaces around the campus are almost always empty and have no reference to the historically artistic community that the new office buildings displaced.

Due to the growing demand for space in urban areas land- value has increased, and areas traditionally zoned for manufacturing and industrial uses are being re-examined



FIGURE 1.3: Corporate Site: Source:Socketssite.com (2014)



FIGURE 1.4: Ballrd Residential Vehicles: Source: Erica Bush (2014)

and re-zoned to allow for much greater degrees of development. One type of landscape where this frequently occurs is urban manufacturing districts. The exodus of manufacturing operations from America's urban centers has left these once productive spaces underutilized. These unique areas once lay on the fringe of cities but as time went on they became engulfed by urban development. The southern rim of Ballard is a great example of how these anachronistic industrial spaces have fostered a unique spatial dichotomy and culture.

Not coincidentally, developing and gentrifying industrial land is also a prime environment for Seattle's homeless. In these areas the homeless are left to their own devices, either parking their vehicles along long stretches of fenced off space, or simply curling their bodies under infrastructure and warehouses abandoned at nightfall.



FIGURE 1.5: Ballard Character montage Source: Erica Bush (2014)

For these forgotten urban residents, the industrial areas have become some of the few places they can remain invisible to the majority of urbanites. They keep their belongings crammed into garbage bags or stuffed behind boxes, shipping containers, or construction remnants. They are the silent sector, trying at great lengths to be left alone and to have privacy. On occasions when the sun streams across the cement laid landscape, they might gather in small groups to dry out their sodden linens along the small patches of open space, or re-organize their personal systems of storage. No one asks these residents to come to public meetings or to share their insight about “the community”, though the neighborhoods in which they reside are just as much theirs as it is anyone else’s.

The views on how we use land are still very much black and white to some extent. It is often assumed that if the homeless, or teenagers or children are using a space it means that it will become off limits to other sectors of the population. This view is partially responsible for why cities are left with small disregarded public spaces that are unused because to improve them requires not only an economic investment but a long discussion over who would have rights over that space.

Seattle has a large number of discarded urban spaces that have not been adequately utilized. Any transect walk through the city will bring a person by numerous empty parking lots, vacant parcels, and underpasses. This is particularly notable in the industrial spaces of the city that are transitioning to new uses. As land prices increase without being planned for in a holistic way, they are now well incorporated into the surrounding urban fabric. Often it is these transitional spaces that are then appropriated by transient populations, in the case of Ballard, particularly those living out of RVs or their cars. Although these urban residents don’t own homes or pay rent in these areas, like other residents, they still deserve to have their surroundings improved.

The aforementioned issues all collide within the urban landscape, which in effect magnify negative impacts on transient populations. It is this group that is most affected when these areas are less accommodating or are outright removed from the spaces they call home. This lack of security and increasing temporality of place leads to a breakdown of social cohesion of urban communities. If people can’t afford to stay in one place

they can't take the time to invest in that place, and in turn can't create or maintain relationships. Those who are displaced may lose relationships that took years, or even generations, to build. These connections provide numerous services to residents. It has been said that relationships are a critical influence in what creates a place, the loss of relationships one could argue is partly a loss of a place. By whitewashing our urban spaces we are removing people who may be deemed "undesirable" but they are people who have attachment to places like anyone else.

One's residence is only a component of what many consider home – the neighborhood is equally if not more important and where you gather in that neighborhood can be like the extension of your own living space. As people are displaced by gentrification homeless people living in the public space of these neighborhoods lose not only their individual homes but they feel unwelcome in those areas as well. UN-HABITAT Executive Director Joan Clos i Matheu stated in a report by Projects for Public Spaces, "What de-notes the character of a city is its public space, not its private space. What denotes the value of the private assets of the space are not the assets by themselves but the common assets."

There are efforts to stop cuts to federal housing programs, to secure middle income housing and a diverse supply of housing. Unfortunately, public spaces have received much less emphasis on retaining the characteristics which make them unique and relevant to those who use them everyday.

The design of my thesis is specifically focused on meeting the particular needs of the homeless population through the inclusion of features that meet the needs and challenges of this user group currently experiencing displacement from the site as larger commercial entities replace small scale local maritime industrial spaces. Through the design process I hope to gain a greater understanding of how to appropriate a space to encourage greater usage by all members of a community while better serving the needs of the homeless (a population that has rarely been the beneficiary of design intent).

In creating this design there are a number of questions that this thesis addresses and that provide my design, rationale, and inspiration.

These questions include:

1. What functions is the design site best suited to perform in serving the needs of the local homeless?
2. Given that the site is neither highly visible area nor is it located within a residential area what are design and programmatic features that could be implemented to encourage engagement and safety on the site and its immediate context?
3. How and why is this site poised for transformation into meaningful and usable space for all neighborhood groups?
4. How can this underutilized space be redesigned in a way to bring visibility to the issues of transient populations in the immediate area while being respectful of their privacy?
5. As Michel De Certeau argues, place is not the physical space but it is where relationships take place. Given that how might design tactics at this particular site encourage the growth of understanding and acceptance between the different user groups surrounding the site in effect demonstrating singularity?

CRITICAL STANCE

It is my belief that as designers we are uniquely positioned to draw attention to circumstances often disregarded. Through responsible and socially equitable approaches to the design of our urban spaces we are also able to serve the needs of a larger diversity of populations. Given this ability and the recognition that transient populations are the most susceptible to the impacts of changes to our public spaces, there remains a need for design's intervention.

In seeking to better understand how concerns of homelessness and the right to public space interface with and inform my design I have explored numerous questions including:

1. How has gentrification changed the urban morphology of Ballard, specifically the role and presence of public space?
2. How have more recent urban projects in similar site locations handled the issue of gentrification and displacement of lower socioeconomic groups? What can be learned from these examples?
3. How might design tactics be more responsive to the context of their sites in a more comprehensive way, incorporating a wider range of the stories and inhabitants associated with that area and in turn demonstrate singularity?
4. By designing sites that reflect and respond to the needs of transient populations in addition to that of the greater population, might it be possible to improve the daily functionality of a site while simultaneously altering the strong negative perception many carry of those users.
5. How can we shift our approach to urban design so that it more directly addresses social needs of site's context?

The exploration of these larger conceptual questions was a key component in educating my design decisions, enabling me to more appropriately answer the questions I posed earlier which were more specific to this project.

Often in the design world, taking the time to think about these larger conceptual concerns is considered an inefficient use of time and unimportant to the task at hand. I would argue that in order to appropriately address the four thesis questions stated previously, it is imperative that a basis of understanding be reached through the exploration of these larger conceptual questions.

Currently the design of our urban environments is overly simplistic. Rarely is there innovation in the ways we approach these spaces, nor do we consider the possibility that they might serve as more than an urban hallway – blankly connecting one developed site to another, having no identity of their own. Given that the availability of urban space continues to decrease in the face of privatization, it is crucial that designers use their skills to improve and bring dimensionality to our urban landscape. In bringing greater attention and awareness to these spaces, their function may become more complex and integrated.

Interestingly, in light of the changing social dynamics of our public spaces designers are also beginning to pay much greater attention to those spaces not traditionally seen as assets to the urban landscape. Brownfields, polluted waterways, vacant parcels, underpasses, and abandoned railroad tracks have all been sites of some of the most innovative and creative landscape designs of the past decade. Seattle, though it has not been proactive in this movement in the recent past, is home to one of the most well-known examples of this repurposing of space: Gas Works Park, created decades ago. What has not been a focus of this movement has been utilizing the strengths of landscape architecture and urban planning in the public realm to improve the lives of those less fortunate.

Often our largest philanthropic endeavors within the design profession are focused on international sites through the work of agencies such as Architects Without

Borders. While this is certainly commendable, I feel that as designers we should play a greater part in re-shaping our immediate surroundings and work to create a healthier environment for all residents, regardless of economic or social standing.

BALLARD

North to Crown Hill

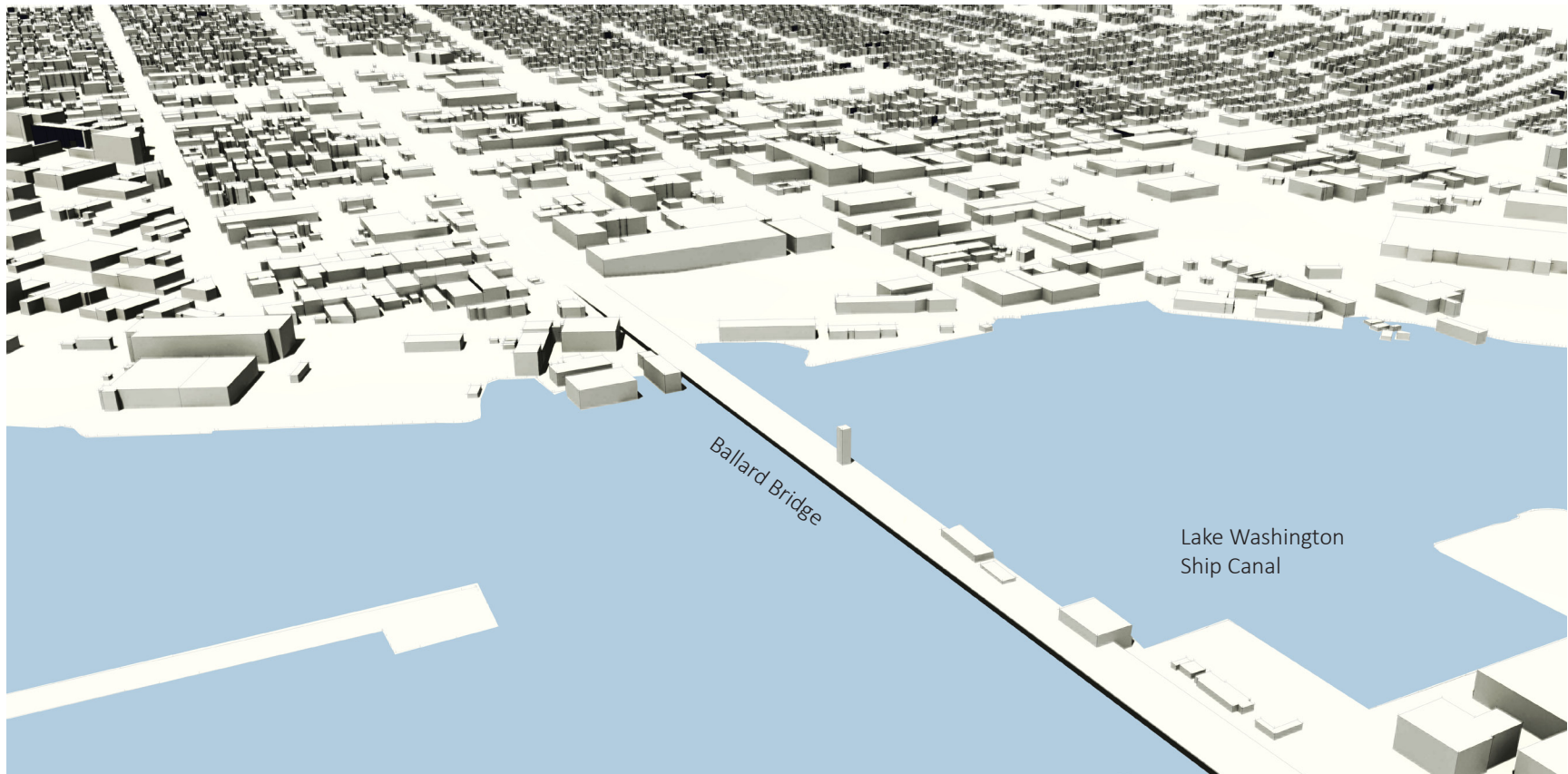


FIGURE 1.6: Ballard Urban Form: Source: Erica Bush (2014)

As you walk along the weed strewn chain link fences of the southern rim of Ballard (see figure 1.7), one of Seattle’s last remaining urban industrial spaces, there is a sense of utility in the air. If you pass by these areas often enough, you might witness them come to life, often moving in slow motion to complete a task only a handful of workers completely understand. It’s almost like wandering through a zoo of machines, pressing your face to the glass and gawking at their exoticness.

These spaces wrap the shores of the Puget Sound, ribbon the Interbay Valley and continue along the Ship Canal lining the constructed canal from the salt air of the bay to the calm waters of Lake Union and Lake Washington (as shown in figure 1.6). It’s an unusual affair of steel blended with ship staffs, boats, marine equipment, and tarps – protecting unknown contents from the persistent rains of the North West.

Those who mill through the gaps of these giant ships and warehouses are clad in work clothes you imagine your grandfather wearing (see figure 1.8) or something you might expect to see during WWII, but there is something romantic in watching them go about their tasks. Outside, on the waters edge is a place where time seems to stand still. Some of these workers have been in the area for generations like the Northern Europeans who first came to the area for its productive fishing. In 2001, Lynn Moen wrote a book called ‘Voices of Ballard: Immigrant Stories From the Vanishing Generation’ in which she attempted to capture many of these stories. At the time it was written, these populations had already drastically diminished.

These areas are now surprisingly quiet, a change from the robust grinding of machinery that once characterized this soundscape. Often the only sounds are sea gulls, crows and an occasional long honk to let the bridge conductors know they’ll need to let someone by. If you listen closely you can hear water lapping along the shore and materials clamoring behind tin enclosed warehouses, rusted to different shades of red and green. A series of train lines



FIGURE 1.7: Pre- Ballard Blocks 2. Source: Erica Bush (2014)



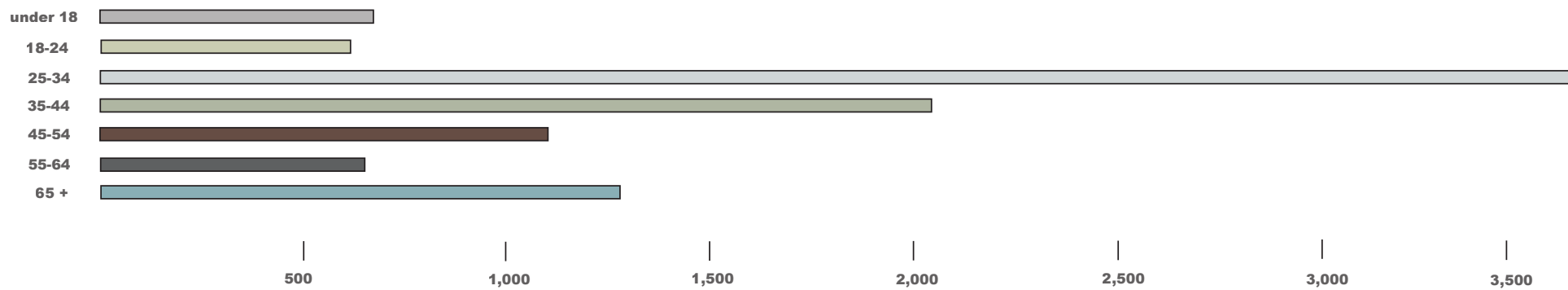
FIGURE 1.8: Jeff, local maritime worker: Source: Mariana Kajlich (2014)

DEVELOPMENT HISTORY



FIGURE 1.10: Ballard Development Source: Created by author using data from City of Seattle Archives (2014)

Ballard population by age group



Ballard population household characteristics

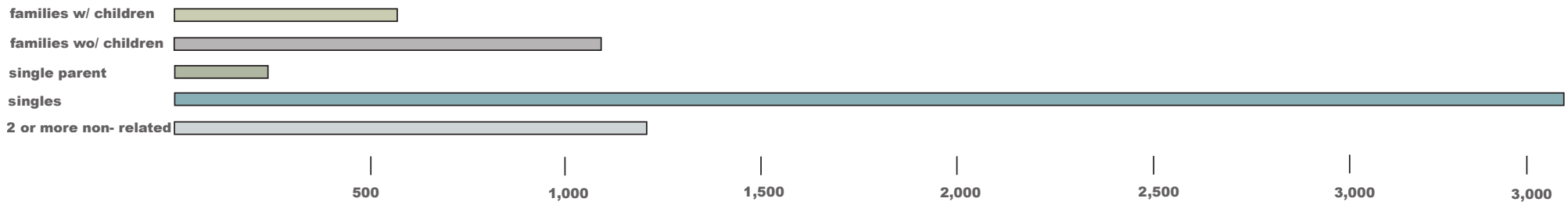


FIGURE 1.11: Ballard Demographics: Source: Created by author using 2010 Census Data (2014)

Ballard growth trends demonstrate that the vast majority of those moving to the community are between the ages of 25-34 and are single. This is a large change from the historically older, family oriented local demographic. As a designer I feel this growth trend means that the public spaces of Ballard should be approached differently than they have in the past and can take more risks as they do not need to cater as much to children and young families, particularly in the southern rim of the neighborhood.

traverses the landscape, some still in use, some long discarded. The walls of these vacant industrial buildings have become canvases for local graffiti artists and the contrast of the oxidation with the bright primaries of spray paint inspires pause and appreciation from passersby.

Seattle is unique in still having a large amount of industrial zoned land within the center of the city, as we can see in the local zoning map (figure 1.12 on next page). In most similar landscapes across the country, industry has been priced out and has been pushed to the periphery where land is cheaper and there are fewer neighbors with potential complaints about the negative externalities of these uses such as noise and air pollution. The long and continuous history of industry in Seattle has led the city to take a very protective stance regarding industry and its place in the culture of the city, leaving for this generation and those to come the ability to envision a more creative and resilient future for its continuation.

Zoning Map

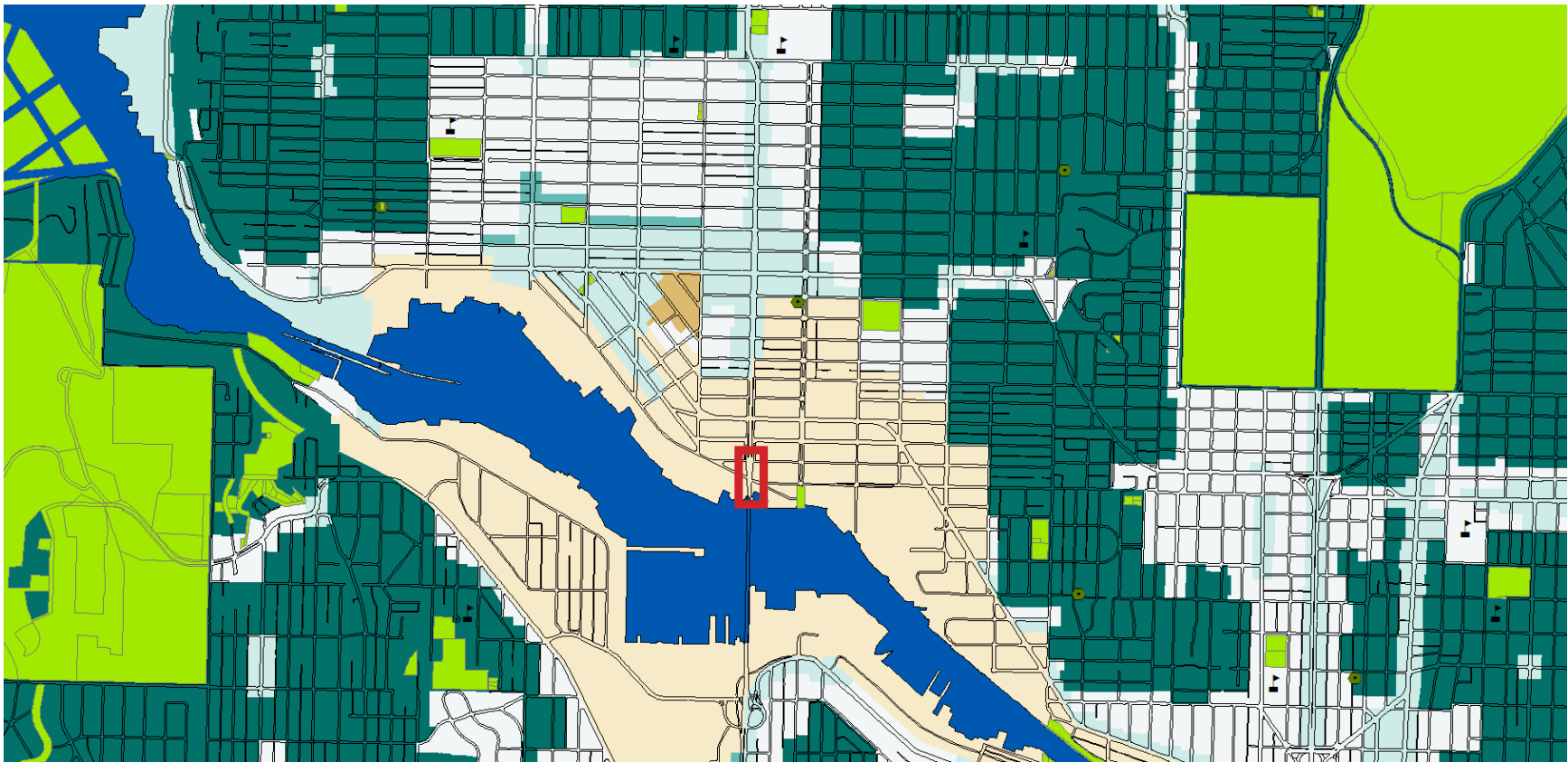
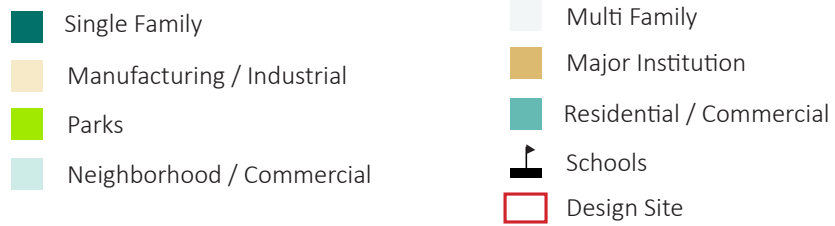


FIGURE 1.12: Ballard Zoning: Source: Geographic Information System (2014)

HOMELESSNESS OF BALLARD

Much of the populace labelled “homeless” in Ballard does not identify themselves as such. Many of these individuals have vehicles in which they sleep and consider those spaces their residence, therefore identifying themselves as low income, or what I’ll refer to in this document as “sheltered homeless” (Pruss, 2014). The alternative to this population is a group referred to as “street homeless” -- individuals who reside mainly in local green spaces such as Discovery Park, Gilman Park, along the docks, in Golden Gardens, or in squatter settlements around the district (Pruss, 2014).

There are also a number of distinct groups within both the sheltered and street homeless population. The first of these categories is ethnicity with the largest portion being Native American. Following this there are also those who segregate by substance use, age, and the mentally ill (Pruss, 2014).

A very important factor in creating spaces for all groups considered homeless is to be highly sensitive to that fact that a design can not be completed under the presumption that one person without personal experience or

training with this population would be able to prescribe a cure-all. Recognizing this, it was my intention to use my design abilities, alongside discussions with people who know much more about this population, to find ways to better serve this group.

The sheltered homeless portion of this population has been drawn to this area since the late 1970’s when the first regulations were placed on the size of vehicles that could legally park in residential zones. Light industrial spaces such as Ballard became the only areas where RVs and campers were legally able to stay over-night. Unsurprisingly, Ballard then began to see concentrations of this type of “urban camping”.

As greater Ballard’s demographics have shifted and a higher income population has moved into the community (Census 2010), there have been more and more constituent complaints about this “urban camping” phenomenon, setting off a backlash of regulatory action aimed at displacing this low-income group from the only area they are legally able to be.

No parking between 2-5 am signs were placed

in mass numbers across Ballard’s industrial zoned area. As is demonstrated by the map on the next page (figure 1.13), the Ballard-Fremont area has more of these signs than anywhere else in the city (Ballard Taskforce on Homelessness and Hunger, 2014).

More recently, low-income advocates have been able to successfully prevent any more of these signs from being posted. The continued concern of this action is that those living in their vehicles are now even more concentrated than ever before due to the limited number of streets that allow it. This concentration leads to the perception that there is a “growing homeless population” in Ballard which simply isn’t the case. It is in fact becoming much more challenging for this population to remain in the neighborhood, despite having been in Ballard longer than many of their housed neighbors (Pruss, 2014).

