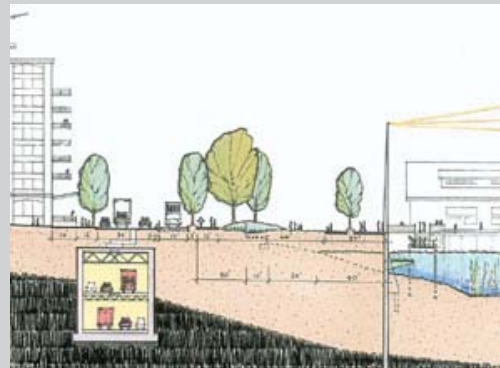
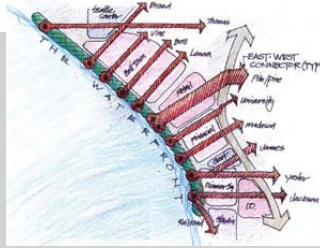
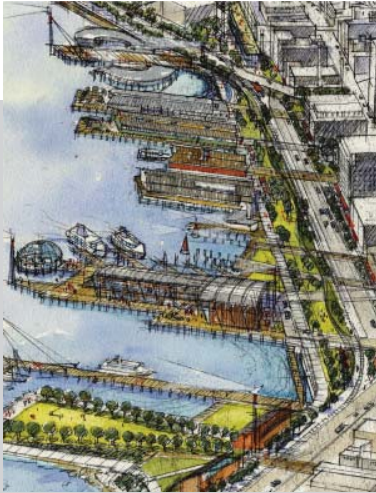


# Waterfronts

open spaces and interfaces of edge environments

Seattle Open Space 2100  
**Waterfront Typology**



A few results of Seattle's Waterfront Design Collaborative

[alliedarts-seattle.org](http://alliedarts-seattle.org)

**Waterfronts** are dynamic places by nature. As an edge environment, the overlap of different communities of users and dramatically different conditions make for enormous amounts of complexity and energy. In the non-human realm, waterfronts are the interface of the aquatic and the terrestrial, the site of complex intertidal communities, the point of release for wave action, and the vehicle for many dispersal patterns. As related to human history and use, waterfronts have a long history of changing types and levels of uses, and are now coming back into potentially thriving and layered public use. Once the site of first settlements and exploration, they have long served as transportation corridors and ports, hubs of trade, travel centers, recreation venues, and much, much more. Waterfronts have been extensively used by humans for their utility in travel, trade, recreation, and general enjoyment, and have also suffered cycles of abuse and neglect from these very use patterns.

Cities seek a waterfront that is a place of public enjoyment. They want a waterfront where there is ample visual and physical public access - all day, all year - to both the water and the land. Cities also want a waterfront that serves more than one purpose: they want it to be a place to work and to live, as well as a place to play. In other words, they want a place that contributes to the quality of life in all of its aspects - economic, social, and cultural.

*-Remaking the Urban Waterfront, the Urban Land Institute*

Seattle's Waterfront -

"A once-in-a-century opportunity to create a new front porch for Seattle."

-Seattle Department of Planning and Design



Seattle's waterfront viewed from Denny Hill, 1888  
Courtesy Paul Dorpat



Stetson and Post Sash and Door Co. mill, from King Street, 1882  
Photo by Carleton E. Watkins, Courtesy UW Special Collections



## Historical Progression of Waterfronts

### COASTAL SEAPORT: Settlement and Initial Development

The development of modern North American seaports began with early European settlers. As ships were the primary mode of transportation for both goods and people, sites for ports that provided shelter from harsh weather and geological formations that allowed for convenient ship movement and docking became the center of all transportation-related activity. These port sites developed into bustling developments to support shipping-related activities and served as a staging area for further movement.

### INDUSTRIAL CENTER: Shipping and Manufacturing

Once established as a port city, these settlements then came to also serve as centers of shipping to export newly found resources, as well as sites of industrial manufacturing. As shipping becomes more advanced and the ships more massive in size, more elaborate docking structures and cargo storage infrastructure is constructed, often resulting in dredging the natural shoreline, and railroad infrastructure may be introduced. Culturally, these port cities also served as centers for exchange of ideas, information, and other cultural happenings.

### DECLINE AND DECAY: Changing Economies and Changing Land-Use

As the shipping industry moved to more reliance on the trucking industry, and industrial manufacturing became unfeasible, these large industrial waterfront developments were abandoned. The structures obsolete and the land often polluted, waterfronts became airports, parking lots, red-light districts, and the like.

## NEW YORK, New York, USA

### *The Waterfront as the Last Untapped Open Space*

“The Waterfront Park Coalition is an alliance of environmental, civic and community groups that support revitalization of the New York City waterfront with public open space and restored ecological habitat. These groups have come together as a coalition to promote: (1) public access to the city’s waterfront and waterways in each of the five boroughs; (2) adequate and equitable financing for waterfront public space and access; and (3) protection and improvement of waterfront habitat.”

