

Reconnecting Cuba's Waterfront:  
An Urban Strategy for Post-Revolution Havana

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A thesis  
submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Master of Architecture

University of Washington  
2012

Jim Nicholls, Chair  
Kathryn Merlino

Program Authorized to Offer Degree:  
Architecture

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my thesis advisors, Jim Nicholls and Kathryn Rogers Merlino.  
Thank you for your guidance and support for this project.

To my parents, Ernesto and Maria del Carmen Gualy.  
Thank you for your unconditional love, support, encouragement, faith, and endless frequent flier miles.

To my sisters, Vanessa and Maritza Gualy.  
Thank you for for being my best friends.

To my Seattle family, Mike, Lynette and Lucas Pullmann.  
Thank you for your friendship and non-architecturally related conversations.

To my Cuban family, Teresita, Vicente, Jose, Josefina, Ayamey, and Luis.  
Thank you for showing me your wonderful country. I am forever indebted for your warm hospitality and generosity.

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## INTRODUCTION

### 01 Personal Narrative

I grew up in a Colombian household in the middle of Nashville suburbia. While our neighbors were discussing sweet tea and baseball, my family's dinnertime conversations often focused around Latin politics, history and culture. Because of this, I was keenly aware from a very young age of Cuba's great ascent in the 19th and early 20th century to its abrupt fall in 1959.

Needless to say, Cuba, in particular Havana, has always fascinated me. It seemed an obvious choice for my thesis. After a number of 'please' and 'thank you's', I was able to receive government permission to travel to Havana for four weeks during the summer of 2011. The purpose of my research was twofold: to document the El Vedado neighborhood for a private grant and to 'find' a thesis topic for my Master of Architecture degree. The El Vedado neighborhood, just a few kilometers west of Havana's infamous Old City. This neighborhood, once dominated by the Cuban wealthy and the American mafia, is equivalent to walking in a historical time warp. My days consisted of photographing, video recording, documenting the infrastructure, sketching ideas, interviewing residents and local architects, playing soccer with the neighborhood kids and absorbing as much as I could of the neighborhood's character – both past, present and hopeful future.

I was fortunate to have spent my four weeks living with a Cuban family. I immediately learned that two Cubas exist: a foreigner's Cuba and a Cuban's Cuba. A foreigner's Cuba is easy. It is filled with luxury resorts, nightclubs, harbor boat rides, and easy communication to the world outside of the island. A Cuban's Cuba is starkly different. It is filled with deteriorating housing, state-sponsored food rations, censorship, and little hope. This intense dichotomy was compelling and unavoidable.

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I spent twenty-four days documenting a northern triangular portion of the El Vedado neighborhood – from Calle G to Calle 23. The very social residents of El Vedado loved engaging with foreigners. Everyday I met new residents that asked what I was doing, why I chose El Vedado, and, predictably, why the US trade embargo still existed. While researching, observing and learning about this policy, my preconceived thesis topics began to naturally unravel. The empirical data collected from my discussions and interviews with the residents of El Vedado began to serve as the development of my thesis.

I poignantly remember a conversation with my host family. I invited the family to take a harbor boat tour followed by lunch on a sunny Saturday afternoon. The Cuban mother politely declined while laughing. I was informed that Cubans were not allowed on boats, nor allowed near marinas. It was the law. The woman, nearly 55 years old, had never been on a boat, seen her city from the water, and had only been to the beach a handful of times. I was surprised that the residents of this island nation had such little interactions with water. This resonated with me throughout the thesis process and served as the foundation for my thesis.

## Problem Statement

The United States and Cuba have a long history of a very complex and dynamic relationship. The small island nation, 90 miles south of Florida, has had the most stringent embargo placed on it by the United States for over 50 years. As a new Cuba begins to slowly rise from the shadows of the elderly Castro brothers, both the United States and Cuba are slowly changing policy and reconciling political ideology.

Ironically for an island nation, everyday Cubans have little access to water. As the nation opens its doors, Cubans will have wider exposure to its water through access to beaches, marinas, boats, etc. This thesis proposes a post US embargo urban strategy, working from the macro to micro scale, on the reimplementation of water into the lives of Cubans. How can the United States help capitalize on policy changes and facilitate an urban strategy that reconnects Havana to its waterfront?

On the macro scale, a proposed hydrofoil ferry route will connect the United States and Cuba, via Miami and Havana. This proposed ferry route will provide the first legal water connection between the two countries in over 50 years. On the micro scale, a site transforms from a desolate anti-American plaza to a regenerated urban space that reintegrates water to Havana.

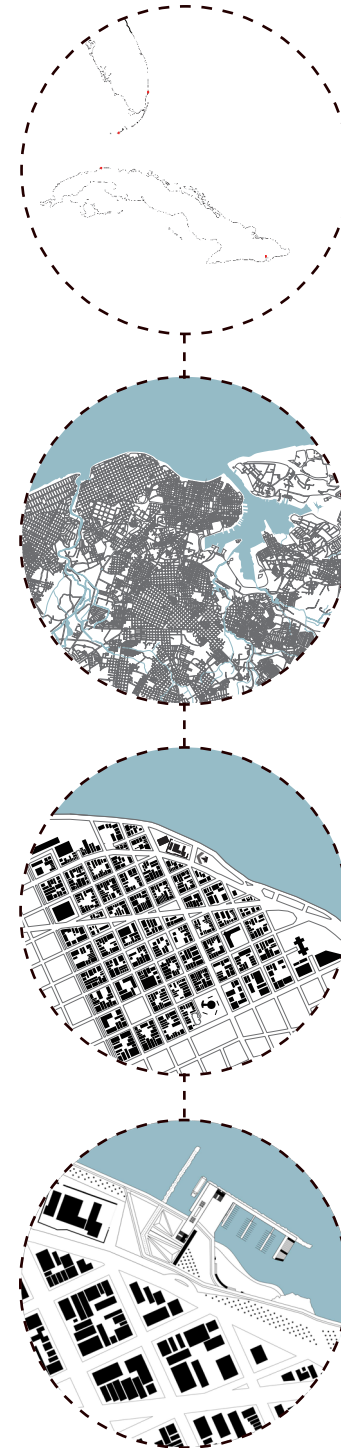


Figure 01: Macro to micro diagram

## HISTORY

### 04 Historical Framework: 19th Century to 1950s

The early 19th century marked the United States growth to the South, from Florida to Louisiana. Cuba, having a highly sought after sugar market, desirable trade location and highly active ports, seemed like a 'natural appendage'<sup>1</sup> for the United States. In 1817 Thomas Jefferson wrote, "If we seize Cuba, we will be masters of the Caribbean."<sup>2</sup> The early American disposition of manifest destiny and the desire of controlling trade and minimizing Spanish control in the area was the catalyst for wanting to own Cuba early on. The US attempted to buy the island from Spain several times; first in 1809 then again in 1848, 1852, 1854 and finally 1898, but to no avail. Spain rejected each offer keeping Cuba as their colony. However, the United States forged a strong political presence as it relied so heavily on Cuban exports. In fact, during the late 19th century, it was estimated that 83% of Cuban exports were sold to the US while only 6% of exports were sold to Spain. During this robust period of Cuba's economy, the island accepted thousands of US citizens who moved to Cuba to capitalize on its fertile soil, strong economy and business opportunities.

A large political shift in the US relations to Cuba occurred in the late 19th century. During this time, Cubans became more vocal about their desire for independence from Spain. As protests emerged, the US sent the ship *USS Maine* to Havana to protect US citizens in case a war erupted between Cuba and Spain. Mysteriously, the *USS Maine* exploded and sank in the Havana harbor. This act served as catalyst for the beginning of the Spanish-American War. The Spaniards were defeated and gave control of Cuba to the US through the Treaty of Paris in 1898. Immediately after the treaty came into affect, the Island of Cuba Real Estate Company was created to sell Cuban land to US citizens and businesses. This aided in strengthening a US economic presence on the island. The US controlled Cuba until 1902 when it gave Cuba its independence but the reserved the right

05 to intervene with Cuban affairs and the lease of naval stations, which is currently where the Naval Station of Guantánamo is located.

Before and after the independence of Cuba from Spain and the US, the Cuban economy relied heavily on US investments, exports and business relations. US assets on the island were valued at \$200 million in 1906, roughly equaling \$4.8 billion in 2010 value. Between 1900 and 1920, some 44,000 Americans flocked to Cuba, boosting capital investment on the island to just over \$1 billion from roughly \$80 million and prompting one journalist to remark that “little by little, the whole island is passing into the hands of American citizens.”<sup>3</sup> US citizens and businesses owned an estimated quarter of the island. Sugar and tobacco dominated the Cuban export market to the US. It is estimated that US companies owned 60% of the Cuban sugar industry and imported 95% of the total Cuban crop by 1926.<sup>4</sup> These numbers continued to grow exponentially until 1959, although political instability on island continued to rise.

With Prohibition policy that was enacted in US from 1920-1933, the US mafia began to shift liquor, drugs and prostitution outfits from the continent to Cuba. The mafia bribed Cuban politicians to allow Havana to become the mafia’s playground for underground activities. The rising politician, General Fulgencio Batista, invited the well-know mafia lord, Meyer Lansky, to take over operations of casinos and racetracks, ensuring that Batista and the mafia earned a cut from all winnings. A dark side of gambling, rampant drug and alcohol use, prostitution, exploitation of labor and illegal money laundering became commonplace in Havana, the ‘Latin Las Vegas.’

With vice taking over, corruption naturally emerged in politics. Cuban politicians accepted bribes, funded casinos and other mafia-inspired developments, turned blind eyes and, ultimately, cheated elections for the sake of the US mafia. Batista was later Cuban president from 1940 through 1944. Lansky offered Batista \$250,000 in cash and guaranteed him the presidency if he returned to politics in 1950; therefore, securing Batista's corrupt government to continue allowing the mafia to run lawless in Havana. Batista with strong-arm backing staged a coup and seized power of the island, cancelling the presidential elections. He remained in power until 1959 when a young Cuban, Fidel Castro, sought massive political reform by creating a government for the Cuban people.

### The Cuban Revolution and the US Embargo

*The corruption of the [Batista] Government, the brutality of the police, the regime's indifference to the needs of the people for education, medical care, housing, for social justice and economic justice ... is an open invitation to revolution.*

Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., Latin American Affairs Assistant to JFK

Fidel Castro, an educated Cuban attorney, and Che Guevara, an Argentine doctor, had met in Mexico City and shared similar political Marxist-Leninist ideology. Both sought massive reform in Latin America. During Batista's second presidency, the two rebel leaders had overthrown Batista's army in the eastern part of the island, slowly making their way into a highly-prized political take over in Havana. Castro's Revolution ousted Batista's army in Havana on January 1, 1959. Batista and his family immediately exited from the country.



Figure 02: Fidel Castro (left) Che Guevara (right)

07 US interests in Cuba were deep at the outset of Castro's power. One of Castro's first acts as acting leader of the Cuban Revolution was the Agrarian Reform Law in May of 1959. This law nationalized all farms and agrarian land in Cuba, including those of US citizens and businesses, and by doing so, removed all ownership by private US and Cuban businesses. The Agrarian Law Reform marked the first attack of Castro's Revolution against US interest on the island. In a similar second act a few months later, Castro enacted legislation that allowed for the nationalization of all foreign-owned property without compensation, an estimated \$1 billion worth of property.

