

DEPARTMENT OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

School of Architecture and Allied arts

University of Oregon

Site Planning and Design Studio, Spring 2013

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BLOCK 112: PORTLAND'S NEWEST PARK BLOCK

INTRODUCTION

Portland, Oregon, has a long and treasured history of planning and design innovation, testing, and risk-taking. From the platting of the North and South Park Blocks in the mid-19th century, to the Tom McCall Waterfront Park, Lawrence Halprin's series of revolutionary fountains and plazas, Pioneer Courthouse Square, the MAX light rail system, and even the Portland Building with all of its faults, the City of Portland has been a national and international leader in testing new urban design ideas.

In recent years, this trend has been even more evident, with remarkable urban spaces, such as Director Park, Jamieson Square, and Tanner Springs Park. The most recent addition – The Fields – is in keeping with this tradition and vision.

This studio is about designing the next piece of this complex urban tapestry: **BLOCK 112**

Through close cooperation with professional staff from Portland Parks and Recreation (PP&R), this studio will focus on the design of the block at the northern end of the North Park Blocks, an area that is on the verge of becoming the next 'hot spot' in central Portland.

Briefly, the studio is charged with providing PP&R with creative innovative design visions and ideas that respond to the dynamic history of this area of Portland, the strong design traditions in the city, and the very practical issues in the neighborhood. PP&R has asked that, while we clearly recognize the realities of this site, we also think beyond the obvious limitations and requirements, and consider creative design responses that can provide a vision for this next area of Portland's urban excitement.

Although not yet in the design phase, this will soon be a real PP&R project. Your designs have the capacity to influence what happens to this site in the near future.

BLOCK 112

Block 112 lies between NW Glisan and NW Hoyt Streets to the north and south and between NW 8th and NW Park on the east and west. It was platted in 1869 as part of the original layout of the area of Portland just north of Burnside. The site is boarded on the south by the park blocks, on the west by commercial buildings, on the north by the US

Post Office and on the east by the historic and now closed US Post Office, soon to be the home of the Pacific Northwest College of Art (PNCA.)

In addition to requesting a 'big idea' and vision, as well as the usual and expected qualities of public urban space (i.e., planting plan, seating, views, security, etc.) PP&R staff have presented us with the following programmatic ideas and requirements:

- Address Community needs by designing flexible space(s) for uses including seating, farmers markets, painting classes, enjoying the summer sun, First Thursday art shows, and/or water play feature. What is the Pearl District missing when it comes to public open space amenities?
- Include the Lee Kelly sculpture currently sitting on the edge of the site
- Integrated Stormwater Feature - treat impervious surfaces onsite for water quality (see Portland's Stormwater Management Manual for facility sizing)
- Focus on 'Sustainable' hardscapes – regional stone, concretes...
- Transportation – adjacent ROW as continuation of park? PNCA adding no parking for students, promoting mass transit, bikes & skateboards
- Circulation - park designs need to define connections to existing park blocks, future development of Post Office site and the main entrance of the PNCA building (facing park).

Other Program Ideas:

- Skate spot or 'Skatedot' – an integrated skateboard feature smaller than 1000sqft
- Lighting for nighttime use
- Locations for Food Carts

In addition the studio will consider and include:

- Design precedents, both in Portland and other cities
- Behavioral observations and physical traces in other Portland parks
- Contexts at multiple scales
- Urban design principles
- Various materials
- Appropriate modes of representation
- Design at multiple scales

STUDIO GOALS

The studio has three broad goals:

1. *Understand the current conditions at Block 112 through increased development of site analysis skills and precedent studies.*

2. *Develop broad visions and detailed plans for the sensitive and appropriate design of contemporary additions and modifications to this important urban landscape.*
3. *Coordinate these efforts with our project partners at Portland Parks and Recreation.*

STUDIO PARTNERSHIP

This studio is being directly supported by planning and design staff at Portland Parks and Recreation, and they will join us for the midterm and final reviews.

Our commitment is to provide PP&R with creative, exciting and appropriate design solutions to a number of critical issues, programmatic requirements and existing circumstances.

SITE VISIT

There is a **required** studio site visit on Saturday, April 6. This is an all day trip.

RESOURCES

All studio documents and resources including schedule, maps, planning documents and important websites will be posted to the course folder on the AAA Server.

Park Information & History:

- These blocks were some of the original park properties in the city. Captain John Couch dedicated the blocks to the City in 1869.

<http://www.portlandoregon.gov/parks/finder/index.cfm?action=ViewPark&ShowResults=yes&PropertyID=447>

- Parks 2020 Vision – PP&R has reached many of the goals outlined here for the Central City, but some still remain. It puts downtown park planning issues into some focus. The document is 13 years old.

<http://www.portlandoregon.gov/parks/article/89443>

Watershed/Stormwater:

- The site is in the Willamette Watershed and the Tanner Creek Sub-Basin

<http://www.portlandoregon.gov/bes/30938>

- Recent work on Tanner Creek Water Quality by BES

<http://www.portlandoregon.gov/bes/article/354686>

Planning/Urban Design

- Central City Urban Design Goals – This is a meaty but interesting document about the direction PP&R would like to go related to urban form and the public realm downtown. See Public Realm Pages 49-60

<http://www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/article/313708>

511 Building Program & PNCA:

- Historic 511 Federal Building

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/511_Federal_Building

- 511 Broadway, a registered historic building that will anchor the city's North Park Blocks. When complete, the renovated 511 building will be the home of PNCA's new MFA program, and will feature demonstration galleries, an information center, an auditorium and artist studios, but no food services.

<http://www.alliedworks.com/projects/pacific-northwest-college-of-art-masterplan/#/overview/15>

EXPECTATIONS

In addition to the usual requirements of studio participation and timely project completion, the field trip to the site is required.

Studio schedule and format for submission of final work will be discussed in studio. All work will be submitted in both digital and analog formats.