



# Waterline

Art, Form, and Living at the Urban Edge

Rutgers University | School of Environmental and Biological Sciences

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2025SP - Praxis Studio I

2025SP - Praxis Studio II

2025SP - Studio-Special Topics

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Spring 2026

Tuesdays 2:00pm-6:00pm; Thursdays 2:00pm-5:00pm

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Studio Instructor:

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## Course Description

Across the United States, cities are facing a profound housing crisis.

New York, one of the most vibrant yet unequal cities in the world, struggles with low housing stock and unaffordability. Rent burdens and displacement ripple outward from Manhattan into every borough. Policy reforms alone cannot solve this. To create true affordability, we must build more housing, and just as importantly, design better worlds, places that uplift the human spirit, foster belonging, and make density desirable.

The Long Island City Waterfront Studio positions landscape architecture at the center of this challenge. The forty-three-acre site, stretching from the Queensboro Bridge to Culture Lab, lies along a tidal river and within one of New York's most ambitious rezoning efforts. Here, thousands of new homes, public spaces, and cultural venues are planned to emerge over the coming decades. The question is not whether this transformation will happen, but what kind of world it will create and what kind of life it will enable.

This studio asks students to imagine that world. It is not a course in policy or ecology, but an exploration of design as an art form: how intention, concept, and form shape lived experience. Students will design both the development and the landscape, proposing a framework where housing, infrastructure, and public space form a coherent and expressive whole. The goal is to create a place that is not only resilient and equitable, but also beautiful, joyful, and alive.

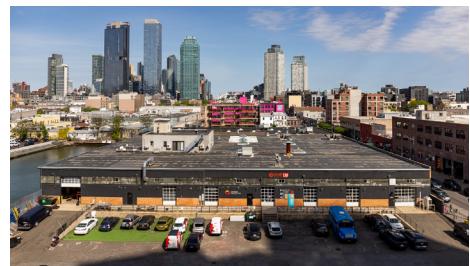
Landscape architecture, in this context, is both the ground and the medium of urban life. It organizes the relationships between buildings and open space, connects people to the water, and gives the city its character. It choreographs light, sound, material, and time. It becomes a stage for culture, daily rituals, and chance encounters. As designers, we are responsible for shaping these experiences, crafting the venues where people live, gather, and find meaning.

Long Island City is not an empty site. It is already home to vibrant communities, industries, and cultural spaces. The studio challenges students to connect with this existing fabric, to design new places that extend rather than erase, and to consider how growth can reinforce identity instead of displacing it. Through this work, students will confront the complexities of urban transformation and the creative potential of landscape as both structure and art.

Ultimately, the studio seeks to explore how design can give shape to life at the edge, how art and form can make the city more than a place to live, but a place to be alive.



The 43-acre Long Island City waterfront site stretches from the Queensboro Bridge to Culture Lab, bounded by Vernon Boulevard and the East River. Once an industrial district, it now stands at the threshold of major transformation, where housing, culture, and landscape will converge to define a new vision for urban living at the water's edge.



## Studio Intent

This studio operates between imagination and construction. Students will analyze urban systems and housing precedents, yet the primary goal is to design with conviction, to make form that communicates an idea. The work moves from conceptual diagrams to physical and digital models, from masterplan to detailed space, developing an understanding of how landscape, architecture, and public life intertwine. The emphasis lies not on technical solutionism but on authorship, clarity, and meaning. Through iteration, critique, and collaboration, students will learn to translate vision into built form, creating landscapes that are infrastructural, cultural, and fundamentally human.

## Course Objectives

- To position design as an artful, intentional act that gives form to both space and life.
- To explore housing as a social, spatial, and cultural framework that shapes how people live together.
- To treat landscape as a medium of expression—simultaneously ecological, civic, and poetic.
- To engage the waterfront as a threshold of exchange between city and water, new and existing communities.
- To integrate infrastructure, mobility, and architecture within a coherent landscape vision.
- To cultivate an authored design language grounded in concept, craft, and clarity of idea.
- To imagine cities not just as systems of need, but as places of joy, identity, and possibility.

Above: Images depicting existing development.  
Source: <https://citylimits.org/as-rezoning-plan-moves-ahead-a-photo-tour-of-long-island-city/>

## Course Expectations

Design is a process of exploration, experimentation, and reflection—a cycle of trying new ideas, taking risks, and learning from them to move your project forward. Never shy away from taking risks, but remain open-minded and objective when evaluating your decisions. Be prepared to adapt, iterate, or even abandon initial ideas as part of the design journey.

To get the most out of this studio, bring your ideas to life through sketches, inspiration images, rough models, or any visual representation that conveys your thought process. Design instructors and your peers can only provide meaningful feedback on the work you share, so the more material you bring to critiques, the more valuable the feedback will be. Struggling is a natural part of the design process, but don't let fear or frustration stop you from presenting your efforts—your work, no matter how preliminary, is a crucial foundation for growth.

Attendance is mandatory, as our discussions, presentations, and critiques are vital to your progress and the overall success of the studio.

## Course Methodologies

### Lectures

Lectures will introduce key concepts, methods, and ideas relevant to the studio. These sessions will be informal, encouraging you to ask questions, share thoughts, and engage in discussion. Occasionally, guest speakers may join to provide additional perspectives.