New York League of Conservation Voters website

[http://www.nylcv.org/Programs/WPC/Waterfront\\_Park\\_Coalition.htm](http://www.nylcv.org/Programs/WPC/Waterfront_Park_Coalition.htm)

The *New York Waterfront Blueprint* is a document produced by the WPC which chronicles over 100 complete, ongoing, and proposed waterfront projects throughout the coastlines and waterways of New York City’s five boroughs. The projects point out opportunities for design and redevelopment intervention to provide publicly accessible and enjoyable open space, often made available by existing conditions including working and abandoned rail-lines, abandoned warehouses and factories, industrial sites, and capped landfills. Planned improvements go beyond park uses, often including residential housing and office complexes, as well as environmental remediation and habitat restoration. These projects have huge potential to open one of the world’s most densely populated and constantly (internally) redeveloped cities up to a previously grossly underutilized open space: the waterfront that surrounds and cuts through the entire region!

The Waterfront Park Coalition is comprised of public agencies, non-profit organizations, and private foundations, and these projects are enjoying a great amount of public support and media coverage.



## Factors Contributing to the Resurgence of Waterfront Development

### Available Land

Abandoned waterfront facilities led to depressed land values, ripe for ambitious redevelopment schemes.

### Cleaner Water and Land

Environmental regulations and remediation, beginning in the 1970s and 1980s made the land again appealing along the waterfront.

### The Historic Preservation Movement

Preservationists took to preserving historic structures, much of which were located along the waterfront and still standing because of a long period of abandonment.

### Citizen Activism and Leadership

Citizen activism in reclaiming 'lost' waterfronts and historic regions pushed much redevelopment by city agencies.

### Urban Revitalization

With the revitalization of urban downtowns and the construction of residential developments with supporting services, waterfronts have become prime real estate.

*-Remaking the Urban Waterfront, ULI - the Urban Land Institute*

## Waterplace Park and Providence Park, Rhode Island, USA

*"a Venice in New England" -New York Times*

In the mid-19th century, Providence was a city with a prominent waterfront, Cove Basin, surrounded by the wide Cove Promenade. However, with the rise of the industrial revolution, Providence's waterfront was soon populated by overflowing sewers, woolen mills, textile-dyeing plants, meat-packing plants, and elevated rail tracks. The three rivers which move through and meet in Providence were decked-over, hidden from sight and removed from access.

This public called a stop to this decline once the iconic Biltmore Hotel was closed in 1975. Business leaders united to form a private group to purchase, rehabilitate, and reopen the "elaborate landmark hotel." This momentum led to a sweeping proposal to dramatically reshape and reinvigorate the city core of Providence. The plan sought to bring people back to the center of the city, to work and to live, and used the obscured rivers to drive the plan. In total, this dramatic re-shaping involved burying railroad tracks, removing the over-river decking, changing the course of a river, relocating freeway paths, and reclaiming the lost Cove Basin.

These dramatic moves required dramatic leadership and creative financing. There were many changes in ownership, responsibilities, and funding mechanisms, but in the end it took committed leaders, passionate citizens, and a well-articulated vision to bring about the reclaimed city center and ensure high-quality public open space.



Chicago's Lincoln Park on Lake Michigan  
<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/destinations>



San Francisco urban waterfront  
[www.citykayak.com](http://www.citykayak.com)



Gondolas on the Woonasquatucket and Providence Rivers  
<http://www.providenceri.com/gondola.html>

*“The waterfront isn’t just something unto itself. It’s connected to everything else.” -Jane Jacobs*



Park at Battery Park City  
[http://www.nylcv.org/Programs/WPC/blueprint/boroughs/manhattan/pages/5\\_battery/index.htm](http://www.nylcv.org/Programs/WPC/blueprint/boroughs/manhattan/pages/5_battery/index.htm)

### **Aquisition / Implementation Mechanisms**

As waterfront redevelopment typically follows heavy industrial waterfront sites that have experienced a period of decay, the process to reinvigorate these spaces can be messy. The three primary areas that must be successfully managed in these projects are: politics, finance, and urban design.

According to the Urban Land Institute, the most effective waterfront redevelopment plans include:

- Strong leadership and vision, each locally rooted.
- Good relationships and links between the redevelopment agency and all levels of involved government.
- Good relationships with local residents and business members.
- Ability to coordinate high-quality private development projects with local public benefits.
- Clearly defined land ownership.
- A long term, sustainable financing plan.
- Transparent project contract-award process.
- Small development increments in tight phasing plans
- Adoption of existing infrastructure and buildings; phased construction of new.
- Continuous public access to waterfront edge.

### **Birmingham, England**

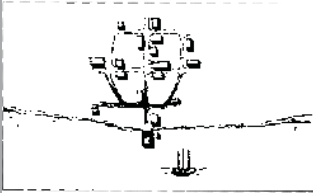
#### *Canal Waterfronts and an Open Space System*

Birmingham became a bustling center of Britain’s Industrial Revolution in the mid 1700s, during which time over 200 miles of canals were constructed by various companies to strategically connect Birmingham to the rest of England. However, with the decline of Birmingham’s metals manufacturing industry in the 1930s, the canals also suffered decline of use and were abandoned. Silt accumulated in the canals and activities from World War II inflicted more severe degradation of the canals, and in 1958 all canals were placed under the supervision of British Waterways, a public corporation charged with managing Britain’s inland waterways.

