GETTING PUMPED

Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) is about to get a lot bigger. According to a recently-closed request for proposals (RFP), the city of Los Angeles is preparing to build its largest new terminal at the airport in over 20 years. Several major firms have applied for the project, one of the first steps in the airport’s ambitious redevelopment plans. An architect should be chosen within one to two months, according to LAX officials.

The new Midfield Satellite Concourse, located about a quarter mile west of the airport’s Tom Bradley International Terminal and at the location of a current hangar area, would measure 500,000 to 600,000 square feet. Cost estimates have not been released. According to a RFP issued last fall and closed to entrants on December 20, the new terminal would stand about 140 feet wide, 700 to 1,000 feet long, and three to four levels high. It would be able to accommodate eight to nine Airbus A-380 aircraft gates, and would be connected to Tom Bradley via a 1,400-foot-long underground pedestrian tunnel. That tunnel would either include moving walkways, a people mover system, or both. The plans also call for a 100,000-square-foot, 80-foot-wide and 940-foot-long expansion of the Tom Bradley terminal, allowing for new gates continued on page 5

ART CENTER’S AMBITIOUS NEW PLANS ENERGIZE PASADENA

Construction should begin in a year and completion is expected by mid-2011. Urban Partners and Pierce Educational Properties will finance the structure, which will be operated independently of Art Center.

The building is one of several bold designs that the institution has recently commissioned, giving the school one of the highest architectural profiles in the country. The board is now talking to Thom Mayne about the transformation of the nearby decommissioned Glenarm Power Plant—which the school recently leased from the city of Pasadena—into a graduate research and development continued on page 12

HIGH VOLTAGE

After five years of planning, Pasadena’s Art Center College of Design gave final approval in February to a $40 million new graduate housing scheme by Santa Monica-based Daly Genik.

The project sits next to the school’s South Campus, a complex of studios and classrooms in South Pasadena that the same firm designed inside a former 1940s aircraft testing facility in 2004. The board is now talking to Thom Mayne about the transformation of the nearby decommissioned Glenarm Power Plant—which the school recently leased from the city of Pasadena—into a graduate research and development continued on page 12
LETTERS

In today’s world of info-addiction, abetted by the hand-held device and our own human ability to download, process, and store ideas and material at an alarming rate, The Architect’s Newspaper gives us up-to-the-minute data, delivered hard and fast, just as it should be. Its information is timely and relevant, and moreover it seems to circulate faster than the speed of light. When AV speaks, people really do listen.

DENARI
NMDA, INC.
LOS ANGELES

BUKOWSKI’S REPRIEVE

On February 26, the Los Angeles City Council declared the former bungalow of late poet/novelist Charles Bukowski a historic landmark, saving the decrepit courtyard apartment at 5124 De Longpre Avenue from demolition. The decision ends a bawling debate that broke out last November in the Los Angeles Cultural Heritage Commission and rumbled through the Planning and Land Use Committee before landing in front of the full City Council.

The effort to preserve the battered stucco apartment in East Hollywood where the hard-drinking writer lived from 1963 to 1972 began last July when Bukowski admirer Lauren Everett spotted a Craigslist post advertising the property as a teardown for an asking price of $1.3 million. In November, Everett and Esoteric Bus Tours co-founder Richard Schave took the matter before the Los Angeles Cultural Heritage Committee (CHC), hoping to have the bungalow where Bukowski transformed himself from an anonymous postal worker into a famous author designated a cultural-historic landmark.

Despite dramatic accusations from the property’s owners that Bukowski was a Nazi sympathizer, the Committee voted 3-1 in favor of landmark status. On February 19, the Planning and Land Use Committee approved the CHC’s recommendation, moving the issue to the full City Council, which gave final approval. That action prevents the property’s owners from altering the unspcctacular exterior and interior without special permission and may require them to wait up to a year for a demolition permit.

But according to the Associated Press, Aleksandri Konovolov, the courtyard’s owner, sold the property during the landmarking process and has threatened to sue the city for forcing his hand in the matter. A phone call to Konovolov’s attorney, Joseph Trenk, was not returned. Nick Velasquez, spokesman for the City Attorney’s office, had no knowledge of a suit being filed as of February 29.

As for the preservationists, Lauren Everett had hoped to see a writers’ colony emerge in a restored Bukowski Court, but the recent sale complicates that prospect. Meanwhile, Schave has scheduled a Bukowski “Hauntings of a Dirty Old Man” tour for March 9. Not surprisingly, the tour will include a stop at 5124 De Longpre Avenue.