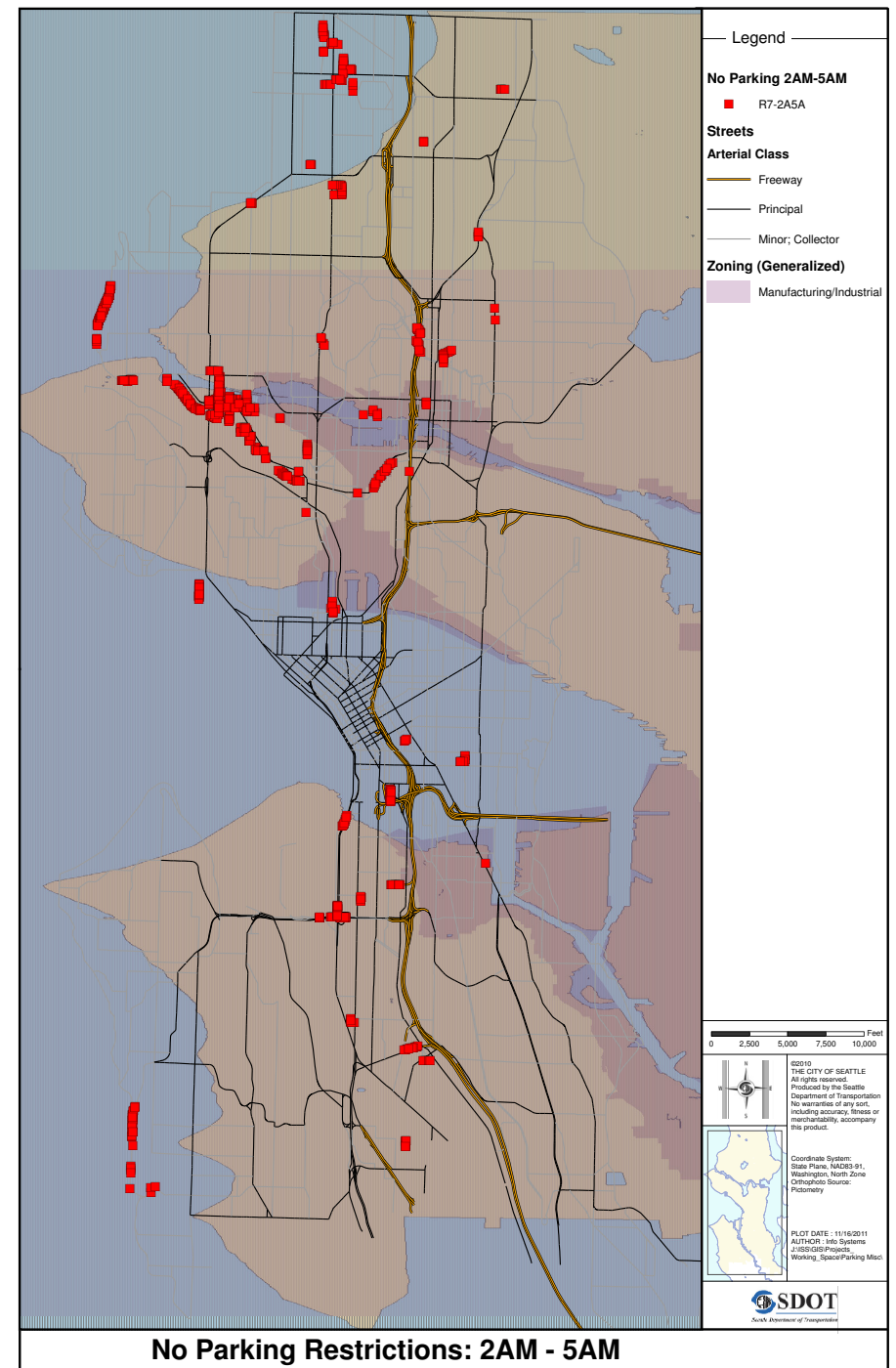


FIGURE 1.13: No Parking Restrictions Source: Seattle Department of Transportation (2014)

THE SITE

The site I have chosen is situated within the context I have described and I believe it meets the specifications necessary to effectively explore the social concerns previously discussed. These include:

- At present, housing a substantial transient population
- Currently being used by the community consistently, or an area that could be used by the community if made available
- Being found at a junction of gentrification; the process of gentrification is disturbing the site, coercing physical adaptation.
- Being located nearby so I am able to observe on a daily basis

I chose the space beneath the Ballard Bridge(15th Ave NW) between the waterfront and West 46th Street because, in addition to meeting the above criteria, the site is highly complex, making it an exciting space to explore, design and re-envision. Like the vast majority of Seattle, the area along the Ballard ship canal has changed drastically over the past few decades as divergent economic forces have swept through the city. Unlike much of Seattle, Ballard, which has a unique history of it's own, has experienced an even more dramatic shift following the re-zoning of the area in the last ten years, with another momentous change in 2010. Following the re-zone of Ballard as a focal point for absorbing the influx of new residents to Seattle, the area quickly began to transform, gentrifying the once sleepy industrial fishing community (see figure 1.14).



FIGURE 1.14: Ballard Norwegian Parade Source: Seattle Times



FIGURE 1.15: Gentrification of Old Ballard Avenue

The area around the study site has grown exponentially over the last fourteen years (see figure 1.14) and is projected to continue to grow in population. This indicates the areas' ability and desire to sustain further development. The area is home to a populous large enough to support retail, a housing supply to maintain and expand said populous, and a market to support office and other business strategies if the land is developed appropriately.

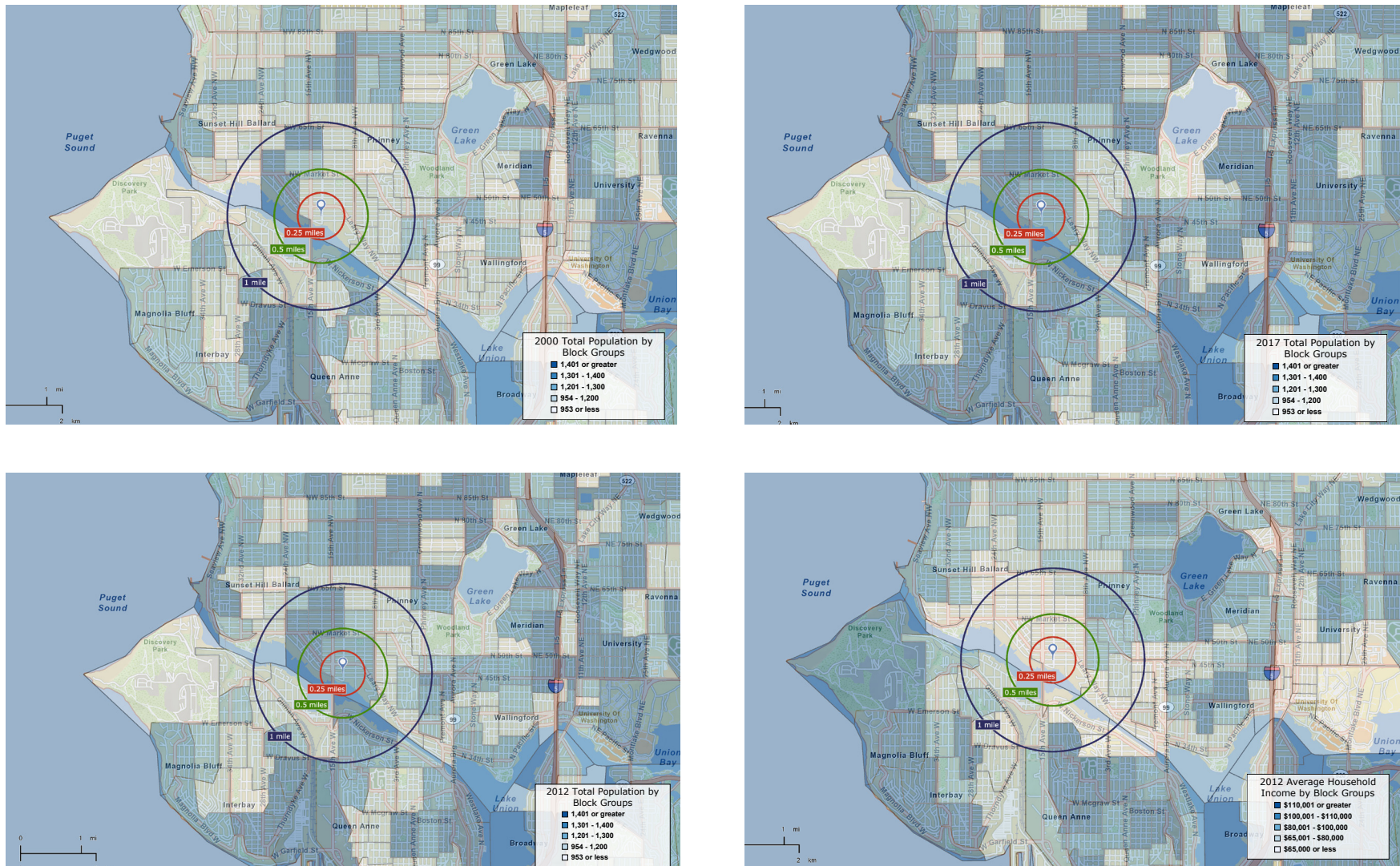


FIGURE 1.16: Ballard Growth Source: Maps created by author using 2010 Census Data (2014)

The space below the bridge is now the tipping point between large commercial developments along Leary Way and West 46th Street and the remaining strip of industrial spaces along Shilshole and the ship canal. In addition to being an economic and social transect, the site is also ecologically interesting in that it is one of the few locations where the right of way meets the shoreline.

The site image below is a survey map from 1914. At that time, the parcel size around the site was very small and each was owned by a different local company. As the area has shifted, many of these small parcels have been conjoined in order to make room for much larger spaces such as the Ballard Blocks project which houses no production based space. Today the area to the immediate northeast and east of the site is comprised of only two parcels, replacing the original 42 shown below.

Yet, the site's most intricate component may still be the diversity of users that circulate within and through it, following the main routes shown in figure 1.18. In

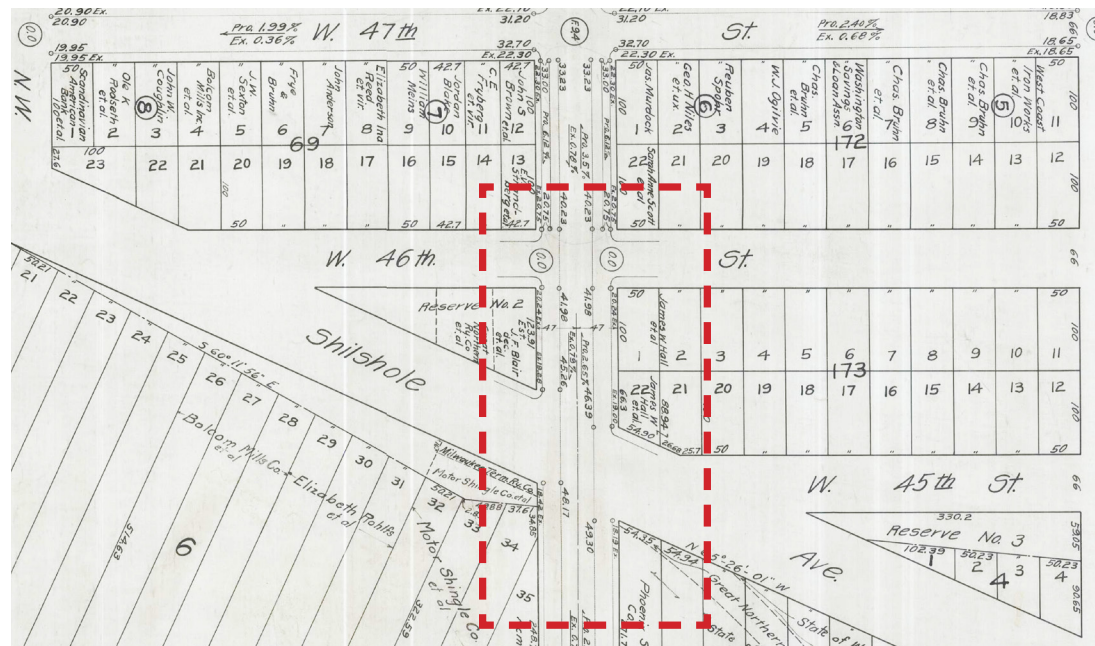


FIGURE 1.17: Ballard Development Source: Created by author using data from City of Seattle Archives (2014)



Immediate Context and Transportation Corridors

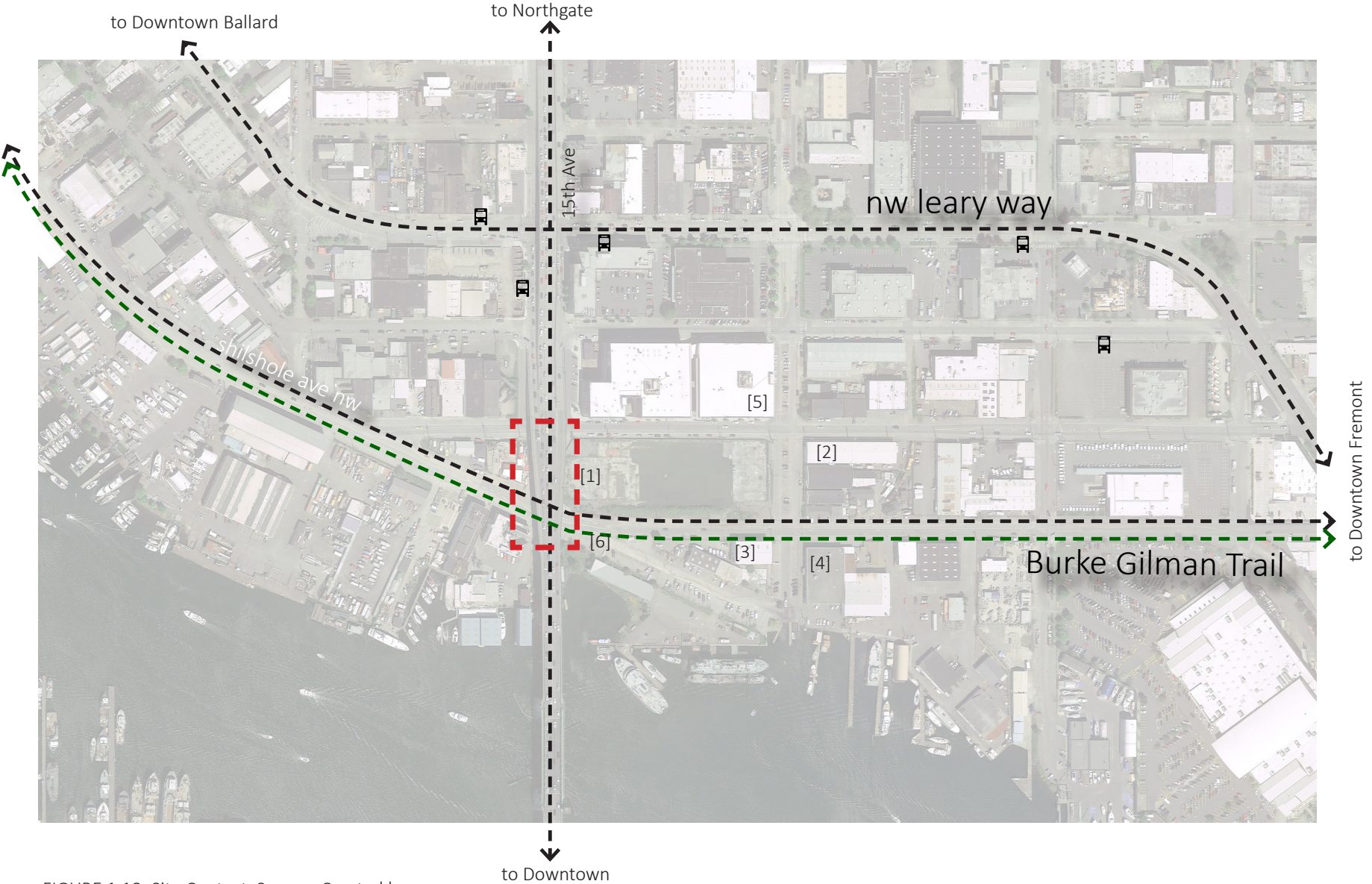


FIGURE 1.18: Site Context Source: Created by author using Google satellite imagery (2014)



[1] Looking north east from site



[2] Looking east from site

The site is surrounded by predominately industrial spaces. The recent development of the parcel immediately north of the site is largely retail with some service industries. Just South of the site along 14th, there is water access. 14th Ave NW is also slated to be redeveloped into a pedestrian corridor that will promote more foot traffic north and south. There is also direct access from the Ballard Bridge that supports multiple-stop trips. The Burke-Gilman Trail also passes along the front of the site.



[3] looking south east from site



[4] Looking south from across the street from site



[5] Looking northwest toward site



[6] Looking west toward site

Source: Photos taken by author

addition to the transient population and the industrial workers, the incoming gentrifying class moved into the area to the big box commercial spaces within the Ballard Blocks Development site (Fred Meyer, the new BevMo, etc.).

These box stores pose other challenges. These stores come with big parking lots, with homogenous form, with very few doors that are far apart, and so on. They are not the small-scale commercial and working spaces that have for over a hundred years comprised the industrial core of Ballard. The same group that shops at these retailers makes up the cyclists and joggers who now transect the site as part of the missing link of the Burke-Gilman trail. The sheer volume and variety of people that use the site each day demonstrates an obvious need for more thought and attention to be given to this discarded landscape.

This site demonstrates some of the greatest challenges we face in designing our cities: groups of people with drastically different lives, needs and wants, in spaces that in some ways meet these requisites and in others, fall desperately short. We forget that remnant spaces of our cities like the



one beneath the Ballard Bridge (as shown in the images on the last page), are part of our public realm and can be made beneficial to all those who use and pass these sites each day. Margaret Kohn writes, “Movie theatres and sports stadiums do not feel like public spaces because they do not facilitate interaction between people”. It seems to me that areas like industrial Ballard have the same issue: they do not facilitate interaction but rather allow their users to remain in their silos, muttering to themselves about how others are infringing on it.

Lastly, the simple fact that the site is covered is both advantageous and challenging. While the underpass creates a sheltered place, it also evokes greater safety concerns that the design will need to address.

Designing a site, or features of a site, that can confront these complex issues will not be a simple task but it is a necessary one. There is a lack of communication between the social scientists researching these issues and the designers shaping the urban landscape which will impact the lives of those at risk of displacement. While I understand the financial pressures of designers to meet their clients’ demands, in the case of urban public spaces the client is the public in its entirety and thus, those members should remain participants in the process. In closing I seek to design an inclusive space that will:

1. Address environmental justice issues within the surrounding community
2. Bring attention to the issues of displacement and homelessness within the immediate context of the site
3. Preserve place attachment
4. Demonstrate a design of singularity

LITERATURE REVIEW

Designing any space should be approached through an understanding of the issues and conversations surrounding similar spaces and their particular needs. In choosing a thesis project, I set out to design an area under a large piece of infrastructure, in a complex urban space, specifically seeking to address the needs of the community's transient population while also bringing attention to the concerns of the growing rate of homelessness in Seattle.

In order to best rationalize the design decisions made throughout the course of this thesis, it was imperative that urban design theory be a critical part of my approach as well as an understanding of the population I wished to serve through the design. This thesis seeks to demonstrate through an example of one small site design that landscape architects and urban designers have an opportunity to address the needs of the homeless in public space while serving the greater community. I mean to ground my design decisions in an exploration of topics of freedom in public spaces, perceptions of the homeless, homeless needs, place making, the evolution of the public realm, gentrification, privatization of public space, and displacement, as these topics relate to the design of public spaces. My interests lie heavily in the flexibility of public space and how public spaces are often overly-controlled in many ways as a response to the negative perceptions of "the urban". Furthermore, I would like to draw attention to how the stereotypes and perceptions of the homeless have been partially responsible for the production of a homogenized urban landscape.

My site design aims explicitly at creating a design that is inclusive of and encourages the local homeless population to use the space along with, and not in place of, the greater community.

Homelessness as it relates to the field of landscape architecture and urban design is generally thought of as a programming issue. While on occasion the issue of homelessness is accommodated in public spaces, it is more frequently tolerated, and often, designers themselves are charged with finding "solutions" to the issue through defensive design. Design discussions now involve conscious efforts to ensure that we are being inclusive of community needs, wishes and desires. The homeless population, however, is treated very differently and is never included in such conversations or decision making processes. Generally, this community is seen as a group that we should try to eradicate from the public realm (the only place they have to be) to more "suitable" spaces; out of sight and out of mind. The stereotypes our society has placed on the homeless, which will be discussed in greater depth further into this chapter, have given us the freedom to treat this population with a lack of respect we wouldn't dare apply to any other group. In our day-to-day lives we have the ability and freedom to isolate ourselves from circumstances that make us uncomfortable, but designers who are accountable for the development of the public realm should be held accountable for designing spaces that meet the needs of the entire public.

In order to create a design with the aim of serving a particular population it is first and foremost critical to know whom that population is comprised of. The Seattle/King County Coalition on Homelessness conducts an annual "One Night Count," each

One third of those sleeping outside were located in sites just like under the Ballard Bridge

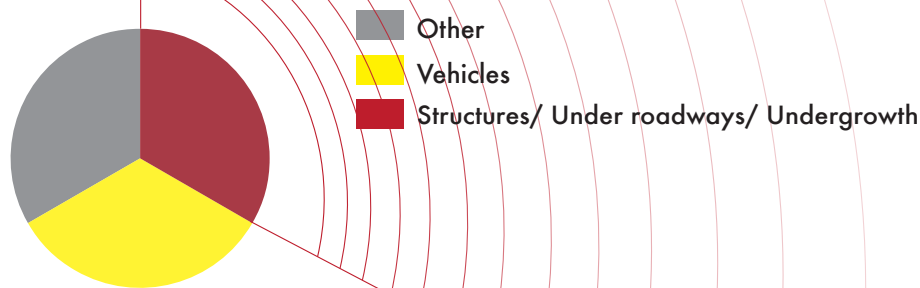


FIGURE 2.1: Homeless locations Source: Created by author using One Night Out Count data (2014)

year, generating a large portion of the data on the extent of homelessness in this area and eventually influencing decisions regarding this population. These counts include portions of Seattle, Bellevue, Kirkland, Redmond, Shoreline, Kenmore, Bothell, Woodinville, Kent, Federal Way, Renton, Auburn, and White Center and a survey of homeless shelters and transitional programs throughout King County.

The 2012 “One Night Count” which took place on January 27th identified 8,830 homeless individuals throughout King County (The Seattle/ King County Coalition on Homelessness, 2012). Of these individuals, 6,236 were found in shelters and transitional programs, leaving at least 2,594 sleeping elsewhere (see figure 2.1). This year, the number of people who were surviving outside without shelter increased from 2,594 individuals in 2012 to 2,736 in 2013 (The Seattle/ King County Coalition on Homelessness, 2012). In reality, there are more homeless individuals or families throughout Seattle and King County who were not included in this count either because they were hidden from volunteer counters, are living unsheltered in areas of the county not included in the count, or are temporarily homeless but staying with friends and family. This means the numbers currently used for planning and policy decisions are likely much smaller than the reality of the situation.

While it may not be obvious, many homeless include families. One Night Count survey reports the following breakdown among households living in emergency shelter and transitional housing programs: 50% of homeless people in the Seattle area are families with children. 34% are single adult men, 15% are single adult women and less than 1% are unaccompanied

youth. Homeless families are a large concern for the region, often resulting from young parents (approximately a third of these families include parents age 25 or younger and half of those parents are younger than 21 (The Seattle/ King County Coalition on Homelessness, 2014).

Persons of color are over-represented among the homeless population in Seattle relative to the general population and those in poverty (64%). Although it's often assumed that the homeless are unemployed this is not always the case. Thirty percent of counted homeless in Seattle are employed. Most families (69%) are homeless for the first time and most of them (57%) are staying or living with a friend or family member. Contrary to popular conceptions of the homeless as inherently more dangerous than the general populous, 86% of homeless families in the Seattle area have minimal or no criminal history (King County Committee to End Homelessness, 2012).

Homeless youth are a particularly noteworthy portion of the homeless population in our region, partially due to their high visibility in some of our more densely populated districts such as central downtown and the University District. 685 youth and young adults ages 13 to 25 have been accounted for in the Seattle area. Of these, 408 were staying in shelter or transitional housing programs. 277 youth and young adults were surveyed at program sites and other places that homeless youth frequent. Many of these youth "couch surf" with friends and relatives and therefore fall into the category of the hidden homeless and are not included in the count. Of those surveyed, 81 were without any shelter and 126 were unstably housed (they did not know if they could stay in their current situation 30 days from now). The majority of youth in shelters (67%)

were in programs designed for youth under age 18. The youth and young adults counted by the survey differed from those in shelter or transitional housing. A higher percentage of surveyed youth were male and African American, Asian or multiracial and from South Seattle or South King County.

In 2012, the Single Adult Shelter Task Force collected data on the numbers and types of shelter beds, program models, and demographics of people who rely on the local shelter system within King County. The analysis came to the following conclusions: approximately 2,583 beds identified as part of an inventory for single adults including indoor, year-round shelter programs (1,829), tent city/communities (299), and winter season shelter beds (455 seasonal). Ninety two percent of the indoor shelter beds in the region are located in the city of Seattle meaning there is a drastically disproportionate number of in need individuals in the city of Seattle in relation to surrounding communities. The vast majority (75%) of these individuals are residing in overnight shelters only (clients come into the shelters between 8 and 9 P.M. and exit between 6 and 8 A.M.), thus a large number of individuals have nowhere to go to escape the elements for at minimum 12 hours a day. Nearly half of the year-round beds are in donated or leased space, meaning that these spaces could be made unavailable without much notice. The number of shelter beds also fluctuates throughout the year with between 450 and 700 more beds available in the winter months (typically November-March) which then close leaving a larger number of homeless on the streets during the spring and summer months (Committee to End Homelessness King County, 2013). By having a clearer understanding of the numbers of those living on the street municipalities, and non-profits are better able to articulate

the severity of the issue and can argue for funding to address the problem. This information is generally not discussed in the field of landscape architecture and urban design and should be more heavily used by designers when rationalizing their design decisions.

