Project Description:

In 2007, the historical Yale Adee Boathouse was demolished to construct the Pearl Harbor Memorial Bridge. The city of New Haven received funding from the Connecticut Department of Transportation to build a new boathouse that would salvage architectural features from the boathouse in a contemporary building and landscape setting. The new boathouse provides the city’s first public waterfront amenity that is accessible by foot, bike, vehicle, and wheelchair.

The platform was sited so that the western edge was set in the historic location of the original 19th century Canal Dock. The platform design honors the historic dock, jutting out beyond the main platform to the terminus of the original dock and further highlighted through linear paving patterns, historic timeline, flags, lighting and seating. The ‘dock’ has a new life serving as the start/terminus of the popular Farmington Canal Heritage Trail, a multiuse pedestrian and bikeway, which begins at the boathouse and winds north through Connecticut and New England.

The boathouse features the salvaged portal of the Adee boathouse and interpretive displays and is home to a community rowing facility that provides boat storage, transient slips, and ADA-accessible ramps for kayaks and canoes. The building also houses the University of New Haven’s marine educational facility along with events facilities fronted by a rooftop terrace with breathtaking views of the harbor.

The mission statement of the Boathouse at Canal Dock is:

“Opening New Haven’s Waterfront for Adventure, Discovery and Growth.”
Canal Dock provides a home for the historic Yale Adee Boathouse in a new contemporary setting while providing the City of New Haven its first public access to the waterfront in a premier, state of the art facility.
Located in the heart of the New Haven Harbor, the project includes a new concrete pier and boathouse, a pedestrian esplanade, floating transient and rowing docks, and houses both a conference center and a marine educational facility.
The new boathouse is sited adjacent to the street to create an urban experience while maintaining a pedestrian scale to the environment. Site architecture including custom light poles, trees, and entrance canopy work together to address the pedestrian scale.
The Boathouse marks the start of the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail, a popular multi-modal pedestrian and bikeway. The pier that extends out to the water - marked with a flagpole - is in the original location of the historic Canal Dock.
The design of the esplanade includes site furnishings that house “Bike New Haven” bicycles, part of New Haven’s bike share program. The multi-modal transportation options provide increased user accessibility and diversity.
The Boathouse at Canal Dock identification signage sits atop the original brownstone foundations from the Yale Adee Boathouse. Architectural relics from the original boathouse were catalogued to be re-used in the new construction.
On the topic of historic preservation, foundation stones were also incorporated into new custom benches. These benches utilized re-claimed wood from the original boathouse and were planed to match other pre-fabricated benches on site.
A key component of the design is a custom ipe and stainless steel railing that wraps the edge of the esplanade. The thin profile of the cable rail provides unobstructed views of the water and reinforces the architectural linework.
Landscape architects led the design of a custom railing, utilizing both 3-D computer graphics and physical model to find the appropriate characteristics and proportions in order to maximize views of the harbor while providing a modern aesthetic.
An interpretive timeline explains to visitors the history of the site and serves as an educational piece describing both animal and plant waterfront ecosystems. Benches and light poles enhance the linear character of the dock.
Site lighting design is intended to provide indirect, soft lighting along the esplanade. All light sources are reflected downward in order to best view the night sky. The evening experience along the waterfront provides striking views of the harbor.
The landscape architecture team worked closely with the building architect to design a rooftop terrace for conference center on the second level. Rowers access the boating facility through overhead bays on the lower right side of this photo.
The wood and stainless steel finishes of the site architecture complement the building decor and are extremely resilient to the marine environment. Even with this strength in materials, the site maintains a light, welcoming feel.