These political maneuvers by Castro resulted in the US enacting an economic trade embargo partially imposed on October 19, 1960 under President Eisenhower. Over the next two years, Cuba strengthened its relations with the USSR, a US threat, and continued to enact policies directly against US interest. President John F. Kennedy tightened the embargo by expanding its scope in 1962. This full trade embargo severed all social, economic and political ties between the US and Cuba and still remains in place today with modifications.

The following timeline depicts events, political statements, and legislation regarding the past 50 years of US-Cuban relations.

# 1960

**October 19** U.S. President Eisenhower imposes a partial economic embargo on Cuba.

# 1962

**February 7** President Kennedy **BROADENS THE PARTIAL TRADE RESTRICTIONS TO A BAN ON ALL TRADE** except for non-subsidized sale of foods and medicines.

**March 23** President Kennedy expands the Cuban embargo to include imports of all goods made from or containing Cuban materials, even if made in other countries.

# 1963

**February 8** The Kennedy administration **PROHIBITS TRAVEL TO CUBA** and makes financial and commercial transactions with Cuba illegal for U.S. citizens.

**December** The Foreign Assistance Act is amended to prohibit U.S. aid to countries that continue to trade with Cuba.

**December 12** U.S. Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy seeks to end the travel ban to Cuba in a memo to Secretary of State Dean Rusk. He refers to the ban as **"INCONSISTENT WITH TRADITIONAL AMERICAN LIBERTIES."**

# 1975

**February 9** U.S. Senator Edward M. Kennedy urges the U.S. government to lift the embargo and normalize relations with Cuba.

**"I BELIEVE THE IDEA OF ISOLATING CUBA WAS A MISTAKE,"** says Kennedy. **"IT HAS BEEN INEFFECTIVE. WHATEVER THE REASONS AND JUSTIFICATIONS MAY HAVE BEEN AT THE TIME, NOW THEY ARE INVALID."**

**November 15** House Representative John B. Breaux (D-LA) is quoted in the New York Times: "...my constituents say that if the United States can sell grain to the Soviet Union and China, why can't they sell rice to Cuba?"

# 1977

**March 19** U.S. President Carter drops the ban on travel to Cuba and on U.S. citizens spending dollars in Cuba.

# 1979

**January 1** Cuban-Americans are permitted to visit their families in Cuba. More than 100,000 visit in the coming year.

**June 19** Representative Ted Weiss (D-NY) **INTRODUCES LEGISLATION TO END THE U.S. TRADE BLOCKADE AND RE-ESTABLISH DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS.**

# 1982

**April 19** The Reagan Administration reestablishes the travel ban.

# 1985

**October 4** U.S. President Reagan bans travel to the U.S. by Cuban government or Communist Party officials or their representatives. It also prohibits most students, scholars, and artists.

# 1990

**October** US Congress passes the **MACK AMENDMENT, WHICH PROPOSES SANCTIONS OR CESSATION OF AID TO ANY COUNTRY THAT BUYS PRODUCTS FROM CUBA.**

# 1992

**February 5** U.S. Congressman Robert Torricelli introduces the Cuban Democracy Act and says the bill is designed to **"WREAK HAVOC ON THE ISLAND."**

**June 15** From an editorial in the NY Times: "...This misnamed act (the Cuban Democracy Act) is dubious in theory, cruel in its potential practice and ignoble in its election-year expediency... An influential faction of the Cuban American community clamors for sticking it to a wounded regime... There is, finally, something indecent about vociferous exiles living safely in Miami prescribing more pain for their poorer cousins."

**October 15** U.S. Congress passes the Cuban Democracy Act, which **PROHIBITS FOREIGN-BASED SUBSIDIARIES OF U.S. COMPANIES** from trading with Cuba and family remittances to Cuba. At this time,

**70% OF CUBA'S TRADE WITH U.S. FOREIGN SUBSIDIARY COMPANIES WAS IN FOOD AND MEDICINE. MANY CLAIM THE CUBAN DEMOCRACY ACT IS IN VIOLATION OF INTERNATIONAL LAW AND UNITED NATIONS RESOLUTIONS THAT FOOD AND MEDICINE CANNOT BE USED AS WEAPONS IN INTERNATIONAL CONFLICTS.**

**November 24** The United Nations General Assembly votes heavily in favor of a measure introduced by Cuba asking for an end to the U.S. embargo. The vote is 59 in favor, 3 against and 79 abstentions.

# 1993

**November 11** **THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY ADOPTS A RESOLUTION ON THE "NECESSITY OF ENDING THE ECONOMIC, COMMERCIAL AND FINANCIAL EMBARGO IMPOSED BY THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AGAINST CUBA." THE VOTE IS 88 FOR THE RESOLUTION, 4 AGAINST, WITH 47 ABSTENTIONS.**

# 1994

**October 26** The UN General Assembly votes for a measure to end the U.S. embargo. The vote is 101-2, with 48 abstentions.

# 1995

**November 2** United Nations General Assembly votes for a measure to end the U.S. Embargo of Cuba. The vote is 117-3, with 38 abstentions.

# 1996

**March 12** President Clinton signs the Helms-Burton Act which  
IMPOSES PENALTIES  
ON FOREIGN  
COMPANIES DOING  
BUSINESS IN CUBA,  
PERMITS U.S. CITIZENS  
TO SUE FOREIGN  
INVESTORS WHO MAKE  
USE OF  
AMERICAN-OWNED  
PROPERTY SEIZED BY  
THE CUBAN  
GOVERNMENT, AND  
DENIES ENTRY INTO  
THE U.S. TO SUCH  
FOREIGN INVESTORS.

# 1997

**November 5** United Nations General Assembly votes for a measure to end the U.S. Embargo of Cuba. The vote is 143-3.

# 1998

**March 13** In Boston, Roman Catholic Cardinal Bernard Law urges US President Bill Clinton to end the 36-year-old embargo, "IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO REASONABLY SUPPORT THE EMBARGO AGAINST CUBA WHILE AT THE SAME TIME GRANTING MOST FAVORED NATION STATUS TO THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA."

**December 6** Senator Christopher Dodd (D-CT), a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee urges his government to establish a "new conversation for the new millennium" with Cuba.

# 1999

**January** The Clinton administration announces changes to the embargo, which include the sales of some food and agricultural products to private individuals and non-governmental organizations

**February 23** The coalition of Americans for Humanitarian Trade With Cuba join the United States Association of Former Members of Congress to call on the Clinton administration to end the embargo on food and medicines to Cuba. "The U.S. embargo on Cuba is the single most restrictive policy of its kind. Even Iraq is able to buy food and medicine from U.S. sources," says George Fernandez, Executive Director at AHTC.

"...I SPEAK FOR THE VAST MAJORITY OF US WHO DO NOT THINK THE U.S. SHOULD BE IN THE BUSINESS OF DENYING BASIC SUSTENANCE TO FAMILIES AND CHILDREN IN CUBA."

**November 9** United Nations General Assembly votes for a measure to end the U.S. Embargo of Cuba. The vote is 155-2.

**October 19** At a meeting of the International Chamber of Commerce, American businessman and ICC Vice-President Richard D. McCormick, calls for an end to the U.S. trade embargo of Cuba. "...embargoes don't work," said McCormick. "They are counterproductive; they just hurt the people who are in the least position to help themselves. I think that after 38 years it is time for this embargo to be ended. Unilateral sanctions don't work."

**November 29** A 23-member task force in the U.S., made up of Republicans and Democrats, calls for an end to the embargo to "help the island's transition to a post-Castro era and reduce the chances of U.S. military intervention."

# 2001

**April 18** In Washington, the Cuba Policy Foundation releases a poll in which  
**A MAJORITY OF AMERICANS ARE SAID TO SUPPORT THE IDEA OF DOING BUSINESS WITH CUBA.**

**November 30** The U.S. government turns down a Cuban offer to compensate Americans for properties confiscated by the Revolution 40 years ago.

# 2002

**July 23**  
**U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES VOTES 262-167 TO END THE TRAVEL BAN AND ALLOW THE SALE OF AMERICAN GOODS TO CUBA.**

**August 7** House Majority Leader Dick Armev (R-Texas) says the U.S. should open trade with Cuba.

**August 7** From an editorial in the Boston Globe:

**"AS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, OPENING TRAVEL AND TRADE TO THE ISLAND WOULD IMPROVE THE MONITORING OF HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES AND EXPOSE MORE CUBANS TO AMERICAN VALUES.**

Bush ought to put the interests of both Cubans and Americans before his domestic political needs."

# 2003

**March 12**  
**U.S. SENATORS MAX BAUCUS (D-MT) AND CHUCK HAGEL (R-NE) INTRODUCE A BILL IN CONGRESS (UNITED STATES-CUBA TRADE ACT OF 2003) THAT SEEKS TO LIFT THE EMBARGO.**

**March 12** Stephan Vitvitsky writes in Tufts Daily; "...the Cold War ended in 1991 when the Soviet Union ceased to exist. There is no more communist threat and the United States is the lone superpower of the world.

**THE EMBARGO DOES NOT MAKE SENSE IN THE POST-COLD WAR WORLD AS IT HAS OUTLIVED ONE OF ITS MAIN OBJECTIVES BY TWELVE YEARS, QUARANTINING COUNTRIES ALLIED WITH THE SOVIET UNION."**

**March 21** Ten U.S. Senators from both political parties form the "Cuba Working Group," to promote an end to the embargo against Cuba.

**"WE BELIEVE THAT THE AMERICAN PEOPLE CAN HAVE GREATER INFLUENCE ON CUBAN SOCIETY BY DEVELOPING A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CUBAN PEOPLE,"** the senators say in a letter to senate leaders.

**September 15** The U.S. House of Representatives approve a bill ending travel restrictions to Cuba for US citizens. The bill, authored by Jeff Flake, wins by a vote of 227-188.

**October 10** U.S. President George W. Bush establishes the Committee for Assistance to a Free Cuba, and further enforces the ban on travel to the island.

**October 24** The U.S. Senate votes 59-36 in favor of lifting the ban on travel to Cuba. The result is similar to a vote at the House of Representatives last month. This is a major "rebuff" of President Bush's policy towards Cuba.

# 2004

**February 26** U.S. President Bush signs Presidential Proclamation 7757, which bans vessels from traveling to Cuban ports from U.S. ports.

**April 30** According to a letter sent by the U.S. Office of Foreign Assets Control to the U.S. Congress,

THE U.S. TREASURY DEPARTMENT HAD 4 FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES DEDICATED TO INVESTIGATING OSAMA BIN LADEN AND SADDAM HUSSEIN AND OVER 2 DOZEN ASSIGNED TO INVESTIGATING CUBAN EMBARGO VIOLATIONS.

# 2005

**November 8** For the 14th straight year, United Nations General Assembly votes for a measure to end the U.S. Embargo of Cuba. The vote is 182-4.

# 2007

**March 1**

SENATOR MICHAEL B. ENZI (R-WY) INTRODUCES THE "FREEDOM TO TRAVEL TO CUBA ACT"

on the floor of the senate: "If you keep on doing what you have always been doing," he says, "you are going to wind up getting what you already got.