General Demographic information made available through Safe Harbors Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) on people accessing shelter indicates that shelter residents are predominantly male and a disproportionate number are people of color. More than a third of clients stayed less than 7 days over a 12-month reporting period, leading to the conclusion that these individuals are extremely transient. There are also a number of differences in the populations served in Seattle and in the County.

Cost of rent and home ownership is known to be one of the biggest factors contributing to homelessness. Seattle is a city known for its lack of affordable housing (Gibson, 2004). 45% of all renter households in King County pay more than 30% (thought to be the livable portion of income to be spent on housing) for rent. Less than 5% of apartments in King County are affordable to households earning less than 30% of median income (\$26,400 for a family of four in 2013) and that 5% continues to shrink each year. The average rent for a two-bedroom apartment in King County has now reached \$1,190, an increase in over \$150 dollars a month over the last five years (Bhatt, 2013). A worker must earn over \$20 per hour to afford this housing if “afford” is based on the 30% marker.

While there are no definitive answers to how to handle the issue of homelessness we have learned some about what

services to provide and how to provide them to this community in order to maximize the benefits. There are now numerous examples of projects that demonstrate the economic benefits of assisting the homeless in their current situations versus simply providing emergency shelter.

1811 Eastlake, run by the Downtown Emergency Service Center (DESC) provides supportive housing for 75 formerly homeless men and women who struggle with chronic alcohol addiction. Unlike the vast majority of shelters, an individual does not need to be sober to seek services at this location, a huge political feat for the agency. Within one year of residency, residents reduced their visits to the emergency room, sobering center, and jail, resulting in cost savings of more than \$4 million. The cost of users to the sobering center is staggeringly high, the 40 people who were the highest users of Harborview and the Sobering Center cost \$2,000,000 annually until they were admitted to housing at 1811 Eastlake. Examples such as this indicate that while this population may struggle with higher rates of substance abuse, treating these individuals with respect has highly beneficial outcomes both for the homeless and for the city at large.

Jail admittance is also significantly associated with the homeless. Many homeless individuals are arrested for petty crimes or public disturbance related to mental illness, drug or alcohol abuse. A mentally ill prisoner in the King County Jail (over half of whom are homeless) stays almost 140 days longer than a general population prisoner, at an estimated cost of \$300 per night. Frighteningly, the King County Jail serves the second highest concentration of mentally ill in the State of Washington.

In addition to simply understanding how many homeless people reside in Seattle and what that population looks like, what more drastically influences our design decisions in regards to them is our perceptions of this group and the stereotypes that our culture has instilled within us in regards to this population. In choosing a thesis topic I wanted to address an issue that I felt was pertinent to the field of landscape architecture and urban planning that I have rarely seen discussed. Seattle has a serious problem with homelessness and given that the thesis process is a way for students to investigate solutions to the problems of our field that compel them the most, I felt it was a crucial one to explore. Through purposeful design it seems only humane to create spaces that aid in making these individuals lives slightly less challenging and acknowledging that there are people who are concerned about their plight. My design seeks to make that statement legible.

We see homeless people all the time in our daily life rounds. The homeless who are most visible are those who fit the stereotypes of this population; being dirty, perhaps smelling of alcohol or carting a multitude of belongings, they cannot easily blend in with the people around them. They may be lumps under a blanket in a doorway or someone asking for change or collecting odds and ends off the street. In contrast, the homeless might also include the person you buy your daily coffee from or ride the bus with every morning but these are not the stereotypical perceptions of what “homelessness” looks like. Often public perception of homelessness is a far cry from the reality of its existence in our society. Public perception frequently pairs homelessness with criminal activity (Barak, 2002). It is this perception that then leads to policies that criminalize the very state of homelessness. Criminalizing

homelessness implies that homelessness is a choice people make and punishes that choice, ignorant of the fact that in most cases, the situation was involuntary (Kohn).

As a culture we’ve created a strong characterization of this group that then dictates the political, design, and planning decisions that affect this population in addition, people don’t want to be reminded of this unpleasant reality so our comfort trumps their right to exist in public space - at last judging by policies, zoning laws, etc.. The homeless must also contend with NIMBY-ism (Not In My Backyard). “Most Americans want the homeless off the streets, but no one wants them next door” (Jencks, 117).

Using the perception that the homeless are inherently bad in some way, we design spaces that are uninviting to them and



Source: Street Spirit

that clearly state they are unwelcome in the public arena. In reality, the homeless are often the victims not only of the shortfalls of society but of crimes committed upon them.

One report about hate crimes and violence against the homeless titled, "Hate, Violence, and Death on Main Street USA", states that "over the past 7 years (1999-2005), advocates and homeless shelter workers from around the country have seen an alarming nationwide epidemic in reports of homeless men, women, and even children being killed, beaten, and harassed." A total of 472 violent hate-crime attacks against the homeless were documented in the report. Of those attacks, 169 resulted in death (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2006. pg.6).

Homeless individuals who are female are especially vulnerable to crime. The Florida four-city survey focused on the victimization of homeless women, surveying 737 homeless women and 100 homeless men (serving as a control group). In this study, men were more likely to be victims of physical assault during their lifetimes as compared to women (87% vs. 72%). However, once other variables were statistically controlled for, there was no significant difference based on gender. Over half of the women (54%) reported having been raped, compared to only 14% of the men. This difference was significant (Jasinski et al, 2008).

These facts point to the increased need for safe, comfortable places for the homeless to spend the time that they have outside emergency shelter accommodations. Through designing public spaces with the needs of this population in mind as would be the case for underneath the Ballard Bridge,

municipalities are taking a larger role in the protection of these individuals.

The dangerous circumstances in which homeless live are further exacerbated by the response of municipalities and private agencies to diminish the extent to which homelessness remains a visible social ailment. The enforcement of these regulations further legitimizes the need for our public spaces to respond to the needs of this community group.

One way that our relationship to public spaces impacted is through the adaptation of laws and policies that relate to the homeless of our society. As those with more economic advantage transition into new geographic areas they have a greater say over what occurs in the public spaces of a community, given our stereotypes and societal fears of marginalized groups this often means greater efforts made to remove them from the public eye, as is the case in the shifting industrial section of Ballard surrounding my site. This is one reason I chose to focus my design strategies on this population as I felt their circumstance best demonstrated the outcome of the diminished availability of truly public space in the urban realm.

In the context of homelessness, we must take a closer look into the current conceptualization of both public and private space. If the intent of legislation is to "control behavior and space such that homeless people cannot do what they must do in order to survive without breaking laws" then "Survival itself is criminalized" (Mitchell, 163). It can be argued that the right to public space is not simply labeling a space as such

and thus making it accessible to all. Rather, it requires the space to allow users to illicit some degree of control, freedom, and inhabitation. As Arnold (2004), Mitchell (1995; 2003) and Waldron (1991) argue, punishing people for performing private acts in public when they lack private places of their own situates homeless people in a highly vulnerable position of “being everywhere while permitted to be nowhere” (Gibson, 2004).

The anti-homeless legislation enacted recently has become more aggressive, showing a sharp increase in the number of regulations governing activities that the homeless often participate in in the public realm (loitering, curfews, anti-begging, anti-soliciting, restriction on sleeping, camping, sleeping, or storing property). in 1993 Seattle became the first city in the country to enact a ban on sitting or sleeping on public sidewalks or risk getting a \$50 ticket which was then followed by other cities around the country including San Francisco and Portland (Knight, Seattle PI, 2010). Berkeley, California an area generally viewed as liberal and accepting, followed precedents set by Seattle, Portland and San Francisco and by the mid 90’s was known to have some of “the strictest [anti-panhandling legislation] in the country” (Mitchell, 162)

This ordinance was the first of many other major efforts to sanitize and “improve” the downtown core to make the area more attractive to the business class and tourists. Now that Ballard has become a tourist and high income-shopping district and with this shift a similar displacement trend is now occurring in this area as well.

Mark Sidran, City Attorney for Seattle sponsored many of

anti-homeless laws in the 1990s, outlawing public urination, sitting on sidewalks, and sleeping in public places (Mitchell, 168). These laws targeted specific actions exclusively when said actions occurred in public places (the actions themselves are not thought of as criminal but are considered so when performed in public spaces). For example, it is perfectly acceptable if not respectable to write a grant application asking for money but to beg for money on the street in many places is illegal. The anti-homeless legislation seeks to bar behaviors which homeless people must do for survival in whatever space they have access to (public spaces). These regulations on public space then translate to a scenario in which there is literally no room for homeless people. This regulation causes the public sphere to be recreated as “intentionally exclusive, as a sphere in which the legitimate public only includes those who have a place governed by private property rules to call their own” (Mitchell, 2003, 183). This fact makes ownership or leasehold of property a prerequisite for legitimate citizenship.

In “Brave New Neighborhoods: The Privatization of Public Space,” Margaret Kohn 2004 discusses three critiques of a Robert Ellickson’s zoning proposal. Ellickson believes that “cities should return to the old skid row model of social control” and that “certain behaviors associated with transients, hobos, drunks, and homeless people should be confined to specific zones of the city so that other areas can enforce more rigorous quality of life ordinances against behaviors such as nonaggressive panhandling and bench sitting” (Kohn, 168). The system Ellickson appeals for has long existed in many cities in an informal manner. In Los Angeles for example, the homeless have been excluded from the Bunker Hill area and contained in a skid row area along Fifth Street (Kohn, 169).

Kohn argues against Ellickson's proposal, which calls for a return to a focus on nuisance laws giving property owners greater legal rights regarding activities on the periphery of their property. The first point she makes is that such a system would formalize existing patterns of marginalization and would further exacerbate the problematic attitudes towards homelessness already present in society. My design intention relates to these arguments in that I agree that urban policies are returning to more exclusive trends, finding ways of further controlling the public realm instead of reaching solutions that aid both parties.

Having grounded an understanding of the issue of homelessness in Seattle the next topic explores the history behind landscape architecture as a means of addressing the wellness of our urban residents, particularly underrepresented populations and therefore the rationale that our discipline should remain concerned and active in this discourse. Recognizing the dialectical relationship between public urban green spaces and homelessness is a step towards envisioning an urban ecological approach to planning. In my design I not only wanted to provide the homeless a place to feel comfortable but create a space taking into account their physical and mental health concerns.

Isolation of the Homeless

When homeless individuals experience displacement they don't disappear, these populations are simply becoming more concentrated in the fewer places they are left to their own devices and often farther away from the goods and services they need to maintain their livelihood.

In exploring theoretical frameworks regarding landscape architecture and social interaction in the face of Seattle's homeless population, it can be argued that decentralizing these at risk populations and creating small-scale interventions throughout the city will better serve these populations than displacing them to concentrated areas.

Concentrating the most troubled and impoverished people in a given location increase the propensity for that space to become dangerous. Mike Davis illustrates this in his book *City of Quartz*: "by condensing the mass of desperate and helpless together in such a small space, and denying adequate housing, official policy has transformed skid row into probably the most dangerous ten square blocks in the world" (Davis, 232-233). Kohn also notes that isolated areas chosen in which to concentrate the homeless populations may also be located far from schools or medical facilities. In her critique of privatization and political activity Kohn refers to commodification, providing a broader framework under which we might look at this issue. Public space has become part of a profit-making tactic, referred to as "cafe creep": the effect of commercial ventures taking over more and more of our public realm. This is often seen in drastic advertising, which has begun to appear in more and more public spaces, as well as in the growing presence of security officials and security cameras.

This isolation tactic brings to bear the question of when if a community has a more economically diverse public sphere can it integrate the homeless with an economically upwardly mobile population in a way that is mutually beneficial – providing improved conditions for the homeless and education the incoming population about the complex concerns and

realities of homelessness in this community.

The space underneath the Ballard Bridge has experienced a number of these treatments. In the course of my observations of this site spanning about six months I have witnessed the removal of many materials what were once used by the local homeless for shelter and most notably the erecting of an enormous fence around the site controlling any and all access which was argued to me by city staff as constructed to prevent dumping on the site. While this may in some respect be true the fact that the neighborhood is experiencing a spike in high end residential growth, those surrounding the site are generally not those who would be responsible for dumping.

Long before anti-homelessness policies were a topic of discussion, landscape architecture was directed at social reform and human wellness (Fisher, 2010). Specifically, landscape architecture was thought as means of addressing the negative health and social implications of an increasingly urbanized environment. Given that the homeless experience public space more than any other group it seems appropriate to discuss how the design of these spaces can be a benefit to their wellness. Furthermore we now have a much more thorough understanding of how our environment effects out health both negatively and positively, designers of public spaces should recognize their capability in this realm and use this information to better inform their design intentions.

Fredrick Law Olmsted was one of the first landscape designers to bring notoriety to the role of landscape architecture in public health and it became the founding principle behind the necessity for and eventually the construction of Central Park in

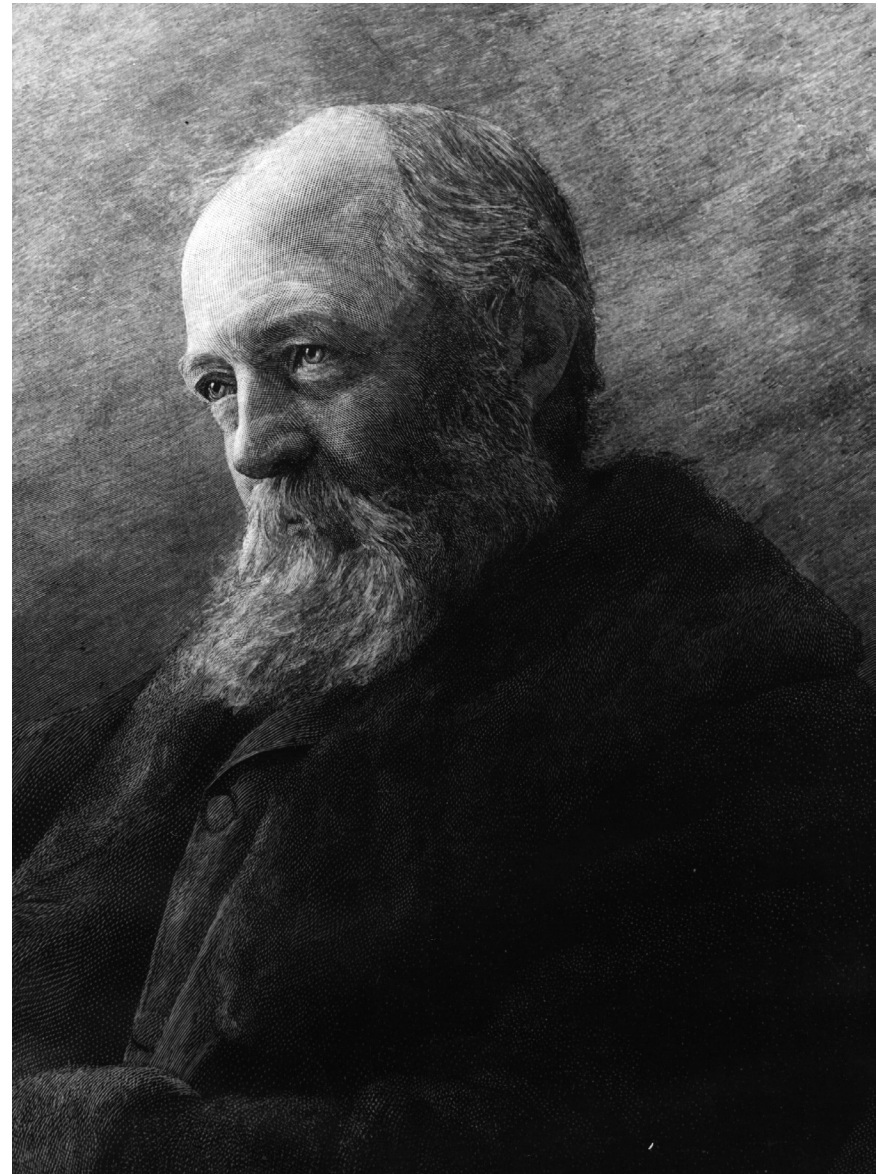


FIGURE 2.2: Fredrick Law Olmsted Source: answers.com (2014)

1858. Olmsted believed that the underprivileged living within cities would benefit greatly from access to green open space. He believed that naturalistically designed parks could play a key role in counteracting what he perceived to be the debilitating aspects of living in highly urbanized areas. Olmsted wrote that in such oases people could find relief from the stresses they were consistently confronted with in their daily lives and improve the populations' physical health by increasing their contact with sunshine, clean air, and greenery (i.e. they would be "Disinfected by sunlight and foliage").

Olmsted's theories centered on immersion in pastoral landscapes that offered views of meadows, pastures and calm water. These locations were thought to be conducive to contemplation and restorative for one's state of mind. While this belief was grounded in prejudice there was a degree of truth and foresight to Olmsted's vision: we continue to research and discover the importance of access to green space, both psychologically and physically.

While the space underneath the Ballard Bridge is not a pastoral landscape by any means the site and others like it are the landscapes which many homeless reside and therefore arguably should be reimagined as places capable of supporting a safe and restorative environment. The lack of access to health care and other basic amenities leaves the homeless at a greater risk of a myriad of health risks, many of which have to do with the environments in which they reside.

There are numerous aspects of human health impacted by our surroundings. The role of the built environment in health has been increasingly recognized in recent years (Frumkin, 2011).

Benjamin Jakubowski and Howard Frumkin have done a large amount of work on this topic. In an article written in 2010 the authors cover a range of topics regarding the built environment and health ranging from air pollution to pedestrian infrastructure and green space. A study presented at the American Thoracic Society International this year showed a link between heart risk and noise and air pollution. Researchers used a measure of arterial hardening known as "thoracic aortic calcification" (TAC) to estimate heart risks in people before and after exposure to different types of pollution. Exposure to fine particle air pollution was shown to increase TAC scores by nearly 20 percent and exposure to noise pollution increased TAC by about 8 percent (Samet 63). Environmental Health Perspectives also published research revealing that long-term exposure to traffic noise may account for approximately 3 percent of coronary heart disease deaths (about 210,000 deaths) in Europe each year. The article explained that traffic noise could lead to elevated levels of stress hormones (cortisol, adrenaline, noradrenaline) which in turn could lead to high blood pressure, strokes, and heart failure (Mead).

Studies show that mental health can be intimately tied to the features of the built environment and that some physical surroundings have a salutary effect on mental health and well-being one of the greatest concerns for the homeless population. Consequently, spaces can be designed in such a way as to promote the development of stronger mental health. "Green space, parks, and community gardens are examples of land use that promote health. Green space supports community health by reducing stress, promoting physical activity, and improving perceived general health" (Verheij RA, PP, Vries, Spreeuwenberg, 2006).

Mental health includes when an individual has the ability to cope with normal stresses of life, has the opportunity to work, and is able to contribute to their community. The promotion of mental health involves the action of creating living conditions and environments that will allow people to adopt and maintain happy, healthy lifestyles. It is rational then to design spaces frequented by the homeless that are explicit in hosting features proven to promote psychological health.

Correctly included these features can influence stress, anxiety, and depression, facilitate social interactions, and promote recovery from mental fatigue (Sullivan & Chang, 2011). While there are numerous features of the built environment that contribute to mental health and social capital, some of the most widely studied aspects include green spaces, place attachment, aesthetics, and noise.

Several studies have demonstrated that proximity to green space promotes healthy psychological development, a higher self-rated quality of life, increased satisfaction with one's neighborhood, and more positive interactions with one's neighbors (Day, 2008; Kaplan, 2001; Grahn and Stigsdotter, 2003; White et al., 2013). Quality neighborhood parks in particular contribute to stronger social ties among residents, as these places provide residents with an opportunity to interact frequently, which establishes trust and belonging (Kaźmierczak, 2013). This benefit applies to people of all ages, because studies have found that children, college students, and older adults show signs of improved cognitive functioning, better perceived quality of life, and increased social ties (Mårtensson et al., 2009; McFarland, Waliczek, & Zajicek, 2008; Kweon,

Sullivan, & Wiley, 1998). In addition, too much stimulation leads to individuals being inattentive, withdrawn, irritable, distractible, impulsive, and accident-prone; however, this can be overcome through contact with nature. Greenspace helps to reduce levels of stress and promote good mental health, because simply viewing natural resources can facilitate attention restoration (Berman, Jonides, & Kaplan, 2008). These findings suggest that very small improvements to the public realm can actually make a difference in how people experience the site, features such as streets and parks lined with grass, plants, and trees, and other natural features can go a long way toward promoting a vibrant, healthy community.

At the same time, there are features of the built environment that can impede the development of social capital and good mental health. Long commutes from home to work add stress to daily life and decrease involvement in community affairs (Heaton et al., 2010). Thus, it is essential to construct live-work communities where residents can quickly travel between destinations, freeing up time for friends, family, exercise, or other health-promoting activities. Many of Seattle's homeless are employed which makes displacing them from spaces like under the Ballard Bridge a health issue, as they may no longer be within commuting distance to their places of employment.

High levels of noise and traffic are associated with increased cardiovascular disease risk, aggression, and anxiety, and decreased interactions with neighbors (Sullivan & Chang, 2011; Stansfeld, Haines, & Brown, 2000; Davies and Van Kamp, 2012). Given that a third of the homeless of Seattle sleep under roadway infrastructure they are much more at risk of these implications than the general population. While we cannot

make these spaces entirely safe we can intervene to improve the air and noise quality surrounding them.

The proceeding discussion has focused on the homeless for whom this thesis is intended to benefit and why that focus is necessary as well as how the field of landscape architecture is poised to impact this situation. Throughout the design process I tried to take into account how to protect users of the space from outside harmful externalities, particularly how to create a green space that would promote a sense of wellbeing and reprieve. The following section will explore a number of theoretical topics that impact the circumstance of the homeless and explore why Ballard is a rational testing ground for the exploration of this topic.

The public realm has grown less and less public due to an array of ever changing factors. For one our consumer society has accepted a greater degree of surveillance within public space, larger and more visible advertising, and more corporate ownership of the space between buildings. In addition, our culture's focus on the automobile, an extremely isolated and single-user transportation solution has drastically shifted the scale of our public spaces making them less comfortable for the pedestrian. This is an experience felt drastically at my thesis site given that the site is bisected by two roads and underneath a large piece of automotive infrastructure. Allan B. Jacobs and Donald Appleyard speak on this issue, noting that our cities have "become an empty desert, leaving public life dependent for its survival solely on planned formal occasions, mostly in protected internal locations"(101). In their book, "Toward an Urban Design Manifesto" they go on to say, "good environments should be accessible to all". This may seem like a

very simplistic notion but there is more complexity to this short statement than first meets the eye. The idea that good urban design should be enjoyed by all socioeconomic groups and is in fact more greatly needed by those in lower socioeconomic classes often comes in direct conflict with private development ideals. The more our cities cater to individuals, the less they seemingly have to offer to the public domain. The same article states, "The good urban environment is one that somehow balances these goals, allowing individual and group identity while maintaining a public concern, encouraging pleasure while maintaining responsibility, remaining open to outsiders while sustaining a strong sense of localism"(102).

As more powerful entities have a greater say in the shaping of our urban spaces this balance becomes more difficult to maintain and consequently, the dynamics of these spaces change. This transition often occurs under the guise of the celebrated public private partnerships or incentivized zoning strategies where private entities are given leniencies often regarding the scale of development in exchange for the creation of public amenities as was the case in Seattle's South Lake Union Design Guidelines (Heurkens, 471). While generally this is a mutually beneficial proposal in the eyes of a cities' financial structure the public spaces developed in the process are generally more controlled and cater to the private entities user group.

