Yesler Terrace: 21st Century Neighborhood.
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The Seattle Housing Authority is planning to demolish 600 units of public housing built in the 1940s over an area equal to about 10 city blocks called Yesler Terrace. The SHA plans to replace this with a new neighborhood of approximately 4000 units, including a mix of incomes and uses. The site is within 5-10 minutes walking distance of the downtown, is on a hillside with as much as 100' of elevation change with views of Mount Rainier, and will include a wide variety of building types from high-rises to mid-rises to what is commonly referred to as 5-over-1 housing. The population will include very low-income families, moderate to middle income singles, couples, empty nesters, and high-end households—approximately 40% affordable and 60% market-rate.

The SHA has hired a team of planners and architects to master plan the framework for the new neighborhood, collaborating with the residents and neighbors. The SHA has asked me if a studio could explore how the new neighborhood could be built out within this new master plan, testing design guidelines at the architectural scale, and exploring ways of mixing these diverse incomes within various housing/building types.

This is an opportune time to explore innovative housing types to inform all of the stakeholders before they move forward into the next phases of more refined architectural solutions. Each student will have the opportunity to pick a site or block within the new framework (to include 350-450 units with other uses) and test its rules, providing feedback to adjust the rules as needed. This will also provide an opportunity to stretch the imaginations of the SHA, the design team and the residents, with new ideas for sustainable communities and innovative architecture responding to the special social conditions of this demographic mix. The studio’s early stages of research into international examples of the state of the art will not only inform you as students, but elevate the awareness and dialogue of all the stakeholders presently involved in the project.