...WE ARE NOT HURTING THE CUBAN GOVERNMENT; WE ARE HURTING THE CUBAN PEOPLE. ...IT IS TIME FOR A DIFFERENT POLICY."

# 2009

**February**

OBAMA LIFTED TRAVEL AND REMITTANCE RESTRICTIONS ON CUBAN-AMERICANS AND ABOLISHED LIMITATIONS ON MONEY TRANSFERS.

Obama also made strides to improve business relations with the island. He

LIFTED SANCTIONS TO ALLOW U.S. TELECOMMUNICATION COMPANIES THE CHANCE TO APPLY FOR BUSINESS LICENSES IN CUBA, encouraging cell phone, Internet, radio and satellite television technologies there. In addition, Obama made it

EASIER FOR BUSINESSMEN TO SELL AGRICULTURAL AND MEDICAL GOODS in Cuba by offering a general travel license that does not require individual permission.

# 2011

**September 8** From an editorial in the Los Angeles Times:

"WHO WANTS THE EMBARGO? PRACTICALLY NO ONE BEYOND A SMALL NUMBER OF CUBAN AMERICANS IN THE MIAMI AREA. IT EXISTS TODAY ONLY BECAUSE FLORIDA IS THE LARGEST SWING STATE AND REPUBLICANS BELIEVE, PROBABLY CORRECTLY, THAT THEY ARE UNLIKELY TO WIN ITS 29 ELECTORAL VOTES WITHOUT STRONG SUPPORT FROM THIS SPECIAL-INTEREST GROUP."

**September 9** President Obama has renewed his authority under the 1917 Trading with the Enemy Act to extend the U.S. trade embargo on Cuba, according to a statement from the White House press office. Obama stated, "I hereby determine that the continuation for 1 year of the exercise of those authorities with respect to Cuba is in the national interest of the United States."

## US Embargo: Now and the Future

With increasing international and domestic pressure, the US embargo is being reviewed. The United Nations vote represents the US's main allies, all members of the G8 and G20, and all emerging markets voting in favor to denounce the trade embargo the US has placed on Cuba. There has been rising pressure questioning the US's strictest sanctions on an island that poses no military, terror, or economic threat to the US. The Obama administration has made strides to ease travel restrictions, raise family remittances to the island, and enhance telecommunication services to the island. While these new policies do not remove the US embargo, they represent the few times in which the US has made an effort to ease our sanctions on the island.

For the first time in decades, Cuba is taking small steps to open its doors and policies. Cuba's slowly shifting government policies have made international headlines over the past few years: '*In a Shift, Cubans Savor Working for Themselves*'<sup>5</sup>, '*Cubans Set for Big Change: Right to Buy Homes*'<sup>6</sup>. Headlines have announced Raul Castro's effort to encourage Cuban entrepreneurship and self-employment, allow for the sale of residential property and automobiles, and further open its markets to more foreign investment and trade in what can be described as Market Socialism. These policies are removed from the economic and social policies of his older brother, Fidel Castro. As Cuban policy shifts, the existence of the US trade embargo continues to raise questions both domestically and internationally.

This thesis proposes a public space, post US embargo. This is a time in which the US and Cuba will remember the past while simultaneously embracing a new era in their relationship.

On October 25, 2011, the United Nations voted to **denounce** the fifty year old trade **embargo** on Cuba. The United Nations voted **186-2** in favor of this denouncement.<sup>7</sup>

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## Cuba Inches towards Market Socialism

**BBC: March 27, 2011**

## A Last Hurrah for Cuba's Communist Rulers

**BBC: April 16, 2011**

## In a Shift, Cubans Savor Working for Themselves

**New York Times: February 3, 2011**

## Cuba Reform May Permit Foreign Travel

**BBC: May 9, 2011**

## Cubans Set for Big Change: Right to Buy Homes

**New York Times: August 2, 2011**

## Cuban Banks Begin Offering Loans to Private Businesses

**BBC: December 20, 2011**

## SITE

### 15 El Vedado Neighborhood

El Vedado is located approximately 5 km west of La Habana Vieja, Havana's infamous old city. El Vedado is derived from the Spanish word *vedar*, which means 'to forbid'. The El Vedado district originally served as a natural forest reserve for the city. Early 19th century city laws prohibited any form of tree cutting or construction within the area; therefore, creating a forest reserve. The purpose of this reserve was twofold: provide open green space for the growing, dense city and to provide a buffer defensive zone in case of an attack from the west.

As Havana started to grow out of the original walled city, it spread west to form the Centro Habana district during the early 19th century. As trade continued to grow, specifically with the US, the city planned for further expansion west to the Almendares River. The connection to the Almendares River allowed for imports and exports to have a better connection between Havana's port and the interior of the country. The Carmelo district grew along the river. Unlike the narrow streets and haphazard streets of La Habana Vieja, Carmelo grew from a regulated grid pattern. In 1859, civil engineer Luis Iboleón designed an urban plan for the growth of Carmelo and El Vedado which included removing all the forested land and incorporating the grid into the city boundaries. This included approximately 400 city blocks composed of 100m x 100m blocks and 16m wide residential streets.<sup>1</sup>

Highlights of Iboleón's plan included *parterres*, tree-lined corridors of lawn between the sidewalk and the curb. His plan also called for setbacks of structures from the sidewalk, creating a green zone in front of houses or businesses. Iboleón's intention was to weave green spaces into the urban fabric, similar to Ildefons Cerdà's plan of Barcelona. Since Cuba's climate is tropical, the plan was laid on a northeast axis to allow for prevailing



Figure 03: Greater Havana

Gulf of Mexico



Figure 04: Central Havana



Figure 05: El Vedado with street names

18 winds from the bay to flow down the streets with the street grid, allowing breezes to work with the urban fabric. The grid system was named on a simple letter and number system, which was borrowed from the suburban Garden City style.

In 1898, a peace treaty was signed between the US and Spain marking the end of the Spanish-American War and leading to the US military's occupation of Cuba. Wealthy Americans, feeling secure with America's occupation of the country, arrived in Cuba ready to invest their money in the island's sugar plantations, rum distilleries and the real estate market. During this American occupation, the US administration established basic infrastructure to ensure growth for a modern Havana.<sup>2</sup> The US-led public works projects included: completing water mains, creating systems for sewage and water, paving and repairing roads, adding electric streetlights for safety and visibility, adding telephone and natural gas lines, and constructing an electric streetcar system throughout the city.

The electric streetcar was established in Havana in 1901. It ran through the center of El Vedado on Calle Linea and Calle 23. The streetcar line ran through El Vedado and connected this dense area to La Habana Vieja and to the rising suburbs of Miramar, Playa and Marianao. The streetcar system allowed for quick and easy access to El Vedado and surrounding neighborhoods. Similar to the urban renewal movement in the United States, the streetcar and its infrastructure were removed in 1952 to accommodate more automobiles.

Throughout the late 19th century and well into the mid-20th century, the wealthy residents, both Cubans and Americans alike, concentrated their extravagant mansions and real estate development on the untouched El Vedado neighborhood, particularly in the triangulated area between Calle G and Calle 23. The homes were built in traditional,



Figure 06: Electric streetcar removal on Calle Linea

period styles; art deco, eclectic, Beaux-Arts, and neoclassical styles. While law-abiding Americans were calling El Vedado their new home, the American mafia slowly began to infiltrate El Vedado as their own by erecting grandiose hotels, casinos and nightclubs in the area of La Rampa the commercial center of El Vedado. La Rampa consists of the eastern most portion of Calle 23 and intersects with El Malecón.

### El Malecón and the Anti-Imperialist Plaza

The proposed site borders the northern edge of El Vedado along the shoreline, near an arterial street called El Malecón. El Malecón is an 8 km esplanade that runs from La Habana Vieja to Almendares River. The four-lane roadway and its seawall runs from the Castillo de San Salvador de la Punta, a fortress at the base of the Havana channel, to the Almendares River. Construction began in 1901 and was phased into three periods, ending in 1952 at the mouth of the Almendares River.

Physically, El Malecón has no obvious elements of interest. However, culturally, El Malecón is a microcosm of Havana's life, earning the nickname of 'The City's Window.'<sup>3</sup> Today, Habaneros, the name for locals, and tourists embrace El Malecón twenty-four hours a day. It is filled with tourists taking photos of the dilapidated buildings, Habaneros on romantic strolls, elderly gentlemen playing dominos on the sea wall, and people discussing latest baseball scores. There are few boats in the harbor. The only boat in the bay is one designated for international visitors to take a harbor tour. A reflection of the political leadership that has ruled this island nation, Cuba has outlawed its own nationals to own or board boats in fear that they will exile to the United States to seek political asylum.



Figure 07: El Malecón under construction



Figure 08: El Malecón - August 2011

Since the United States and Cuba have no formal political relations, the former US embassy is occupied by a formal section of the Swiss embassy which houses the United State Interests Section. The US Interests Section performs the same duties as an embassy, although it falls under the umbrella of the Swiss government. The United State Interests Section is located between Calle L and Calle M along El Malecón. This building and its surrounding area have been a hotbed for US and Cuban conflict over the years. When the US broke political relations with Cuba, the building was turned over the Switzerland to protect it. It was not until President Jimmy Carter attempted to normalize relations with Cuba did US personnel return to Havana to work in the building.

The large grass site in front of the United State Interests Section has historically been used as the grounds for anti-American rhetoric by the Cuban government. Billboards have frequently been placed on the site representing America as greedy capitalist exploiting Cuba. In 2000, then-President Fidel Castro ordered the construction of the José Martí Anti-Imperialist Plaza. This plaza became the official home for all Cuban-sponsored anti-US rallies. The plaza's surface is colored hardscape. Large metal arches cover the center of the plaza. Metal columns line the perimeter with green palm-like tops. The plaza has a large stage with "PATRIOTISM OR DEATH" and "WE WILL HAVE OUR REVENGE" largely painted, facing in the direction of the former US embassy. The plaza also contains a large flag monument.

The US responded to the erection of the José Martí Anti-Imperialist Plaza by erecting a large electronic ticker board on the fifth floor of the United State Interests Section. The ticker board announced worldwide news banned by the Castro government. It was in a highly visible location along El Malecón. Cuba responded a month later by erecting 138



Figure 09: Anti-Imperialist Plaza looking west

flags to cover the ticker board. This monument is called the Wall of Flags. While visiting Havana during the summer of 2011, only one weathered Cuban flag flew amongst the 137 empty poles.

### Neighborhood Context

This particular area of El Vedado represents many different uses and zones. Calle 23, or La Rampa area, is highly commercialized with restaurants, bars, theatres and shops. As private business has been illegal throughout the majority of the past 50 years, commercialization is highly limited and regulated. Raul Castro has recently opened its policy to allow for more private business licenses and private sales of residential property and automobiles. The streets of El Vedado reflect these changes as many Cubans are beginning to open up clothing stores in their living rooms or small restaurants from their apartments. These changes will begin to reflect larger changes to the urban fabric of Havana as first floor apartments begin to transform themselves to commercial space.