Ballard is no different than most places in this regard and more than ever is struggling to maintain a sense of localism in a quickly morphing local design aesthetic driven by a surge in private development in the community. Figure 2.3 demonstrates how new development is predominantly grown

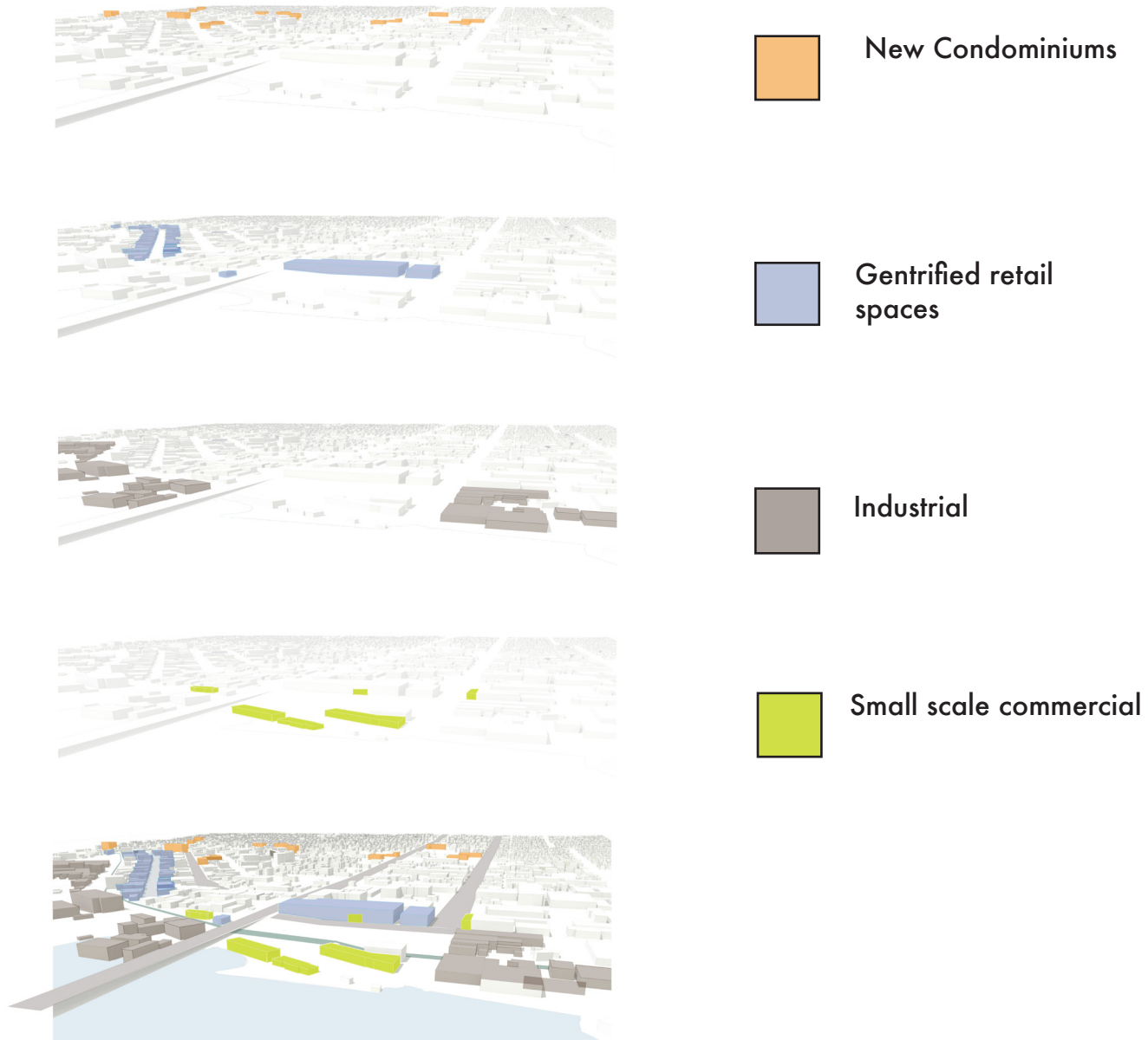


FIGURE 2.3: Site context- shifting built environment: Source: Created by author (2014)

in the north side of the Ballard district but is now spreading south into the industrial area surrounding the design site. The new condominium and apartment units that are have been constructed at expedient rates in the area loom over the historically small-scale manufacturing spaces that mostly catered to the production of equipment needed for the local industries. Ballard as site of transition was what drew me to want to design a space within that area. The community has maintained a strong sense of self for over a hundred years and is now seeing that slip away. Therefore in designing this space I wanted to think critically about what are the foundational features of the site, what makes the site and its context unique and a factor in a greater story of the community.

The issues of homogenization have in part stemmed from a long history of fear mongering regarding urban areas. This fear has been embedded over the course of thousands of years, at times and places justifiably and at others not. This embedded demonization has had long standing consequences for our approaches to our design decisions. As Jeffrey Hadden and Josef Barton have noted, the Judeo-Christian tradition shows evidence of “anti-urban underpinnings” in its earliest stages (Hadden and Barton, 1973, 85-90). The bible itself views the city as “unnatural” – an abomination in the eyes of god. The industrialization of later centuries compounded these notions and in many regards made them a reality. Cities became focused on production and a visual reminder of the socioeconomic gaps created by the industrial workforce economy.

Noteworthy figures throughout history have also shared at length their sentiments on the urban realm in length. Thomas

Jefferson was well known for his dislike of cities, and viewed “great cities as pestilential to the morals, the health and the liberties of man.” Other leaders such as Emerson and Thoreau viewed the city as artificial and confining.

Melville, Hawthorne, and Poe have all referred to the city similarly as the backdrop for frightening experiences, personal defeat, heartless commercialism, poverty, sin and crime, noise and loneliness...

Such reflections on city life continued simply taking different shape as society changed. Over the last half-century we see this most clearly in the representations of cities in films and through advertising. During the 70s highly racist films portraying minorities at the root of vandalism, crime, and urban filth placated into the white flight movement causing further issues for declining urban tax bases. Cities with little financial means began to look and feel like the terrifying images portrayed in films and consistently reported through the conservative news reels of the time. It’s no wonder that the common populous would focus so much of our approach to the design of public spaces on making sure we were defensible of such activities (Macek, 212).

By the 80’s and 90’s the film and product industries had found thousands of ways to capitalize on the fear Americans had come to believe regarding city life. Homes became fortified with expensive alarm systems at unprecedented rates, advertised behind the guise that you are only safe at home, barricaded from the evils beyond. Films like, *The Crow*, *Batman Returns*, *Seven*, *Dangerous Minds*, *Escape from LA*, *Clockers* and *Falling Down* all received enormous amount of attention.

How then does this relate back to urban design? Design is like film, writing, or any creative act a means of representing our selves in a visual form. When our culture tells us to be afraid of something, density, minorities, animals, teenagers, the homeless, men, whatever it might be our built environment demonstrates that fear.

There are many physical examples of how these phenomenon have impacted urban design ranging from regulations such as park closing times and the ubiquitous unwelcoming bench design, to entire layout as is discussed further in the precedents section. These fears further exacerbate the issues of homogeneity and in effect the issues of placelessness in our urban surroundings. The site I have chosen to design is a perfect example of this phenomenon. Instead of exploring how the space could have been designed in a way to promote interchange and celebration of it's surrounding context the concerns of the homeless and misuse lead to the decision of erecting an over twenty foot fence around the site, making it



FIGURE 2.4: Homeless Deterrents in Guangzhou China: Source: Elitedaily.com (2014)

un-usable for anyone and creating an eyesore upon entering the neighborhood. Now the site appears like every other underpass in the city, a concrete massing creating a visual and psychological barrier of one portion of the neighborhood to the other.

The aesthetic ramification of the demonization of the urban has been the whitewashing of the urban landscape. When you walk through the streets of Ballard as soon as you find yourself surrounded by new condo development and isolated private courtyards you are no longer aware of where you are. This feeling of not being able to differentiate your surroundings is referred to as placelessness, another phenomenon I wished to address in my design. As Ballard transitions into a more dense urban environment the small underutilized and derelict spaces we take for granted could become aids in retaining the neighborhoods character.

We choose where we live, work, and generally spend time somewhere because we like it as a “place”. There are key factors which make one area distinct from the next and we are use these orient ourselves and to generally feel more at ease. One way people perceive space is through the mental image. The mental image, according to Kevin Lynch, is a composite sketch of a place or series of places that has developed temporally. It is the way in which most of us envision our surroundings and is critical to the way in which we perceive our environment either positively or negatively. Lynch stated, “Above all, if the environment is visibly organized and sharply identified, then the citizen can inform it with his own meanings and connections. Only then will it become a true place, remarkable and unmistakable.” (Lynch 92) Lynch used

the mental image as a tool for understanding our connection to the environment on the city scale. At the neighborhood scale the series of buildings, shapes and structures around us creates an image identifiable from other images. By having a more delineating imaginable environment we gain a stronger spatial understanding and also create a stronger connection with the immediate urban environment, in turn developing a heightened psychological connection with ones surroundings. One could then deduce that if an area lacks definable character there is a diminished psychological connection of the spaces users to the site.

Our urban centers are demonstrating a greater appreciation and understanding regarding the importance and desirability of access and quality of public spaces. The Commission for Architecture & the Built Environment stated in a recent publication that,



vs.



“A successful park or green space can be the making of a place. An unsuccessful one can help ruin it. Major programs of development and regeneration are now providing greater opportunities than ever to improve the spaces we already have and to create inspiring new ones.”

This change in desirability equates in many cases to the increased land value within the urban landscape. As land values increase, increased development is also expected. This is the case in Ballard which has experienced 4,159 new housing units emerge in since 2001 (Mattson 2012). Much like many communities experiencing rapid growth, Ballard in conjunction is losing a sense of self. While economic growth in the community is welcomed the loss of the identity of Ballard as it’s own community set apart from Seattle as a whole is not. The condo and high end rental housing boom in Ballard is making

great strides in the regions goals towards densification and urban renewal which should not be diminished in importance, but the loss of a communities character and affordability is an unacceptable price to pay for those characteristics.

Ballard is becoming homogenized in character of architecture, demographics, urban design and culture. This is a common in communities experiencing rapid growth yet is undesirable on many fronts, even by those who are touted as the cause of said homogenization. Urban public spaces are no exception, while what immediately comes to mind in this discussion are the massive condo developments, the spaces between them are impacted to just as much. As these spaces are re-designed to respond to the new architecture they too lose their character or simply no longer function in the same way. Often these spaces are simply there to fit requirements and provide little to no social amenities to the community as the older public realm had.

While the ways we interact with public spaces have changed, we know that access to outdoor space as a third place are needed just as much as ever before and that they have a large impact on the perception of the urban landscape. The growing demographic populations of Ballard are different than those of past generations but they too value and are impacted by their physical surroundings. As urban designers we are faced with a growing challenge of no longer designing public spaces simply for passive recreation, we need to focus more attention on the functionality of these limited spaces and how these functions meet the needs of a more divergent set of users.

Spatial homogeneity in conjunction with social homogeneity

have become a riding concerns for the Ballard community. The highly concentrated public spaces we previously tended towards, such as Central Park, may no longer have the greatest or most desirable impact on our day-to-day lives. Such could be said for the centralization of any use across our cities. Contrary to the popular belief of the 1960's when designers and planners advocated for physical and social homogeneity through the use of functional zoning, urbanists are now embracing the strength, intrigue, and resilience of heterogeneity in our urban environments. De Monchaux, architect and urbanist, eloquently speaks on this issue:

“The city is a dense network of relationships. The best way to provide infrastructure is to not go in with a meat ax but to practice urban acupuncture, finding thousands of different spots to go into” (Arieff). Creating small pockets of greenery and public space such as under the Ballard Bridge is a mechanism of giving a community greater identity.

In addition to decentralization of urban spaces being beneficial to their role in the lives of urban residents retaining social diversity is also a key feature of ensuring a sense of place in the urban landscape and has been systematically removed from the public sphere. Social homogeneity can be seen on almost all socioeconomic levels; the “divide and conquer” method of space, each space designed exclusively for one user group. It is the same methodology that led to poor solutions to low-income housing (having a cluster of ten 30-story housing projects). In the case of homelessness in Seattle, one might take a closer look at Pioneer Square, a historically socially challenged area of Seattle which houses a vast majority of the cities social services.

Currently, there remains a centralization of the homeless population in Pioneer Square due to the services and amenities offered in the area. In addition, the environment doesn't change user groups throughout the day but rather remains monopolized by a single group at all times. Due to the vast number of homeless people and the common perceptions of that group, alternate users and uses of the space have diminished, further exacerbating the notion that the homeless are people that space cannot be shared with.

The concept of "diversity" in the public sphere can also become problematic if viewed too narrowly. Claims for diversity can be challenged as simply strategic rather than as a means to achieving social equity of any kind. Chris Hamnett argues that, "diversity has been pushed as a positive quality in its own right by [London Mayor Ken] Livingstone amongst others, but I think this is dubious and was simply a tactic/ strategy to portray London as diverse and therefore a richer city culturally. I think tolerance is a much better criterion, as it embodies implicit positive qualities that different groups either accept or valued equally or are seen as having a right to exist and to access resources. This could apply to tolerance of the homeless or other groups, not simply different ethnic groups" (Fainstein, 67). This is the approach that I have taken in designing the area under the Ballard Bridge, by encouraging diversity on the site there is no misunderstanding that change is occurring in the area only that the lifestyles of those who have lived within proximity of the space for years should also be taken into account and the space should reflect their needs and identity.

Setha Low, an urban anthropologist whose work focuses on

urban spaces and cultural diversity analyzed this subject in her work, "Rethinking Urban Parks – Public Space and Cultural Diversity". She looks at a few particular parks in New York City and examines the users and uses of these spaces. Each park is diagramed and explained in terms of who lives near the park and how each of the adjoining neighborhoods interacts with it. Low, Taplin, and Scheld spend a great deal of time observing the site, understanding constituency groups, and defining temporal periods each of these groups are involved in what activities and why. Interviews were then used to supplement these observations, which the author refers to as REAP methods (e.g. behavior mapping). Physical trace maps were used to note the presence of particular objects such as liquor bottles, needles, trash, clothing, and erosion in the parks. Transect walks also took place which involved being given a tour of the site by someone who lived near the park and used it regularly.

Having lived near my thesis site for over five years I watched the dynamic of the neighborhood well before I was involved in this thesis work. I too felt that through observation the site could be better understood and therefore better imagined as a productive space.

Through defining a number of key terms and issues related to cultural diversity and the public realm including cultural values, cultural hegemony, social sustainability, sustainable development, and cultural property rights in relation to public spaces literature on the subject has attempted to understand differing ways in which historically underrepresented groups can be taken into account when designing and managing public areas.

While urban designers, planning landscape architects and architects have embraced the benefit of diversity in our cities both spatially and socially, the physical embodiment of these differences is often lacking in our day-to-day surroundings. Bringing attention to this, theorists have brought to light a new phenomenon, which they have referred to as the “sanitization” of our urban world (Mitchell, 2003). It appears that not only do we discourage the continued heterogeneous use of space we also continue to create spaces that look alike, feel alike, and entice only singular user groups. Examples of this phenomenon include areas such as University Village in Seattle, the Pearl District in Portland and the Meat Packing District in New York all of which cater exclusively to a high-income, white urban



FIGURE 2.6: Ballard Condo Growth Source: Seattle Times (2013)

demographic that is seeking a high end retail experience that includes the name brands they are familiar with in a space that conforms to their notion of urbanity.

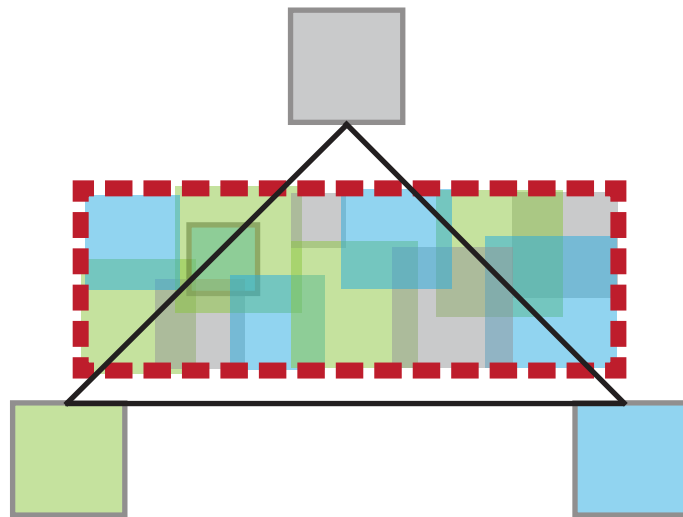


FIGURE 2.5: Triangulation Diagram Source: Created by author (2014)

One concept regarding the diversity of public space I found particularly useful in conceptualizing the concerns behind the transformation of Ballard is that of triangulation. Triangulation serves as the counterpoint to social and spatial homogeneity. As Christopher Alexander has defined this concept as , “when a space allows for two or more overlapping functions and thus facilitates additional activity and interaction between people. It often occurs in small spaces.” Its effects can have a positive consequence when used on the urban scale to provide opportunity for connection between strangers. The concept of triangulation speaks poignantly to the overarching goal of this thesis design and to the greater needs of communities that are

facing a loss of singularity. When areas such as Ballard begin to morph into a site lacking difference the level of acceptance and understanding of inhabitants becomes diminished as well, and the corresponding trend as demonstrated in numerous communities has been that marginalized groups are less tolerated or simply forced out by growing market forces.

In addition to concerns about homogeneity in the public landscape and how this impacts the homeless population the concerns of privatization of public space have been a growing issue for the homeless. In Ballard the large scale development boom has meant that much more of the landscape has been taken up by structure, leaving less open area for the homeless. Traditional urban design created a clear definition of the public and private realm with the sidewalk being public and the buildings themselves being private. Now developments are taking a greater role in shaping the public right of ways immediately surrounding their development and enforcing a stricter code of conduct in these spaces.

Privatization of the public realm has had increasing implications on the interactions of the public to the spaces they generally construe as public but may in fact no longer be. Many outdoor spaces, which we rationally assume are a part of the public realm, have in fact been appropriated by public entities, legitimizing a much greater degree of control and oversight.

Concentrating the most troubled and impoverished people is likely to create a very dangerous space as Mike Davis illustrates in his book *City of Quartz*: “by condensing the mass of desperate and helpless together in such a small space, and denying adequate housing, official policy has transformed skid

row into probably the most dangerous ten square blocks in the world” (Davis, 232-233).

In her critique from the romantic perspective, the homeless individual is framed not as someone who has “failed in terms of bourgeois standards but [rather] as someone who has embraced a different set of values even at great material cost to himself” and she argues that this “preserve[s] a way of thinking and living differently” (Kohn, 179). From the democratic perspective, the homeless are “participants in a certain kind of civic conversation” and are considered “political agents”, giving a place within society and value to this sector of the population.

The concerns of privatization, homogenization, demonization, legal tactics and increased sanitization all compound into one main issue impacting the homeless in areas like Ballard which is displacement.

Displacement has been acknowledged but seen as an unfortunate corollary of processes that are revitalizing city centers, attracting private investment and securing the physical fabric of architecturally valuable neighborhoods. This leads us to the question of whether these benefits are justified given the social costs involved. (Atkinson 2003:2345) The dialectical relationship between economic processes and an ecological rationality displacing economically marginalized residents has not been explicitly linked to urban homelessness (Dooling, 2009).

Displacement is experienced in different ways in each community it impacts. As discussed in detail by Caitlin Cahill,

“One common tale accounts how some residents “voluntarily” more due to unprecedented rent increases or landlord harassment.” Families and individuals in her study explain how when priced out of the Lower East Side of New York City and had to move to Queens where they knew no one and remained in risk of being displaced further from their social network as time progressed. In her research those who resided in the Lower East Side referred to that neighborhood as home, not the individual unit they resided, a common linguistic associating for many urban residents. Freeman and Braconi in their work, *The Right to Stay Put, Revisited: Gentrification and Resistance to Displacement in New York City, 2004* argue that this is not simply displacement but instead a “replacement” (51). In this case, poor and working class people move into other disinvested neighborhoods where they do not know anyone, and replaced by an entirely different socioeconomic group.

The constant fear of being relocated is destabilizing and reinforces a deep lack of agency within lower income communities. Cahill’s work in the Lower East Side demonstrates how the young women in the community felt they had no power over their own security and stability. There was a sense among the women that “they” had the power to kick them out of their own home, a fear that has been validated on countless occasions. This situation harks back to America’s long history as being rooted in property ownership, which has been identified with a sense of control. Historic discourses about property ownership as a prerequisite to citizenship have begun to appear in altered form in modern politics. In 2004, President Bush stated, “I believe our country can and must become an ownership society. When you own something,

you care about it. When you own something, you have a vital stake in the future of your country” (The Ownership Society 2004.) The problem with such rhetoric is that this perception suggests that those who choose not to own property or are economically unable experience a marginalization and the threat of exclusion. The ownership society validates the privatization of the public realm in effect further exasperating disenfranchisement by the groups who have historically cared for these areas. The more emphasis is placed on ownership the more disregarded those who don’t own feel and the more resentment grows between the have and have nots in a community.

Cultural displacement is what is experienced on the other side of the issue, for those who stay and witness the transformation occurring around them in their community (Alicea 2001, Muñiz 1998). As noted earlier place attachment theories and place identity suggest that one’s relationship to their environment has an impact on the “formation, maintenance, and preservation of the identity of a person, group or culture.” (Altman and Low 1992:10). This then begs the question of what happens to a person or a group’s identification when a place experiences a cultural transformation? When discussing cultural displacement the differences between displacement and replacement are moot. When well known and loved images are erased around a neighborhood that has been called home for long periods of time cultural displacement is also felt as a loss of self, community and culture, often met with feelings of anxiety and anger Cahill:219).

Gentrification unlike urban renewal is a slow process, at first barely noticeable, the neighborhood begins changing more

and more quickly. This difference between displacement caused by urban renewal, natural disaster, eminent domain and other immediate large-scale displacement forces and that of the slow moving gentrification has great ramifications from a political standpoint. Many residents when interviewed have expressed ambivalence toward their community's circumstance, confusion, political apathy and decreased sense of agency at the changes occurring around them. "The experience of socio-economic disinvestment and associated negative outcomes, can transform civic engagement into alienation" noted by Cahill. It's not that those who have lived in these underprivileged communities don't care enough to improve them; they simply lack the same available resources and become further disinvested in that change as time goes on.

While not as explicit as anti-homeless legislation and physical impediments to use, gentrification has played a key role in the displacement of residents into homelessness and the homeless from one location to another. Displacement has a great number of negative effects at both the individual and societal levels.

"Root Shock" written by Mindy Fullilove describes a number of people that live in urban areas along the east coast of the United States that have faced large scale redevelopment projects. Each city's situation is understood through the personal narratives of those that have lived in these spaces and been affected by their adaptation. Virginia City, Newark, Pittsburg, and New York are some of the areas Fullilove explores. Her writing is captivating and through interviews she is able to best describe the phenomenon she calls "Root Shock", or the systematic removal of communities from their

original locations and the effects of that disruption.

Through these stories the reader is able to understand how deep an impact the destruction of a strong community can have: interviewees in the book experience depression, isolation, economic hardship, and loss of close friends. The interviews or in some cases sessions, take place at times over a number of years and are therefore able to define what those communities were able to provide their inhabitants, whether it be a place to feel safe, a connection to wildlife, supportive neighbors, economic stability or a sense of ownership and attachment.

Root Shock underlines the importance of the personal narrative to the discussion of displacement. It's easy to neglect the impacts of people losing their communities without choice when there aren't personal anecdotes attached to these impacts. The book also provides a strong background to the ways in which underprivileged urbanites have experienced displacement for generations. Many communities, especially African American communities have had to relocate multiple times, losing with each move social capital they've been able to create. This reoccurrence greatly impacts the stability of this racial group and has made them rightly distrustful of urban planning policies and government interventions in their communities.

Often the homeless are overlooked when the topic of displacement is discussed, as if the only people affected by this process are those that own or rent the structures they reside in. Since the homeless spent the vast majority of their time outside their surrounding spaces become more

of a home to them and the connections they make to these areas are in some ways stronger than those who retreat to their residences each night.