MIKE SCHULTE

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The city of Stockton, CA, was founded at the eastern terminus of the San Joaquin River and the southern entrance to the Siskiyou Trail in 1849. Here, a German gold miner, Charles Weber, purchased 49,000 acres of a surrounding Spanish land grant and built a camp to serve other gold miners and the first permanent residence in the San Joaquin valley. The city eventually became the distribution center for the enormously rich farmlands of the valley, and even built one of the largest inland deep-water ports in the country to service its farm economy.

The land immediately adjacent to Captain Weber’s settlement and the port developed as Stockton’s commercial and civic downtown. The agricultural wealth of the region provided the economic base to support some splendid downtown commercial and government buildings in the 19th and early 20th centuries; the grand mission-style Stockton Hotel of 1910, the 1930 Fox Theater (now the Bob Hope Theater), and several beaux arts office towers. The areas around this center developed modest residential neighborhoods with towering shade trees that would be the envy of any new urbanist to protect the houses during the valley’s scorching summer sun.

In the post-World War II period, Stockton suffered, like most American towns, from the rapid relocation of its downtown retail and commercial core to new suburban shopping malls, office parks, and car-dependent residential neighborhoods. It did, however, retain its county court and administrative buildings, providing the downtown with a daily influx of workers.

In the 1960s, the city’s redevelopment agency decided to stop the outflow of businesses from downtown by knocking down many blocks of 19th century commercial structures (several with wooden sidewalks) and the towering 1910 stone county courthouse, replacing them with car-friendly shopping centers. If this “urban renewal” scheme did not totally destroy the entire downtown, an elevated “crosstown” highway was eventually rammed right through the area, effectively cutting the city in half. But despite these nearly calamitous projects, Stockton’s downtown still has enough buildings to give it the feeling of a central urban downtown.

Now the Stockton Redevelopment Agency wants to knock down seven more hotels in the downtown that serve as a handsome urban fabric and streetscape, weaving together the disparate structures that still remain in the area. The agency hopes to replace them with something the downtown already has in abundance—more parking lots—turning it into a hodge-podge of half-empty blocks that want to be urban but is neither nor a functioning urban quarter.

Fortunately, there is a dedicated local group, Save Old Stockton, led by city planner Joy Neas and architect Linda Derivi, fighting the agency and trying to keep these buildings, restore them (perhaps as affordable housing), and bring people back to the area. It’s a historic first step at an important preservation moment for the city. And though the group has run into well-organized opposition from local property owners and city officials, it is now preparing a lawsuit to have the buildings and downtown saved.

There will be a series of court cases in the coming months that will determine the fate of the buildings and what remains of the downtown’s unique fabric. This is the perfect moment for architects, preservationists, and planners to weigh in on the importance of preserving dignified usable structures and to reverse the trend of reconfiguring California’s downtowns around the requirements of the automobile. If you want to write a letter to protest this needless demolition, write the Stockton Record (www.recordnet.com) or the city council (www.stocktongov.com/citycouncil/index.cfm) and the leaders of Save Old Stockton, 924 North Yosemite Street, Stockton, CA 95203.

RETRACTION REQUESTED

Any rumor of a sale of SOM, or any part of it (“Eavesdrop,” CAN 02_02.27.2008), is completely false and a total fabrication. The remaining commentary in the article—with the exception of the quote from SOM partner Craig Hartman—was equally untrue.

GEO NICHOL
MANAGING PARTNER
SHIDMOR, DREX AND MERRILL SAN FRANCISCO

CORRECTION

In a story last month about San Francisco’s Park Merced (“Next Big Thing,” CAN 02_02.27.2008), there was an incorrect reference to Stellar Management, the developer of a new housing complex there named Parkmerced. Stellar has offices in New York City and in San Francisco; it is not Texas-based.

KIMBERLI MEYER / JOHN PARMAN / SIMON SADLER / CRAIG HODGETTS / WALTER HOOD / DAVID MECKEL / FRANCES ANDERTON / STEVE CASTELLANOS / EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD LAURI PUCHALL / CRAIG SCOTT / ALISSA WALKER

STREET, 5TH FL., NEW YORK, NY 10007. FOR SUBSCRIBER SERVICE: CALL (JANUARY, FEBRUARY, MARCH, APRIL, MAY, JUNE, AUGUST, SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER) (WWW.ARCHPAPER.COM) 1910 20th century commercial office towers. The areas around this center developed modest residential neighborhoods with towering shade trees that would be the envy of any new urbanist to protect the houses during the valley’s scorching summer sun.