The area near Calle G tends to be filled with what once were large single-family houses. A dramatic shift occurred to many of these residences weeks after the Cuban Revolution in 1959. As many of the owners feared the political and economic instability brought by Fidel Castro's Revolution, many exiled the nation immediately after he seized power. Castro answered by inviting Cubans from the interior of the country to Havana for free education and employment opportunities. Castro made legislation that allowed a government takeover of these abandoned properties. He later housed these nationals in these abandoned residences, subdividing these houses to a number of apartments. The east end of Calle Linea contains numerous high-rise apartment complexes overlooking El Malecón. The largest of these buildings is the FOCSA building, which was completed in



Figure 10: Wall of Flags monument



Figure 11: El Vedado figure ground

1956 and, at that time, was the second highest concrete and steel building of the world. The northwest area of Calle G contains the area's largest park, Parque José Martí Stadium. This park consists of a soccer field, track and a covered basketball court. Parque Victor Hugo is the area's second largest park. It is an entire block found off Calle 21 and Calle H. The largest hardscape park is found directly in front of the former US embassy building, José Martí Anti-Imperialist Plaza. A few smaller hardscape parks are found off Calle Linea. While not having an official park designation, the esplanade of El Malecón remains the most used public access in El Vedado.

As Cuba is a social-state, government institutions are found throughout the El Vedado neighborhood. These uses range from schools to hospitals to government-run enterprises and offices. A few foreign embassies are located within this area of El Vedado, including the Indian Embassy and Romanian Embassy.

### Physical Context

El Vedado's once opulent infrastructure still gives a hint or two of its former pre-revolutionary greatness. Architecturally, the city has been left to languish in what can best be described as a historical time warp. The city's infrastructure, well-kept and a source of pride in the city's heyday of the early 20th century, has presently become low on the list of government priority post-Cuban Revolution. The infrastructure, undisturbed by the bulldozers of modern property development, has left the city's streets nothing short of mesmerizing due to their dilapidated state, yet colorful presence. Castro's Cuba has been very limited financially and has shown little interest in maintaining its existing infrastructure. Due to this, building materials such as concrete, wood, paint, etc. have been scantily delivered to the island over the past fifty years. With little incentive for

A first time visitor to Havana immediately notices two things about the city: the **graceful architecture** of its buildings and the fact that so many of them are **in ruins.**<sup>4</sup>

improvement, such as resale value, little disposable income to repair, and the hardships of acquiring building materials, Cubans have left their infrastructure to decay.

El Vedado's parks, both landscape and built form, lack basic maintenance and regular use. Frequent visits to Parque Victor Hugo at various times of the day and night proved nothing more than an empty block with overgrown weeds, broken glass bottles and trash everywhere. Parque José Martí Stadium is only used by participants of organized sports, yet neglects such amenities as small walking paths, seating and shade. The smaller hardscape parks along Calle Linea draw more people in, although many appear to use the parks for their access to the transportation stops along this main arterial. The users tend to use the parks as a waiting area until their bus or *almendron*, a 1950s-era rideshare taxi, arrive. These hardscape parks generate more heat, as the concrete reflects back. These hardscape parks did little to mitigate the generated heat and lacked shading opportunities for users left in the perpetual Cuban heat. In conclusion, this neighborhood's failing infrastructure lacks usable and maintained public spaces to enhance the quality of life for its residents.

### The Cuban People

After twenty-four visits to El Vedado at various times of the day and under various weather conditions, a behavioral analysis concluded many aspects of how residents respond to their public space and neighborhood. Three main behavioral characteristics are described and influenced how they will ultimately affect the proposed site's design.

Habaneros are an incredibly social group. As their government has fought for decades to remove social barriers, Cubans are raised with the ideology of a collective being, as opposed to an individual ideology. This has been embedded into their way of life. It is

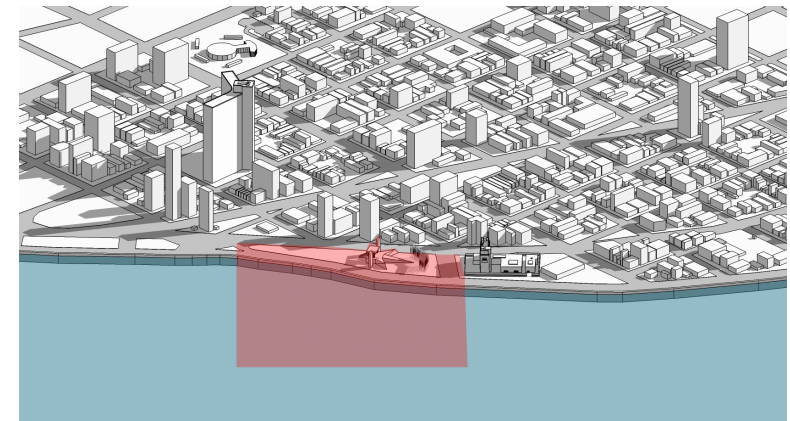


Figure 12: El Vedado physical context (site highlighted)



Figure 13: El Vedado's parks

difficult for an American living in 2012 to imagine a world without the everyday distractions such as the internet, let alone, television, Facebook, Xbox, iPhones, etc. and modern day comforts such as air-conditioning. The internet is illegal in private residences and too expensive for your everyday Cuban wanting to check their email in a government-run internet shop. The US trade embargo restricts imports from American companies to deliver the latest technology, media, or other various material possessions. Cuban daily interactions are less dependent on material goods and almost fully reliant on family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, etc. This has led to strong community; neighborhoods where everyone watches out for each other, children play soccer in the streets without worry, neighbors sit on their front porches and gossip and domino tournaments dominate well into the evening hours.

Residents interact and socialize where shade dominates. With yearly highs well above 80 degree Fahrenheit in the winter, upper 90s in the summer and intense humidity, residents congregate to places that provide a respite from the heat and protection from the rain. With little air-conditioning available, interior spaces tend to be similar temperature as exterior spaces. El Vedado's original urban plan provides tree-lined streets and lots of shade. It is common to see residents sitting under trees, moving throughout the day depending on the sun's location. Many of the neighborhood's parks lack canopy shade with corresponding seating; therefore, disregarding a basic need for the comfort of its users.

From Calle J to Calle M and El Malecón to Calle 13, the United State Interests Section has hired armed guards to watch for suspicious activity, force people to move along the area of El Malecón directly adjacent to the building and discourage any photos or videos taken within the area. For a city with relatively low crime rates<sup>5</sup>, residents are intimidated by a heavy presence of armed guards in their safe neighborhood, especially guards hired by the United States. This fear and uneasiness further deters residents to engage the public space of the José Martí Anti-Imperialist Plaza.



Figure 14: El Vedado from above



Figure 15: Domino players

## CASE STUDIES

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### The Madrid Río Project

Madrid, a city of 3.5 million, recently completed one of the city's largest infrastructure projects in its history. The city removed M-30, a surface ring road constructed along Madrid's River Manzanares. The road, constructed in the 1970s, was described as 'ripping a crippling gash through the city.'<sup>1</sup> The idea behind this infrastructure project was to replace the surface road with a tunnel solely dedicated for automobiles. The former surface roads were converted to a linear 10 km, or 6 mile, park along the River Manzanares. The park has reestablished the river's presence within Madrid. Similar to Cuban parks, the park 'arises from a political culture that presumes public service is an end in itself.'<sup>2</sup>

West 8, a Dutch firm, partnered with a joint venture composed of three Spanish firms, including Burgos & Garrido Arquitectos, Porras La Casta and Rubio & Alvarez-Sala, to design the master plan for the urban park. The park has a surface area of approximately 1,600 acres. The plan focused to eliminate physical barriers, promote environmental responsibility, and provide users with sports, leisure and culture.

With a major highway arterial eliminating connection from one side of the River Manzanares to the other side, reconnecting neighborhoods along the riverbanks was a driving force behind the design. The park provides eleven new footbridges across the river, restoration of the existing bridges and conversion of an automobile bridge to solely a pedestrian bridge. The footbridges improve connections within the city for both pedestrians and cyclists from various neighborhoods on both sides of the river.

The Madrid Río project seeks to promote environmental responsibility by various different methods. The project reclaims the city's river. Through this, the city has addressed



Figure 16: View from east



Figure 17: Water integration

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the water quality and has sought remediation. The park has created green zones and planted 25,289 trees<sup>3</sup> to enhance air quality in an area heavy with automobile fumes. Understanding the new density brought to the site, the city has responded by facilitating new public transportation routes to the park and its various neighborhoods.

Finally, the Madrid Río project seeks to provide users with a variety of different activities and uses. The park provides more than 30 km of bike paths and 42 km<sup>4</sup> of pedestrian walkways. In addition, eleven playgrounds have been created for children and six spaces for the elderly. Water features, such as fountains and misters, have been placed throughout the park. The city has designated rowing lanes in the river to allow for rowing teams to practice. The park also brings the city its first urban beach, which allows a place for urbanites to sunbathe and swim. This unique element has brought the water back to the residents of Madrid. It has been applauded for introducing a new social bathing culture to the surrounding area.



Figure 18: Before and after

## Copenhagen Harbour Bath

Copenhagen, a city of 1 million, has seen a dramatic shift to its harbor. The harbor, once primarily industrial, has now become a social and cultural center, due in part to the Blue Plan. The Blue Plan consists of 42 km of waterfront in Copenhagen harbor working to promote more recreational water areas, playgrounds, promenades and houseboats. Since 1953, many of the city's swimming baths had been closed due to poor water quality. As water quality has improved and the Blue Plan has been initiated, a number of swimming baths have been reintroduced to Danish life.

PLOT, led by architect Bjark Ingels and Julien de Smedt, designed the Harbour Bath. The Harbour Bath is located in Islands Brygge and was completed in June 2003. The project covers an area of approximately 2500 m<sup>2</sup>. Its central location and high visibility has led this swimming bath to become a 'symbol of leisure and water culture'<sup>5</sup> in Copenhagen. The design calls for extending the existing park onto the water. Constructed with IPE wood, the Harbour Bath creates an urban harbour landscape with a program that includes dry docks, cliffs, playgrounds and lifeguard stands. The project contains five swimming pools: two children pools, two swimming pools and one diving pool.

In a short period of time, the Harbour Baths has become a unique oasis in the middle of Copenhagen. This project has been applauded for its social component. City dwellers treat the Harbour Bath similar to a beach. It not only provides a place of swimming but, more frequently, a place of socialization, sunbathing, play, BBQing, sports, etc. The project has become a symbol of leisure and water culture in the heart of the city.



Figure 19: Context to city



Figure 20: View of jump point

## Yokohoma International Port Terminal

The city of Yokohoma, outside of Tokyo, invited architects for an international competition to design a passenger cruise terminal with civic facilities, combining both urban and aquatic landscapes. The winning team, Foreign Office Architects (FOA), won the competition in what would be their first built design.

*Our proposal for the project start by declaring the site as an open public space and proposes to have the roof of the building as an open plaza, continuous with the surface of Yamashita Park as well as Akaranega Park. The project is then generated from a circulation diagram that aspires to eliminate the linear structure characteristic of piers, and the directionality of the circulation. - FOA*

The proposal presented the waterfront with a continuous structure of open spaces. The design calls for fluid and uninterrupted, yet multi-dimensional, space. FOA intends for the program space of the passenger terminal to be read as an extension of the ground; therefore, promoting a continuous circulation throughout the site. Smooth and continuous undulations throughout the site create open space for which the residents of Yokohoma use as public space.