PRECEDENT STUDIES

PUBLIC/ PRIVATE: STRATEGIC DESIGNS FOR HOMELESS SERVICE PROVIDERS

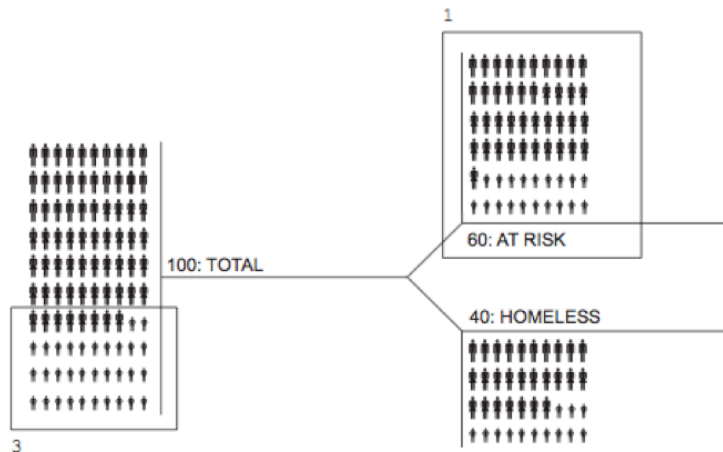


FIGURE 3.1: Katz Chiao Source: Public/ Private: Strategic Designs for Homeless Service Providers (2011)

In 2011 Katz Chiao published a work entitled Public/ Private: Strategic Designs for Homeless Service Providers. The project followed a series of policy actions in the New York City area:

“Policy changes enacted in the past decade that have led to the construction of some new models of supportive housing, but designers have, for the most part, responded to competition briefs and RFPs, rather than helping to define the issues involved. We are interested in how designers can work alongside city organizations and homeless service providers to identify the kinds of issues beyond housing that design is well-equipped to address. How could designers address the issues faced by these organizations, improving the effectiveness of service and outreach as well as the quality of the spaces themselves? How might their efforts help to end chronic homelessness? How could design play a role in de-stigmatizing homelessness in the modern city? (pg. 1)”

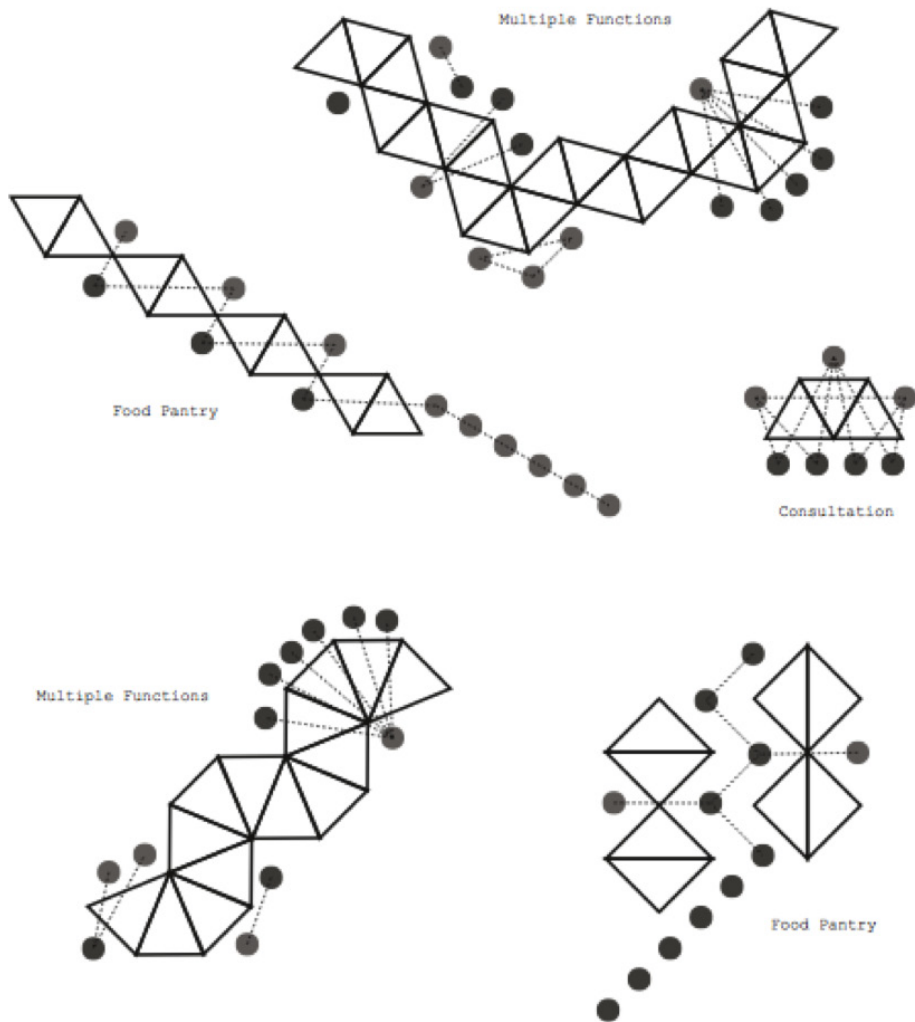


FIGURE 3.2: Katz Chiao Source: Public/ Private: Strategic Designs for Homeless Service Providers (2011)

The project was first born out of the Graduate School of Urban Planning at Columbia and further developed through a design collaborative, now based out of New York and Boston. As a design example the study does an impeccable job of graphically representing facts and figures relating to the homeless population of NYC:

The project does an in-depth analysis of the needs of both the homeless themselves and those who are there to assist them. One important issue the study addresses is the lack of privacy homeless individuals generally have and therefore attempts to figure out how to create a level of intimacy in the spaces in which the homeless interact with service providers.

These diagrammatic explorations of space responding to this particular population are indicative of the types of visuals I would like to explore as I move into the design portion of my thesis. It is my hope that I will be able to test out these types of spatial arrangements on site and observe whether they are utilized and precisely how.

Lessons learned from Public/ Private: Strategic Designs for Homeless Service Providers:

- The homeless population generally lack privacy in their day to day lives therefore make attempts to conserve a safe degree of intimacy in the spaces in which the homeless interact with others
- Observation is a key, observe how the user group you're concerned with behaves in order to best design a space that will not make them uncomfortable
- Diagramming spatial relationships is a very powerful way of communicating the goal of the design

LAFAYETTE SQUARE PARK



FIGURE 3.3: Lafayette Square Park Source: Hood Design (2014)

Lafayette Square Park is one of the best-constructed examples I have seen regarding addressing homeless needs in public space. The park is location in Oakland California at a site that has historically had a numerous problems with crime and perceptions of safety in the area. Walter Hood, the designer of the project went against typical urban design strategies in developing the spatial pattern of the park in an attempt to provide distinct areas for each of the user groups, allowing a multitude of activities to take place at the site simultaneously.

The park was built in 1999 and has been highly celebrated by both community members and the homeless inhabitants. Hood worked closely with the community during the design process, in turn bringing a great deal of local support leading to greater stability of the site moving forward.

The design was able to both create green space but also be highly visible from almost every direction allowing those on the site to feel very safe. The geometric layout of the park gives the space a clean manicured look even though

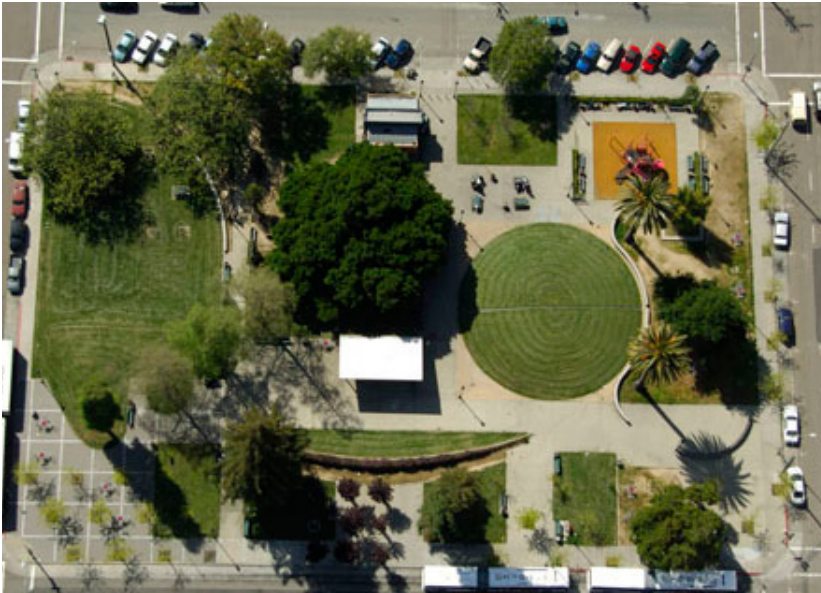


FIGURE 3.4: Lafayette Square Park Aerial Image Source: Hood Design (2014)

maintenance is minimal and the planting pallet is relatively sparse.

Lessons learned from Lafayette Square Park:

- Local support and involvement in highly important to a successful design especially when highly political topics such as homelessness are a topic of conversation
- Provide space where different groups feel comfortable
- Provide basic amenities including covered areas, seating, and barrier from the street
- Make sure connections with the surrounding neighborhood circulation patterns, and sensory experiences are well documented and addressed in how the layout of your design
- Keep open visual sightlines across the space for safety
- Choose planting that will not create closed off areas or make spaces too dark while still providing greenery to soften the urban landscape and allow for reprieve



FIGURE 3.5: Lafayette Square Park Diagram Source: Hood Design (2014)

UNDERPASS PARK



FIGURE 3.6: Underpass Park Source: Archdaily.com (2014)

Underpass Park is located under and around the Eastern Avenue, Richmond and Adelaide overpasses in Toronto Canada. It was the most extensive park ever built under an overpass in Canada and phase one was completed in 2011, with phase 2 to be finalized this year.

Landscape architects Phillips Farevaag and Smallegger in conjunction with The Planning Partnership designed the park. Underpass Park is part of a greater ongoing effort by the city of Toronto to transform pockets of neglected urban spaces on the waterfront into valued public amenities. Since its grand opening the park with features, a skate park, basketball courts, a playground, an open flexible space, seating and green areas has been highly successful. The park is successful in taking advantage of the concrete beams and columns of the overpasses to create a unique and inviting community asset and provide year round weather protection.

The surrounding community has had safety and disinvestment concerns and the park has been a way not only to provide a series of amenities for the community but also to bring different groups together around the envisioning of the space.

In order to serve the youth and families of the neighborhood a playground is located in the middle section of the park, between St. Lawrence St. and River Street. This



FIGURE 3.7: Underpass Park Source: Urbantoronto.ca (2014)

area includes a teeter-totter, hopscotch, 4-square, swings and climbing structures. The area also includes a series of park benches and flexible community space that can be used for markets, festivals and seasonal public events.

The eastern-most section of the park, east of River Street, includes two basketball half-courts, and an extensive skate park featuring a series of obstacles, rails and ledges as well as a secondary open flexible space.

Public art is also a key feature of the site. *Mirage*, by Paul Raff Studios, uses reflectivity to draw people into and through the space using the beams as a sculptural feature which light can bounce off of.

When planning the overarching public art strategy for the West Don Lands, Underpass Park was identified as a high priority public art opportunity. In late 2009, Waterfront Toronto launched its first ever artist competition and selected Paul Raff.

Underpass Park Lessons Learned:

- It is possible to transform derelict and unused space beneath a series of overpasses into a unique community park
- Innovation is key to a successful design
- Play areas are a great way to draw people into an area in which they wouldn't otherwise feel comfortable feel comfortable
- Flexible space is important to that the site can be used by a greater number of people and a larger number of times throughout the day and year
- Public art can serve as a means of drawing people into the site and providing an amenity – light and safety

BATTERY PARK CITY



FIGURE 3.8: Battery Park City Source:Travelbieber.com (2014)

New York City like all cities has experienced its challenging moments in history. In the 1960s New York was in the process of transitioning from an industrial to a commercial economy. Large portions of the cities periphery were warehouses and docks that had become dilapidated and abandoned. In the meantime the financial district was growing economically and causing a demand for housing in lower Manhattan. It was at this time that the first plan to redevelop Battery Park City entered the mind of the New York political front. Years went into a master plan for the area, which fell through in the 70s as the economy tanked and the real estate market fell from \$13.00 a square foot to \$7.00 and vacancy rates skyrocketed to over twenty percent (Gordon, 1992).

The initial grand vision of the area was never realized but several housing “pods” and the Gateway Plaza was constructed in a piecemeal manner throughout the late 70s. By 1979 the project was in a serious financial bind and in order to avoid a financial bailout a deal was set forth where ownership of the 92 – acre site was transferred from the City of New York to the Battery Park City Authority (BPCA), increasing the private agencies control over the project in addition to speeding up the permitting process. A plan was shortly passed created by architects Alexander



FIGURE 3.9: Battery Park City Source:commons.wikimedia.org (2014)

Cooper and Stanton Eckstut. Spending on public facilities in this new plan was cut from the original \$73.6 million to \$3 million; the plan also no longer had a provision for subsidized housing. The development site was now marketed toward wealthy financial business types, not the middle-income focus of the 1960s plan. Today Battery Park City appears at first glance to be a successful example of a public private partnership- the grounds are meticulously well maintained; New Yorkers from all over Manhattan as well as tourists heavily use the site. However if you're generally familiar with urban public spaces (particularly those around the rest of New York) you can tell something is different. There is little to no social or use variance across the space, and it seems entirely removed from the rest of the city. It's very much like a Disneyland version of New York, complete with a picture perfect backdrop of the statue of liberty. In addition, the blocks are not rectangular like the rest of the city making the area disorienting, as well as the area being heavily monitored by employees of the park service which gives the false impression that they are city workers when in fact they are paid by a private organization – other truly public parks lack the funding for such employees. The aim of the BPCA is to increase the land's market value not to provide an amenity to the city. Vagrants, loitering teens, or any gathering, which doesn't fit, into this economic stream are quickly escorted off the premises in order to not deter, or make uncomfortable those willing to pay exorbitant prices for their lattes and lunches with views of the Hudson (Kohn, 153).

Projects such as this one are a dime a dozen at this point and can be viewed from different perspectives. On the



FIGURE 3.10: Battery Park City Source:commons.wikimedia.org (2014)

one hand the city (whatever city the project happens to be located within) gets a well-maintained park without a financial burden on the cities tax base. On the other hand, in the case of Battery Park City there is now a 92-acre site in one of the most expensive real estate markets in the country, which generates revenue strictly for the benefit of one luxury community. Furthermore the entirety of the site's decisions are made by one market driven organization whose motives are necessarily different than that of a public entity- serving the wants and needs of a very specific demographic and excluding even the admittance of others.

Battery Park City Lessons Learned:

- Private public partnerships can be beneficial to the functionality of a site but can also lead to the isolation of socioeconomic groups in public space
- Designs of public spaces should reflect their greater context and relate to the urban fabric surrounding them
- Views beyond the site can be used as art forms in their own right

VICTOR STEINBRUECK PARK



FIGURE 3.11: Victor Steinbrueck Park Source:Ben Rainthorpe(2014)

“There are 10,000 homeless people in Seattle... I think if you had a different clientele you would see that that the park is heavily used and serves a vital function for people who most need access to the outdoors and security.”
(Comment by Richard Haag during LA forum on the redesign of Occidental Square Hines, 2005 p.124)
Victor Steinbrueck Park is located in downtown Seattle just north of Pike Place market, a highly frequented tourist attraction. Victor Steinbrueck and Richard Haag designed the park in 1989 on a very limited budget. Both designers are known for their commitment to socially responsible design and for publically vocalizing their concerns regarding this topic.

The park is has been noted by numerous homeless advocates as an important feature in downtown Seattle because of its accommodation of the homeless in conjunction with the tourists, residents, shoppers and business personnel who also frequent the site throughout much of the day and over the course of the entire year.

The park is best known for the view beyond its' borders which looks out over Puget Sound and the Olympic Mountains. There are also numerous cultural symbols on the site including a pair of totem poles that frame this



FIGURE 3.12: Victor Steinbrueck Park Source: KiroTV.com (2013)

expansive view. At the center of the park lie a series of lawn covered berms which are most heavily used during the summer months when the homeless along with fatigued shoppers and those on their lunch breaks lounge in the sun and take in the view. These berms also function as visually separating the park from the street, creating a very flexible gathering space and providing a small patch of green in a highly urban area.

The berms are held in place with low retaining walls that double as the support for a series of benches that sit back from the sidewalk and provide a means of people watching the activity along the sidewalk.

On the west side of the berms towards the water are a number of individual stools and small tables that people can sit and eat at. Given the relatively confined space of the park Haag and Steinbrueck were successful in providing a variety of seating options so that users never feel crowded or inhibited from using the space. This is evident from the difference in who uses each element. While homeless men often gather to socialize along the benches facing the sidewalk, the benches facing the water and the mountains along with the small tables are generally frequented by those on break from work, meanwhile tourists most often gather along the railing on the far west side to take in the views.

Haag and Steinbrueck chose simple durable construction materials of concrete, the carved wooden totem pole, and an iron railing (Olin, 2004). The decision for simplicity was in part the project budget but it was also indicative

of the overarching goal of the design, which was to be deeply rooted in the place and culture while celebrate the everyday urban landscape (Olin, 2004, p.5). The design is simple, well used and highly pragmatic. It is not obvious that there was an explicit intent of accommodating the homeless population, which makes it in my eyes even more successful.

Victor Steinbrueck Park Lessons Learned:

- Provide a variety of seating options that meet the needs of all types of users
- Green space at any scale provides a visual and psychological relief from the hardscape of the surrounding urban landscape
- Use local materials and cultural references to ground the design in its place
- Public process is again key to a successful project
- The homeless and other user groups can co-exist in a public space that is designed well
- Provide generous flexible space
- Provide a number of programmatic features at different parts of the site, at different time and different scales

PEOPLE'S PARK



FIGURE 3.13: Peoples Park Source: <http://dwkee.blogspot.com/> (2014)

Located just off of University of California Berkeley's Campus, People's Park represented one of the last truly public spaces in the city in 1991 when rioting perused surrounding the demolition of the park for redevelopment. The city has historically been the site of unrest between the city, US, local activists, local merchants, and homeless people (Mitchell, 1992).

The property is owned by UC, which acquired the site in 1967 in order to build dormitories. Although the school lacked the funds to develop the site at the time the home which where on it were removed. In 1969 a group of students, community activists and local merchants took it on themselves to take unofficial ownership of the land. Their goal was "to create a user-controlled park in the midst of a highly urbanized area that would become a haven for those squeezed out by a fully regulated urban environment (Mitchell, 1992). UC – similarly to my site responded by erecting a fence around the Park and keeping out those who were using it. Activists in response led mass protests that escalated to the 1969 riots which have become a symbol of Berkeley.

The police and the University were eventually vanquished and their power over that parcel of land has remained

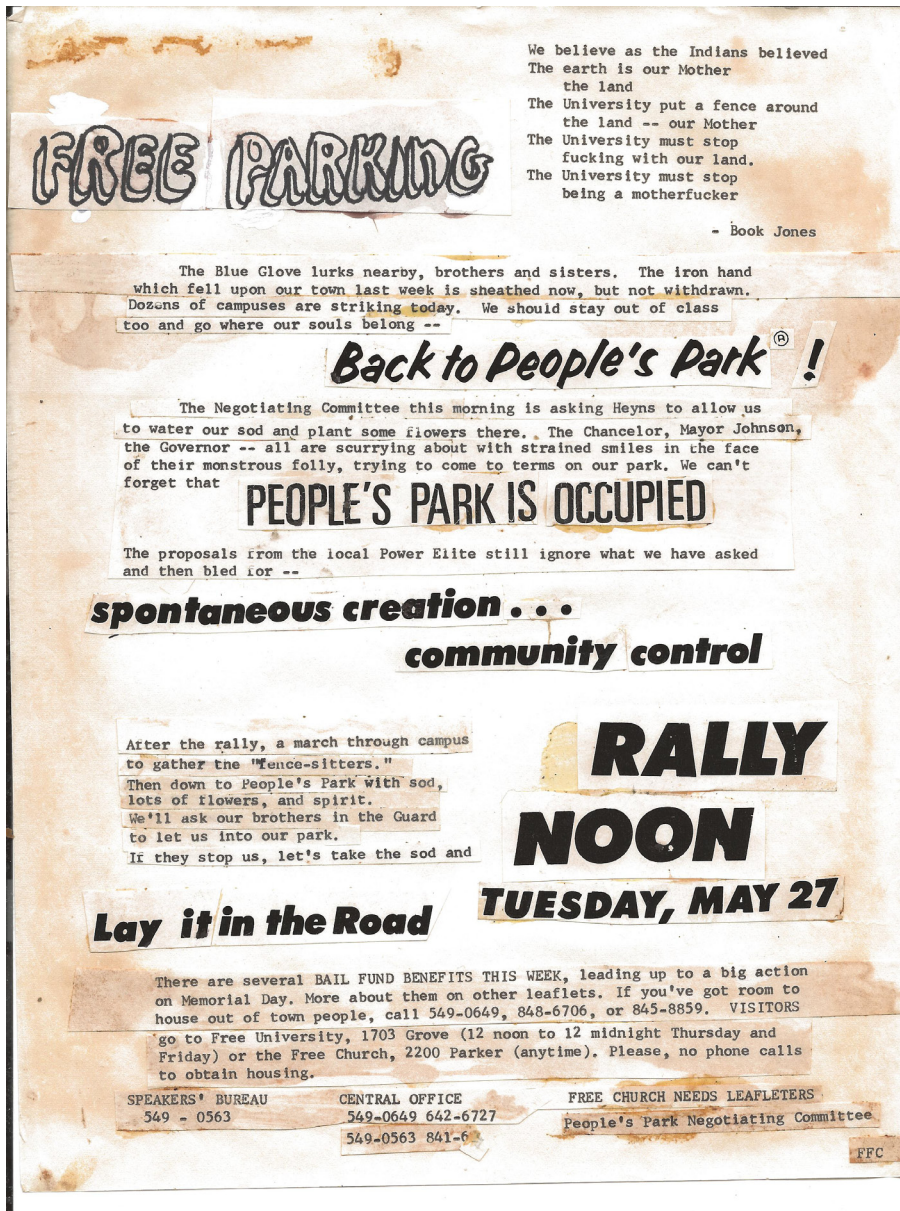


FIGURE 3.14: People's Park Pamphlet Source: www.larrysworld.com (2014)

minimal ever since. People's Park represents an important symbol of the power political activists have in shaping the land, in this case the ability to retain this space for persons "evicted by the dominant society (cf. Deutsche 1990). In the early 90's as the political climate changed around the site the University felt it was a more appropriate time to re-assert control over the site. Many claim that perceptions were more important than the actual activities taking place in the park. The response to the reversal of these perceptions was the police resorting to violence – using wood and putty bullets against protesters and roughing up the homeless. After this the park was given a closing time of 7pm and despite the absence of "disturbances" police arrested 16 people for trespassing in the first week under new direction (Lynch 1991).

People's Park just celebrated its 45th anniversary in April of 2014 and is still beloved by many locals. In recent years changes to the park have been made in order to address concerns of safety particularly related to visibility. On December 28, 2011, UC Berkeley bulldozed over the west end of People's Park, tearing up the decades-old community garden and plowing down mature trees. These changes have continued to instigate a degree of heated conflict over how the park should be managed (Berkeleyside, 2013).

What continues to this day is that People's Park is recognized as a consistent safe haven for the homeless, one of the few remaining in the area.

ADDITIONAL RELEVANT PROJECTS

6th Avenue South Urban Design Study is a thesis example out of the Urban Planning Department at the University of Washington written by Caroline Majors. This thesis explored the use of remnant spaces under underpasses in the International District of Seattle.

This thesis was a great example of neighborhood special analysis and how users are currently behaving in these areas. It asked about the greatest challenges to be faced and how and who would best address them including programmatic features, urban design strategies and economic opportunities.

The Pop-up HAWSE (Homes through Apprenticeships With Skills for Employment) is an international example of how designers are looking to address the issue of homelessness in our built environment. This group is working to create pop-up housing opportunities in un-used garage space in the Hackney neighborhood of London.

Though I am not looking to design residential units for the homeless, I found this precedent to be influential in its strategy for educating the inhabitants on light construction skills. "The proposals not only offer a home but education opportunities in construction techniques," say the architects. "[It is] a way of regenerating street frontage and

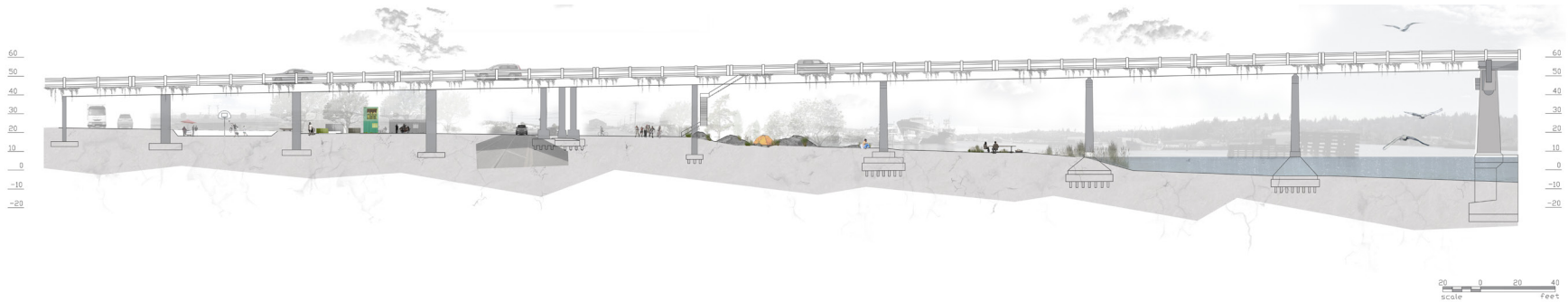
a practical interim solution between other development possibilities."

Additionally this project accepts the temporal nature of these sites and accounts for the necessity of being able to quickly and easily construct and deconstruct the units. These garage spaces most likely will be bought or leased for more economically viable activities in the future but they represent the larger notion that there will always be spaces throughout the city in transition. The project poses to the public a question: why not use these transitional spaces for the benefit of those who are in immediate need? ("Garages to provide 'pop-up' housing for Homeless People")

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- Equitable public space does not happen without intentional design intent
- In order to design my site in a way that addresses the needs of the local homeless population, and the greater community, I need to understand how they currently use the space and what would be most apt to draw them into the site
- People are particular about what spaces they interact with and why they choose to use them, my design needs to provide something that has a very strong pull to all user groups
- I should be very careful in how I frame my design intent, making sure to highlight the benefits to the community at large
- My site is unique in a number of ways, I should be focused in on the beneficial features of and surrounding the site and use those to strengthen the design itself

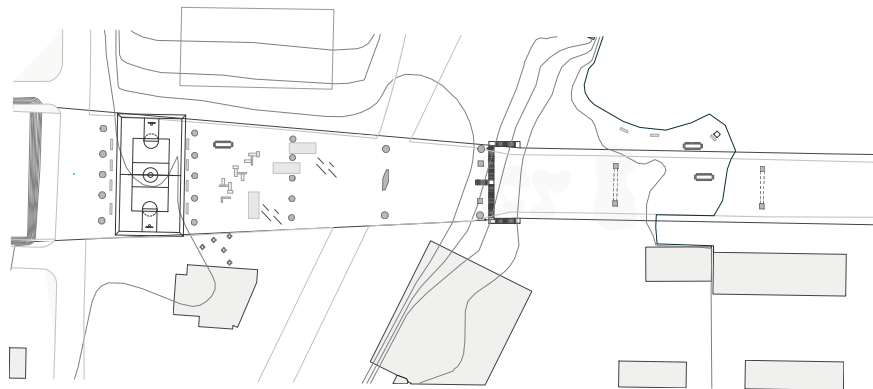
DESIGN



DESIGN APPROACH

My design approach was to use William Whyte's concept of Triangulation; which as Christopher Alexander explains is "when a space allows for two or more overlapping functions and thus facilitates additional activity and interaction between people. It often occurs in small spaces," to address the needs of the homeless in tandem with programming and design features that would draw a diverse group of people to a space that was currently unused by the majority of the community.

