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Three Cal Poly Teams Compete in the Ninth ULI - Gerald D. Hines Urban Design Competition

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Abstract

Every year the Urban Land Institute runs the prestigious Gerald D. Hines Urban Design Competition open to interdisciplinary teams of graduate student nationwide. In this article, faculty Hemalata Dandekar and Umut Toker, who jointly coordinated the entries of three Cal Poly student teams, describe the projects and reflect on the pedagogical effects of their efforts.

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THREE CAL POLY TEAMS COMPETE IN THE NINTH ULI - GERALD D. HINES URBAN DESIGN COMPETITION.

HEMALATA C. DANDEKAR AND Umut TOKER

Every year the Urban Land Institute runs the prestigious Gerald D. Hines Urban Design Competition open to interdisciplinary teams of graduate student nationwide. In this article, faculty Hemalata Dandekar and Umut Toker, who jointly coordinated the entries of three Cal Poly student teams, describe the projects and reflect on the pedagogical effects of their efforts.

The Urban Land Institute's Gerald D. Hines Student Urban Design Competition stimulates visioning of innovative built environments. Recognizing that "successful real estate development and design in the 21st century requires intensive collaboration across disciplines and sectors" the Hines competition invites graduate students in the United States or Canada to form a multidisciplinary five-person team to intensively tackle a real land use challenge in a U.S. city.

After the ULI announces the city, the project area, and the challenge, teams have only two weeks to submit their proposals that must include a plan for the whole area as well as a "demonstration project," a pro-forma, and creative solutions for financing and implementation. CRP graduate students have led Cal Poly in this competition since 2006, when our team received an honorable mention (see Focus IV, 2007).

In this ninth year of the competition three multidisciplinary teams - eight Masters of City and Regional Planning, three Masters of Business Administration and four 5th year Architecture students worked full steam, night and day, from January 17 to January 31st. Competing with over 150 teams from universities all over the USA they were challenged with "Maximizing the Transit Opportunity: Mount Baker Station Area Seattle, Washington." The competition called for a comprehensive design/development program for a large site around the Mount Baker light-rail station three miles southeast of downtown Seattle. The station is in the heart of an economically and ethnically diverse neighborhood. The clients, a local family, owning a 33 acre site by the station occupied by several tenants sought a long-term vision for their property. The city is in support of a sustainable, transit-oriented development.

The three Cal Poly teams built on significant co-operative research and analysis to develop three quite distinct solutions which, in each teams words, were characterized by the following:

MLK Place

Team members: Cindy Ma, James Hinkamp, Joanna Pong, Helen To and Jessie Wilkie

The U.S. Census considers the Rainier Valley 98118 zip code to be one of the most diverse neighborhoods in America. The Multi-cultural Livable Kinetic Place, located in the heart of Rainier Valley, is a local reflection of the world. The historical significance of the area derives from generations of immigrant settlement, successful lumber and paper production industries, and as a hospitable locale for America's pastime, baseball. Such foundational elements ripen the opportunity for innovative development in North Rainier Valley. Small business and mixed-use development flourish, in conjunction with an ecologically sensitive landscape, supported by a thriving local economy capable of incubating and attracting business.



Hemalata C. Dandekar, PhD. is professor and head of Cal Poly's CRP Department.



Umut Toker, PhD. is Assistant Professor at Cal Poly's CRP Department.

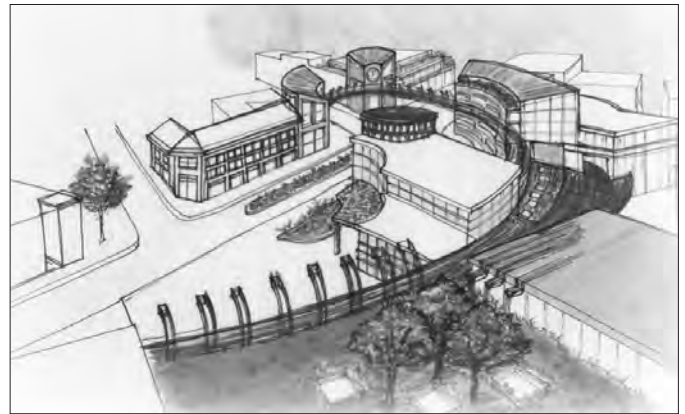
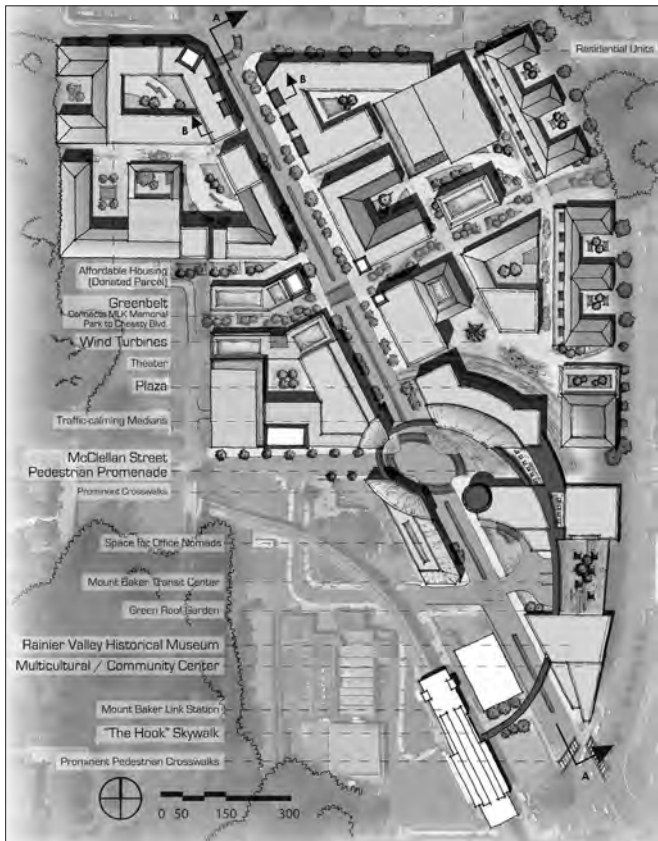


