The Village: A New School of the Built Environment

Project Location: College Park, MD, USA  
Project Category: Graduate / Upper Level

This studio looked at the future physical and architectural needs for a school of architecture and related disciplines. Early exercises included studies of campus master plans, site and program analyses, and stakeholder interviews, which gave a solid foundation for design.

My design concept for the School of the Built Environment is a village for collaborative and cross-disciplinary learning. The intention is to make the outdoor environment a part of the school. The outdoor room is an active, shared common space where students from different programs can interact.

The Village includes four buildings that wrap around a central courtyard. Multiple entry points to the courtyard are designed hierarchically based on their contextual relationship to campus. The primary point of entry is on the Mall, where a large, axial opening serves as a portal between the Mall and the courtyard.

A stepped pool serves as both a focal point for gathering and a place for stormwater collection to mitigate flooding. The ground plane contains the most publicly programmed spaces. The Northeast building includes a double-height gallery facing the Mall and an auditorium recessed into the hill. The Southeast building’s library and cafe prominently face the Mall and the courtyard, with an axial entry-space between them. The Southwest and Northwest buildings contain classrooms, makerspace, and a double-height common space with an open-air porch to reinforce interior-exterior connection.

While the outboard walls are heavier masonry with punched openings to fit in with the style of the surrounding context and create a strong edge for the Mall, the inboard walls are lighter and more porous. Timber columns and glazing visually connect the interior spaces to the exterior courtyard, reinforcing the notion that the outdoor room is an integrated and unifying element of the new School of the Built Environment.
A monumental entry serves as a portal between the Mall and the courtyard.
A thicker bar of trees to the north provides shading to southern-exposed surfaces.
The courtyard transitions from landscaped green space to hardscaped paths.
An indoor-outdoor common space includes an open-air porch, pulling the exterior environment into the building.
Permeable hardscaping includes room for circulation as well as outdoor seating for students around the library and cafe.
Exposed timber structure provides warmth to second floor studios and serves as a tool for architectural education.
The Village is a place for meeting and connection, where students will be forced to get out of their studios and engage with the environment as they cross the courtyard to attend a lecture or visit the gallery.
Process Sketches