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Revitalizing Marina Bar: Architecture, Public Realm, and Future Flexibility

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PROJECT PRESENTATION

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Abstract

This project presents the redesign of the passenger terminal and marina landscape at the Port of Bar, Montenegro. The port currently faces challenges as a maritime gateway and as a public space for the local population. Issues such as inefficient spatial and functional planning, fragmented landscape design, and environmental issues have weakened the marina's identity. With the development of the city as a tourist hub and as regional ports continue to expand their offerings, Bar has fallen behind in the advancement of its offerings to tourists arriving by sea, one of the city's main sources of income.

The proposed intervention introduces a new passenger terminal, which will accommodate cruise, ferry, and yacht passengers; a redesigned marina landscape that encourages and increases public use; and the introduction of a dual function for the terminal, which will ensure ongoing activity during the off-season. Multiple site analyses, user patterns, and reviews, combined with the urban context, guided the design choices, which resulted in a solution that enhances functionality, efficiency, and visitor experience.

The project demonstrates how an architectural vision, combined with targeted spatial and operational interventions and research, can positively reshape the perception and performance of the Port of Bar. Since it already holds a special place in the city's identity, the proposed solution creates an even stronger connection between the sea and city, initiating a broader urban impact on the city's urban fabric while positioning the marina in a new light as a more active and integrated part of Bar's contemporary life.

Keywords: port, marina, passenger, terminal, landscape, promenade, cruise, ferry, yacht, waterfront.

Introduction

Located on the coast of the Adriatic Sea, the Port of Bar is one of the oldest ports in Montenegro and its main economic driver. For centuries, it has served as a connection between land and sea and has been a strategic point for both trade and travel (Port of Bar, n.d.). However, as the port has shifted between different time periods and uses, inconsistent development in combination with the aging infrastructure, the port can no longer meet today's maritime and urban needs. While neighboring Balkan countries are developing and moving forward in their goal of modernization, the port of Bar risks falling behind as efforts for its revitalization are minimal and lacking.

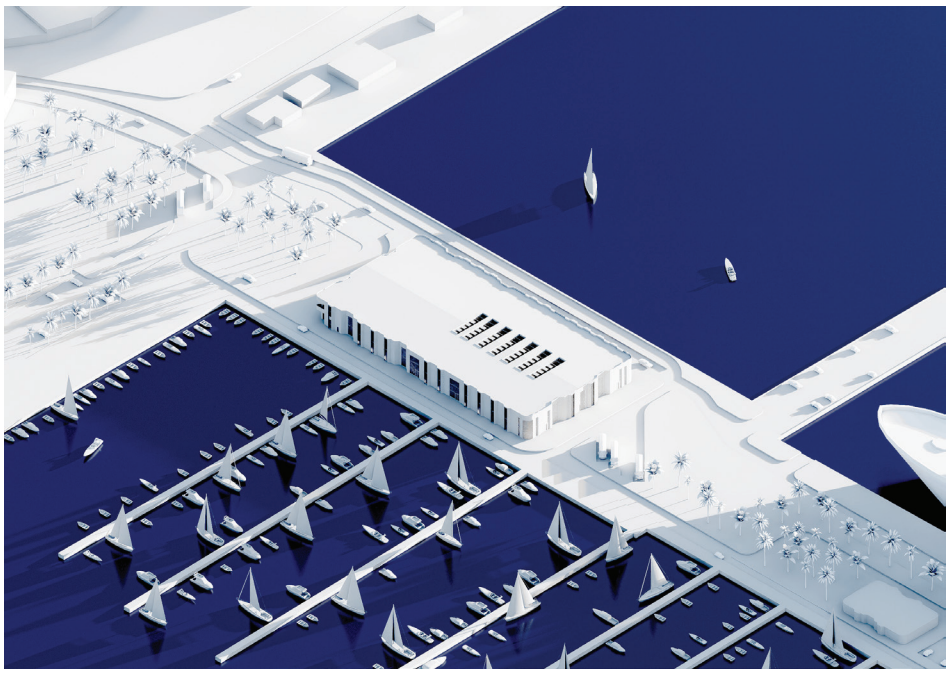
This project explores the transformation of the aging and outdated passenger terminal and its surrounding marina landscape. This project aims to propose a new terminal building and provide a new solution that will reconnect the port with the city by revitalizing the public realm, establishing modern standards, and meeting the rising maritime demands needed for growing cruise, ferry, and yacht operations (Auckland Transport, 2019; Cheng et al., 2020; Saudi Red Sea Authority, 2024).

