



# Maintenance Planning

*'Pardon Our Appearance'*



*Rotch Traveling Scholarship  
Final Competition Brief 2024*

Cover page images from Boston Public Works 'X' social media page,  
@BostonPWD, <https://twitter.com/BostonPWD>

## **'Pardon Our Appearance'**

Maintenance work is all around us, yet it is almost always hidden from public view. It takes place during the peripheral hours of the day and at the margins of our spatial imaginaries, in stark contrast to established narratives of progress and innovation that lie at the very core of the architectural profession. This year's Rotch Traveling Scholarship invites participants to explore the underlying regimes of maintenance and care that shape the built environment, from domestic rituals of cleaning and repair to the stewardship of existing building stock and material resources to the collective upkeep of our public spaces and infrastructural systems. By re-positioning the architect as a caretaker of the people, places, and resources around them, the competition invites proposals that shift our understanding of maintenance from a remedial act to a critical framework for exploring alternative value systems, spatial practices, and material ethics.

## **Overview**

Beyond buildings and aesthetics, architecture influences the functionality, efficiency, and character of urban environments. Buildings are not isolated entities but integral parts of a larger urban fabric, interacting with transportation networks, utilities, and public spaces. Thoughtfully designed architecture and its connection to infrastructural systems can enhance the connectivity and livability of cities, fostering social interaction, economic activity, and sustainability. On the other hand, poorly integrated systems can lead to congestion, inefficiency, and a decline in the physical condition of our urban landscape. Therefore, a symbiotic relationship must exist between architecture and infrastructure, each informing and responding to the other in the pursuit of a more vibrant and resilient urban environment.

*"If architects assert that signs and information are more important than infrastructure, why would bureaucrats or politicians disagree? As much as they have been excluded from the development of the city, architects themselves have retreated from the question of function, implementation, technique, finance, and material practice. And while architects are relatively powerless to provoke the changes necessary to generate renewed investment in infrastructure, they can begin to redirect their own imaginative and technical efforts toward the question of infrastructure... for a practice engaged in time and process—a practice not devoted to the production of autonomous objects, but rather to the production of directed fields in which program, event, and activity can play themselves out."<sup>1</sup>*

The year's Rotch competition final brief aims to redefine architects' relationship with urban infrastructure, as well as the facilities and resources required for its maintenance, recognizing its significance and encouraging a more active engagement with the people and city it serves.

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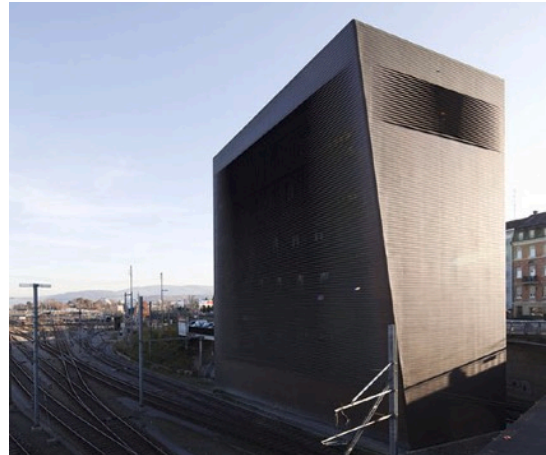
<sup>1</sup> Allen, Stan. *Points + Lines: Diagrams and Projects for the City*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999.

## Architecture, Maintenance, and Infrastructure

Maintaining our cities is an essential but often overlooked component of urban living. In addition to the buildings that make up a city's urban fabric, infrastructural systems such as roads, bridges, tunnels, public transit, etc., must all be maintained in coordination. In the United States, this responsibility falls predominantly on governmental Public Works departments, whose ongoing efforts ensure the smooth operation of our cities.

Public Works departments serve as the unseen backbone, continuously working to maintain the functionality and safety of our public spaces and essential systems. Despite their importance, they often fail to receive the attention and support they require themselves. Yet, their significance cannot be overstated. Within their facilities and all around the city, a dedicated workforce undertakes the challenging task of managing, repairing, maintaining, and upgrading the complex web of infrastructure that supports modern urban life.

While their work may go unnoticed by many, the impact of their contribution is felt throughout every city block. It is through their dedication and expertise that cities function seamlessly, providing inhabitants with the essential services and amenities they depend on daily. The Biden administration's Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, at roughly \$1 trillion, allocates a significant amount of federal funding to repair and rebuild roads and bridges, focusing on climate, resilience, equity, and safety for all users, including cyclists and pedestrians. Thus, it is essential that we recognize the maintenance needed in a city and those who undertake this task, acknowledging the critical role they play in sustaining the urban environments we inhabit.