In 1988, an “urban regeneration brainstorming session” became the basis of the Birmingham Urban Design Strategy, a plan that calls for development of a visual identity at a pedestrian scale in revitalizing the city. Here, the city’s control of the existing, though modest and derelict, waterways provided a framework from which to develop a system of public open spaces. The canals will serve to organize an open space system, and will provide a catalyst for further redevelopment throughout the city by virtue of the extensiveness of the existing system.



## Pattern of Waterfront Development



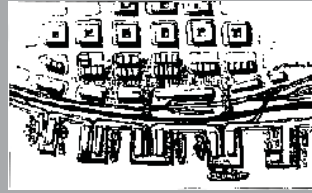
### SETTLEMENT

A port settlement is established in a safe harbor; inhabitants have direct contact with the natural shoreline.



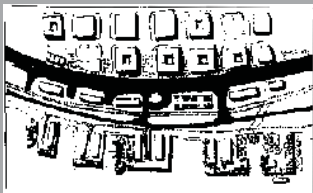
### A PORT IS ESTABLISHED

The settlement becomes a city with a port authority; docks made of stone and fill replace wood structures.



### CITY DETACHES

As commerce and shipping expand and industrialize in nature, the distance between the shoreline and the city center increases significantly.



### DECLINE

As shipping decreases, or larger facilities are developed elsewhere to accommodate large modern ships, the original shoreline is abandoned.



### REDISCOVERY

Redevelopment spearheaded by the city's redevelopment agency brings about environmental clean up and reconnects the city to its waterfront

Remaking the Waterfront, ULI



Port of Seattle cranes, Duwamish Waterway, Seattle skyline, September 2001

Photo by Priscilla Long

## Resources

The Waterfront Park Coalition. *New York Waterfront Blueprint*. New York Conservation and Education Fund, January 2002.

Fisher, Bonnie, et.al. *Remaking the Urban Waterfront*. ULI\_the Urban Land Institute, Washington, D.C., 2004.

<http://www.alliedarts-seattle.org>

<http://www.britishwaterways.co.uk/>

<http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/citycentrecanalcorridor.bcc>

<http://members.virtualltourist.com/m/81e43/4d5f5/>

[http://www.nycgovparks.org/sub\\_newsroom/biennial\\_report/biennial\\_02\\_03/html/waterfront.html](http://www.nycgovparks.org/sub_newsroom/biennial_report/biennial_02_03/html/waterfront.html)

[http://www.ci.seattle.wa.us/dpd/Planning/Central\\_Waterfront/index.asp](http://www.ci.seattle.wa.us/dpd/Planning/Central_Waterfront/index.asp)



Seattle's Waterfront  
[http://www.ci.seattle.wa.us/dpd/Planning/Central\\_Waterfront/DPD\\_000551.asp](http://www.ci.seattle.wa.us/dpd/Planning/Central_Waterfront/DPD_000551.asp)

## Seattle's Central Waterfront Plan

From the DPD website:

Over the years Seattle's central waterfront has evolved from a frontier wilderness to a major economic center, fueling growth in the Pacific Northwest and beyond. However, in recent years the Alaskan Way viaduct and the seawall along the central waterfront have been damaged and weakened. This condition has thrust the waterfront towards yet another major milestone in its evolution.

The Waterfront Advisory Team was made up of 12 members, representing Puget Sound regional issues, urban design/public art, the environment, historic preservation, economic development, neighborhoods/community development, public development, private development, landscape architecture, labor, and general waterfront issues

City planners are working to take advantage of this once-in-a-century opportunity to create a waterfront that will meet Seattle's challenging needs. Planning activities have been focused on generating creative ideas about what the future waterfront should be.

Reconnecting Seattle to its Central Waterfront is the overall goal used in developing the draft Waterfront Concept Plan. Other goals include:

- \* Restore the natural environment and culture
- \* Strengthen diverse mobility choices
- \* Celebrate Northwest character and maritime heritage
- \* Renew a sense of place

Seattle's Waterfront Concept Plan

[http://www.ci.seattle.wa.us/dpd/Planning/Central\\_Waterfront/COS\\_004367.asp](http://www.ci.seattle.wa.us/dpd/Planning/Central_Waterfront/COS_004367.asp)

February 2004 Visioning Charette

[http://www.ci.seattle.wa.us/dpd/Planning/Central\\_Waterfront/DPD\\_000552.asp](http://www.ci.seattle.wa.us/dpd/Planning/Central_Waterfront/DPD_000552.asp)



Seattle's Waterfront  
1907 (top)  
2002 (bottom)

<http://www.kokogiak.com/projects/seawft/default.asp>