The construction of a new passenger terminal would not only have a positive impact on the area, but viewed from a wider scope, it would have a positive effect on the economy of Bar, as it would increase the number of passengers it can accommodate and elevate Bar's position compared to other destinations in the region. In addition to this, the tourism industry in Montenegro has experienced tremendous growth in the past few decades, and this, in a way, adds to the need for an intervention of these parameters. The landscape that this project would create would greatly enhance the beauty of the waterfront, change the infrastructure, and enhance the connectivity with the city (Fig. 1). As part of the primary objectives of this project, is the need to increase social interactions within the city, create a cultural impact, and, as a final objective, create a new meeting point for the locals at the marina.

When thinking of the project in the broader context of architecture in the Balkans, this intervention would be a new addition to the region, showing how a positive impact on tourism can be created when reimagining a structure that is primarily not considered of much importance to tourism. As this intervention is of a mixed character, blending aspects of transportation, culture, and scenery, it would have a positive impact on economic, social, and urban significance.

Figure 1

Site Axonometric view (Shllaku, 2026)



Project Description

The project is centered around two major aspects: the design of a new building for the passenger terminal, which will accommodate ferry and cruise passengers, and the design of a new, smaller terminal for the yacht passengers. Along with these two new buildings, the project also envisions the complete redesign of the marina landscape. In addition to these aspects, the project also entails the improvement of the port-city connection, the integration of the marina administration offices in the main terminal building, and the development of new spaces that will be used all year round.

Along with the design of the new buildings for the passenger terminal, the project also entails the development of two new promenades with seating and greenery spaces along the main waterfront area and the improvement of the existing main parking area with the development of a new parking area for the ferry passengers (Fig 2). The project's most important feature is the utilization of the main terminal

building for exhibition purposes when there are no cruise and ferry operations, mostly during the off-season. This will give the marina a new dimension beyond its transportation purpose and transform it into a cultural and social experience.

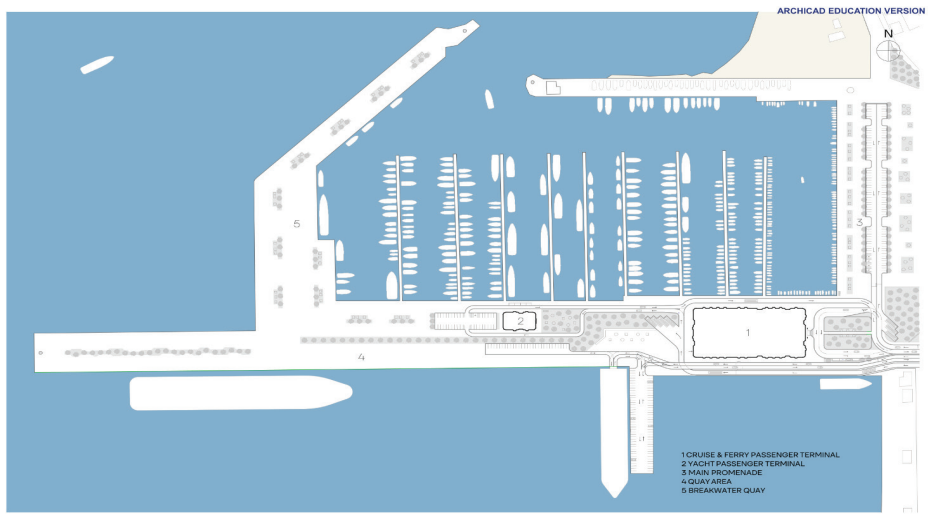
The Bar Port is a small port with ferry activities several times a week, cruise activities during the summer, and yacht passengers. Despite its excellent location, its outdated facilities, the lack of basic passenger facilities, and its industrial activities are some of the challenges it faces. These challenges, combined with other issues of operational character such as poor management of the flow of cruise and ferry passengers, further highlight the importance of intervening in the current situation. The industrial activities in the marina currently affect the marina's image, turning it into an industrial zone, and also creating a dangerous environment both physically and environmentally. Despite its condition, the port is being used by local people, which is due to the fact that the promenade is active, especially during the summer. The proposed project deals with the current problems in an effective manner, and at the same time, it reinforces the existing strong points of the port, such as existing pedestrian movement patterns. Logistical measures that ensure a smooth operation, such as separation of passenger flows, security procedures, clear signage, and circulation routes, were fundamental in the planning process (Auckland Transport, 2019).