It is my view that many of the stereotypes projected upon sectors of the population are done so because we have limited interaction with them. This notion was supported through the



interviews with homeless advocates who have worked for years engaging the community with the homeless population (Pruss, 2014).

This site could be a space where the population at large becomes more educated about the challenges faced by the homeless in their community and begins to breakdown some of the negative stereotypes unjustly projected upon them.

SITE ANALYSIS STRATEGIES

My strategies for designing this site began with simply spending a great deal of time in and around the space. I visited the site on an almost daily basis for over six months at various times of day. During my visits I made a concerted effort to take in the site from its many approaches including, coming down off the bridge, east from central Ballard, west from Fremont and north from the waterfront because the vertical nature of the site makes these viewpoints very pertinent to the design.

I found sketching at the site the most useful tool in imagining what the site could be, which often took the form of diagrams or simple vignettes.

The most important strategies for the design were initiated through my personal experience working with the homeless and low income as well as conversations with those who have spent a much longer duration working with this population, particularly in this area.

Since much of the design features were pre-determined by the particular needs of the community I wished to serve, much of the initial site analysis centered on how to meet these needs in a creative way.

DESIGN METHODS

A great degree of the methodology behind this design is observational in approach, in large part due to the time and resource constraints of this project. I knew that this would innately mean a large degree of bias given that my perceptions of the site may not be representative of the greater population. I also felt however that it was important to have created a design that was a response to my own observations as I had not done this in entirety while in my graduate program.

The other method used toward the design of the site was my precedent analysis, which was extremely helpful in exploring what the possibilities are in sites such as this one. These analyses also gave me an understanding of how other designers have approached the sensitive subject of hopelessness as it relates to public space.

During the course of this thesis I visited sites in five cities outside of Seattle that were intended to either remove or serve the homeless in some capacity. These site visits had a strong impact on the design decisions I eventually made, particularly in wanting to make the design stand out as different from other local parks in the area that are unreflective of social context.

DESIGN CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- Freight traffic
- Dark area
- Narrow alley
- Loud Traffic

OPPORTUNITIES

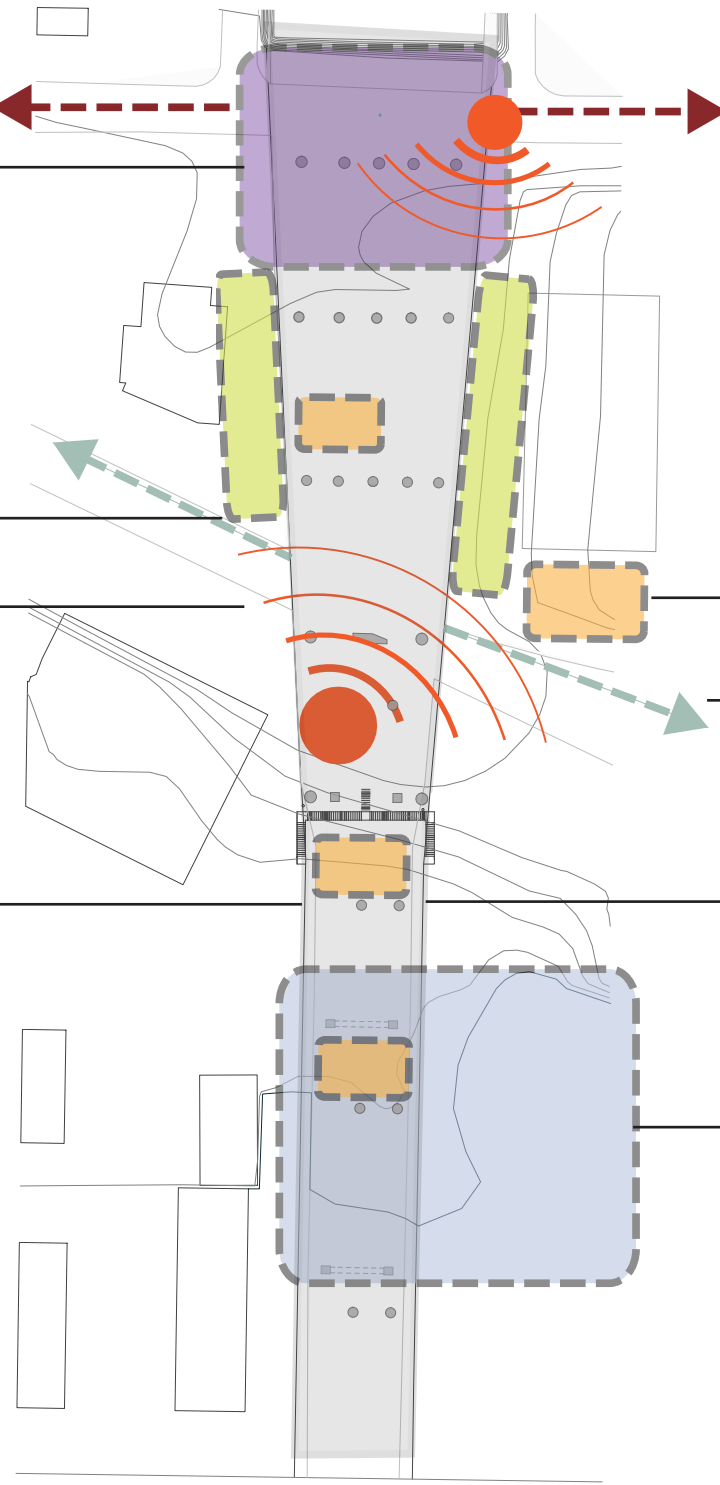
- Surplus Materials
- Burke Gilman Trail

- Covered Space

- Covered Space

- Waterfront Area

CONSTRAINTS



DESIGN STRATEGIES

Freight traffic
Dark area
Narrow alley
Loud Traffic

Covered Space

CONSTRAINTS

Elevated intersections to slow traffic and decrease noise

Recreational space utilizing covered space

Vegetated planters to draw users through the site and make alleyways feel wider

Reuse of site materials

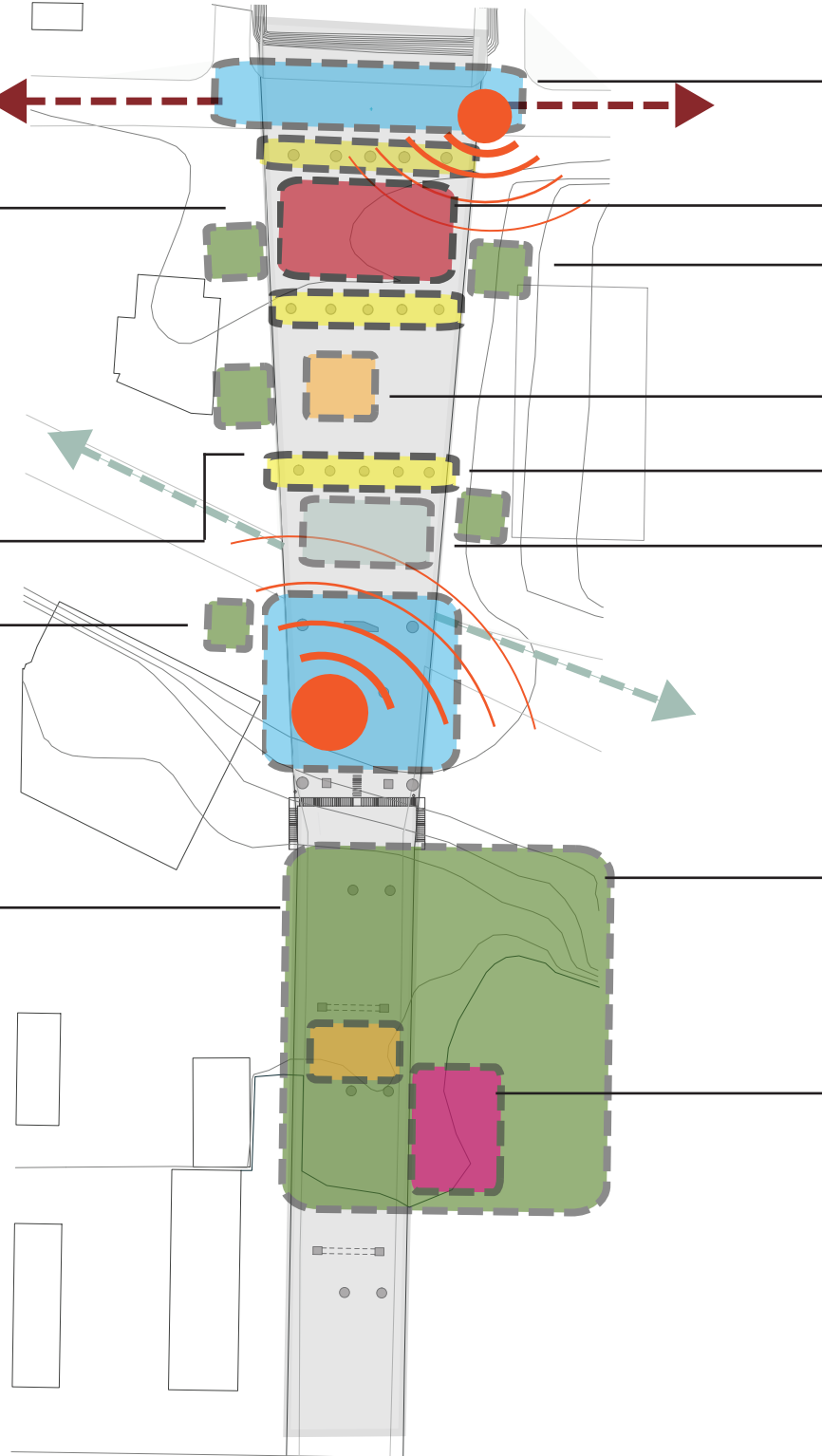
Increased lighting on site

Bicycle service area to support alternative transit through site

increased green space to decrease noise, take advantage of the waterfront and improve water quality

Installation of seating and fire pit area to draw users to the waterfront

STRATEGIES



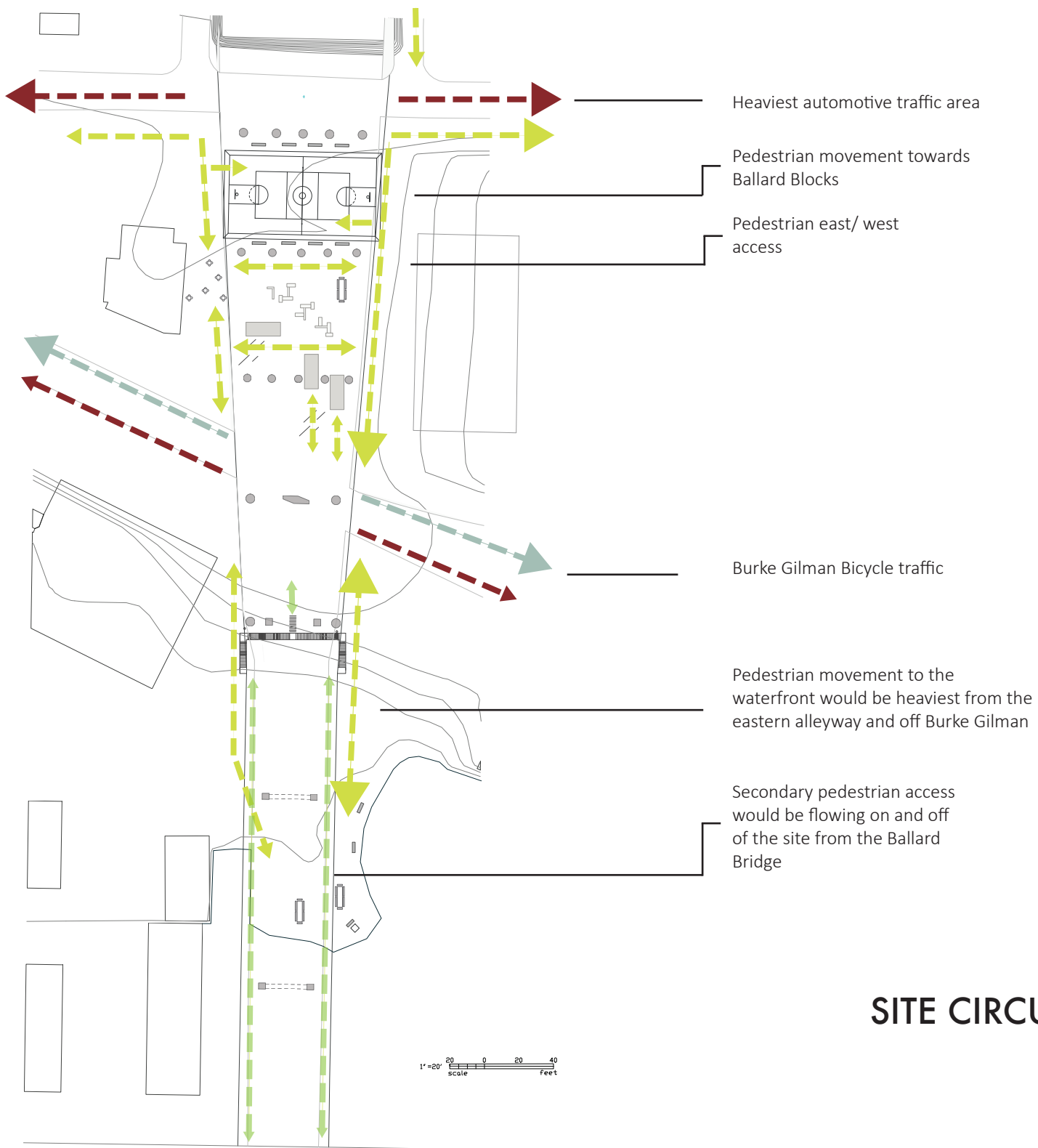
SITE MATERIALITY

In addition to simply sketching and diagramming on site, much of my design direction came from being inspired by the materiality of the site and its context.

As shown here, the area around the site is littered with discarded construction material which I saw easily being reappropriated to meet the needs of the site.

Using a readaptive strategy, the design of the site would be cost effective and inherently be more unique upon completion.





SITE CIRCULATION

SITE PROGRAMING

Programing a site like this is highly complex. Recommending the construction of a park in any area that is not residential in nature means that there will be greater challenges in drawing different people to the site. There are a number of **key challenges** I needed to take into mind when planning for the site:

1. Covered areas like this one with limited visibility cause people to be fearful.
2. The warehouses and commercial spaces around the site have limited hours making the site very quiet and dark at night.
3. There is very little greenery on the site.
4. Water cannot reach below a large part of the northern portion of the space.
5. There are a number of circulation patterns taking place around the site but since the site is currently closed off from public access I had to make assumptions regarding how the site would naturally be traversed in the future.
6. It can be assumed that there is contamination in the soil below surface level on the site due to its historical uses.
7. The two roadways that traverse the site, NW 46th street and Shilshole are both heavy traffic corridors. NW 46th street has more automotive traffic and freight loads and Shilshole has a great deal of bicycle traffic.

The same features that provide challenges on the site also create a number of **diverse design opportunities**.

1. The site creates a large covered space in a city that experiences long stretches of inclement weather.
2. The numerous thoroughfares transecting the site bring a wide number of people to the space and are a reliable source of safety and human energy.
3. The limited work hours of the local merchants and commercial spaces means that if the homeless in the area were to use the space in the evening they would be providing a service to the community by over-seeing the site.
4. Because the area is not residential there are a greater degree of uses that could be implemented on the site, which would not be bothersome to neighbors.
5. Because there is little greenery existing on the site currently small green space interventions would go a long way to increasing the aesthetic quality of the space.
6. Since the site is under a bridge there is no risk for future development.
7. The hazardous soil conditions in conjunction with the waters edge provide a perfect testing ground for phytoremediation tactics that would improve the environmental quality of the site and provide a much needed green space.
8. While the bridge columns are a challenging design component they also give the site definition and shield users from passing traffic.

DESIGN GOALS

The goals of my design were to:

1. Address environmental justice issues within the immediate community
2. Bring attention to the issues of displacement and homelessness within the immediate context of the site
3. Preserve place attachment
4. Demonstrate a design of singularity

DESIGN FEATURES ADDRESSING GOALS

1. a. Inclusion of a large green space along the waterfront.
b. Include plant material aimed at improving water quality at the site.
c. Remove physical barriers to waterfront access
2. a. Inclusion of art installation (text ground plane) that speaks to this issues discussed in this thesis.
b. Service stations that serve the entire community including a public restroom and bicycle repair area.
c. Create a space where the low- income and homeless individuals within the community can share their needs and community members can respond to those in kind.
3. a. Creation of a space that accomodates basic needs including a space to eat, to keep their belongings, to communicate and to recreate in a healthy manor, where all are welcome at all hours of the day.
- 4 a. Inclusion of local materials such as shipping containers, steel lockers, and steel planters.
b. Use of native plantings.
c. Creation of a space that overtly serves all community members and not only those who can afford higher price residential units within the surrounding areas.

KEY USER NEEDS

The design of the site was driven most importantly by the key needs of the homeless in the area that I had identified through my observations and through discussion with local homeless service entities.

These needs included:

- A space to feel safe
- A place to connect with community resources
- Somewhere they would not be forcibly removed and felt comfortable
- A place to store their belongings
- A therapeutic space
- Somewhere to rest during the day when they are not able to be in a shelter or in their vehicles
- A place to keep and care for their bikes

- Somewhere to eat
- A space to get out of the inclement weather
- Restroom and wash facilities

My design intentions were to meet the needs of the homeless while increasing integration of this population with the greater community and so their needs were important as well.

The needs of the greater community included:

- Increased green space
- Access to recreational opportunities
- Public restrooms
- Bike repair station
- Increased sense of safety
- Improved aesthetic quality of the site

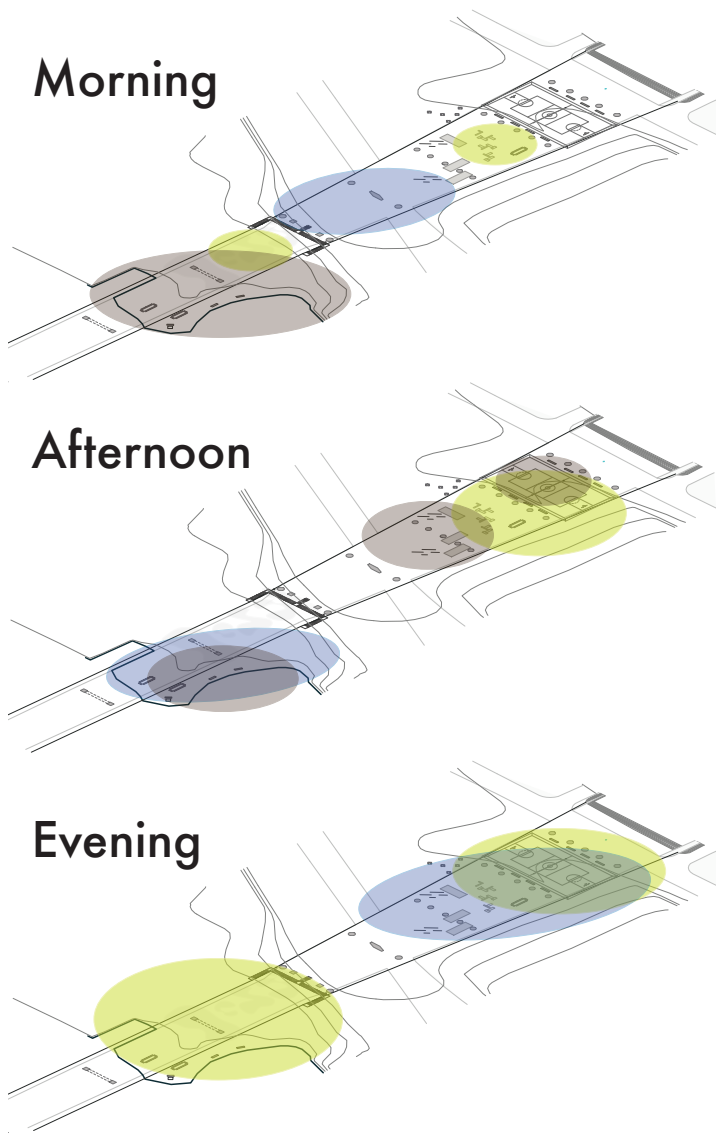
SITE USAGE

It is often a reasonable concern that if you create a space that is comfortable for the homeless it will no longer be a space inhabited by any other group but that population. As demonstrated in the precedent section that does not need to be the case. Much of how a site is used is a response to cues given by the design features and local community involvement with the site.

It was my intention to have each portion of the site used by different groups at different times of the day so that through meeting their needs and wants no one area of the site became relocated to any one user group or for one particular use.

It was also an important aim to design a site that was flexible, allowing for changes within it as the context of the site shifted. Given that the Ballard district has gone through a vast transformation over the last fifteen years it is likely that this

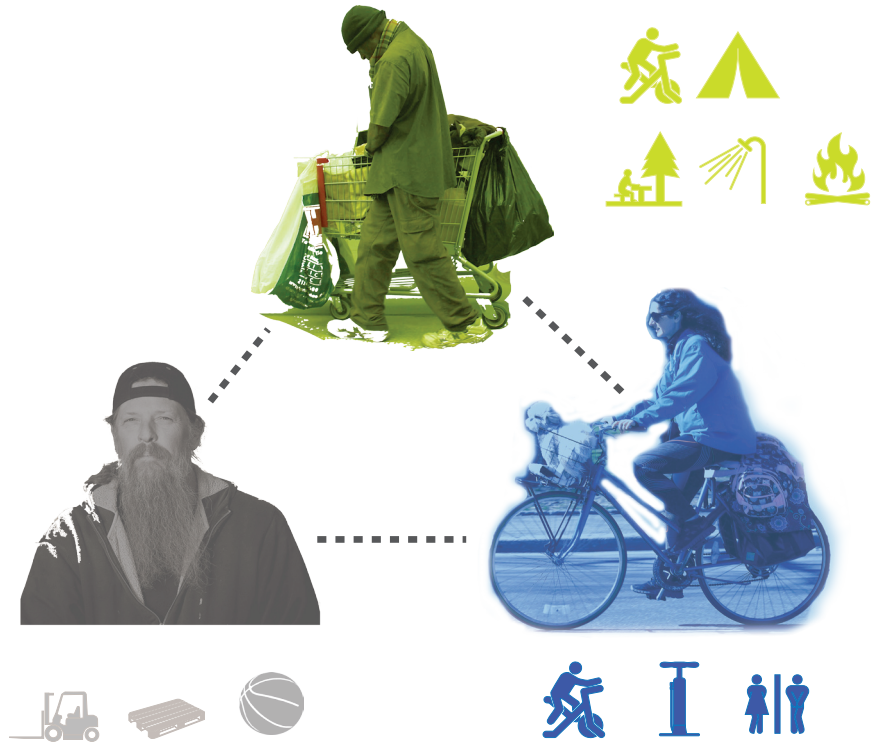
Site Use by Group

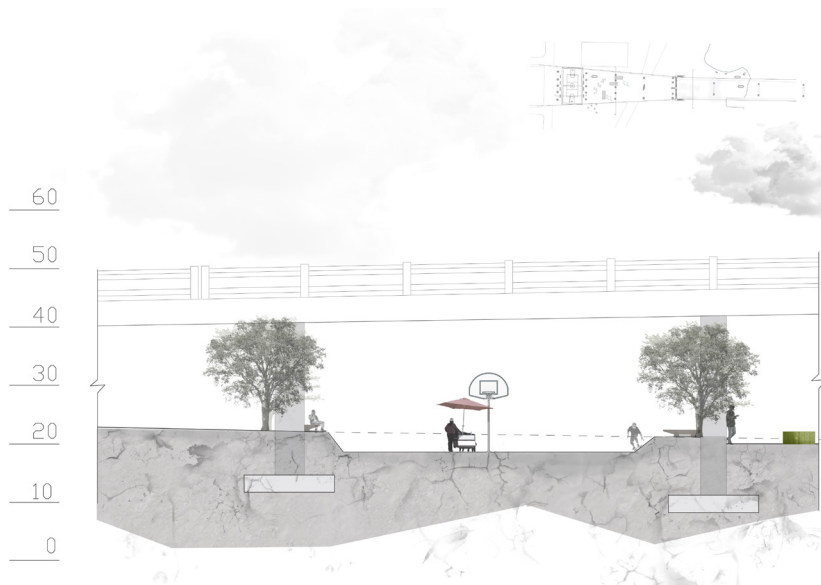


this trend will continue, and therefore the design was kept modular and transformable with little financial investment.