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CLOSER READERS

I read your New York version regularly, but particularly enjoy the California edition as you cover current topics that are over-looked by other publications with a subtle yet provocative take in the editing and art design. I thought that in the most recent issue (CAN02_02.27.2008), the juxtaposition of the article on Francois Perrin’s Brentwood “transparent house” using polycarbonate cladding, the review of the A. Quincy Jones book illustrated by a photo of his Hathaway House, and the review “Walking Through Walls,” of the art installation at SMMa, was brilliant as it makes us really think about architecture and how we interact with it. My only regret is that you do not come out in LA as frequently as you do in New York.

TOM ROBINSON
THE GRACE COMPANY
INGLEWOOD

After years of feeling like a backbonebreaker out here in the winds of LA, watching helplessly as the architectural press continued to portray the West Coast as a kind of cultural oddity (and then only sporadically—I guess it had to do with travel budgets), the arrival of a West Coast edition of The Architect’s Newspaper has done wonders for our collective psyche. It’s dog-eared within minutes of its arrival here at our office, and we’ve actually pursued leads and products highlighted in various features. It is, thankfully, full to the brim with anecdotal, even whimsical commentary rather than portentous musings, and we, like most of our contemporaries, don’t mind a bit of jousting, as long as it’s enjoyable, informative, and hits the mark.

CRAIG HODGETTS
HODGETTS AND FUNG
CULVER CITY

BUKOWSKI’S REPRIEVE

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MIKE SCHULTE

Bukowski’s courtyard apartment on De Longpre Avenue in East Hollywood.
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DOMESTIC DISTURBANCE

According to The San Francisco Chronicle, the city's new planning department director John Rahaim is looking for a new apartment after his boyfriend Lance Farber destroyed their shared residence by damaging antique furnishings, smashing the walls with canned tomatoes, and setting a mattress on fire late last month. But this wasn’t just any old Pac Heights rental—Rahaim was living at the Dennis T. Sullivan Memorial Fire Chief’s Home, a 1926 landmark sometimes offered to city employees in need of transitional housing. A million dollar bail has been posted for Farber, who fled the scene and was arrested later that night on suspicion of driving under the influence. While support for Rahaim, who was appointed by Mayor Gavin Newsom last September, has been overwhelmingly positive, one public official, fire commission vice president Victor Makras, is calling for Rahaim to cover the estimated $30,000 in damages. And Makras would seem an expert on uninhabitable apartments in his role as president of property management company Makras Real Estate: A slew of negative reviews by his former tenants on the website Yelp range from “negligent with security and repairs” to “this is the epitome of a slumlord.”

THE TWIN TOWERS

Architects coast to coast are murmuring about a tower proposed in February for Seattle by Portland–based Zimmer Gunsul Frasca that bears more than a passing resemblance to Robert A. M. Stern’s Tour Carpe Diem announced in January in Paris. The glass towers both feature double-take-inducing faceted facades of triangular planes that angle in and out. While we cross-referenced the employee contact lists of each firm to find out which disgruntled architect lifted the blueprints along with his walking papers, several responses to an ArchNewsNow.com newsletter reveal that there are actually several more angles to the story. Keen eyes saw similar angles in Dallas’ Fountain Place by Henry Cobb of I.M. Pei & Partners (1986), LM. Pei’s Bank of China Tower (1990), Lab Architecture Studio/Bate Smart’s Federation Square, Melbourne (2002), even in the under-construction Bank of America Tower by Cook + Fox in Manhattan. Wow, we had no idea that architects were so... multi-faced.

NOW THAT’S ENTERTAINMENT

When we got word that SBE Entertainment Group (owners of trendy LA restaurants, clubs, and other real estate) CEO Sam Nazarian was named to SCI-Arc’s board of directors last month, we only had one question: How long until Spencer Pratt goes back to school for his masters in architecture? Let us explain. SBE’s got a recurring gig on the is-it-real-or-is-it-fake docudrama The Hills (it’s fake), one of the hottest shows on television, since star Heidi Montag “works” there. Watch closely (because you know you want to) and you’ll notice SBE-affiliated institutions like the Philippe Starck-designed Katsuya fleet seem to appear on-screen a little more frequently than other LA locations. Therefore, it’s only logical that next season will see a fascinating plot twist that results in a scantily-clad catfight in SCI-Arc’s parking lot. Or Nazarian could help out the unemployed Lauren Conrad, who left her “job” at Teen Vogue at the end of last month. There’s an opening in the SCI-Arc publications department?

