



CITY OF TACOMA

University of Washington

Landscape Architecture

L ARCH 503: Community Design Studio

Instructor: Nancy Rottle

City of Tacoma Project Leads:

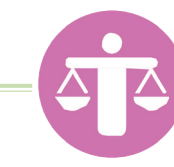
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RUSTON WAY ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN CHALLENGE



Introduction

Over Winter 2018, the LARCH 402/503 Ruston Way design studio in the University of Washington Department of Landscape Architecture partnered with the City of Tacoma and Metro Parks Tacoma to design usable green spaces within the four gulches found along Ruston Way: Garfield Gulch, Buckley Gulch, Puget Gulch, and Mason Gulch. The students aimed to propose designs that would make each gulch usable and ecologically functional for residents and wildlife. The student teams also placed a high priority on connecting the gulches to the waterfront and the larger Tacoma area.



Top: Strolling through the envisioned canopy walk for Mason Gulch.

Bottom: A visionary bridge landing for Buckley Gulch.

Site Analysis

The studio class began by conducting research and analysis on the greater Ruston Way area. The class then split into groups to examine existing conditions of the individual gulches.

Garfield Gulch has ongoing restoration projects, and has received government funding for future development. Formerly used trails on the slopes are no longer accessible.

Puget Gulch is the most developed gulch, and includes mature trails and active restoration efforts. Salmon are also found in the gulch. The Puget Creek Restoration Society, a volunteer-led group that once spearheaded restoration efforts, is no longer active.

Mason Gulch, the largest of the four gulches, is home to a wide diversity of tree species, which provide habitat for many bird species. It has a generous creek flow year-round, and is home to a sewage treatment plant at its base.

Buckley Gulch is home healthy habitat. About half of the gulch is owned by private residents, which currently serves a barrier to future actions. Connectivity is also an issue, as there are railroad tracks between the gulch and the waterfront.



Envisioned lookout point for Garfield Gulch.

Credit: Garfield Gulch Student Team

Design Recommendations

With the help of feedback from representative of the City of Tacoma and Metro Parks, each team proposed designs that seek to address the challenges and opportunities of each gulch.

The **Garfield Gulch** team aimed to create an educational and recreational space for all ages, especially children. They included tadpole and frog habitat for ecological, educational, and recreational purposes. The team also proposed a pavilion that would serve as an outdoor classroom.

The **Puget Gulch** team focused on ecological opportunities, including daylighting of the site's stream, which would enhance salmon habitat. They also proposed trails for the upper areas that are less developed.

The **Mason Gulch** team also proposed stream daylighting, as well as enhancements to the tree canopy. In order to provide connection to the waterfront, the team designed a boardwalk bridge that extends out and over Commencement Bay.

The **Buckley Gulch** team focused on connectivity. They expanded their scope to include the Old Town neighborhood, and proposed a bridge over Ruston way railroad to provide a safer passage between the gulch and waterfront.