The essential concept of the new design encompasses different factors such as openness, flexibility, movement, modernity, maritime, and historical identity. The design of the new passenger terminal and the surrounding landscape of the port require an examination of the past,

present, and future of the site. The new look of the port is expected to evoke feelings of freedom, relaxation, calmness, and excitement in the passengers and visitors (PORTUS, n.d.).

Figure 2

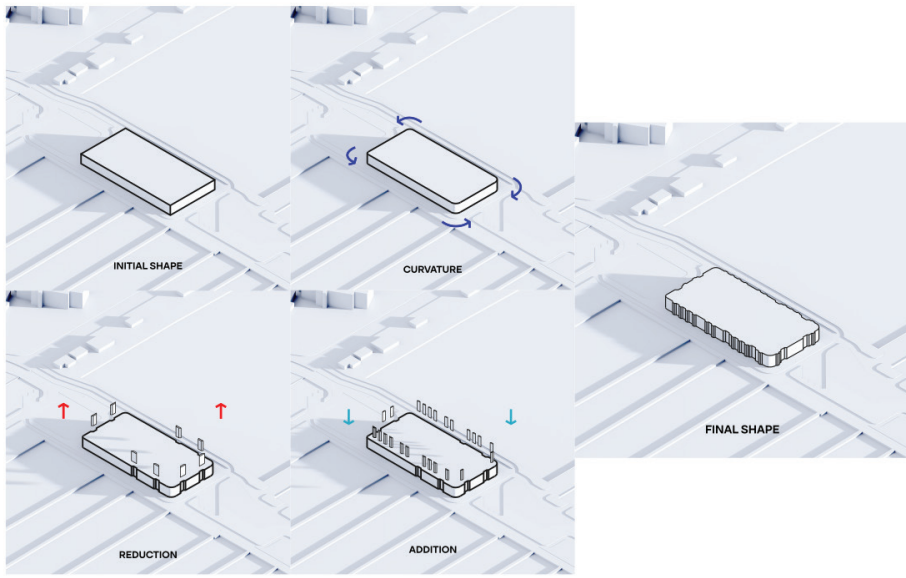
Site Plan (Shllaku, 2026)



The design of the new passenger terminal and the surrounding area establishes the identity of the Port of Bar while maintaining its connection to the city's history and meeting the requirements of modern ports. The design proposal improves the existing spatial layout rather than replacing it with a new one, incorporating openness, sea views, simplicity, and minimal environmental intervention to declutter the area. The design complements the views of the port and the surrounding area, rather than competing with them, in order to maintain the original form of the marina. The geometric language of the terminal buildings is defined by simple forms in the layout of the building and its façade, as shown in Figure 2. The shape of the building is defined by taking a simple shape like that of a cube and filleting it in its corners. Various strategic modifications were also carried out along its edges. The material used in the façade, which is concrete in a brutalist style, maintains its relationship with other buildings in the city that are in a similar style. This material is also used in other parts of the landscape.

Figure 3

Shape Diagram (Shllaku, 2026)



The design of the landscape includes sustainable design strategies such as better shading, placement of native greenery, and updated pedestrian paths, which are all aimed at reducing the heat and improving the comfort (Cheng et al., 2020). The new vision for the marina, as a whole, includes a sense of openness, both physically and experientially. During operational hours, selected areas of the marina will be closed to locals, but as operations finish, all of the port's spaces will be accessible to the public.