Lastly, currently the area under the Ballard Bridge does not feel like a place, its entire intension is to hold up the bridge itself. Through the design I wanted to give the location an identity.

The site naturally broke itself into sections each of which met particular needs, challenges and opportunities of the above points. I will be describing the design features as they relate to each of these sections and how they were all very intentionally driven by such parameters.



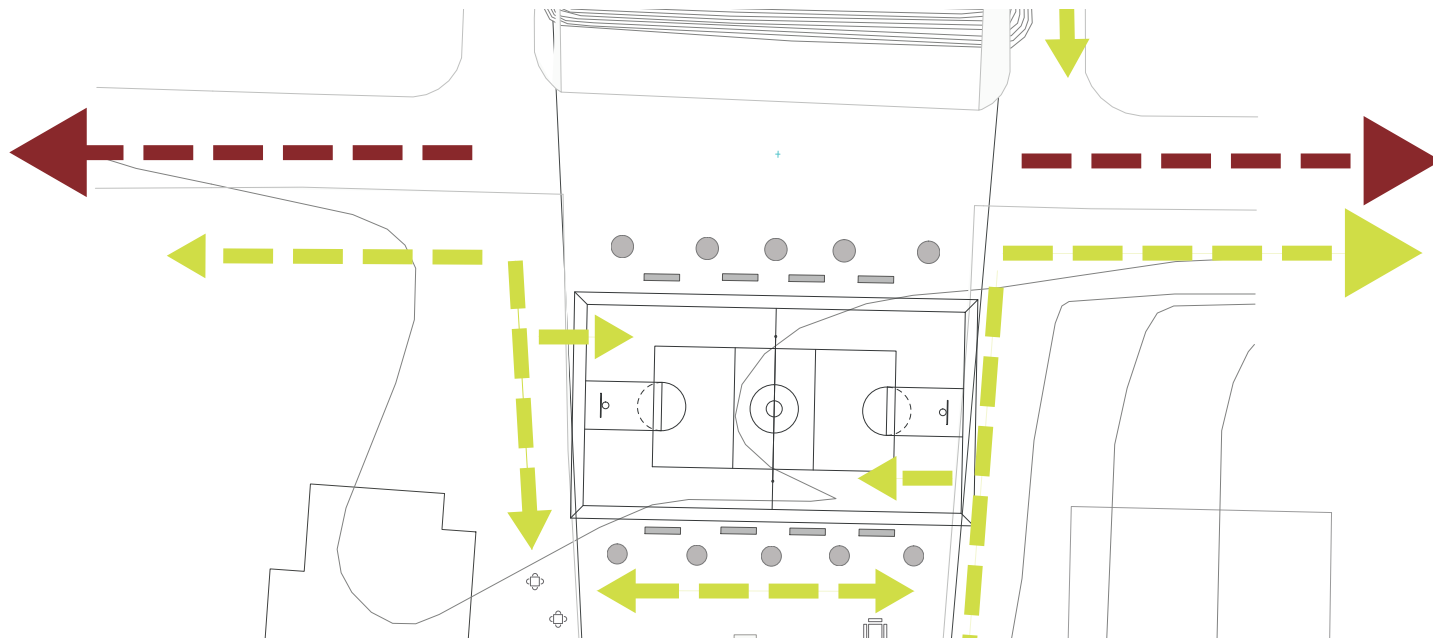


SECTION A

The first section of the site encompasses the area from NW 46th street to the second set of pillars moving south on the site.

This was the most challenging portion of the site to address since it had to greatest number of constraints. First, NW 46th street is a high traffic point that carries a large number of freight vehicles. Secondly this are has the lowest clearance below the bridge reaching less than forty feet, makingit the darker portion of the site. Lastly it is the farthest from the





water, which is the most enticing natural feature.

I wanted to have one strong design feature that extended through the length of the entire site and was able to catch the eye of even those who were simply driving through the site. I decided on painting large text across the ground plane beginning with where NW 46th street traverses the upper portion of the site. Since those reading the text in this space would be moving at faster speeds in vehicles I made the text very large in this space then drastically decreased the size throughout the rest of the site. I wanted the words to be reminiscent of the purpose of the design and therefore chose words that stemmed from my research regarding homelessness, gentrification and displacement. In many areas the text would be too dim to read, and is meant more to draw

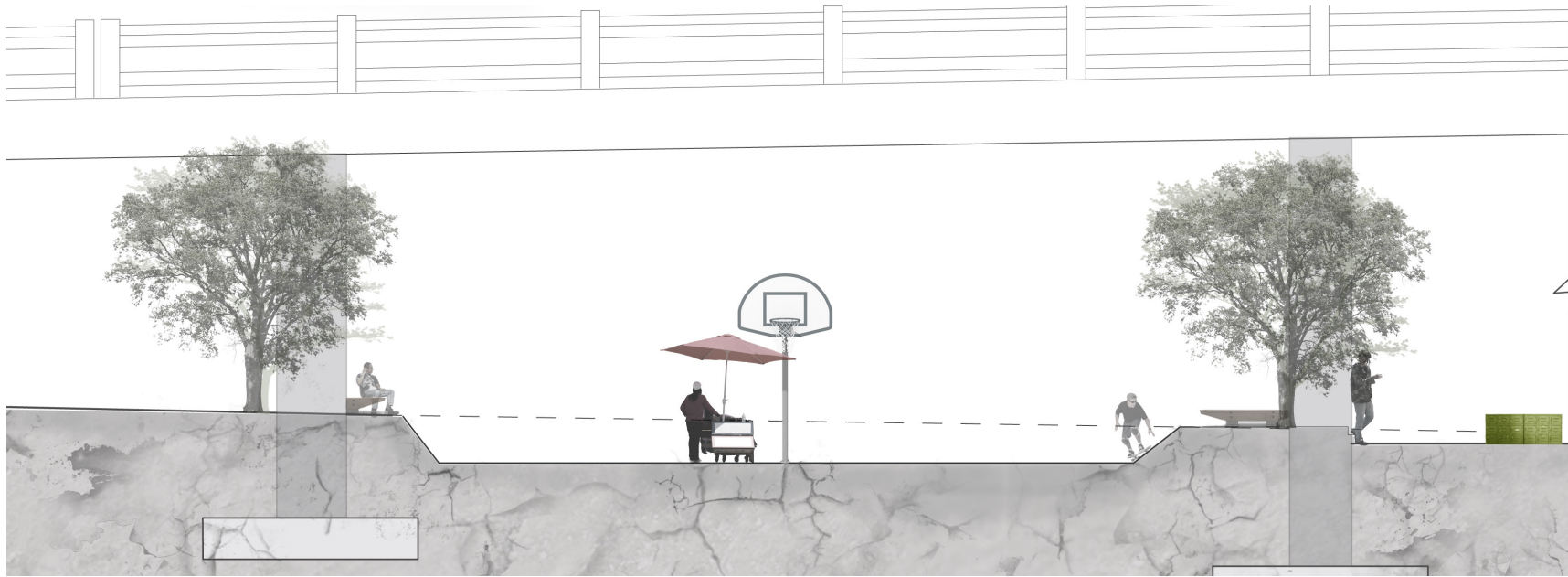
curiosity from passersby, in addition to giving the ground an interesting texture.

Given these constraints and after reviewing the site needs I felt this area would best serve as a recreational zone. After measuring the space it turned out to be just large enough for a standard high school size basketball court.

Local workers taking a break from their jobs who currently have no means of recreating can use the court throughout the daytime hours. Additionally children who are waiting for their parents to shop at the Ballard Blocks consortium next door could use the space.







In the mornings and evening this would provide a flexible space for local service agencies to distribute goods. Additionally, the space could be used for special events such as markets showcasing the work of local merchants. Through simple means this basketball court actually serves a number of needs for all of the user groups within the immediate area by simply being used in different ways at different times.

In order to increase the overhead clearance I dropped this portion of the site down by three to four feet. In doing this I was also able to include an angular ramped wall space that provides an added feature of a skate-able area that would further activate the space in the late afternoon and evening hours. This portion of the site could also benefit most from an added lighting feature, in order to allow for usage in the

evening year round. A simple solution could be uplifting the pillars as was done at Toronto's Underpass Park.

The color scheme of the site was also begins here, I wanted the site to have a bold color pallet that differentiated the space from the surrounding muted tones of the industrial landscape. These colors are demonstrated on many of the structures across the site. The most consistent color I chose to use is an iron ore red because the color reminded me both of basketballs themselves and of the fabrication of the multitude of iron materials of the site.

On either side of the court I included benches to allow for people passing to stop and observe the happening of the court or to take breaks from games and skating. I envisioned these

benches to be fabricated locally as there are many furniture makers in the area who are beginning to specialize in industrial inspired designs with a Nordic design influence.

Circulation to this portion of the site would be flowing from both the east and west side of the court as the basketball area would require a fence along NW 46th street for traffic safety reasons. In order to formalize these entrance areas and define the pathway into the site I included a number of trees lining both the east and west side of the site. On both ends of this section trees replicate the form lines of the columns and draw pedestrian's eyes further into the site. The trees also act to soften the edge of the site and better integrate the alleyways on either side of the bridge with the space underneath it.

Pedestrian movement on this side of the site would be flowing either from the current Ballard Blocks site or from the historic downtown portion of Ballard, once the other Ballard Blocks site is developed the court will be located in a site that is much more visible than it is currently.



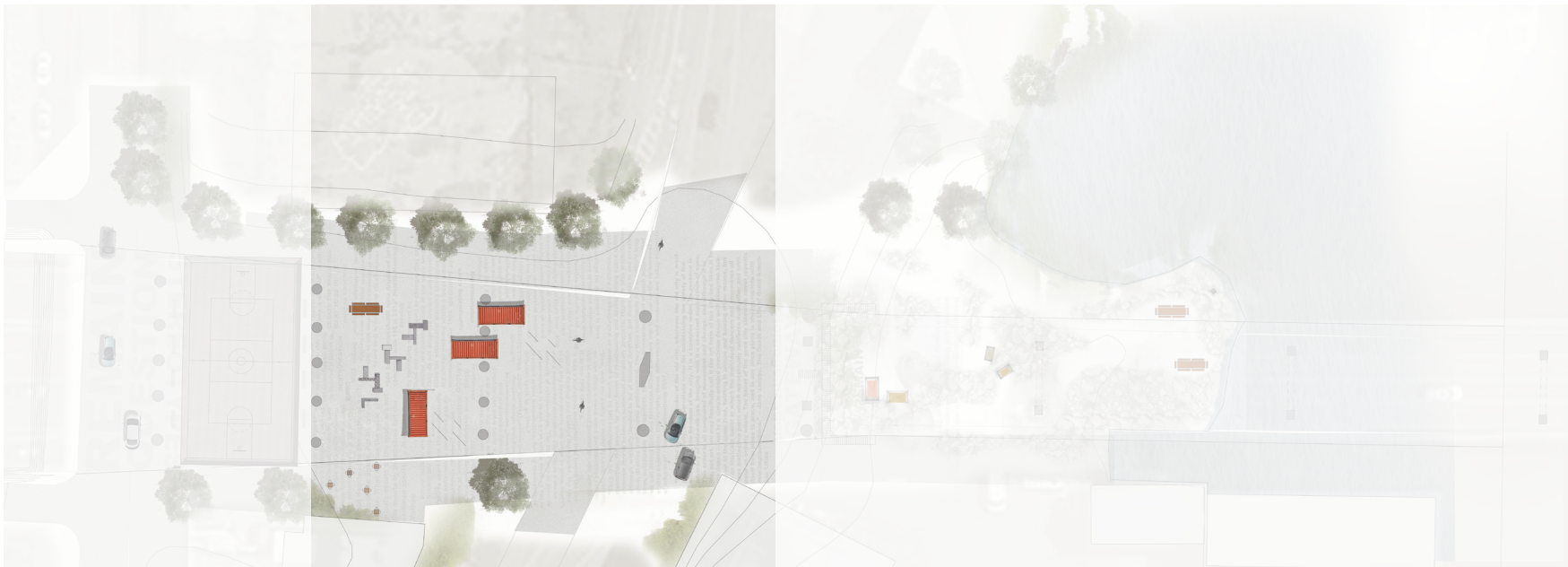
SECTION B

Section B begins at the second row of columns on the south end of the basketball court and extends all of the way to the pedestrian stairways to the top of the Ballard Bridge.

This portion of the site contains many of the most functional design features of the site and begins to integrate the surrounding commercial spaces into the uses of the site. Similarly to Section A, there are also trees that frame the entrances to this portion of the site at both the east and west ends of the site however at the east end of this portion the alley is more heavily planted with trees to increase the amount

of green space. There are also a number of steel planters arranged that both ends that help to frame the alleyway, provide yet more greenery and draw site users eyes down toward the waterfront. While there are a number of uses programed for this space it is the most open area of the design and offers a number of options for functioning as a gathering space either by a few individuals or by a large group.

On entering the site from the east or west sides there are three main features of this space, first off are a series of lockers arranged in the center. These are multifunctional structures that provide a place for the homeless to store their belongings as well as something to sit or climb on. At night the lockers are lit from below turning them into more of a sculptural piece noticeable even by passing traffic. The steel material used



for the lockers was left intentionally simple so that the night transformation of the lighting was more extreme, see image on page 101.

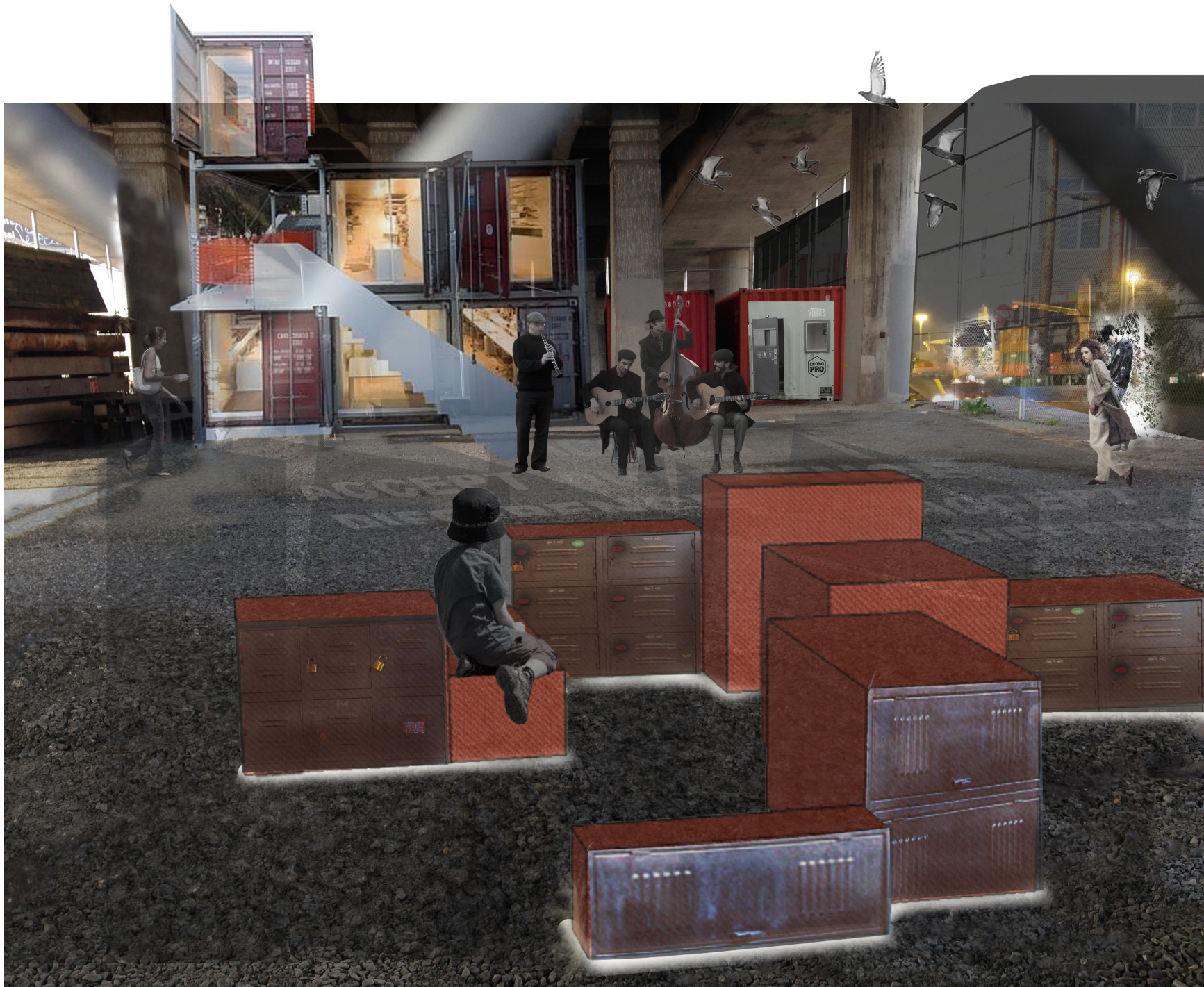
There are also two very different types of table seating made available. At the east side there is one large communal style table where different user groups have the ability to sit within closer proximity to one another or where the homeless in the area could spend time with one another during the day. On the west end just off of where a new café has recently opened there are number of café tables where people could choose to have a more isolated experience of the site. Since these seats are located outside of the bridge canopy it would be possible to add more green space around them and create a garden

seating quality to the space, which people are rarely, is able to enjoy without purchasing something.

The main features of this section are contained within a number of shipping containers. Over the course of my observations the site was periodically used to store for a number of these containers, which in turn became the inspiration for this portion of the site. One of the shipping containers is allocated for a public restroom; another for a showering facility and another two tiered set of containers for a bike repair workshop. All of these are features needed by the populations surrounding the site and all of these features have proven to be a great asset to the community in other locations. A key feature in the use ad design of these stations







would be the strategy behind self-regulating these areas. In Occidental Square Park there has been a public restroom, which is now cared for, in large part by the homeless who most frequently use it. Furthermore there are no public restrooms for the cyclists of the Burke Gilman between Gasworks and Golden Gardens which is nearly six miles away, nor between downtown Seattle and Golden Gardens both of which this site is the midpoint between.

The use of the other container as a bike repair station would

also benefit both of these user groups and could be a much more affordable alternative to bringing a bike to be repaired at a standard bike shop. There are numerous bicycle co-ops that have opened around the country which function entirely on a volunteer basis and through the sale of low cost refurbished parts. Given the number of people who are involved in the bike culture of Seattle this would be a great natural way for the greater Ballard community to interact and share their knowledge with the homeless population in the area who rely heavily on their bicycles.



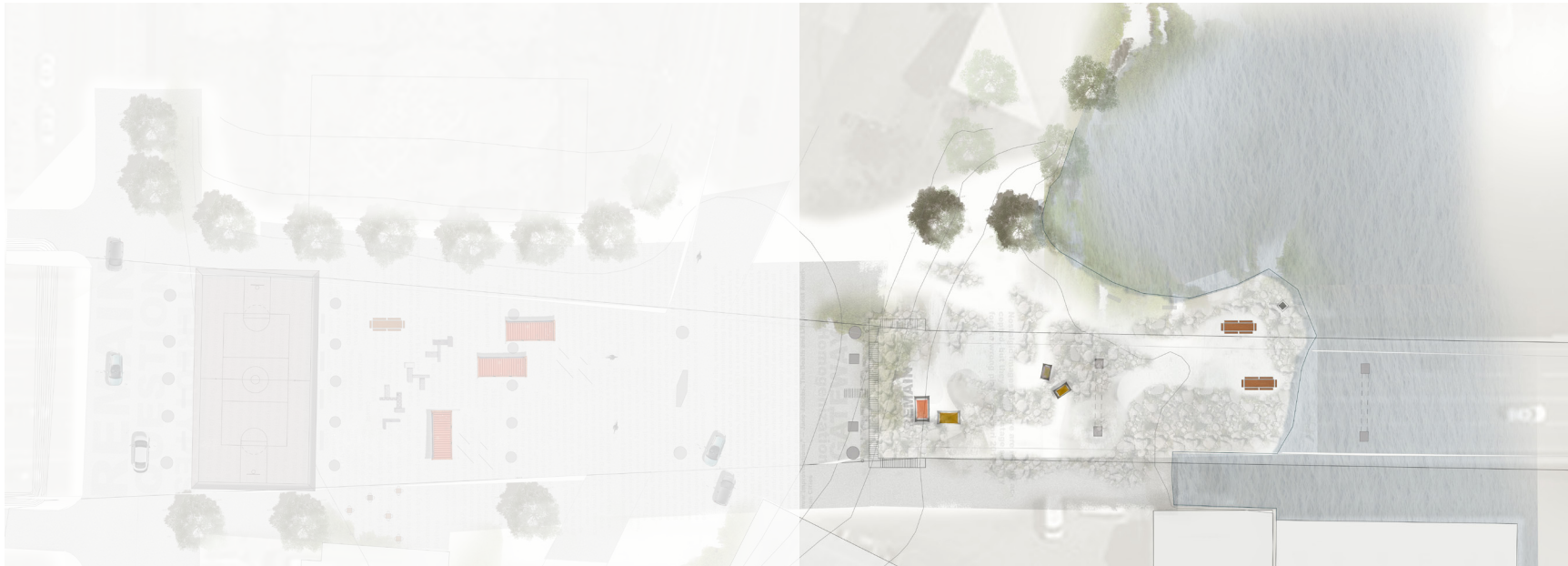
During the period of my design work there have been improvements to the Burke Gilman bicycle infrastructure at the site which have created two way designated bike paths through the site. For this reason, I included a large open area at the north end of the Shilshole Avenue entrance to the site in order to give cyclists enough room to turn off to the restroom facilities without impeding the safety of other riders.

In order to connect this section of the site across Shilshole Avenue I decided to continue the ground plane text but not overcomplicate the site with an additional crosswalk. In order to further slow traffic I did think it would be beneficial to slightly raise the ground plane on the vehicular side of this road particularly because visibility is impaired by the three support columns with intersect the roadway at this point.

SECTION C

The third section of the site has the least amount of programmatic features but is the most complex in its approach. Since this was the only portion of the site with a natural amenity, there is a history of contaminating material on the site, and because there is such a need for green space in this portion of the community I really wanted this to be a very soft ecologically focused portion of the site.

Given that this was going to a much greener area it was also the natural space to provide respite for users of the site. During my design process I was also very aware of how my focus on



the homeless as a user group is a challenging concept to a number of people and therefore designing this portion of the site was somewhat more delicate as there was the perception by some that I was attempting to create a site for an encampment which I am not. However, this portion of the site does currently provide a safe space for a very small number homeless individuals (1-3) and I did not want my design interventions to displace these individuals. It is my feeling that if there are homeless individuals sleeping in an area who are not causing any concerns for others it seems entirely reasonable to improve these conditions with their needs taken into account.

That said, I wanted this portion of the site to provide three basic functions, to draw people down to the waterfront and allow them to view and connect with the maritime industry of

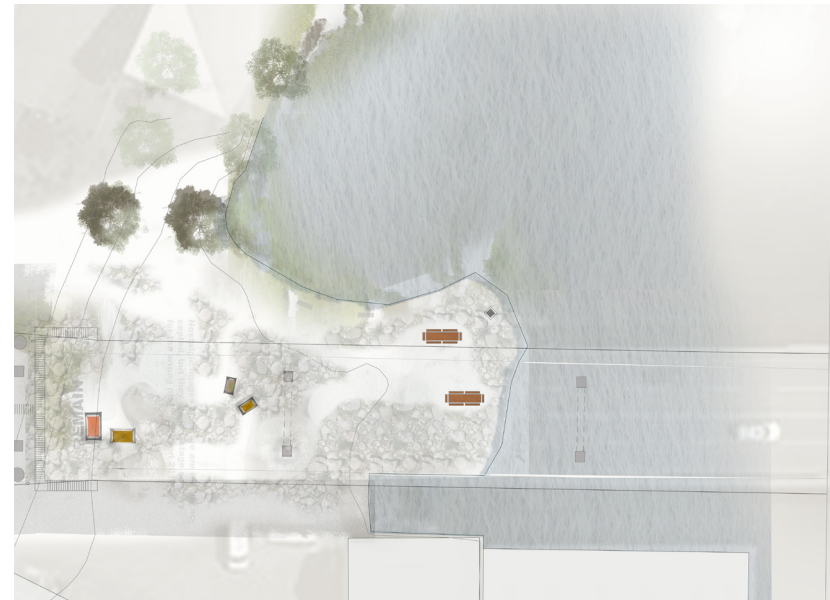
Ballard, to create a vibrant and healthy green space, to create a space where people could eat and look out over the water, where people could cook, and where people could comfortably lay down and rest.

An additional important and challenging component of this area was to make this section reflect the materiality of the upper portions of the site. Furthermore I wanted to use the remnant materials that were strewed all over the site when I first viewed it to inform the design features. For these reasons I decided it would be beneficial to create two alternatives for this portion of the site with neither entirely flushed out to the fullest extent but demonstrating two directions the space could take while still suiting the needs of the community and site.



FIRST ITERATION

Given the complexity of the lower portion of the site I felt it would be beneficial to create multiple design renditions. The variability of options both seek to meet the needs of the site in different ways. The first of these versions was the loosest and “roughest” of the designs allowing for the area to remain relatively unkept, using the discarded construction materials found on the site as material used to create a naturalistic series of mounds.



