

Exploring Design With Kids at Seattle's New Architecture Center - ParentMap

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Exploring **Design** With Kids at Seattle's New Architecture Center

With free hands-on workshops for families, this new center lets kids **design** the future

By Gemma Alexander



Courtesy Seattle Architecture Foundation

Last year, my daughter had a soccer game in a different area of Seattle. Not quite sure where it was, we left an hour early. We didn't get lost, but traffic was bad and we got to the field 15 minutes late; we were the first to arrive.

The influence of **design** on daily life used to be invisible, but for local kids growing up in a region dotted with construction cranes, good **design** — or the lack of it — is felt acutely, even when families don't have the words to describe it.

Enter the **Center for Architecture and Design**, a new public space and shared home for four local organizations dedicated to guiding the region's rampant growth in a more sustainable, equitable and livable direction. [AIA Seattle](#), [Seattle Architecture Foundation](#), [Design in Public](#), and [AIA Washington Council](#) are involved in many behind-the-scenes efforts, but with their new Center, they are also opening their doors to the public and encouraging all of the region's residents to consider **design** solutions for the challenges our communities face.

Grand opening on Saturday, March 5

The best way to check out the Center's family-friendly offerings is to attend the **free grand opening celebration** on Saturday, March 5 between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Throughout the day there will be activities for kids, including button-making, geocaching, giveaways and snacks. Scheduled activities include:

- **Family Workshop: Bikeable Seattle at 10 a.m.**
- **Ribbon-cutting at 12 p.m.**
- **Architect talks at 1 p.m. and 3 p.m.** with Suyama Peterson Deguchi
- **Talks about FitNation projects at 2 p.m.**

An exhibit titled *FitNation* also opens on March 5. The first in a series of exhibits, *FitNation* incorporates kid-friendly, interactive elements such as a treadmill and ping-pong table, in addition to in-depth information panels for adults. The exhibit is appropriate for ages 6 and up.



Designing the future at a monthly workshop at Seattle's Center for Architecture and **Design**

Free monthly workshops for families

In terms of ongoing programs for families, of greatest interest is a **series of free monthly workshops that introduce parents and kids to sustainable design concepts** through hands-on exploration. My daughters and I attended the Center's February workshop, "Urban Farming," in the half-finished new space. The morning began with introductions and a brief slideshow presenting the benefits of urban food production and the design considerations that make an urban food garden successful. Although a slideshow seems a little too much like school for a Saturday morning, this one was aimed squarely at the kids rather than the adults with lots of vivid images and very simple information. (Think, "Plants need water and sunlight," rather than crop rotation schedules.)

The bulk of the workshop involved parents and their children working together to design an urban farm and build a model of their design out of provided craft materials. At the end of the session, the children presented their models to the larger group, answered questions and received feedback on their design.

The feedback was entirely positive, and to my surprise, the atmosphere was one of excitement, rather than studiousness. I knew that my artistic 7-year-old would enjoy building models, but when her "Do I have to go?" 11-year-old sister abandoned eye-rolling in favor of racing for the glue gun I knew the Center had a winning formula for engagement.

Workshops are designed for kids aged 6 to 11 (and their adults) and are held on second Saturdays from 10 a.m.–noon. They are free, but advance registration is strongly encouraged as space is limited.

Upcoming workshops include **Housing Boom** (creative housing solutions) on March 12; **Recycled City** (building an entire city out of recycled materials) on April 9; **Creative Streets** (creating appealing streetscapes) on May 14; and **City of Bridges** (design a bridge) on June 11.

Design workshops for teens

A second workshop series introduces young teens (ages 11–16) to the connection between design and social issues. These workshops, held on the first Saturday of the month, run from 11 a.m.–3 p.m. and cost \$25, including lunch. Scholarships are available. Students work in volunteer-supported teams to plan, build and present a physical or digital model that represents their design.

Upcoming youth workshops include **Urban Gardens** (March 5); **Dense + Livable** (April 2); **Libraries** (May 7); and **Design for All**, a workshop about accessibility on June 4. Some workshops are held offsite, so be sure to check the location during registration. Register in advance online.

If you go ...

Where: The new Center for Architecture and Urban Design is located at 1010 Western Avenue, near the downtown Seattle ferry terminal. (Combine it with a trip to Seattle Aquarium or the Great Wheel!) 206-667-9184.

Grand opening: Saturday, March 5, 10 a.m.–3 p.m.

Monthly workshops: Workshops for kids are free, but advance registration is required.

Hours: Stop by to see FitNation (on until April 9) from Tuesday–Friday 10 a.m.–6 p.m. and Saturday 1 p.m.–5 p.m. The next exhibit, *Living Small*, will examine tiny houses and small space living.

Parking: Nearby parking is available at a surface lot on the corner of Western and Spring, in a garage on Madison between Western Avenue and Alaskan Way; and in a garage on the northeast corner of Western and Spring. At \$3 per hour, this last option is cheaper than street parking. Western Ave. is currently under construction and closed to vehicles.

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