The main passenger terminal is organized into different zones: lobby, waiting area, departure and arrival areas, administrative area, cafeteria, and passenger facilities, including restrooms. Influenced by transportation rules, circulation, security procedures, and intuitive passenger flows guide the layout (Fig. 4-8). The administration area is located on a mezzanine floor, with separate stairs and elevators, which are only used by the staff, isolated from passengers and visitors, as shown in (Fig 5-8). The central area of the ground floor is used as a check-in zone, while the right side of the building is meant for departing passengers and the left side for arriving passengers. A central waiting area used by everyone acts as a meeting space for all passengers. Commercial spaces such as a café, ATMs, and service booths are also included on the ground floor.

The yacht passenger terminal also abides by the same circulation and security regulations, though on a smaller scale, as the flux of people is not the same. The main difference between the terminals is that the latter offers passengers sanitary amenities such as showers, storage, locker rooms, laundry services, and restrooms while maintaining the same operational procedures as the main terminal.

Figure 4

Ground Floor – Main Passenger Terminal (Shllaku, 2026)

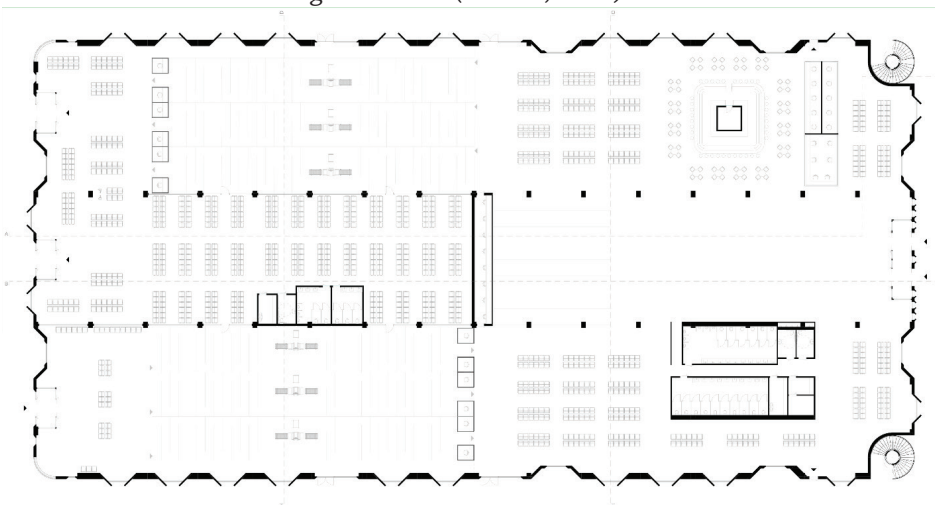


Figure 5

Mezzanine Floor – Main Passenger Terminal (Shllaku, 2026)

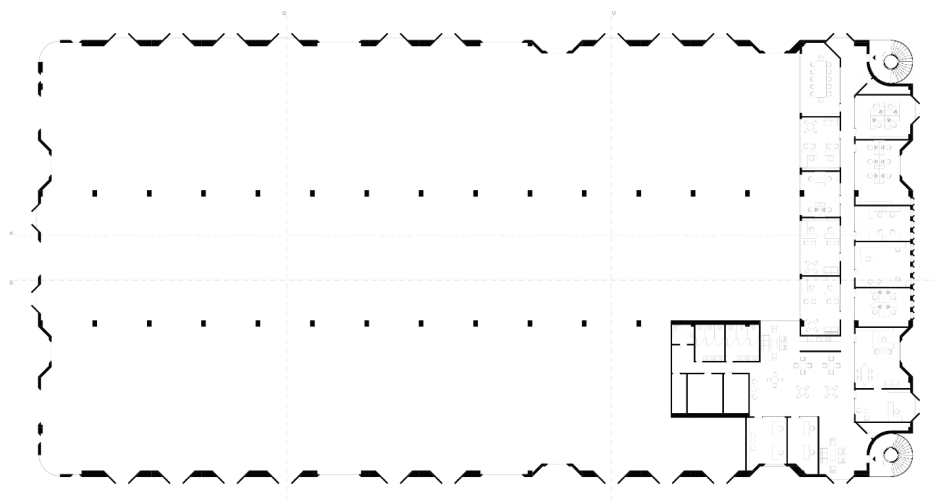


Figure 6

Section A-A (Shllaku, 2026)



Figure 7

Perspective Section C-C (Shllaku, 2026)