GETTING PUMPED continued from front page

along its west side. The RFP also says the building would aim for a LEED Silver rating. LAX officials have not disclosed which architecture firms applied for the project, but according to one applicant, the competition includes Santiago Calatrava with Gensler Architects; Foster and Partners with Leo A Daly Architects and the Smith Group; Fentress Architects with HNTB; and Johnson Fain with HKP. DMJM Aviation was awarded $25 million to be the project’s contractor on March 3.

The airport’s last major expansion came in 1984, with the opening of the Bradley terminal and domestic Terminal 1. The current expansion is a major step for the LAX Master Plan, released in 2005. The massive $5 to 8 billion plan also calls for new gates, taxeways, parking structures, a new ground transportation center, an intermodal transportation center to connect to public transit, and even a new Central Terminal Area that will replace the airport’s existing parking structures. Last February, work began on the $723.5 million modernization of the Tom Bradley Terminal, led by Leo A. Daly Architects. That project, which the airport calls the largest individual project in city history, includes interior renovations (an updated look and new furniture, lounges, and amenities), new LEED certified building systems, installation of an in-line checked baggage security system, and a second boarding gate for extra-large planes. Work should be complete by March 2010.

Meanwhile, this February the city approved the building permit for restoration of the airport’s iconic white-arched Theme Building. The 1961 building designed by Paul R. Williams had deteriorated significantly. The work, led by LA-based Gin Wong Associates, will include reinforcing the structure’s core, adding new lighting fixtures for its upper arches, repainting its exterior, replacing its plaster cladding, and seismic upgrades. That project is scheduled to be done in May 2009. SAM LUBELL

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SAM LUBELL
In April, Park La Brea, the 176-acre residential oasis of 12-story concrete towers and two-story garden townhouses built by Metropolitan Life Insurance Company to ease a post-World War II housing shortage, will complete the first phase of a more than $20 million facelift. The sprawling property, which occupies all the land between the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the teeming mall at The Grove, will eventually be renovated inside and out. Work is scheduled to begin in April on more landscaping, interior renovations, exterior treatments, and a new perimeter fence, spread over a two-year timetable.

Park La Brea may be the most successful example of Le Corbusier’s (largely discredited) ideal composition of “towers in the park.” It is a vertical city composed of a dozen X-shaped towers and lower-lying apartment blocks set within a pastoral atmosphere of gardens, lanes, and court-yards. In a city that boasts the fewest acres of parkland per resident in the nation, Park La Brea has thrived because of its green spaces and city views. But the aging complex underwent a bad paint job in the 1990s, turning the admittedly bland towers into what looked more like stacks of orange and beige packing crates. Moreover, its buildings and landscaping had begun to deteriorate, even as the complex began to suffer from a reputation for housing the elderly and the unhip.

The current makeover is the work of Lina Whitworth, project architect for LA-based Nadel Architects, which was hired by Park La Brea’s owner, the Prime Group, in 2005. Whitworth’s just-completed first assignment (at a cost of $9 million) was to tackle the neglected eastern quarter of the property where three towers loom over asphalt and parked cars.

The towers were originally white monoliths, with little differentiation from ground to parapet. Whitworth used paint to give the towers a new sense of progression. A base is suggested by metallic-paint pinstripes against a charcoal background. Next, a mustard stripe segues to the beige body of the tower. Another mustard stripe separates the final wide band of charcoal that animates the roofline. A new stainless steel marquee and charcoal proscenium were added to enlarge front entries that had looked like side entrances.

Whitworth’s future tasks— specifics are still being developed—are to continue with the new paint palette, update and refresh the complex’s other towers, and find a design theme to unify the complex. Another job will be to design a new centerpiece for the complex: a $10 million rental office/clubhouse/fitness center and pool, slated to replace one of the offending parking lots, and to transform another parking lot into a central “Grand Court.” Whitworth chose to insert a frankly contemporary structure into the crook of one of the X-shaped towers. This new building will actually be two structures, with roofs almost kissing along a jagged line formed where it looks as if a boomerang had split in half. One end of the structure will peel past the edge of its nearby tower and present a two-story glass facade to passing cars and pedestrians—a beckoning gesture that hides the big surprise of a crisply geometric pool elevated one story above street level.

Work has also begun on a new fence that will line the one public street that passes through the complex. The prefabricated fence will be made of 1⁄4 inch laser-cut plate steel trapezoids—easy to replace as needed. The imagery—which will be the new motif at Park La Brea—is reminiscent of art deco, although Whitworth insists that the true inspiration is Bauhaus. “It may be deco-looking, but it is very modern in its tapping into the most recent technology.”

