3.3 PUBLIC SPACE PROGRAM

The programming of public space along the Seattle waterfront needs to fulfill the established overall goal of creating “a waterfront for all”. Programming long, linear spaces is particularly challenging, especially when intensive programming is concentrated in a few disconnected places. Therefore, our approach to programming the linear public realm along the Seattle waterfront must be done thoughtfully and carefully in order to balance activities and develop the relationships between them.

The public space program should follow two tracks. One track should identify and provide adequate design elements to support key, primary activities (the “primary program”). The other track should create a design that is sufficiently generous, suggestive and supportive of a wide range of flexible programming efforts over time (the “event programming”).

Conversely, there are plenty of examples where the demands of excessively specific programming have led to highly specific designs that ultimately lead to obsolescence when the program is no longer relevant or evolves into new sets of demand. Public space suffers when it is overly constrained and fixed – it needs to be easily appropriated, adapted and flexibly used. For example, the minimal piazzas in European cities have survived for centuries because the simple space and openness they provide allows for changing uses over time – from marketplace, to festival, to political rally, to social mixing chamber, to the lone pedestrian crossing at nighttime. Moreover, retail surrounding these piazzas supports the activities taking place in them.

Hence, our approach toward programming on Seattle’s Central Waterfront is to keep it as open, simple and flexible as possible. While there still remains a need to identify and define those primary programs that require specific design, there can also be significant areas that are more open and provide opportunities for a broad variety of programming events over time.
Successful parks and public spaces organize program in similar ways—flexible open spaces and event-based activity nodes are distributed through space and connected via extensive circulation system. New York’s Central Park, for example, has set the stage for a wide variety of cultural programs and uses over time with a strong layout of spaces that accommodate both “primary program” and “event program”, and connects these programs through an extensive and easily navigable circulation network. Originally intended as a public strolling ground, it has accommodated various recreational uses as well as specific events and activities over its life as a park. Program continues to evolve to meet changing needs and desires.
HUDSON RIVER PARK
- Sun Lawn
- Pier 62 Skate Park
- Carousel
- Pier 51 Playground
- Educational Programs
- Pier 65 Lawn
- Café
- Christopher St Fountain
- Leroy St Dog Run
- Courtyard Fields
- Boat Building
- Rooftop Fields
- Tennis Courts
- Basketball Courts
- Mini-Golf
- Beach Volleyball
- Pier 25 Playground
- Harrison St Basketball

BROOKLYN BRIDGE PARK
- The Cove
- Jane’s Carousel
- Main St Lot
- Concession
- Bridge View Lawn
- Granite Prospect
- Harbor View Lawn
- Salt Marsh
- Boat Launch
- Spiral Pool
- Wildlife Preserve
- Picnic Lawns
- Sand Volleyball
- Concession Playground

SEATTLE CENTRAL WATERFRONT
- Belltown Interim Improvements
- Belltown Bluff
- Kayak Launch
- The Grandstand
- Roller Skating Rink
- The Cloud Fountain
- The Pier Slips
- The Promenade
- The Beach

- Primary Circulation
- Large-Scale Open Space
- Small-Scale Activity Node

1 Mile
Programming great public spaces requires a higher level of attention than can typically be granted by a city agency. Thus, an important step in developing and managing the programming of a major public open-space is the creation of an effective stewardship body to curate programs and events over the year. Programming need not be the only function of the stewardship organization; it could also be responsible for routine operations and management, capital maintenance, on-going intergovernmental relations and development. Consequently, the stewardship organization might include an event planner, an arts curator, an educational programmer and a community coordinator. This entrepreneurial and creative team would together imagine a range of programming opportunities, plan and secure resources and then execute specific events over the year. Successful and popular events would breed more of the same over time, whereas less successful ventures would be reconsidered or dropped. Dynamic and vibrant programming would be what defines the waterfront as a vibrant cultural asset, attracting individuals, families and groups again and again.
PUBLIC SPACE PROGRAM

PRIMARY PROGRAM ELEMENTS

An extensive public engagement initiative coupled with a detailed site analysis informs the development of a rich and diverse program for public spaces along the waterfront. Existing destinations and areas of interest are identified and synergies between them evaluated. At the same time, opportunities for expanding the linear waterfront promenade, both horizontally and vertically, are considered for adding generous civic and gathering spaces with elevated views of Elliott Bay.

The waterfront program includes ‘continuous’ and ‘event-based’ activities. Strolling, jogging, biking, driving, and parking are supported along the entire length of the waterfront, whereas event-based programs will happen in strategic locations to maximize synergies with existing destinations. Activities and events will be diverse and have the capacity to change over time to adapt to the needs and desires of all visitors to the waterfront. The waterfront program inspires and informs the design and will continue to evolve over the life of the project.
1. The Promenade
A continuous pathway along the waterfront that allows for strolling, sitting, gathering, viewing, engaging public art and other permanent and temporary amenities, accessing the water and enjoying eating, drinking and shopping experiences;

2. Bicycle Path
A continuous pathway dedicated to two-way movement of bicyclists and roller-bladers;
3. Urban Streets
Well-designed vehicular streets that provide for transit, driving, loading, and parking while being fully integrated with the public realm including generous pedestrian crossings, signage, sidewalks, street planting:

4. Natural Habitat in the City
A range of designed places where natural systems and the biodiversity of living organisms are enhanced – including beaches, tidal pools, planted areas, tree canopy cover and water-based environments:
5. Retail and Commercial Development
The removal of the Alaskan Way viaduct and enhancement of the public realm will spur new retail and commercial development along the waterfront, the east side of Alaskan Way and the city blocks adjacent to the project area.

6. Bay and Boating Activities
The enhancement of the commuting experience on the ferries, access to boats, cruise ships, water taxis, boat tours and views to the bay;
7. Large-scale Open Spaces
A variety of settings for movement, pause, rest, gathering, sunning, accessing the water, fishing, boating, children’s play spaces, outdoor dining, exercise, public art, impromptu functions and flexible event programming, including spaces for concerts and festivals;
8. Small-scale Activity Destinations
A series of intimately-scaled spaces dedicated to specific activities and uses, including: fishing, dining, gathering, impromptu performances, touching the water, water-oriented play, display, learning and education.
ACTIVITY AND EVENT PROGRAMMING

In addition to the primary uses and activities along the waterfront, there should be an ongoing stewardship organization, that is continually planning for events and experiences to attract a diverse range of people to the waterfront. These might include:

1. Cultural Art Programming (exhibitions, installations, concerts, performances, etc);
2. School and Educational Programming (tours, events, stories, experiences, ecology, history, local culture, classes, play, etc);
3. Community Programming (festivals, markets, holidays, etc);
4. Revenue Generating Events (rental and leasing of space to private entities for special events);

The range of possibilities is extremely broad and the design should remain the base inspiration and support for a broad spectrum of dynamic activities to play out over time – some of which we can imagine now, but many others will evolve in completely unforeseen ways. The keys are:

1. A dynamic, creative and entrepreneurial stewardship entity;
2. A diverse range of well serviced and relatively open spaces that each have their own identity and suggestiveness for social possibility;
3. A variety of events that will bring Seattleites out in all seasons and weather, such as developing innovative approaches to integrate elements that offer refuge from inclement weather into new public spaces as well as opportunities to experience the drama of Seattle’s rain and winter weather over Elliott Bay in a sheltered public setting.
4. A number of active events to engage the public in sports and recreation, and health and wellness on the waterfront.