### Group Critiques and Peer Reviews

Group critiques are a valuable opportunity to learn how to evaluate and provide constructive feedback on each other's design work, fostering a shared learning experience.

### Individual Desk Critiques

One-on-one critiques are a cornerstone of the design studio, offering tailored feedback to help you refine and advance your ideas. Always come prepared with new creative work to discuss and develop further.

### Pin-Ups

These sessions allow the studio to assess collective progress and determine next steps. While discussions focus on work in progress, you'll gain the most valuable feedback by organizing your thoughts and curating your work beforehand.

### Formal Reviews

Midterm and final reviews will include external critics with expertise or a vested interest in the studio's subject matter. These sessions require high-quality presentation materials, as they are a key opportunity to showcase your design work.

## **Evaluation and Grading Criteria**

Your performance in this studio will be assessed based on the strength of your design concepts, your ability to address site constraints, the successful fulfillment of the stipulated site program and client design objectives, and the quality of your presentations and progress throughout the semester. Additionally, I will evaluate whether your proposed designs effectively integrate multiple performance metrics (environmental, socio-cultural, and economic) while demonstrating beauty and attention to detail, with thoughtful representation.

Attendance and active participation are essential and will directly impact your grade. You are required to be in studio for the full duration of the class. It is in your best interest to attend all sessions, contribute meaningfully to discussions, pin-ups, and critiques, and fully engage with the studio process. If you are unable to attend class due to illness or other circumstances, please provide advance notice by email whenever possible. More than two (2) unexcused absences will result in a zero grade for Attendance & Participation.

Grades are weighted as follows:

- Assignment 1: Site Analysis 15%
- Assignment 2: Site Planning and Programming 15%
- Assignment 3: Ideation - 50% Concept Design 20%
- Assignment 4: 100% Concept Design 35%
- Attendance & Participation 15%

### Grading System:

A = 89.5-100

B+ = 84.5-89.49

B = 79.5-84.49

C+ = 74.5-79.49

C = 69.5-74.49

D = 59.5-69.49

F = 0-59.49

## **SEBS DEI Statement**

It is our intention that students of all backgrounds will be well served by this course. We will work to create an environment of inclusion which respects and affirms the inherent dignity, value, and uniqueness of all individuals, communities and perspectives. We are lucky to have a diverse university. Diverse voices and life experiences enhance the learning process and we welcome students to share their personal experiences. We will not tolerate disrespectful language or behavior against any individual or group. If you feel as though you have been disrespected or treated unfairly by the instructors or any other individual please let us know. You may speak with the instructors in person, over email or report anonymously via the Office of Academic Programs. In addition, you may also report bias to the Rutgers Diversity and Inclusion initiative using this link: <http://inclusion.rutgers.edu/report-bias-incident/>.

## Course Schedule

### Week 1

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Tuesday 01/20      Studio Introduction  
Assignment 1: Site Analysis + Precedent Study

Thursday 01/22      Work / Desk Crits

### Week 2

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Tuesday 01/27      Remote Class - Work / Crits via Zoom

Thursday 01/29      Work / Desk Crits: Haemee Han

### Week 3

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Tuesday 02/03      Assignment 1: Site Analysis - Presentations and Discussions  
Assignment 2: Site Planning and Programming - Introduction

Thursday 02/05      Work / Desk Crits

### Week 4

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Tuesday 02/10      Work / Desk Crits

Wednesday 02/11      Common Lecture: Steven Lee, Principal, SWA/Balsley

Thursday 02/12      Assignment 2: Site Planning and Programming - Presentations and Discussions  
Assignment 3: Ideation - 50% Concept Design - Introduction

### Week 5

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Tuesday 02/17      Work / Desk Crits

Thursday 02/19      Work / Desk Crits

## **Week 6**

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Tuesday 02/24      Work / Desk Crits

Thursday 02/26      Work / Desk Crits

## **Week 7**

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Tuesday 03/03      Mid Review: Assignments 1-3

Thursday 03/05      Assignment 4: 100% Concept Design - Introduction

## **Week 8**

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Tuesday 03/10      Work / Desk Crits

Thursday 03/12      Work / Desk Crits

## **Week 9**

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Tuesday 03/17      Spring Recess - No Classes

Thursday 03/19      Spring Recess - No Classes

## **Week 10**

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Tuesday 03/24      Work / Desk Crits

Thursday 03/26      Work / Desk Crits

## **Week 11**

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Tuesday 03/31      Pinups

Thursday 04/02      Work / Desk Crits

## Week 12

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Tuesday 04/07      Work / Desk Crits

Thursday 04/09      Work / Desk Crits

## Week 13

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Tuesday 04/14      Work / Desk Crits

Thursday 04/16      Work / Desk Crits

## Week 14

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Tuesday 04/21      Pinups

Thursday 04/23      Work / Desk Crits

## Week 15

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Tuesday 04/28      Work / Desk Crits

Thursday 04/30      Pinups

## **Final Review: Date To Be Determined**

Note: The schedule and content are subject to adjustments as the semester progresses.