Not everyone will buy that argument, and no doubt the makeover will inspire a new round of criticism. But so long as Park La Brea exists, it is probably safe to say that it will remain a monument to a vision of suburbia in the heart of the city. GREG GOLDIN
NEWS

IN DETAIL > HL23

NEIL M. DENARI
ARCHITECTS

During his 20 years of practice, Neil Denari has won acclaim as an architectural visionary, a teacher (who briefly directed SCI-Arc), and a designer of dynamic interiors, notably LA Eyeworks on Beverly Boulevard and the Endeavor Talent Agency in Beverly Hills. But HL23, a 13-story tower of luxury condominiums in Manhattan’s Chelsea neighborhood that broke ground last month, marks a quantum leap in scale and complexity. It is also a debut for developer Alf Naman, formerly a real estate broker. Both were challenged to create a signature building that would maximize square footage on a narrow footprint and turn a profit.

They were brought together by gallery owner Casey Kaplan, for whom Denari had designed a space elsewhere in Chelsea. Naman had acquired a site facing the High Line—a nearly completed park on an elevated former rail line running for 20 blocks along the West Side—on 23rd Street, west of Tenth Avenue. Giller Scelfoio + Renfro are designing the High Line, and developers have been flocking to exploit its potential as a green forecourt for upscale housing. Polshek Partners designed a Standard hotel that opened on Astor Place.

Denari used to live in New York and loves the grittiness of the neighborhood. “This is the last great site in urban America,” he declared, with pardonable exaggeration.

The enthusiastic response of planning chair Amanda Burden spurred a 20-month process of refining the schematic design that would secure the blessing of the New York City Planning Department. The triple glazing comprises 11-foot-by-6-foot panes of colorless iron steel mullions with no spandrel panes, increasing the illusion of height. The south and east facades angle and swell to increase the volume, and this gives the tower a living presence, as though it was a tree twisting to catch the sun. The rippling texture of the steel and faceted glass on the south side should mirror the shifts of light and create an alternation of transparency and reflectivity.

A single-story gallery will be constructed below the viaduct when the tower is completed late next year. That will enlarge the building’s presence on 23rd Street, beside a public staircase leading up to the park. For the fortunate residents of a two-story maisonette at the base, nine full-floor apartments, and a duplex penthouse, all designed by Danish-born architect Thomas Juul-Hansen, the tower will provide a fusion of sculptural daring and sweeping vistas. Perhaps it’s the fresh perspective of an LA firm in New York: HL23 is a third instance of LA architects weaning New Yorkers away from their infatuation with orthogonal blocks, following Frank Gehry with the IAC headquarters on the West Side Highway and Morphosis’ addition to Cooper Union on Astor Place.

MICHAEL WEBB

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The Northridge earthquake damaged several of its concrete blocks and caused large sections of its south retaining wall to break away. This, along with subsequent rain erosion, water damage, and neglect, left the house decaying and in serious danger of collapse. But thanks to over $6.5 million collected in 2005 from the Ennis House Foundation, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, stabilization as well as an intensive renovation were able to go forward.

That project, headed by Frank Lloyd Wright’s son Eric Lloyd Wright with Mack Construction and Historic Resources Group, included structural stabilization, reinfused woodwork, ceiling replacement, floor repair, concrete block replacement, and cleaning. While restoration work continues (including replacing more blocks and finishing work on part of its retaining wall), the house is now ready for visitors, said Linda Dishman, chair of the foundation.

But the neighborhood isn’t ready. A group of about 20 adjacent neighbors is fighting plans to reopen the house to the public, arguing that the house should be sold to a private owner. They say that re-opening it will again create havoc on a tiny street that was never intended to host visitors, conferences, fundraisers, movie shoots, or parties (Gus Brown was notorious for loud parties and for constantly allowing movies to film there).

They add that local zoning prohibits any house in the neighborhood from hosting public visits or events, and point to a letter signed by the foundation in 2005 assuring them that the house would not be re-opened to the public.

“It’s not a shrine, it’s a home,” said Frank Masi, who along with Donna Kolb is leading the group of opposed neighbors. “We want to restore the house to what it was meant to be—a single-family residence.” He added that a recent proposal from the foundation was inadequate because it called for hosting events or tours over 200 times a year. He says he might consider a compromise, but still prefers a sale, preferably to a reputable realtor who would be able to find a respectful owner. The house is landmarked, so its exterior could not be changed.