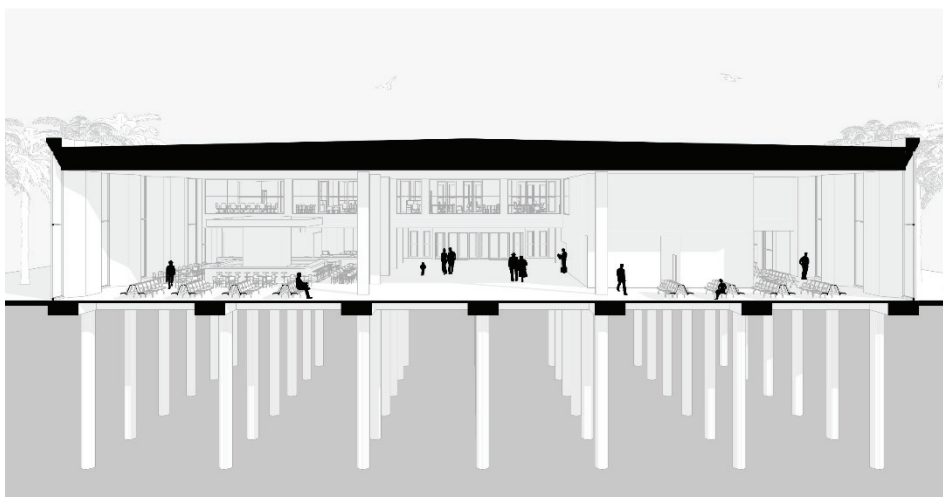


Figure 8

Perspective Section B-B (Shllaku, 2026)

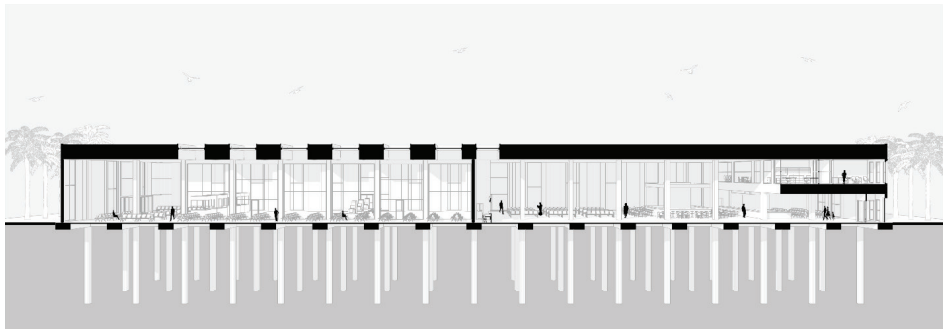


Figure 9

North Elevation (Shllaku, 2026)



Figure 10

South Elevation (Shllaku, 2026)



Figure 11

West Elevation (Shllaku, 2026)



Figure 12

Exterior Render – Main Entrance (Shllaku, 2026)



Figure 13

Exterior Render (Shllaku, 2026)



Figure 14

Exterior Render – Marina Side (Shllaku, 2026)



Figure 15

Exterior Render – Arriving Passenger Entrance (Shllaku, 2026)



Figure 16

Exterior Render – Promenade (Shllaku, 2026)



Figure 17

Exterior Render – Promenade (Shllaku, 2026)



Figure 18

Exterior Render – Promenade (Shllaku, 2026)



Figure 19

Exterior Render (Shllaku, 2026)



Methodology

The methodology for this project was carried out through a structured approach that combined carrying out analytical research, spatial evaluation, and literature review. The first phase entailed understanding maritime operations for cruises, ferries, and yachts, and further filtering information in terms of the ports' size, type, and operational capacity (Cheng et al., 2020). Another important aspect that was part of the research was understanding international regulations that dictate how ports and passenger facilities are designed (Saudi Red Sea Authority, 2024; New Zealand Ministry of Transport, n.d.). Carrying out case studies on other ports that are different in terms of size, capacity, and functionality, yet similar in terms of goals and objectives, such as the port of Shekou in Shenzhen and the port of Salerno, was also part of the research.