The project's skin is composed of IPE and grass. These two materials mark the two transitions in the project: sea into the city (passenger terminal) and city into water (urban space). When a passenger arrives from the sea, they enter the terminal, which gradually becomes the IPE surface of the plaza. Similarly, a resident walks on the grass surface that eventually unfurls into the sea. The design intends to intermingle these transitions seamlessly so that the user can participate in both aspects of the design without recognition. The design allows for ferry passengers to either depart or arrive to Japan within a social and public atmosphere. The views of Yokohoma and the waterfront from the site leave the users feeling connected to both the urban and aquatic landscapes.



Figure 21: View to city



Figure 22: Public seating

## DESIGN

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### Design Concept

Everyday Cubans have little access to water. As the slowly nation opens its doors, Cubans will have wider exposure to its water through access to beaches, marinas, boats, etc. The design concept proposes a post US embargo urban strategy, working from the macro to micro scale, on the reimplementing of water into the lives of Cubans, specifically Habaneros.

The design seeks to capitalize on the existing physical and behavioral assets of the El Vedado neighborhood. The design will strengthen the role of El Malecón and its relationship to water. The proposal will ultimately provide an active urban space filled with active and passive water engagement, social points of connection, and areas of respite and activity.

### Design Strategy

The US and Cuba have had no physical water connection since the implementation of the US embargo. On the macro scale, a proposed hydrofoil ferry route will connect the United States and Cuba, via Miami and Havana. This proposed ferry route will provide the first legal water connection between the two countries in over fifty years.

Within days of the Cuban Revolution, Miami was forever changed. Thousands of Cubans fled the island due to the abrupt political takeover and the island's uncertain future. The majority of those fleeing ended up in Miami, the closest big city with similar climate and existing Latino presence. Over the past fifty years, Miami has become the world's second largest Cuban city, only behind Havana, with an estimated 810,299<sup>1</sup> Cuban population. A physical connection to Miami will strengthen the newfound US-Cuban relations, post



Figure 23: Hydrofoil route

US embargo. Families can reconnect and leisure tourism will increase between these two cities. The hydrofoil ferry will stop at the halfway point in Key West, a main tourist destination. This allows for more points of travel between the two countries.

On the city scale, an urban strategy is proposed to address Havana's waterfront and pedestrian circulation within El Vedado. El Malecón currently ranges from a 4-lane to 8-lane highway along the waterfront. The proposed urban strategy appropriates El Malecón and converts it to a pedestrian-only greenway. Traffic will be rerouted to existing automotive arterials. This greenway allows for users to fully engage Havana's waterfront without crossing a main automotive highway to reach the waterfront. Both walking and bicycle lanes will be given to accommodate a variety of different users' needs and promote movement within the site. Constant movement is crucial as 'moving elements in a city, and in particular the people and their activities, are as important as the stationary physical parts'.<sup>2</sup> The greenway will comprise of circulation lanes, green space, interactive water features, public art, permeable paving, vegetation, trees, and seawall openings to access the water.

Calle L is converted as a pedestrian-priority street. This street provides a comfortable location for walkers and cyclist to access the site from the other main arterials in El Vedado, mainly Calle 23 and Calle Linea. Pedestrian users are given priority to the street over automotive circulation. North to south traffic is entirely closed off while west to east traffic will be allowed to cross the street. The southern most end of Calle L is the location of Coppelia, an ice cream parlor that serves as the heart of the neighborhood. The northern end of Calle L ends in a series of activity nodes within the greenway, such as the new site, the Jose Marti stadium, and an impromptu neighborhood park near Calle O. Every day thousands of people gather around this block to enjoy ice cream. Calle L's pedestrian-priority conversion will allow users safe access to the site and waterfront. This linkage reinforces the neighborhood's connectivity to the site and other areas of activity within the neighborhood.



Figure 24: Urban strategy in El Vedado

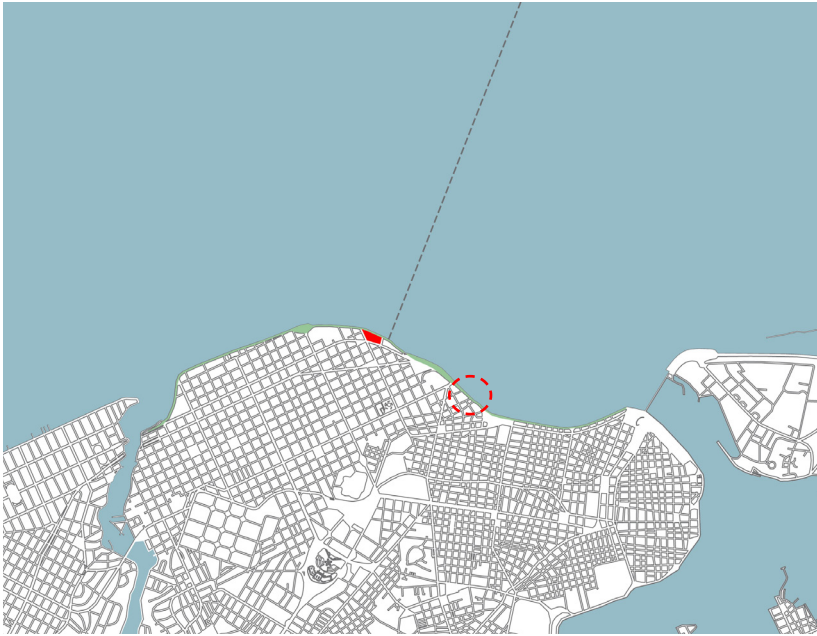


Figure 25: View locator for Figure 26



Figure 26: El Malecón greenway view



Figure 27: View locator for Figure 28



Figure 28: Calle L aerial view

On the midpoint scale, a site transforms from a desolate plaza to a regenerated urban space that reintegrates water to Havana. Since much of the existing Anti-Imperialist Plaza is underutilized, the design creates a sense of place by programming the area with a variety of different public assets within the neighborhood. The success of this urban space is dependent on bringing users to the space, 'what attracts people most [to urban spaces], it would appear, is other people'.<sup>3</sup> The site is programmed to attract people to the water and general activity created by the urban park users. 'Neighborhood parks, you will recall, need people who are in the immediate vicinity for different purposes from one another, or else the parks will be used only sporadically.'<sup>4</sup>

The first major site intervention follows the ideology of carving and displacing space. As the plan calls for carving into the sea wall to create an urban beach, the carved space is displaced to a pier that receives the hydrofoil ferry and creates spaces for boat parking, kayak rentals, and view platform to the city. This gesture generates the main form for the urban park: the sea is brought into the land and the land is brought into the sea.

Circulation, both pedestrian and automotive, is addressed by design within the project. Pedestrians have two main options once you enter the urban park: to engage the urban park while walking along the waterfront, or to follow a path along the edge of the park. Both circulation patterns allow the user to engage in a variety of the park's offerings. Automotive circulation is addressed in the southernmost end. This area allows for a quick drop off/pick up location for those using the ferry. A semi-covered walkway then directs the passengers to or from the ferry terminal building.

The role of water defines the space. Water engagement is presented throughout the site. These subtle and not-so-subtle moves allow Cubans to have daily interactions with something that has been removed from their culture since the US embargo has been



Figure 29: Site photo

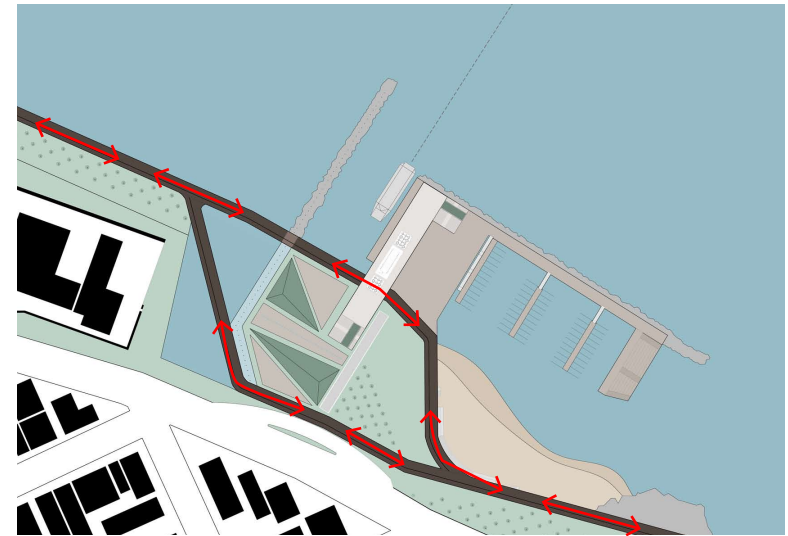
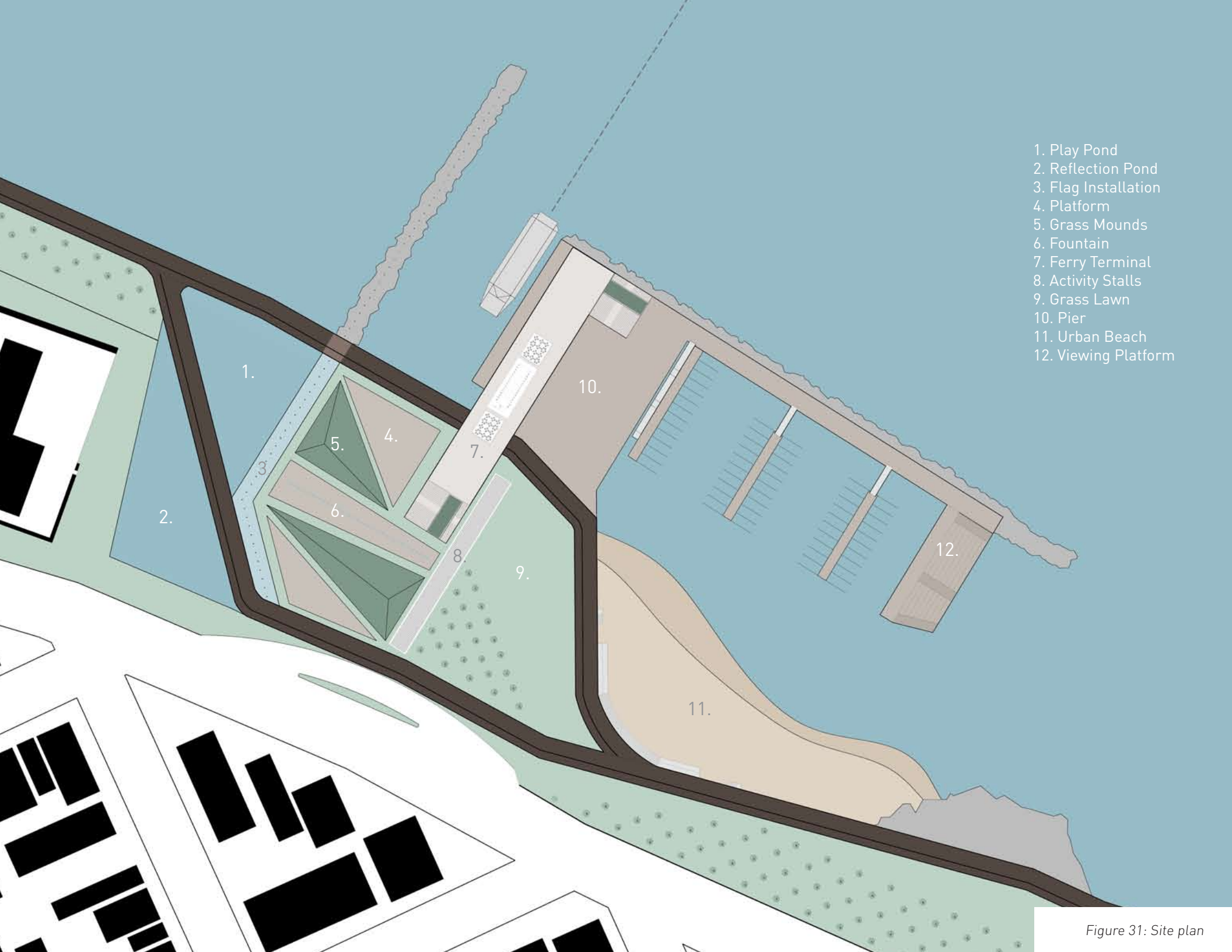