Figure 1 a & b
MLK Place, illustrative site plan and a view of “The Hook”, a skywalk that invites visitors and local residents to safely access MLK Place to and from the Mount Baker light rail station.

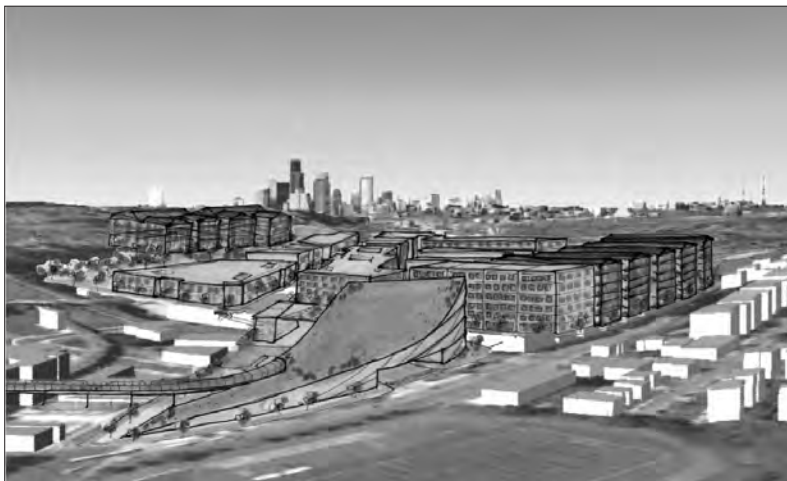
MLK Place is also situated strategically along the Seattle Link light-rail transit corridor. The transit-oriented development actively contributes to the City’s carbon neutral policy emphases. Extensive, ecologically-sensitive technologies are employed throughout MLK Place, to capture prevalent, natural forces of rain and wind in Rainier Valley. Sustainable practices are practiced not only through physical engineering, but also by promoting healthy living. The result is a locally sophisticated neighborhood capable of global engagement.

The Patch

Team members: Anthony Kallioinen, Cynde Kasperovich, Lindsey Miller, Hanh Nguyen and Keith Williams,

The Patch is designed as a neighborhood center, a place where the diverse population of the surrounding area can eat, live, work, play, and shop together. While The Patch offers a wealth of opportunity for socializing and community activities at the community center, art gallery, and sensory gardens, its primary draw will be food. Food is one of the unifying bonds people share across cultures, similar to that of music or dance. The Patch harnesses this sense of unity in several ways, ultimately creating a life-cycle journey of food throughout the site.

The journey begins in the multi-story iconic greenhouse building, where local residents are provided individual plots for gardening and food production, as well as gardening tools and classes. In the floor below, the enclosed, vibrant international market hall provides an opportunity for small-scale, permanent food vendor stalls similar to those of the Boqueria in Barcelona or Reading Terminal Market in Philadelphia. Culinary students from the new international culinary school across the street come to the market each day for fresh produce, meats, and cheeses, followed closely by the talented and established chefs from the many neighboring restaurants. Food trucks line up along the Food Truck Ramblas throughout the day, providing quick meals to workers and visitors. Ultimately, food not utilized is collected throughout the site, where it makes its journey to the compost pile and eventually back to the greenhouse as prime soil, completing a which sustainable cycle.



Figures 2 a & b
The Patch, illustrative site plan and a view towards Downtown Seattle.