As shown on page 106, the area along the waterfront has been neglected for some time.

While much is needed to improve the quality and safety of this portion of the site, I enjoyed the fact that it was somewhat challenging to maneuver in and around the space. There was a sense of discovery in visiting this portion of the site that did not exist at all elsewhere on the design site. I wanted to retain this sense as I began to design the space.





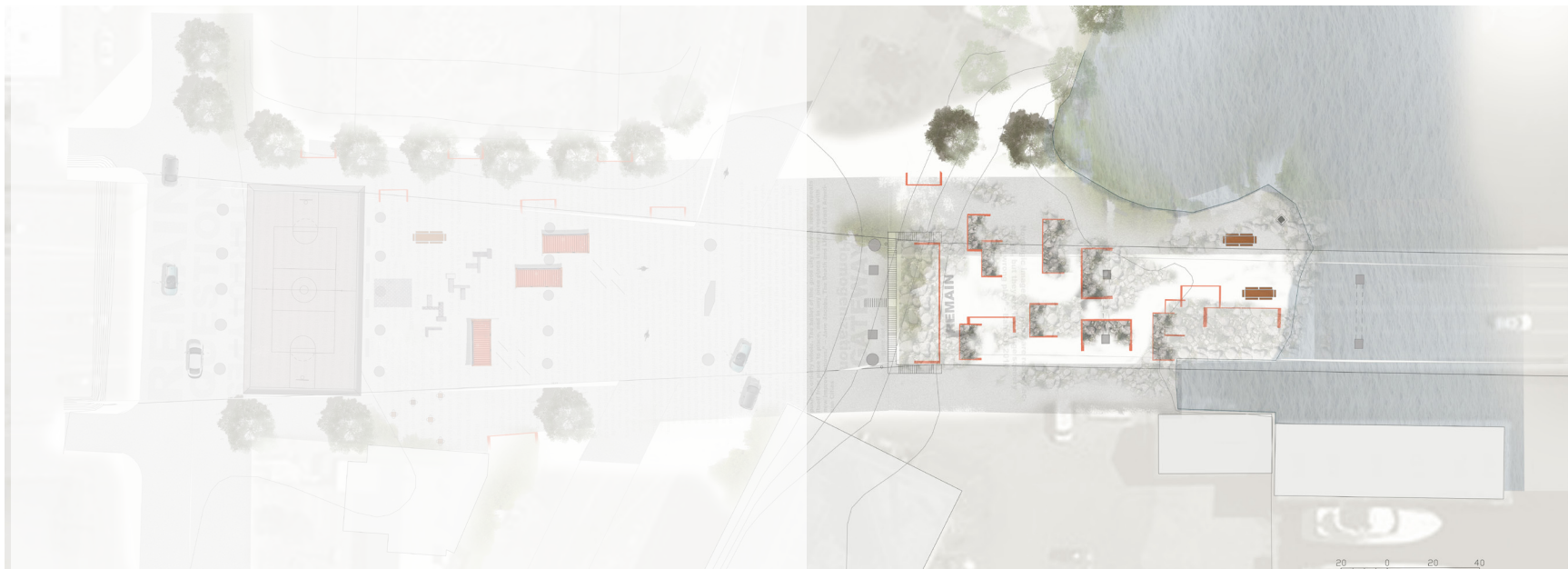
In addition to wanting to retain a sense of exploration along the waterfront, I knew the shoreline edge could be something much softer and ecologically focused which wasn't as easily accomplished elsewhere on the design site.

The next vignette was my first attempt at creating an image of what I felt this space could be if fully brought to its vegetative potential. Rationally this design concept needed to be tempered, however I felt it was important to demonstrate what this site could really be if greenery was introduced to the fullest extent.









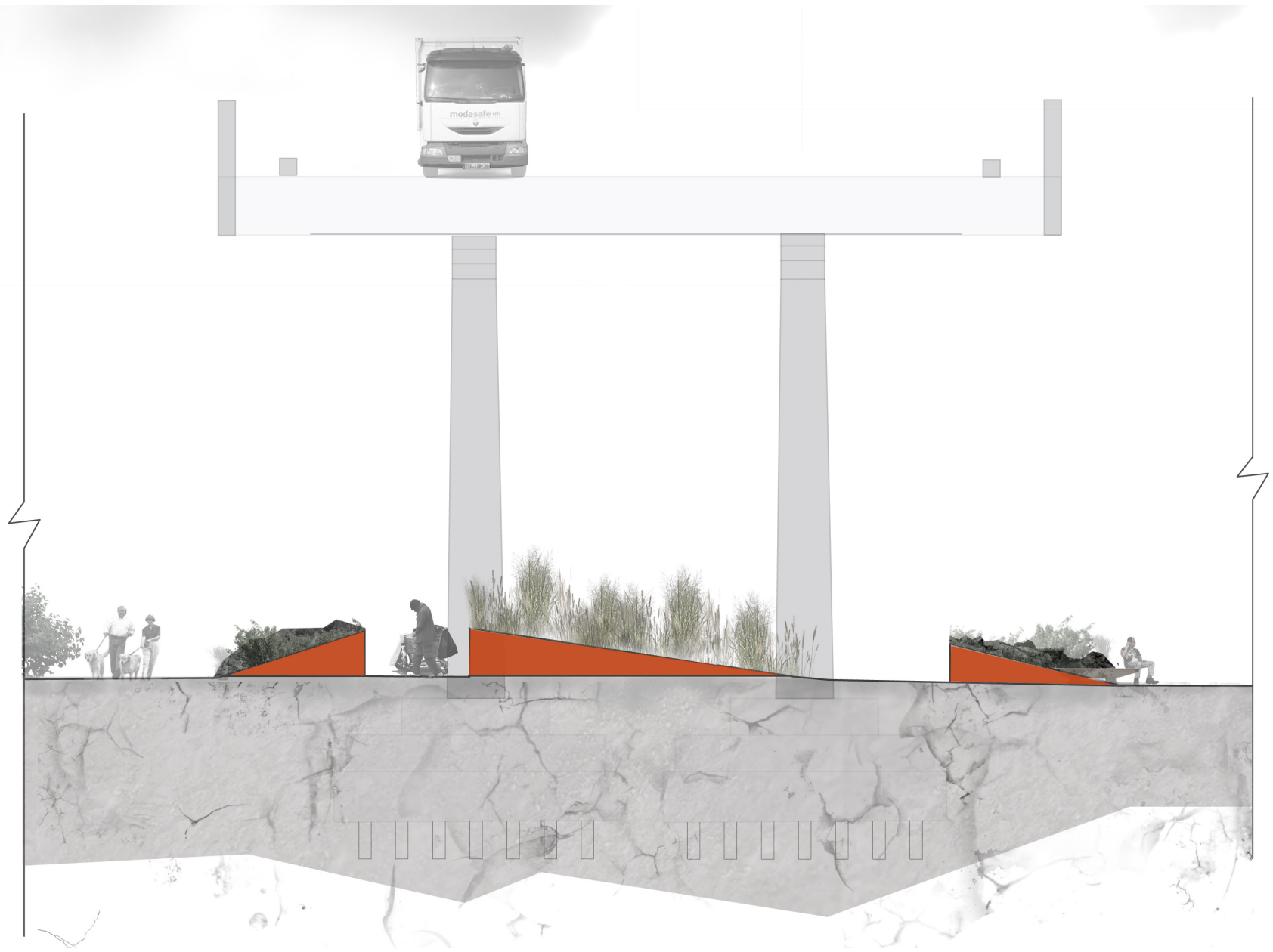
ALTERNATIVE 1

Much of my observations made it clear that the homeless population in the area lacks access to privacy and does not want to be out in the open. Due to this I wanted to create spaces that were a balance between creating comfortable seclusion and never being completely invisible for safety sake.

The first of these alternatives was inspired by the concept of re-arranging the rubble piles first found on the site. The area is broken into a number of rectangular spaces through the use of three sided steel planters that contain a mixture of rubble and native vegetation. Each of these planters have one, two to

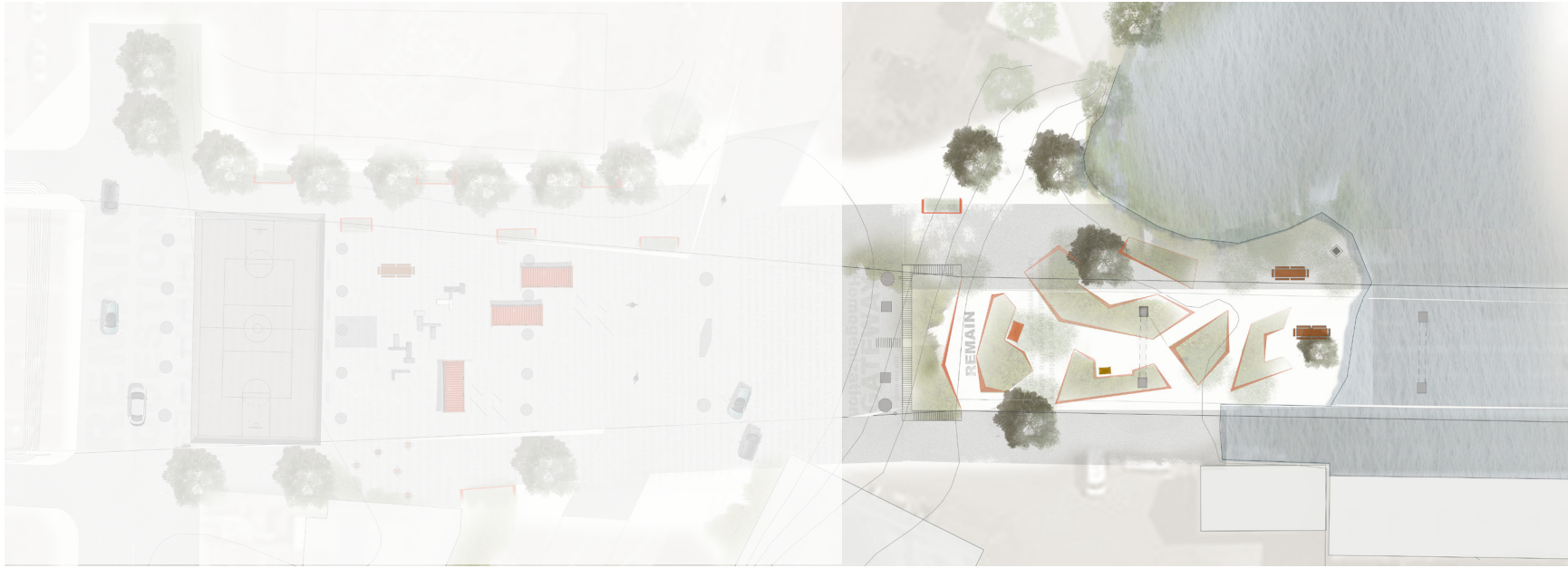
three foot high wall and then two other walls which slope into the ground. The ground in this area is comprised of gravel and sand material. The height of these containers was the most important decision so that when laying down they could create a comfortable and secluded space but once anyone stood they would be visible to other users.

The metal containers also serve to give the space definition and draw those walking down the alleyway of the upper site to the water through the familiarity of color and plantings. Lastly the design provides a large opening at the end of the peninsula, which contains two long communal tables and a large fire pit that can be used for barbecuing or keeping warm during the winter.









ALTERNATIVE 2

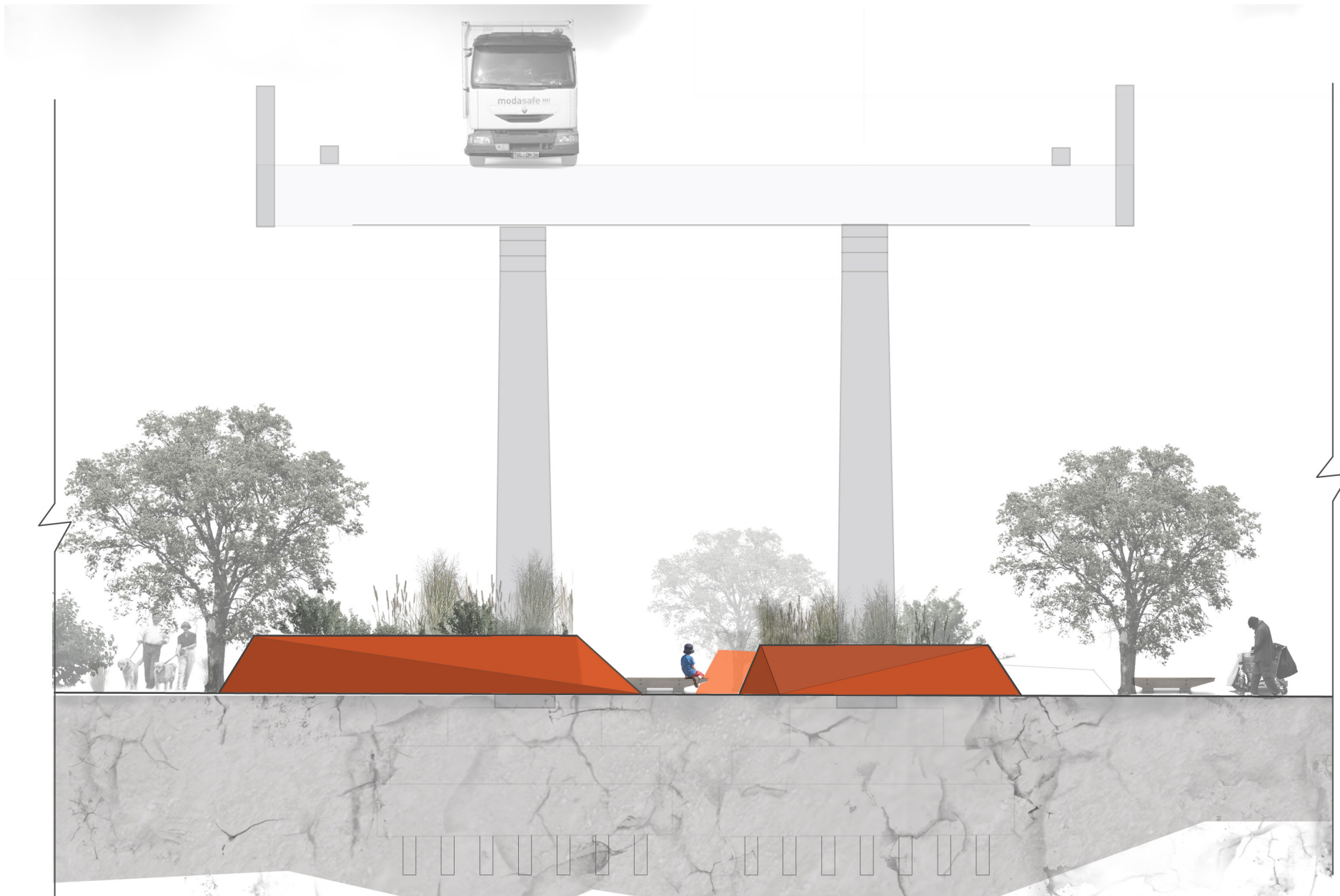
Alternative two was inspired by the idea of letting the space be overtaken by vegetation and then carving out areas for use. In this alternative a series of very large geometric steel planters divide the space. Each of these planters has slanted walls which replicate the forms found around the basketball court in the upper portion of the site. These large planters contain high grasses to invite users to explore the space and frame different views from the site.

Similarly to the first alternative, there are small spaces that could be used for resting areas among the planters and the

plants themselves are kept relatively low so there is no visibility concern. There is also a larger open area at the end of the peninsula that allows for gathering and cooking.

Also included in the second alternative are an increased number of trees to further bolster the feeling of having stepped into a green oasis amidst the industrial landscape.

In both alternatives the shoreline is left very soft and a number of wetland plant species are introduced to the site. There is very little unarmored shoreline along the canal and this



site provides a perfect opportunity to begin introducing more natural shoreline along the Shipping Canal. From an ecological standpoint it is beneficial that the bridge provides the site with shade for a portion of the day because many marine species require shady areas. If the water quality at this location was improved and plantings were added it would be an important resting point for migrating species moving through the area on their way to or from Lake Union and Lake Washington.





With all of the variation across the site I knew it was necessary to have distinct features that worked across the entire site to create cohesion.

The features, displayed here, are divided into three sections, each strengthening that correlation in different ways.

The structures of the site are all very geometric and rectilinear in form, they also all have a red or metallic color scheme which helps visitors follow the site across intersections and physical obstacles.

The vegetation plan is very simple and uses a combination of introduced street trees and native grass planters to connect the rest of the site to the waterfront which is it's natural highlight.

The ground plane in the most unique which is a simple asphalt surface then covered in large text that speaks to the complex issues of homelessness and place attachment. This was used as a way to educate visitors to the site and also create an innovative, memorable and affordable surface treatment that was easily adaptable over time.

Structures



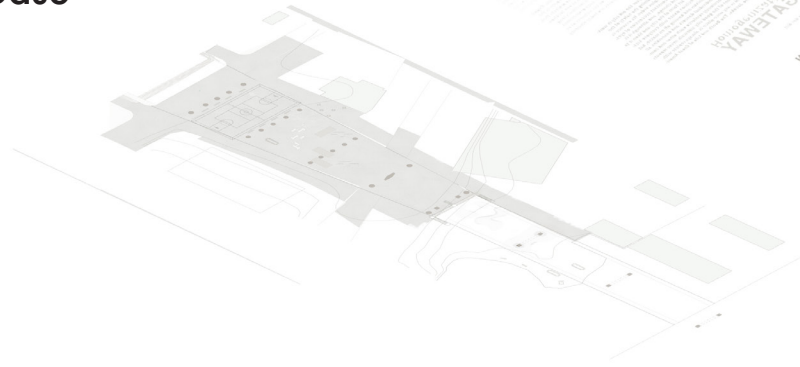
Green space



Ground Plane



Site Base



CONCLUSIONS / REFLECTIONS

As stated in the introduction and design sections of this thesis I set four specific goals I wished to accomplish with my design:

1. Address environmental justice issues within the surrounding community
2. Bring attention to the issues of displacement and homelessness within the immediate context of the site
3. Preserve place attachment
4. Demonstrate a design of singularity

Like any design I feel mine accomplished some of its intended goals better than others. The design is successful in addressing environmental justice concerns within the surrounding community as it creates a lush green space that would be accessible to a diverse number of users.

I also feel the design would bring attention to the issues of displacement and homelessness within the site's immediate context, specifically through the installation of lockers and gathering spaces.

The third goal, to me, is the hardest to achieve. While I do think this design allows for a population at risk of displacement a secured space to be and feel they are welcome in, I don't necessarily believe any designer can create place attachment and this success would remain immeasurable until the design was fully implemented.

The design is successful in reaching the fourth goal of being unique and having a strong identity. Many of the issues I discussed in this thesis pertained to Ballard losing its sense of self as a community. It was important to me to create a design that was reflective of the aspects of the industrial core of Ballard that were being continuously lost as the area developed further. This was accomplished in large part through the salvaging of raw materials found on site and also through developing a program for the space that would encourage use by long-term residents surrounding the site.

Choosing to center my thesis design around a social issue was something that I felt gave my project a needed focus and drive. Given the personal commitment of a thesis and knowing I wanted to do a design thesis, I am still elated that I chose to focus on a concern I feel very personally attached to. This process allowed me to bring together some social justice concerns that had initially inspired my decision to go into the urban planning field with my desire to learn to shape and mold physical spaces to meet these needs, which had initially drawn me to landscape architecture.

Underneath the Ballard Bridge became a very important place to me. While I wanted to and did choose a site that was very similar to many others and is currently meeting a basic need of the homeless population, this site quickly began to differentiate itself from others and became to me a complex landscape filled with opportunity and intrigue.

The thesis process allowed me to spend a great deal of time understanding this space, peeling back it's social, political, physical, historical, and symbolic layers. It was a great learning experience in recognizing that every space, no matter how seemingly straightforward, is anything but, and as designers we have the privilege of investigating that fact.

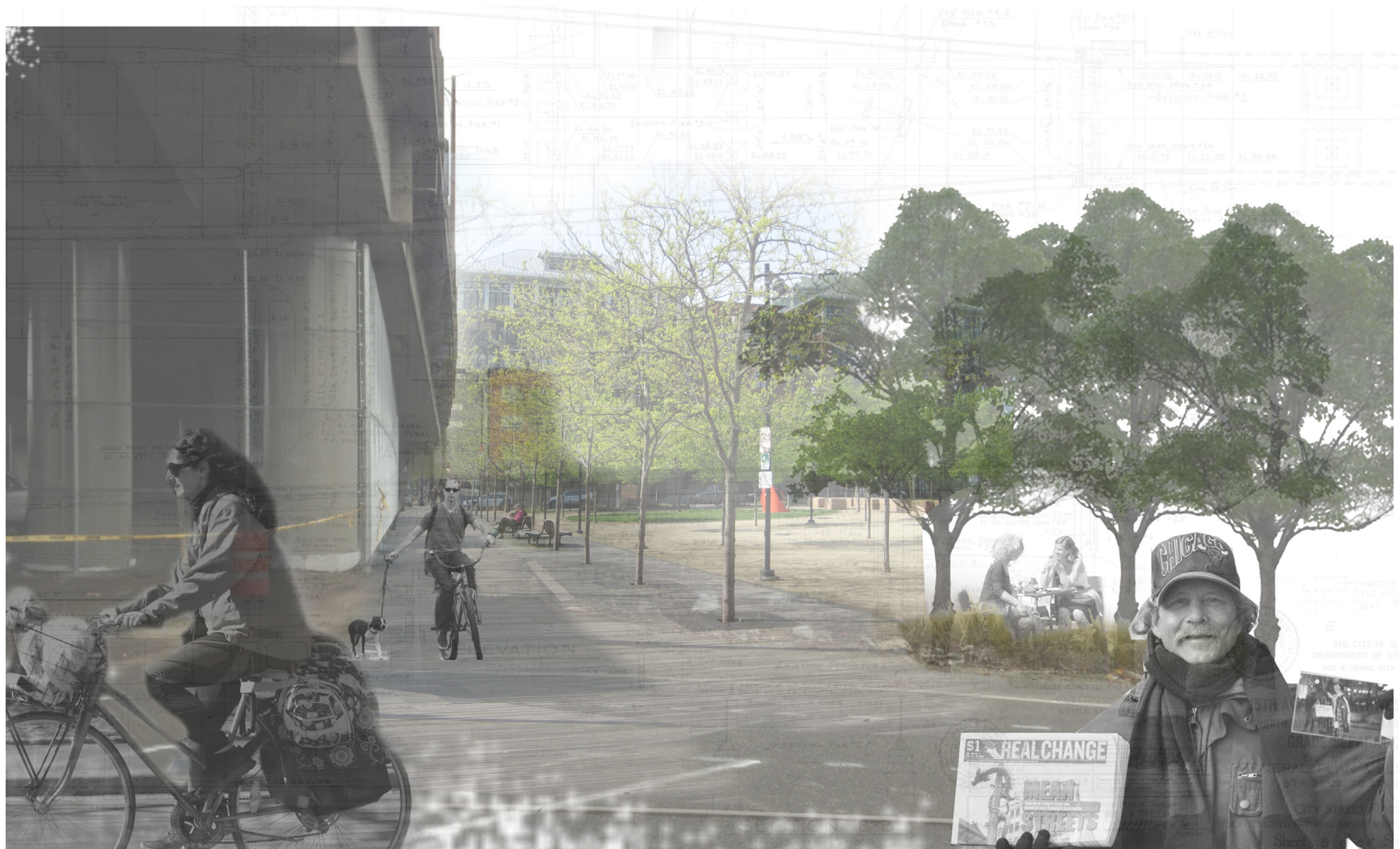
Through this process I have gotten lost down many winding academic paths that in the end, had no place in this document. This exploration alone, however, was still crucial in reaching this point. I have never had the luxury or challenge of delving into one project in such depth and have gained a great deal of respect for the importance of the iterative process, whether that be conceptually, theoretically or in the design itself.

Choosing to explore not only a challenging site but a challenging topic was frustrating and kept me engaged. It continues to be something that inspires me to seek further opportunities in this area. Homelessness is a complex issue that requires knowledge of topics ranging from economics to social affairs, changing demographic patterns and social perceptions. Creating a balanced understanding of these topics in addition to giving the design of the site the attention it deserved was something I struggled with.

I also knew when I first began this project that I had brought with me a significant degree of my own social, aesthetic and

political baggage that would strongly influence my design decisions. This became clear during my design review process where I was met with concern and hesitancy regarding this proposal. Not only did my design approach welcome and serve the homeless as its greatest goal (historically in direct opposition of what many designers try and accomplish), but also did so while celebrating the gritty and unkempt aesthetic that is ubiquitous of urban industrial spaces. These are both design approaches that are not generally welcomed with open arms by practitioners in the field and I found myself having to rationalize my decisions again and again.

I also recognize that as a student I have a great deal of creative freedom I will likely never again experience and that if this site were to be designed by a community process, the outcomes would inevitably be quite different. It was my intention to push the boundaries regarding how we approach the issue of homelessness in public space through the better management of derelict and underutilized areas within our existing urban landscape. I am grateful for the opportunity to have completed this work.



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