Train and the City: Eugene Depot

Implementing the Downtown Plan (2004)

"Train Depot Area - No current development activity is underway for the parking lots south of the Eugene depot. City staff maintain conversations with the property owners to encourage redevelopment in the future" (From 2/3/2016 City of Eugene Report)

In 1871, the arrival of the Oregon and California Railroad was deemed “the most significant transportation development for the economic and population growth of Lane County.” The existing Eugene Train Depot, built in 1908, was sited at the base of Skinner Butte at the end of Willamette Street, one of Eugene’s “great streets” that align Skinner and Spencer Buttes on a north-south axis. A street railway system ran along Willamette Street but it enjoyed only moderate success until service was discontinued in 1904 (the same year the first automobile arrived in Eugene). Multiple urban planning decisions implemented throughout the twentieth century resulted in isolating the northern end of Willamette Street and the Eugene train depot area from the rest of the Central Downtown District. In 2004, this area was identified as one of the twelve “Development Opportunity Areas” in the City of Eugene Downtown Plan. Recent local development proposals, as well as the possible re-development of the passenger rail infrastructure along the Pacific Coast, promises to transform and revitalize this area of Downtown Eugene.

Train and the City Studio will investigate the possibilities of transforming the Eugene Depot area, envisioning the hypothetical revival and modernization of the Cascade Shasta Route. Students will study urban design strategies at the intersection of transportation infrastructure and the form of the city. Visionary proposals for the future of the city of Eugene will generate new ideas about public space, building fabric, infrastructure and programming.

Students will observe, document, analyze and assess how this area works and how it informs the rest of the city. They will develop a series of proposed interventions across different scales to re-establish the Eugene Depot as a central node of economic and sociocultural activity. Students will work in groups and individually on a schematic master plan from which each student will select his or her particular area of interest to develop an urban strategy through a specific design project.