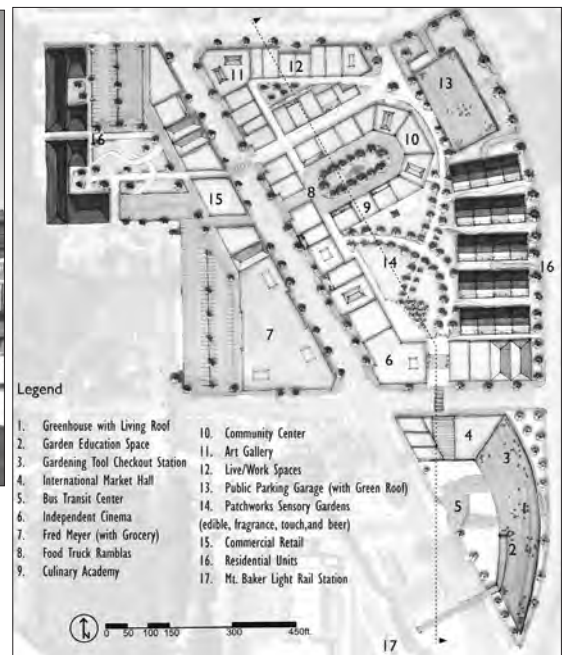
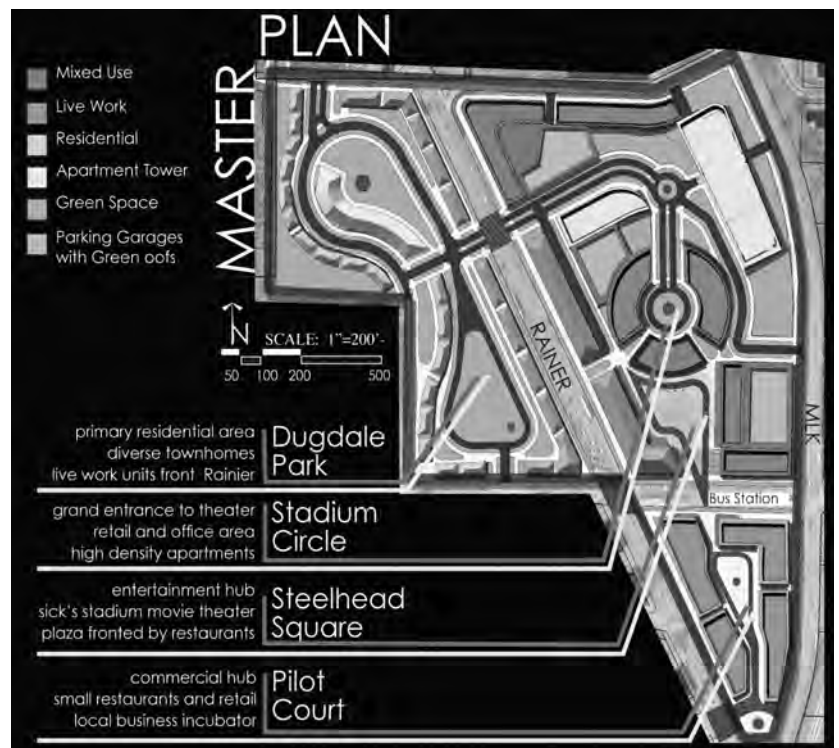


Figure 3
Steelhead Station, site plan.

Steelhead Station

Team members: Teresa Chan, Emily Lipoma, Meaghan Mroz-Barrett, Daniel Noland, Christopher Read

Capitalizing on the movement and activity surrounding the existing transit station and local institutions, Steelhead Station develops the surrounding area to be a live, work, and entertainment destination. Economic and physical redevelopment go hand in hand as new buildings and a non-profit organization encourage local business development. Small units and live/work units are built to accommodate growing businesses, and a restaurant development organization partners with small restaurant owners to share capital resources. The redesign of Steelhead Station fosters a unique dining attraction as small businesses and retail establishments benefit from outdoor seating in the central alleyway. The diversity of uses and user groups ensure activity throughout the day and into the evening. The centrally-located courtyard and movie theatre pay homage to the history of baseball in the area and serve the daily needs of the community as well as cultural and entertainment needs. The small business development, higher density residential units, grocery and retail shops, as well as the entertainment features of the development each play a vital and balanced role in creating the core of community activity at Steelhead Station.



Pedagogic Reflections

The Cal Poly teams were advised by CRP faculty Hemalata Dandekar and Umut Toker. Along the journey to creating their end products they received valuable critique from Professors Henri de Hahn, William Siembieda, Cornelius Nuworsoo, James Doerfler, and Dean Tom Jones. Four CRP alumni with many years of land-development practice in Orange County travelled to San Luis Obispo mid-cycle to provide guidance to the student teams. They energized the groups and, at the same time, underscored the business and bottom-line elements of the mandate. The alumni were: Michael C. Adams, AICP (President, Michael C. Adams Associates, Huntington Beach), Jack Camp (President, Urban Design Camp, Laguna Beach), Peter J. Koetting (Partner, Westar Associates Real Estate Development, Costa Mesa) and Peter Templeton (Principal, Templeton Planning Group, Newport Beach).

Students who were involved in this grueling two weeks of work report that this was the single most valuable experience they have been involved in at Cal Poly as they were forced to make decisions and move through the full cycle of conceptualizing a large project in very fast order, relying on all team members to do their part. The process learning was considerable. The two lead faculty are enthusiastic about what was achieved and feel that the effort yields considerable pedagogic benefits to senior students who are about to launch their professional careers, serving to consolidate their commitment to an integral approach to development, planning, and urban design.



Figure 6

Steelhead Station's Pilot Court, night time rendering.