While Ennis House Foundation secretary-treasurer Stephen McAvoy said that right now the board has no plans to reopen the house to the public, Dishman said that the foundation is working hard to develop a plan allowing limited public access to the house that lessens impact on the neighbors. She said this could include carpooling to the site and having fewer visitors and events. But she admits that sale is a possibility. “If we can’t work out something with the neighbors, then we might have to look at that,” she said. “We’ve made a proposal. The ball is in their court.”

The museum, said its director Dean Sobel, will be the “cherry on the sundae” of Denver’s cultural skyline. The project is set to open in 2010.

The choice of concrete as the main building material will highlight its monolithic nature. It will also allow for an interplay of light within the gallery spaces. With minor use of electrical light, Cloepfil intends to “let natural illumination rake and reflect off the different facets of the concrete.” Crystals will be added to the concrete, diffusing light further into some rooms while leaving others more shadowy.

The museum, said its director Dean Sobel, will be the “cherry on the sundae” of Denver’s cultural skyline. The project is set to open in 2010. AMARA HOLSTEIN
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**VectorWorks Architect 2008—Flexible to Fit Your Workflow**
Good things come in twos. At least that’s what San Diego architect Sebastian Mariscal thinks. He recently designed and built identical, side-by-side houses in La Jolla for his family and his business partner’s family. The project, which he calls Two Inns, came about when Mariscal found a great hillside lot with views of the city and the ocean that was already subdivided in two. Unwilling to part with the land, he chose to build two houses on it.

“When I first visited the property, I climbed up to the roof of one of the little houses there and I felt inspired,” he said. Built into the side of the hill, the fairly minimal steel-framed houses gain dynamic variety with their interlocking combination of cast-in-place concrete below and elegant, warm ipe wood above. (Mariscal referred to the concrete as “masculine” and the wood as “feminine.”) The identical twin-like aspect of the houses has even caused visitors to stop and look.

Inside, the homes’ highlight is their intimate connection to the outside. Their identical main floors, which contain sparsely but stylishly furnished kitchens and living rooms, are clad with 25 glass doors that slide away on automatic tracks, leaving the spaces completely open on three sides. The rectilinear house provides perfectly-framed views from this vantage point, and a front deck allows one to wander further outside. In back, a patio with its own fireplace abuts the grassy hillside. Both decks are floored with the same dark stone tiles as the main living space, effectively creating an outdoor extension of the home. A light well is carved out of the ground in back to allow ample natural illumination into the flexible basement playroom. Upstairs, the master bedrooms for both houses have large overhanging ipe decks. These are also clad with sliding glass doors open to the stunning views. This upper floor contains comfortable rooms for Mariscal’s two children (Mariscal’s business partner has no children, but two dogs).

“I’ve always been interested in having a flexible space. It can become a completely open house, or you can close it if you need privacy,” said Mariscal. The two buildings are divided by a concrete-clad void and a slow-rising narrow stair, and by dense shrubbery to provide privacy and minimize noise. For Mariscal, who also directed construction of the project (his is a design-build firm), the best part is that he gets to enjoy his hard work for years to come. “We enjoy constantly visiting our architecture,” he said. “Now we get to enjoy living in it.”

SL
GAINING SPEED continued from front page

The Environmental Impact Review (EIR), financing, land acquisition, bids, and construction on a proposed route linking Los Angeles to the Ontario Airport.

If funded and built as currently conceptualized, the entire system would be completed by 2030, move at speeds of up to 300 miles per hour, and provide transportation for up to 500,000 riders a day. Los Angeles City Councilman Greig Smith characterized the step as “a giant leap” from a planning process more than seven years in the making. Smith represents the council on The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), which initiated the project and has carried it through preliminary planning.

The first segment of the system is slated to have stations in West Los Angeles, Union Station, West Covina, and the Ontario Airport. According to Smith, an LAX station is also suggested for the route.

According to Smith, an LAX station was also suggested for the route by SCAG’s board about six months ago. SCAG has commissioned conceptual plans from land use and transportation consulting company IBI Group, but the official design phase for the IOS could be more than a year away and would be contingent on funding.

Rather than occupy city streets or require underground tunneling, the transit system would piggyback onto Los Angeles freeways. Caltrans participated in the planning stages and has bought into the concept of the project.

A study by SCAG staff will be completed this June to help the authority decide on routes and technologies. The document will provide comparisons between the high-speed steel wheel system, such as Japan’s bullet train, or Maglev, which harnesses advanced magnetic levitation technology and an elevated monorail.

