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REVITALIZATION OF THE SEATTLE WATERFRONT

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City of Seattle is transforming its waterfront district, led by the demolition of the old Alaska Way highway viaduct. This has opened up incredible views of Puget Sound from the downtown, which is on a large hill. To establish inviting new public access from the reimagined waterfront into the downtown core and historic Pike Place Market, the Union Footbridge has been conceived as a new east-west connection. It allows users to more conveniently negotiate the drastic elevation differences at the site.

As a small urban bridge project, much effort and care has been placed into the design and detailing of the footbridge and companion elevator. The form of the bridge uses elegantly haunched cast-in-place concrete girders and sculpted columns to carry pedestrians out over the landscape below as an extension of the upper sidewalk. This, in effect, becomes a sky walk as users approach the waterfront promenade from an elevated perspective. A grand staircase and elevator provide vertical circulation from the bridge deck down to the waterfront. Artwork is incorporated into the design with a decorative screen wall along one edge of the bridge and a massive 21-m long stainless-steel fern frond sculpture that arches over the staircase. The frond is supported at the top end on the 18-m high elevator tower glazed in channel glass that will glow like a lantern at night. The overall effect of the interacting features is dramatic and will create a beacon along the waterfront promenade that helps with wayfinding.

Significant multi-disciplinary coordination enabled structural, architectural, mechanical, geotechnical, civil, and public art components of the project to be seamlessly integrated together. The new structure is a key element of the revitalization of the neighborhood. It will provide a vibrant, safe and universally accessible pedestrian corridor for residents, workers and visitors of Seattle.



Fig. 1. Union Footbridge renderings