A Front Porch for OHSU
(and a Transformative Outlook on the 21st Century City)

place making + design for pedestrians + adaptive reuse + ecological infrastructure + storytelling

Participants in this studio will develop design proposals for a new ‘front porch’ for and vertical access (a tower or series of towers) to Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU). The site occupies a critical position at the base of Markham Hill (where OHSU is located) and adjacent to the proposed Gibbs Street light rail station. The studio will be organized around four themes:

• **Access:** The project is intended to link the community (base of hill) to OHSU (on the hill).
  
  How shall we think about design interventions in this ‘charged’ location given the state of our health care system and given that so many are or will be denied access?

• **Conveyance:** Scottish town planner Patrick Geddes converted an observatory in Edinburgh into an ‘Outlook Tower’ museum: the lower levels housed exhibits pertaining to early civilization and the first urban environments. The upper floors housed exhibits addressing more recent urban themes. A deck at the top culminated the experience, offering views of the contemporary city.
  
  Might we think of the proposed vertical access to OHSU in a manner similar to Geddes’ Overlook Tower, that it conveys information and tells a story about the past, present and future of the city?
  
  (There are other aspects of conveyance to consider: a seasonal creek flowing through our site conveying stormwater downhill and a pump station on our site supplying 100% of the water to OHSU).

• **Equity:** The now vacant Ahavath Achim Synagogue occupies a central position on the site (the congregation now utilizes a facility to the southwest). Ahavath Achim, Portland's Sephardic synagogue, was founded by members of the Rhodesli and Turkish communities in 1916. In 1961, the Urban Renewal Committee of Portland requested that the original synagogue located on SW 3rd & Sherman be razed to make way for a URC project (one that led to displacement of immigrant populations). The synagogue at our site, built in 1965, was designed by mid-century modernist architect John Storrs.
  
  How can a civic scale ‘front porch’ honor the rich histories and identities of all who live in the city?

• **Adaptability:** TriMet recently purchased the Synagogue and is interested in repurposing it.
  
  How might we introduce new uses for this structure that honor the the history of the congregation while recognizing the potential of the site to assume a greater civic presence given the construction of the light rail stop nearby and urban development that will inevitably follow?