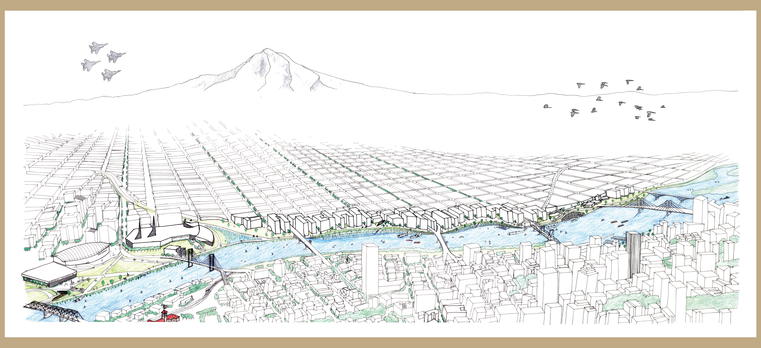
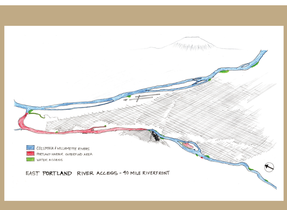
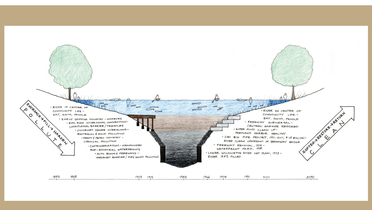
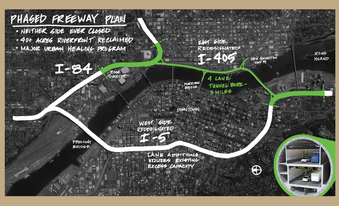
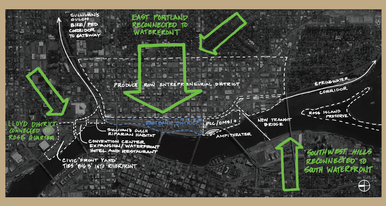
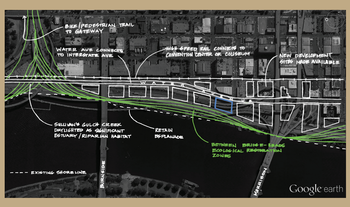


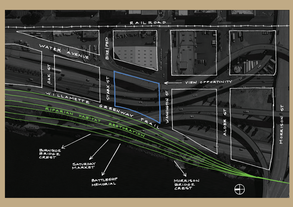












EASTBANK COMMUNITY CHURCH

A Community Asset for a Reimagined Portland Waterfront

Espirito Meller
Prof Gerry Gast

Reclaiming the Central Eastbank of the Willamette River

Boring the eastside freeway below ground is a one-time opportunity to restore a true river-based community to Portland's central city. It is an opportunity to restore the knowledge and habits of river life to the people of Portland through riparian habitat restoration and robust river access. It heals the urban fabric from the South Waterfront, through the Central Eastbank, to the Lloyd District and Rose Quarter. It enables the restoration of the Sullivan's Gulch estuary, and opens the opportunity for a truly wonderful civic space that connects the big three (Convention Center, Moda Center, and Memorial Coliseum) to the Willamette Riverfront.

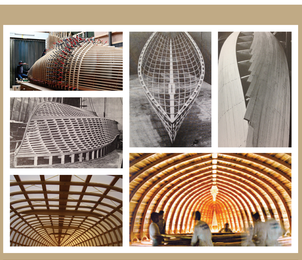
Making a Place of Worship

The heart of Christ is to serve others. The church is conceived as a place to gather, worship God, and serve the community. In space and form it is the intersection of the vertical and horizontal. The congregation sits between city and contemplative garden...bringing into the mind the cycle of serving the community and retreating to solitude. The eye and spirit are focused forward and upward by strong longitudinal structure converging beyond the altar, bringing the vertical axis into harmony with the horizontal.