*Images top to bottom:*  
Metropolitan Area Outer Underground Discharge Channel  
Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Greenway, City of Boston  
Central Signal Box, Herzog & de Meuron  
District Energy Facility, Leers Weinsapfel Associates

## Project

The Boston Public Works (BPW) department is responsible for maintenance throughout the city. BPW's website states that:

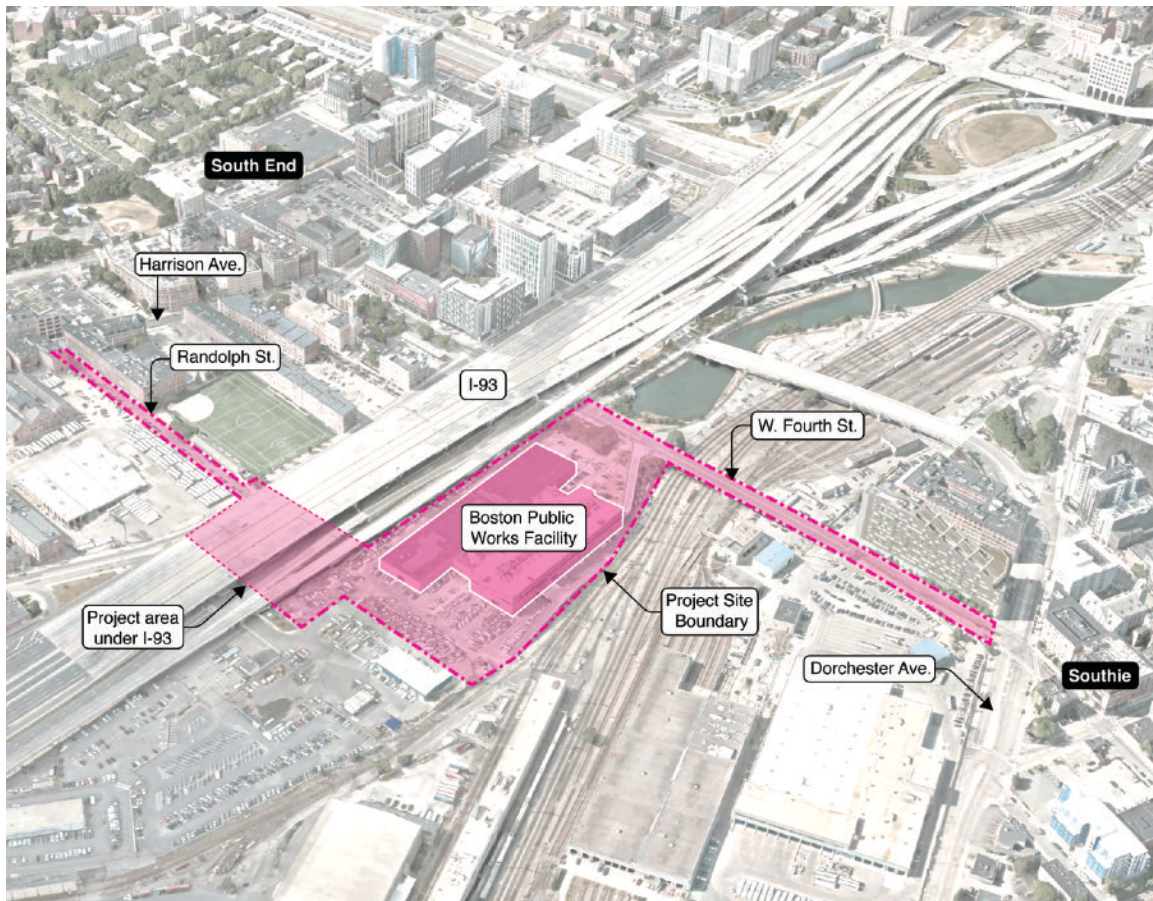
*"Our department provides core basic services essential to neighborhood quality of life. We direct the general construction, maintenance, and cleaning of approximately 802 miles of roadways throughout the City. We operate two major drawbridges, maintain 68,055 City-owned street lights, and supervise contracts for the removal and disposal of approximately 260,000 tons of solid waste. We also operate Boston's recycling program with an annual diversion of approximately 44,000 tons."<sup>2</sup>*

This year's Rotch Traveling Scholarship's Final competition brief seeks proposals that improve the overall appearance and site of the BPW facility, making the building and its site more accessible and engaging with its community and its adjacent urban fabric.