Figure 30: Circulation diagram



- 1. Play Pond
- 2. Reflection Pond
- 3. Flag Installation
- 4. Platform
- 5. Grass Mounds
- 6. Fountain
- 7. Ferry Terminal
- 8. Activity Stalls
- 9. Grass Lawn
- 10. Pier
- 11. Urban Beach
- 12. Viewing Platform

Figure 31: Site plan

imposed. The most notable move is the urban beach. This is the first urban beach in Havana and allows easy and convenient access for the city's residents. The beach is sectioned off so that it will have a bathing zone, respite zone and riprap zone to allow for habitat benches and restoration of native water species. The pier allows for a variety of different methods of water engagement. The ferry will dock from the pier. This creates a destination on its own for those traveling to/from Miami. The pier also contains a marina for over fifty-two small pleasure boats under 21'. Users will be able to rent kayaks under the stairs of the ferry terminal building for a nominal fee. As the majority of Cubans have never ridden on boats, they have never experienced Havana from the water. A large viewing platform allows users to sit, relax, and overlook their city from the water. The viewing platform is arranged so that is aligned perpendicular to the Old City. The viewing platform also serves as a public space for special events or occasions. A barge can be brought in with a movie screen so that films can be projected and viewed from the pier. Water also serves as a place of reflection. A large reflective pond is placed directly in front of the United States Interests Section building. The pond will reflect both the commemorative Cuban flag memorial and the reflection of the six-story US building. Just north of the reflection pond lays a shallow active pond. This wading pond allows a place for people to get their feet wet, play in the water, release toy boats, and freshen up on the frequently warm days in Havana.

The urban park allows for active user engagement through grass mounds and teak platforms. The grass mounds add elevation to the flat site. The grass mounds also add a place where users can overlook people using the ipe platforms for formal or informal performances. Locally sourced ipe will compose the platforms allow for a space for people to gather, sing, dance, etc. The long and narrow teak platform has a recessed water fountain that can be activated for users to interact and engage water on the site. The park also contains a long, narrow activity hall. This semi-covered space is divided



Figure 32: Rip rap beach area

into two prime spaces: a 7'-wide circulation corridor for those seeking direct access to the ferry terminal and a 13'-wide activity area. This area is differentiated with a grade change that creates integrated seating along the entire stall/hall length. This space is flexible and can be divided depending on users' needs. The space is large enough to accommodate a large group playing dominos or a family seeking a shaded area to enjoy lunch. Its versatility allows continuous engagement by a variety of different users. To the east of the activity stall/hall is an open grass area. This area allows users to rest, have a picnic, play soccer, or catch a nap under the tree canopy shade.

Finally, the site contains a ferry terminal space. The building, roughly 50' x 250', is dynamic in that it addresses both the public and private. The southernmost end of the building is programmed to address needs of the urban park users, including restrooms, water fountains, bicycle storage, and food/drink concessions. Its covered breezeway allows for circulation on the site to continue without interruption. The northern end of the building is private and used for the ferry terminal needs. It is sectioned off by check-in, immigration control, and waiting. Similarly, newly arrived passengers are greeted by immigration control and exit to the urban park. Stairs lead the general users to the roof of the ferry terminal building. The rooftop is programmed with a drink bar so that users can enjoy the views of the water, city and arriving or departing ferry. This insures the presence of people on different schedules for different purposes to use the same facilities.

This series of interventions acts as a civic landmark for the city and entrance point to those arriving by ferry to Cuba. The site responds contextually to the El Vedado and the El Malecón greenway through the use of consistent permeable paving, signage, native vegetation and, most importantly, capitalizing on the existing physical and behavioral assets of the community.