The latter was favored throughout much of SCAG’s project evaluations, but SCAG currently holds a technology-neutral position. Smith, however, touted Maglev for its lower construction and maintenance costs and lower pollution levels. Maglev does have one drawback, though. There are few long-term data demonstrating proven success. In China, Shanghai boasts the only operating Maglev system in the world. Bullet trains, which have a lengthier track record, have positive safety records.

IBI Group oversaw SCAG’s initial planning process and developed conceptual designs for four Maglev stations. Their work will provide a reference point for architects designing the stations in the future.

“The aesthetic features of the stations are intended to reflect the intrinsic values of the Maglev system: advanced technology, movement, and speed,” the IBI Group stated in a report to SCAG. Their sleek, often-curved conceptual designs contrast cast-in-place concrete cores with glass and polycarbonate walls leveraging natural light and ventilation through open air stations to take advantage of the region’s climate. Louvers or perforated metal screens provide shading. Connections to other forms of transportation like light rail, bus, air, and automobile were emphasized.

While the conceptualized stations share a visual identity, each addresses individual site considerations. At West Los Angeles, IBI’s challenge was to conceive of a station that could meet the system’s taxing demands but also retain the modest scale required to integrate with the residential community. At Union Station, the firm created space for a new mode of travel in an already packed and historic site by elevating a Maglev station above existing rail. In West Covina, the station is built into a mall—the result of SCAG successfully reaching out to the retail complex’s operator, said David Chow, director at IBI.

As with the myriad of transportation projects in development across the region, the elephant in the room is cost. A 2005 estimate by IBI predicted the project could cost up to $7.8 billion, a figure that would be higher with current market prices. Fundraising-wise, the system would not be “a government subsidized project,” but rather a public-private partnership developed to supply funding, councilman Smith asserted.

A new player on the Maglev scene, American Maglev of Marietta, Georgia, has offered an unsolicited bid, proposing to provide free construction if the first route is revised to include the port of San Pedro. In this case, fees charged to cargo transportation would finance the rest of the endeavor. But American Maglev does not yet hold a track record of successful projects.

In making the case for a high-speed system to serve the region, Richard Marcus, program manager for Maglev and High-Speed Rail at SCAG, pointed out not only to population growth but to Los Angeles’ position as a major port. According to Marcus, 43 percent of containers that enter the United States travel through the San Pedro Bay. In the next 22 years, the number of containers received will triple. “Continuing to build freeways is not the answer,” said Marcus, with understatement. “We’re going to have to come up with another way.”

TIBBY ROTHMAN

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HIGH VOLTAGE continued from front page complex, while funding reached its halfway point in February on Frank Gehry’s new design research complex at the Hillside Campus, located in Pasadena’s Linda Vista neighborhood. Art Center president Richard Koshalek, long known as the godfather of LA architecture and an aggressive patron of innovative design, is the driving force behind the plans.

Daly Genik split its new six-story dormitory block into three single-loaded wings, oriented north-south, which enclose a public plaza and a private courtyard. The firm hopes to achieve a Gold LEED rating by using hydronic radiant heating and cooling, natural ventilation, and a minimum of artificial light. The poured concrete structure will provide thermal mass and will be seismically braced by a diagonal steel frame on either side. Vertical pierced aluminum fins will be attached to this frame and will be contoured to open up views without compromising their role as sun shades.

The building, with retail on its ground floor, will contain 11 live-work units and about 240 single units. Each will be a 26-foot-by-10-foot space that can be configured by the resident into private, public, and work zones. These will open onto a continuous terrace behind the fins and a shaded walkway on the opposite side to achieve a balance of sociability and privacy. Landscaped roof decks supplement the terrace and provide insulation. The architects have designed a prefabricated two-bathroom unit, incorporating kitchens to serve the living spaces on either side.

The design was developed in conjunction with Buro Happold Architects and Loiros Ubbelohde energy consultants. Urban Partners was founded by the late Ira Yellin to renew South Broadway—long before other visionaries realized the potential of LA’s famed Hollywood sign are for sale. The parcel on Cahuenga Peak, the city’s highest mountain, is for sale for $22 million. Chicago-based investment group Fox River Financial Resources reportedly bought the property from Howard Hughes’ estate in 2002 for $1,675 million. Many are worried that development on the ridge will mar the vistas around the iconic sign.

LA ARTS DISTRICT EXPANDING?

LA City Council’s Planning and Land Use Management committee (PLUM) approved a proposal to extend the southern boundaries of the LA Arts District from 6th Street south to Violet, a block below 7th. The change would bring 2121 Lofts and the recently approved AMP Lofts into the Arts District and within its guidelines, potentially allowing them to move forward. According to LA planning director Gail Goldberg, the EIR process required to make the change would take from six to nine months.