Continuous study of passenger flow standards, ISPS security rules, and maritime operational requirements were the driving factors regarding the general layout and planning of the terminal buildings (International Maritime Organization [IMO], 2016; Cheng et al., 2020)

A thorough site analysis was conducted by multiple on-site visits that gave a clear insight into the location's spatial constraints, passenger circulation, existing infrastructure, lighting, overall atmosphere, and connection between the city and sea. Identifying existing issues, such as industrial settings within the port, circulation issues, and a lack of amenities, was made easier to understand with the help of user reviews, drone footage, and other imagery. Observing how locals currently use the port and promenade offered an insight as to where the port stands in the city's current urban fabric and helped in identifying functional problems and defining potential opportunities.

Regarding the concept development, results of the research influenced multiple variants of the architectural, operational, and logistical aspects of the terminal and landscape design, which were then assessed. There were several tests conducted in the form of circulation diagrams, massing schemes, views, scenery, and openness evaluations. The lengthy process of research in various areas and directions ensured that the final product complies with the requirements of modern maritime, while at the same time considering the effects on the city as a whole.

Results and Outcomes

In the Balkans, ports usually function as ports of call, rather than ports of turnaround in cruise itineraries, which is a major factor in their further development. This plays a role in the infrastructure that is placed there, the capacity and size, where primarily they serve transit cruise, ferry, and yacht traffic. Besides the main country ports, neighbouring coastal cities in Montenegro and other countries have developed small, luxurious marinas, but these typically lack the scale, accessibility, or public amenities that the Port of Bar can offer.

Bar has a unique position, which combines strategic location, major economic significance, existing waterfront activity, and established tourism. Unlike smaller regional ports, Bar has the capacity to mix its operational efficiency with a new cultural role, which creates a multifunctional destination for passengers and locals. Another advantage of the port is that it is positioned and treated as an integral part of the city, not divided by everyday functions and urban life. All of these predispositions position it for the development of this kind.

This project could potentially increase Bar's position as a port of turnaround, which facilitates the start and end of cruise journeys along the Adriatic coast. This would firstly begin to develop with small cruises for Balkan itineraries and further with-

in the Adriatic. By developing the passenger experience, public accessibility, and year-round usability, this project demonstrates how a regional port in the Balkans can transcend its traditional function as a stopover, further establishing itself as a maritime landmark.

The solution offers several improvements to the overall function and ambiance of the marina and its landscape. The separation of arriving and leaving passengers eliminates confusion and reduces waiting times, resulting in increased satisfaction. The redesigned waiting areas, now accompanied by seating areas, shading, restrooms, and a cafeteria, provide a more comfortable space for arriving and leaving passengers. Together, these improvements contribute to an improvement in the overall operational efficiency of the passenger terminal.

Yacht passengers are now directed to a separate terminal, an innovation to the marina, which helps reduce congestion during the busy season. The newly added amenities, such as showers, locker rooms, storage areas, and laundry facilities, offer practical support and make their time at the marina more convenient.

The landscape design introduces several improvements to the landscape, new promenades, plazas, and green spaces, which are followed by a pleasant microclimate. These changes make way for social and cultural activation of the waterfront, including. Overall, this creates an environment that can be used by people throughout the year.

When moving through the terminals or promenades, the open sea views, simplicity, and uncluttered spaces unravel the sense of freedom and relaxation. Furthermore, the new architectural language of the site provides a sense of history through the inclusion of several pieces of Bar's identity and eliminates the sense of foreignness.

Conclusion

The design of the passenger and yacht terminals of the Port of Bar, as well as the comprehensive landscape design, presents an example of how an aging maritime infrastructure of significant importance to the city can be revitalized and given a new role in the city's urban fabric.

Several objectives were set from the beginning of the project, mainly to modernize the port, without significantly altering its functionality and image, while also raising its status to modern maritime standards and requirements.

By addressing functional issues and challenges that characterized the port, the new solution ensures that operational efficiency, along with security, passenger comfort, and a pleasant experience for all users are established.

Alongside the functional aspects of the project, there is also an emphasis placed on the relationship between the city and the sea, as well as the marina's influence and role in the city's life. The introduction of the exhibition space in the main terminal is an effort to present the marina in a new light of cultural and social importance to the local population.

Thus, in conclusion, the proposal presents the philosophy of how a site and building defined only by their role as a transport facility can transcend their character and importance to have a greater influence than expected, changing roles and function in accordance with the demands of the moment.

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