

Conclusions

An urban project responds to it's environment on many levels. This project is about the urban environment of Washington DC. Through this study the issues of context, circulation and orientation became the guiding forces that drove its urban program.

Context is the greatest influence on how this project relates to its environment. Building height, massing and materials all play a role in the development of relationships with urban fabric. Though the function, elements and location of this project are unique, the aquarium becomes an integral part of the urban fabric through its relation to the context.

Located at a primary vehicular access corridor from Virginia, the Aquarium and Support Facility became an anchor along the Maryland Avenue access and a 'city wall' defining an edge of Washington DC along 14th Street.

Understanding how people move through the urban fabric is instrumental in revitalizing Maryland Avenue as a pedestrian corridor. This understanding is applied to the scale of the aquarium.

The intent for Maryland Avenue is to reclaim the physical connection between the Capital Building and the Jefferson Memorial. Increasing pedestrian traffic allows the opportunity for commercial and cultural life along the axis – this was stifled by the intruding railroad tracks.

The Aquarium's circulation design reflected the pedestrian urban path.

Providing a clear primary path in the sequential experience of the aquarium communicates the relationships between the micro and macro-ecological exhibits. Equally important is the development of secondary circulation paths. These allow visitors to loop back, stop, reflect or reorient themselves in the aquarium and in the city. As in the macro-urban environment, alternate routes allow flexibility for movement through the aquarium.

For example, the Freshwater Exhibit Towers have a primary path with access to a grand stair, a secondary stair and elevators. The grand stair is open to views of the City, the Maryland Avenue entry court to the south and the D-Street entry to the north. The secondary stairs within the exhibit towers and are open to views of the exhibits. The elevators are located in the connecting elements between the towers. They are glazed to allow views of the city.

Washington DC was designed with orientation in mind. The use of diagonal avenues, iconic buildings, and statuary placement orients visitors within the city. This is helpful to first time visitors to assist them in getting from place to place.

Applied at the scale of the aquarium, views allow visitors to evaluate their location within the aquarium and within the larger context of the city. Positioning exhibits with respect to their geographic order orients visitors at the global level. This geocentric positioning will reinforce and enrich the aquarium experience.

People interact with their environment through tactile and visual experience. Their ability to move from place to place and recognize their position within their environment helps to define a design at many scales.

Design at the urban scale applies with equal importance to design at the scale of an individual building.

This thesis is about the application of design at the urban scale to the scale of a single project.