Figure 33: Activity stall/hall

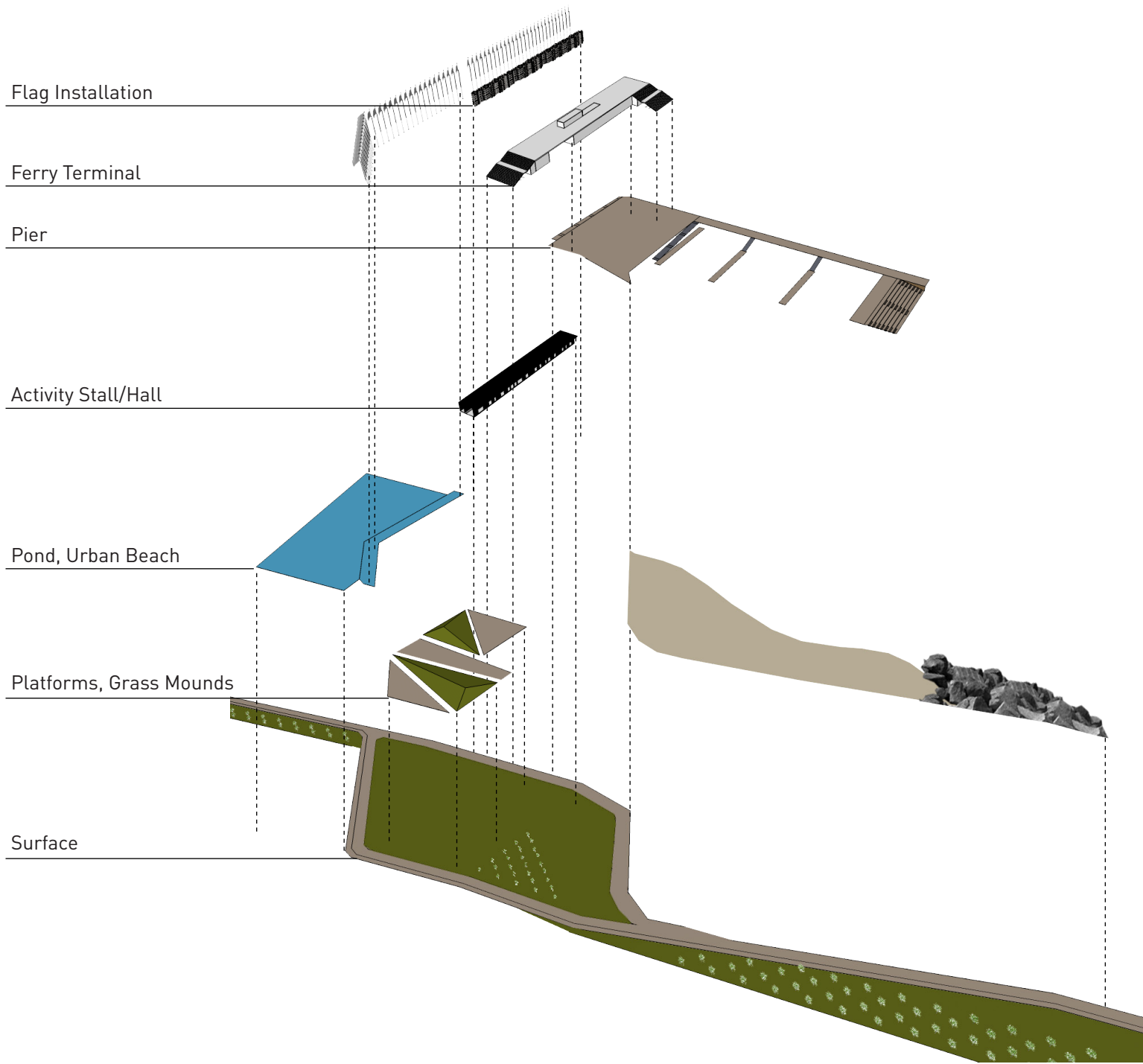


Figure 34: Site components



Figure 35: Before - aerial photo

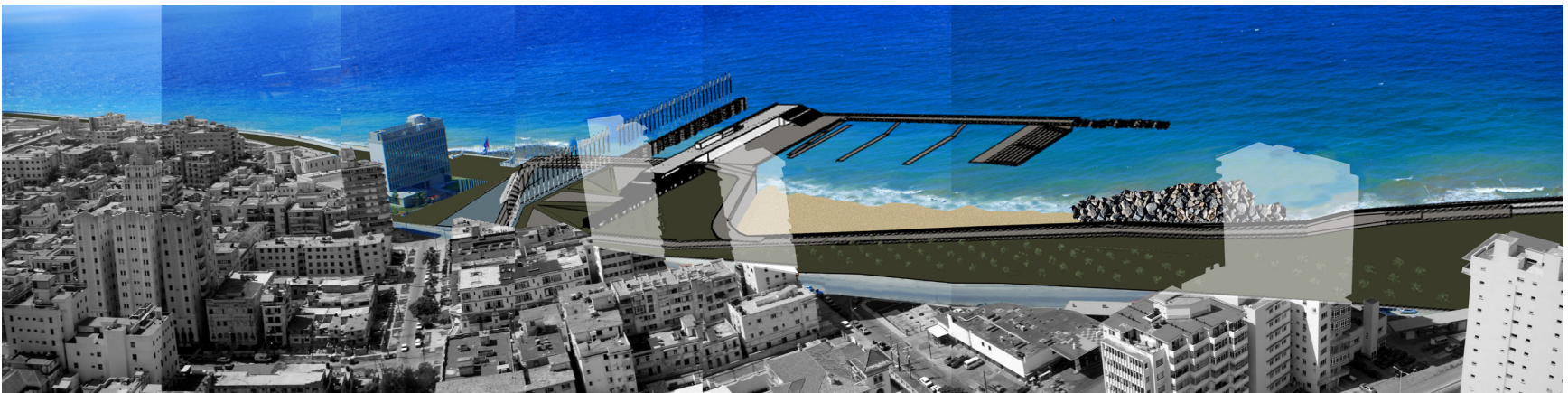
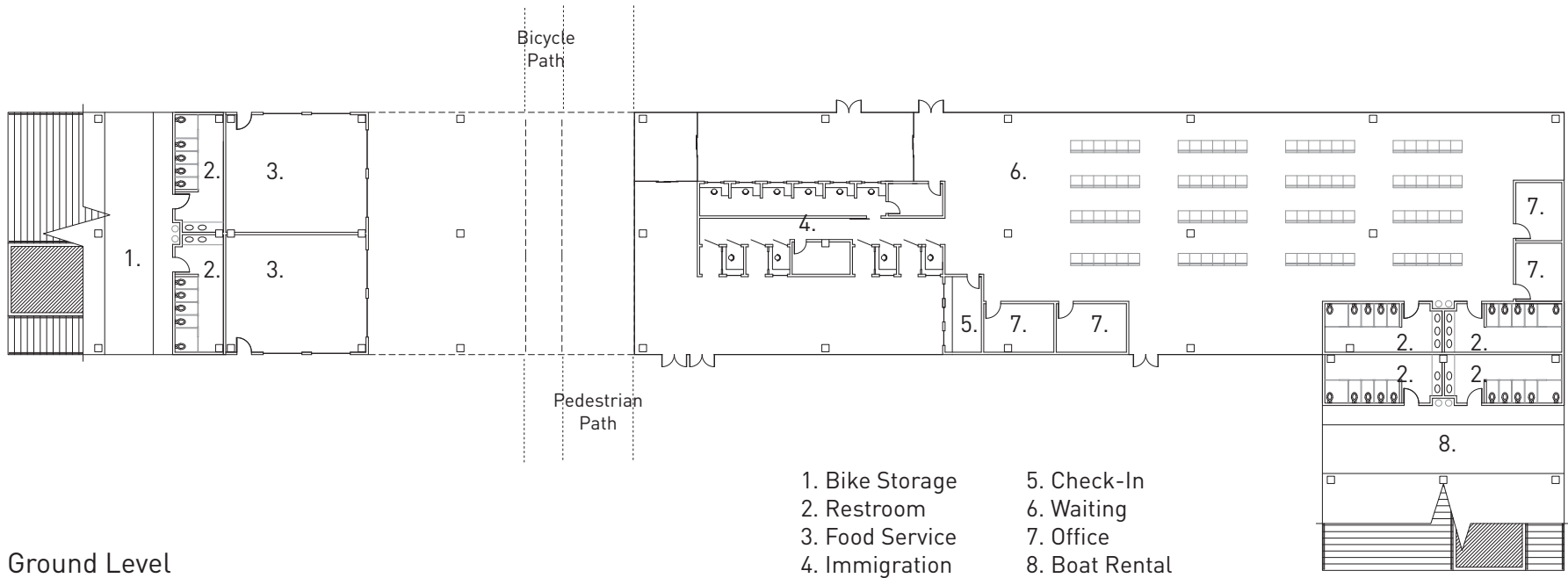
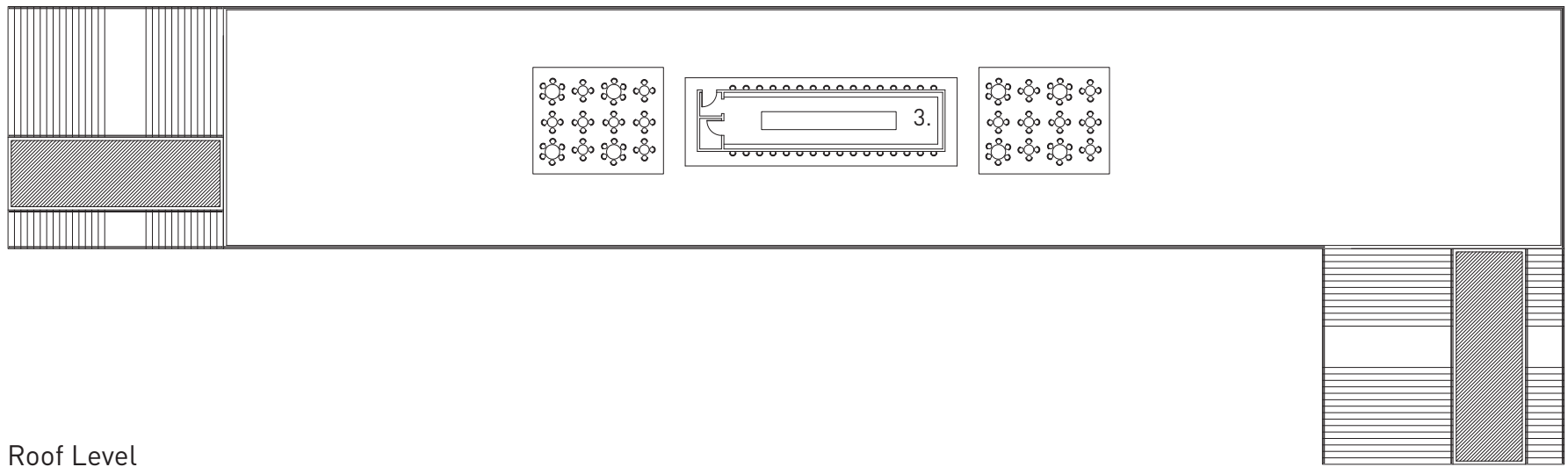