## Site

The site for this project centers around the Boston Public Works building at: **400 Frontage Rd # A, Boston, MA 02118.**

Additionally, the project includes portions of the building's site, extending **under I-93 onto Randolph St.** (into the South End), and **along W. Fourth St.** (into Southie). The site boundary/scope is outlined in the diagram below.



<sup>2</sup> "Public Works," City of Boston, accessed March 25, 2024, <https://www.boston.gov/departments/public-works>.



*Selected site/context images from Google Street View*

Digital site documentation is provided in .dwg and .3dm formats. If you have not received this information, please contact: [bpeterson@architects.org](mailto:bpeterson@architects.org)

## Program

The following program requirements must be met to ensure the uninterrupted operations of the BPW while allowing public access and usage of the site.

- Improve the overall exterior appearance of the BPW facility.
- Operational functions, service vehicle circulation, building access, and the facility's interiors all must remain unchanged.
- Integrate the BPW building and its site, extending into the surrounding context, including:
  - area under I-93 onto Randolph St. and along W. Fourth St., creating a clear connection through the site, linking Boston's South End and Southie.
  - pedestrian/bike-friendly circulation corridor.
  - ecologically sensitive and urbanistically creative connections and interventions.
- Inclusion of open outdoor spaces for the usage of daily gatherings of individuals and groups of people, with a variety of flexible seating, tables, shading, etc.
- Landscape/greenspace design strategy.
- The overall proposal must be universally accessible.
- Existing street traffic patterns must be maintained. However, interventions should include the proposal of areas in which the streets can be expanded to accommodate pedestrian/bike travel, as well as creative landscaping, green spaces, hardscapes, etc.
- Outdoor seating/performance space for up to 200 people with flexible seating and shading structure.
- Playground (1000 sf).
- Public restrooms and equipment storage (800 sf).
- Flexible/pop-up market space (1500 sf).
- Space/access for up to 4 food trucks.



Images top to bottom:  
Chicago Riverwalk, Ross Barney Architects  
Olympic Sculpture Park, Weiss/Manfredi  
Amager Bakke waste-to-energy plant, BIG  
Infra-Space 1: Underground at Ink Block, Landing Studio  
Outdoor Market in Zlín CZ, Ellement Architects

## REQUIREMENTS

### Documentation

The submission is limited to no more than ten 16:9 format slides in PDF. Your drawings or other media should be clearly labeled, and a descriptive text provided. The following represents the minimum documentation required:

- Narrative: conceptual framework and a basic description of the proposed design not to exceed 200 words
- Site Plan, showing adjacent context
- Site axonometric with open space strategy, indicating categories and usage of the various zones and spaces
- Two site sections or section perspectives.
- Overall and/or enlarged plans, clearly illustrating original structures/spaces and proposed interventions
- Renderings of proposal
- Diagrams

The Rotch Committee reserves the right to use submission materials for publication. Submissions to the competition become the property of the Rotch Travelling Scholarship and can only be used with its express written consent.

### Submission

ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION: All proposals will be submitted and reviewed electronically, as a single, multi-page PDF document. Files may be emailed if smaller than 15 MB; otherwise transferred using a file-sharing service. Be sure to include your full name on each slide and to optimize your file for digital viewing.

**SEND TO:** [bpeterson@architects.org](mailto:bpeterson@architects.org)

**DUE BY:** 12:00 PM (EST) on April 15, 2024

### Presentation

Submissions will be judged on April 19, 2024, via Zoom meeting. Finalists should arrive in the virtual waiting room at least 5 minutes prior to their presentation.

You will have 8 minutes to present your work, followed by 12 minutes for questions from the jury and general discussion.

### Statement of Sole Authorship

Sign and digitally submit the statement of sole authorship on the last page of this brief, along with your digitally submitted materials.

### Evaluation criteria

Submissions will be evaluated by the jury according to the following criteria:

- **Conceptual:** Engagement with the issues outlined in the brief; resolution and legibility of the scheme
- **Visual:** Representational capacities to describe the above strategies
- **Verbal:** Verbal acumen of a presentation to the jury

**STATEMENT OF SOLE AUTHORSHIP**

I hereby assure the Rotch Committee that I am the sole author of my submission for the 2024 Rotch Competition. I have not received criticism, suggestions, or help of any sort other than through the use of books and other published literature.

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Signed

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Print Name

Date