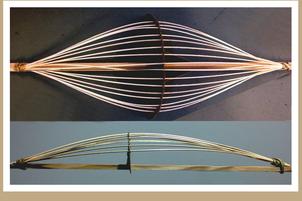
The form and structure are inspired by millennia-old traditions of hand built wood watercraft. The hull form gently floats over the congregation by clerestory light, giving the sense of a heavenly vessel in which to journey as a faith community. The design supports the identity and character of a reimagined Eastbank waterfront district that is "river in character" and restores a river lifestyle to the people of Portland. It is intended to inspire and support a burgeoning creative class, and perhaps catalyze a fine wood boat building industry in the adjacent Produce Row entrepreneurial district, while advancing the digital fabrication capabilities of the regional glulam industry.

Ultimately, it is a place in the city set apart for seeking the holy, walking in community, and serving others.

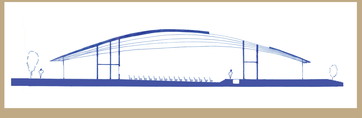


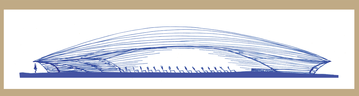


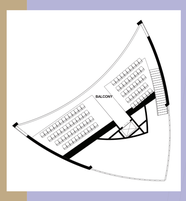




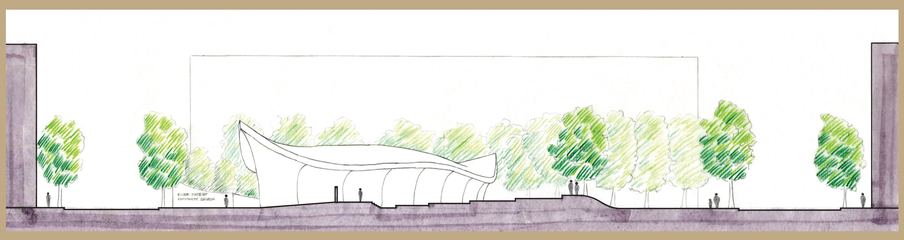


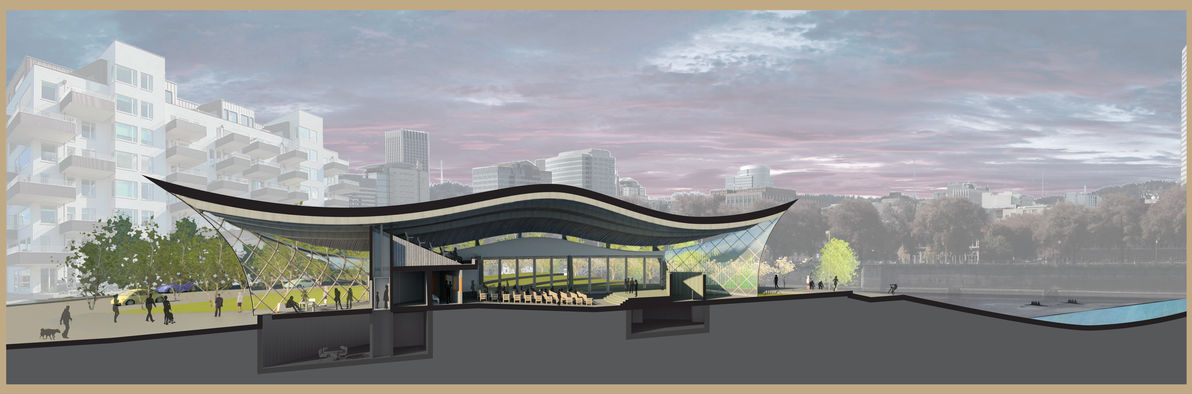












Structural System Concept

The wood rivercraft-inspired form is supported by a series of transverse glulam arches resting on concrete columns. The roof and ceiling form take shape through a system of longitudinal, double compound curve glulam beams. The sensuous curves generated over the sanctuary converge into an apex rising over and beyond the altar, leading the eye and spirit up and forward.

An unseen clerestory at the perimeter diffuses light along a curved line that gently floats the roof form over the sanctuary.

The north wall of the sanctuary is glazed to visually bring the garden inside. The south wall's translucent glazed door system connects worshippers horizontally to the city and expands the sanctuary into the outdoor amphitheater for fair weather events.