Figure 36: After - aerial photo



Ground Level



Roof Level

Figure 37: Ferry terminal floor plans

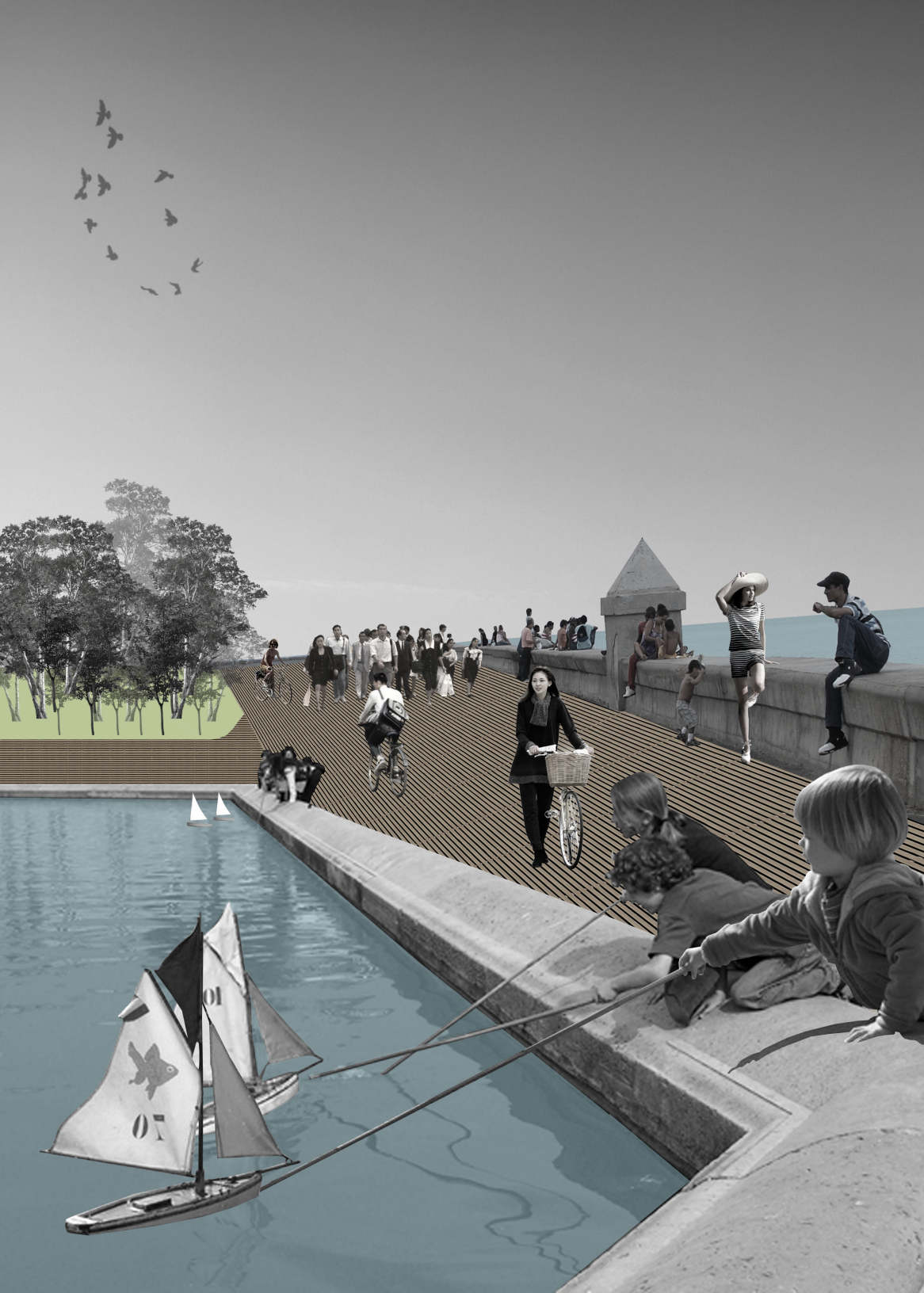


Figure 38: View west to the active pond



Figure 39: View east from circulation path

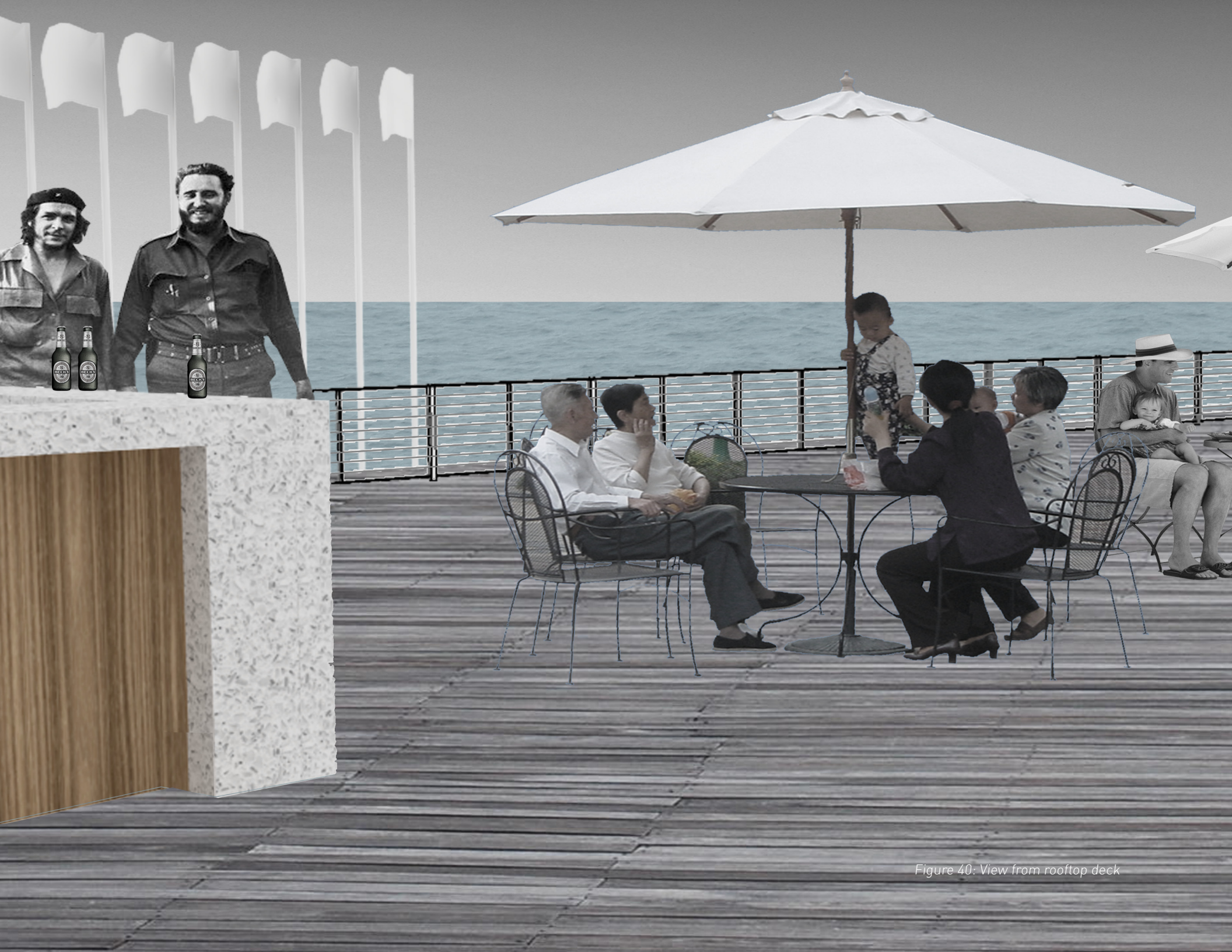


Figure 40: View from rooftop deck

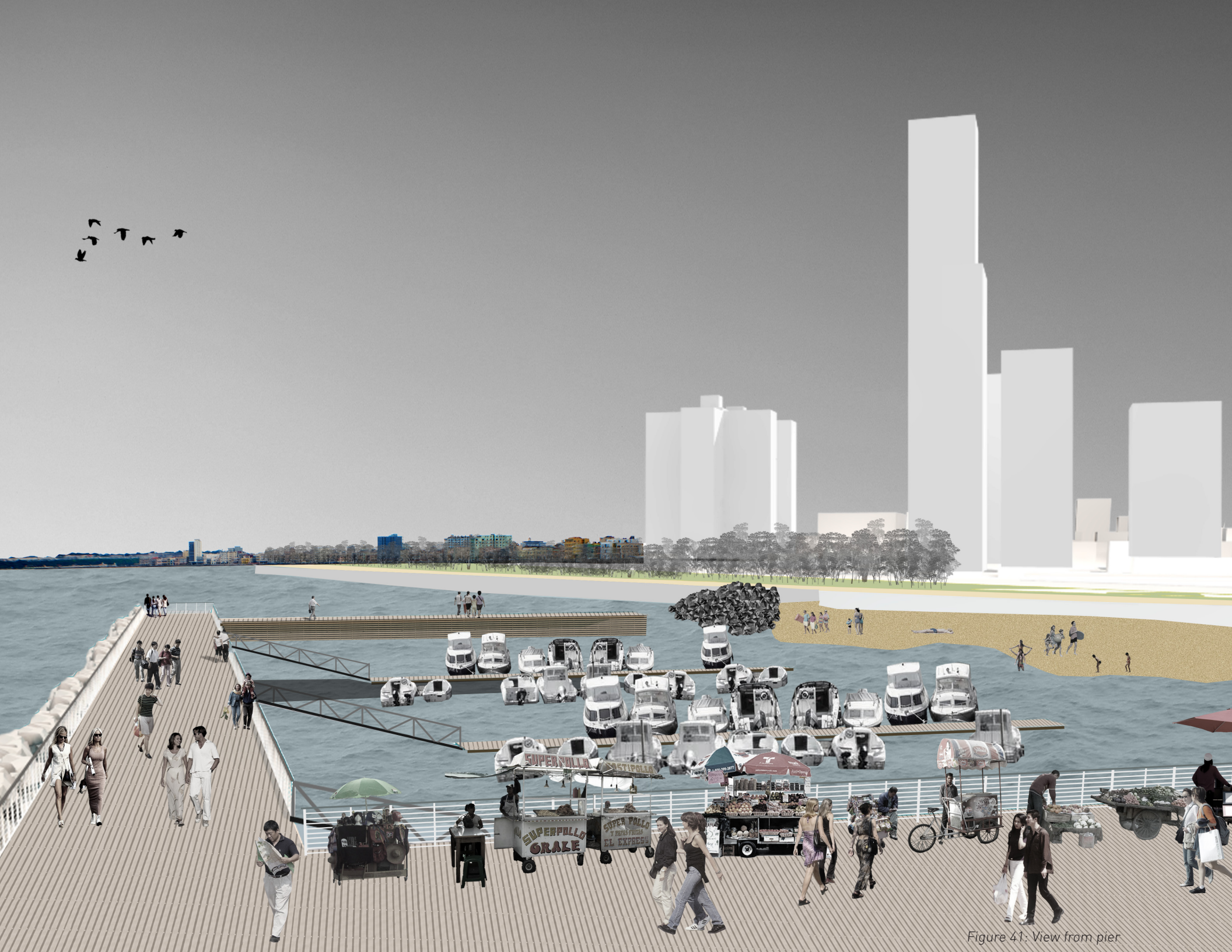


Figure 41: View from pier

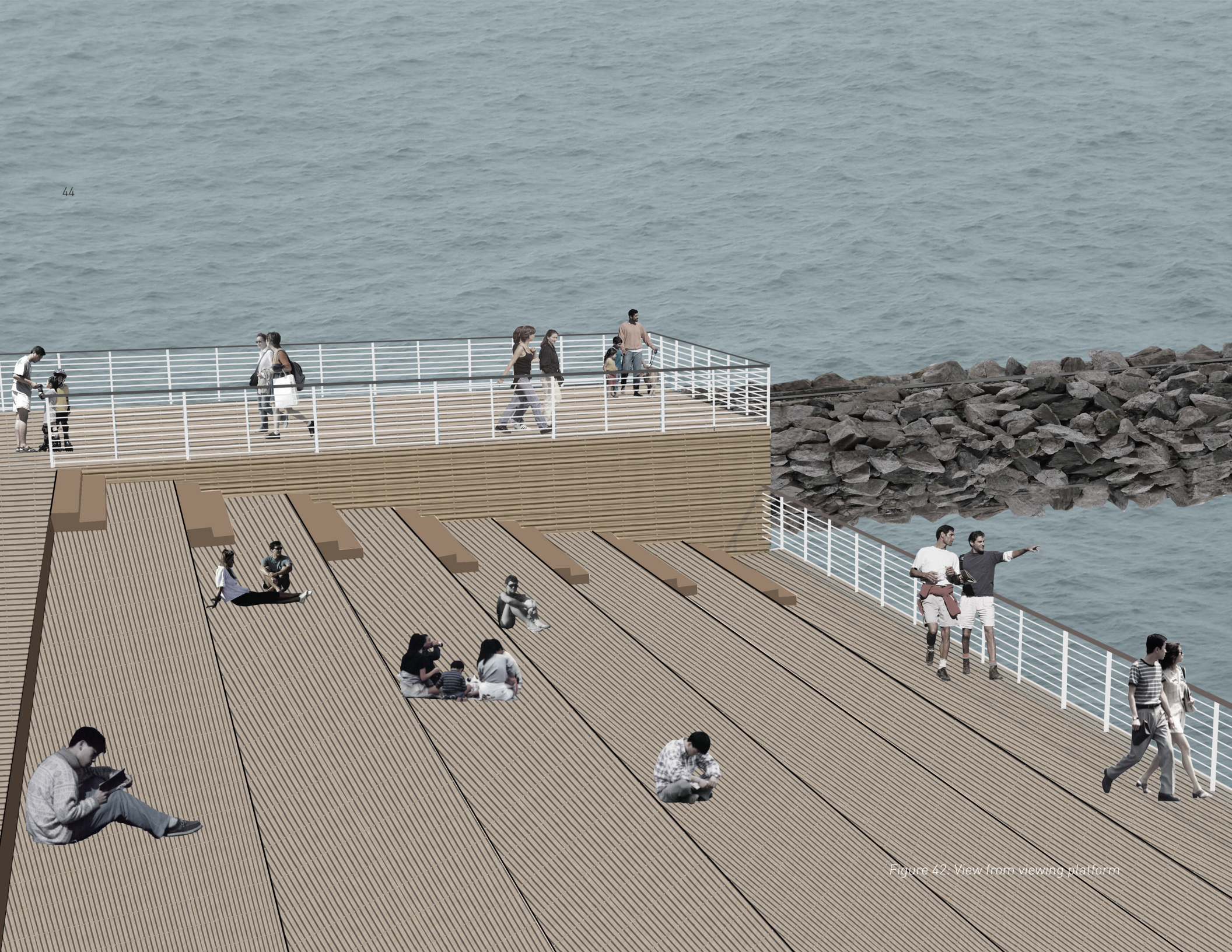


Figure 42: View from viewing platform

## Conclusion

This thesis addresses an unknown Cuba, a post US embargo Cuba living in the 21st century. The thesis explores how a new Cuba can address its water, a critical asset to this island nation that has almost become invisible to its residents. The objective is to ultimately bring Cubans back to their water through various means and methods both passive and active, from a macro scale to a micro scale.

While the thesis can be understood as a political commentary on the US embargo, its primary purpose is to be reflective of social and physical space within the El Vedado neighborhood and its relation to the water. The empirical research gathered during my Cuba visit was essential in the development of the proposal. By integrating an interpretive design based on the empirical research gathered, a space that addresses needs, wants and necessary changes to the current condition has been created.

The proposed urban park and urban strategy face much uncertainty. While strides are being made to loosen the US embargo, there is no set date in place for its removal. What would remain in place are the foundations upon which a site, a highly contested anti-American plaza, and city can transform and develop post US embargo while maintaining its strong Cuban identity. What this design can teach is that these concepts can move beyond this site and be applied along other sites on the El Malecón greenway.

## ENDNOTES

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### History

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<sup>3</sup> Hansen, Jonathan. "Give Guantánamo Back to Cuba" *The New York Times* 10 January 2012: Web.

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<sup>5</sup> Burnett, Victoria. "In a Shift, Cubans Savor Working for Themselves." *New York Times* 3 February 2011. Web.

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<sup>7</sup> United Nations General Assembly. 'Necessity of Ending the Economic, Commercial and Financial Embargo Imposed by the United States of America Against Cuba.' Report of General Secretary of the 66th Session, 2011. PDF File.

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<sup>1</sup> Scarpaci, Joseph and Mario Coyula. *Havana: Two Faces of the Antillean Metropolis*. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002. p. 56. Print.

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<sup>2</sup> Kimmelman, Michael.

<sup>3</sup> "Parks and Leisure Centers" Madrid Visitors and Convention Bureau. 12 March 2012. Web.

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<sup>2</sup> Lynch, Kevin. *The Image of the City*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press. 1960. p 2. Print.

<sup>3</sup> Whyte, William. *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*. Ann Arbor, MI: Edwards Brothers, Inc. 1980. p 19. Print.

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# Reconnecting Cuba's Waterfront: An Urban Strategy for Post-Revolution Havana

# Urban Strategy Havana to El Vedado

## APPENDIX

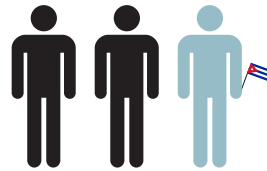
The United Nations estimates that the US embargo has cost Cuba **over \$975 billion**.

The United Nations voted **186-2** in favor of **denouncing** the US **embargo** on Cuba

## Final Boards



Miami-Dade County Population



Miami-Dade County Population



# Site Intervention

## Site Context

# Site Intervention

## Perspectives

APPENDIX

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Final Boards

