TROUTDALE CIVIC CENTER

Project Description

Media and mass market culture increasingly dominate the civic life of communities. A pervasive apathy has created a void between the traditional public life of local involvement and the reality of modern lifestyles. In smaller bedroom communities like Troutdale, Oregon, expansion has come at a frantic pace and planning has sometimes come as an after thought leaving communities without recognizable centers or identities. Sited on the Sandy River at the mouth of the Columbia River Gorge, Troutdale has been one of the fastest growing cities in Oregon. Although Troutdale has endeavored to create an identity along a main street the efforts have not established a clear community center or active public spaces.

The Troutdale City Hall was recently deemed structurally unsound and city agencies and functions have been temporarily relocated to various locations around the city. This project addresses Troutdale’s immediate need for permanent space to house governmental functions, a small branch library and auditorium. The site is located in “downtown” Troutdale with views to the Columbia River, Mt. St. Helen’s and Mt. Adams. As a public building and potential community “center” the project will address typologies and precedents, the nature of public spaces and contextual issues.

Your task is urgent and specific: propose, in architectural form, a civic alternative to the consumer culture of outlet malls, big box retail and isolated suburban culture. How to engage the populace and create a civic center that enhances civic pride and identity? The character of the proposals will be expected to critically explore aspects of contemporary urban form utilizing a visionary social and civic idea. Although the project has many social and cultural aspects the studio will be architectural in nature and a strong emphasis will be placed on tectonic explorations and spatial and site relationships.

Skeletal Program

- Entry and reception
- Administrative offices
- Meeting rooms
- City Council chambers
- Small Library
- Small auditorium associated with library
- Outdoor plaza
- Coffee bar

Program notes

- The project will be a new freestanding building between 20,000 and 25,000 SF
- The program offered is meant as a guide only; room sizes and arrangements may be added or subtracted according to your overall idea. They may not be eliminated merely to ease the planning of your building. There are some aspects of the program that are essential to the nature of the project, i.e. the council chambers.
- The relationship between the parts of the program and the site are to be developed from your ideas and philosophy about the site and program.
- For this project we will not consider height or site restrictions although each student must be aware of the current requirements or guidelines in this area.
- Sustainable design practices are expected: (natural light and ventilation, onsite energy production landscape integration)
Study Objectives

Project

- To understand the elements of a successful civic space
- To explore the potential of built form to establish communal identity
- To strive for an architecture which integrates form and the expressive potential of the tectonic
- To foster a symbiotic relationship between building, program and site

Process

- To use physical models as design media for primary exploration
- To explore and understand our individual architectural design process

Teaching methods

This course is organized as an interactive studio, requiring both student and critic participation in readings, discussions, architectural analyses, reviews of student design work, and other group activities. Attendance at studio sessions is required and working in the studio during non-studio time is strongly encouraged. Design education is a non-linear process that benefits from peer input and collective energy. I will provide ample criticism and guide the class as a whole but will not be didactic in directing proposals toward one solution. Self-motivation and commitment is expected.