NEW COO FOR SCI-ARC

The Southern California Institute of Architecture announced in early March that Jack Wiant had accepted the post of Chief Operating Officer for the school. Wiant had been the chief financial officer at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles for 20 years.

BROAD STrikes again

Eli and Edythe Broad donated $10 million to a new performing arts facility at Santa Monica College, creating an endowment fund for programming and arts education. In turn, the 499-seat, $45 million performance space designed by Santa Monica architect Renzo Zecchetto will be named the Broad Stage.

BRINGING ON THE JAILS

The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation Construction has chosen Irvine-based gkkworks as the master architect of a 1,900-bed prison expansion in Wasco, California. The new high-security facility will be located next to the existing 4,000-bed prison in Wasco, a small but quickly growing city about 140 miles north of LA. The $300,000-square-foot prison is slated for completion in 2011. The prison is the result of California AB 900, a $17.7-billion bill to construct facilities for 53,000 new prison and jail beds over the next five years to alleviate the state’s overcrowded prisons. California’s prison system, originally designed for 100,000 inmates, housed 173,000 inmates in 2007 and has resorted to placing about 17,000 inmates in temporary beds in locations like prison gymnasiums.

CULVER CITY TOWER MAKES PROGRESS

A 13-story, 220-foot-tall office tower in Culver City near the intersection of Centinela Avenue and Sepulveda Boulevard has cleared its first hurdle. It was passed last month by the Culver City Council’s planning panel. Developed by Centinela Development Partners, the entrance office complex heads next to the full Culver City Council for approval. Many in Culver City fear that a high rise on such a busy intersection will cause major traffic tie-ups.
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Moonlighting has been around since the dawn of work, and architects are certainly no strangers to the phenomenon. From large, high-profile firms to small offices with just a handful of employees, architects often take unofficial jobs on the side to pay the bills, to climb the corporate ladder, or to simply find a creative outlet beyond the desktop of their workplace.

Many claim that it has always been part of the culture in the architecture world, while others say there is a rise in moonlighting due to the downturn in the economy and heightened competition in the architecture job world. Firm jobs are still vital for most financially. But with boring CAD duty a rite of passage, and salaries not rising with the cost of living, working at a firm is often not enough. For young architects, moonlighting may feel like the only way to get ahead.

Tom Newman, of Newman & Wolen Design, said that wherever he had worked before opening his own firm had had no-moonlighting policies—but that never stopped anyone. “I did it and everyone else did it,” he said. “It was the only way to have some creative control and get through the drudgery you dealt with every day.” But he also admitted that it was the
years hunkered down in large firms that gave him the back-bone and experience necessary to eventually open his own firm. “You certainly don’t get a lot of practical experience squeezing out small garage renovations on the side, although you may make a little extra money doing them,” he said.

“Even though I had an excellent experience at my firm, I still took on extra work to either pay bills or pursue more creative projects,” said a 26-year-old architect who preferred to remain anonymous. He graduated from the Yale Architecture program and then went directly to Kohn Pedersen Fox, where he worked for two years on a $400 million commercial project. He admitted that moonlighting was prevalent—the other day, he watched an architect a few cubicles away working on a rendering for another job. He maintained there is really no other way for young architects to hone different skill sets. “As a young architect in a large firm, you never deal with the clients or the contractors,” he said. “How else are we supposed to learn project management?”

Benjamin Ball, an architect and co-partner of Ball-Nogues Studio, moonlit for nine months while working at a small firm. Hrastan Zeitlian, director of design at Leo A Daly, is against moonlighting but understands the need, and so developed a creative think tank called Struere where he could develop creative ideas, including competition entries for the Hilal tower in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia (right) and the Czech National Library in Prague (below).

Benjamin Ball started working on the installation Maximilian’s Schell (facing page) in Silverlake while still with a small firm in Santa Monica. He quit three months before the exhibition’s opening and then co-founded Ball-Nogues Studio.
architecture firm in Santa Monica. He spent most of his nights and weekends working on Maximilian’s Schell, a massive, vortex-shaped installation made of mylar that was showcased at Materials & Applications, a gallery in Silverlake, a few years ago.

“I had to quit three months before the opening so I could devote myself fully to the project,” he admitted. “But for the first nine months of development, I had to keep a full-time job.”

Nogues, his partner, worked for Frank Gehry and admitted that he shied away from moonlighting while working for the large firm, except for once—when Gehry himself set him up with some outside work.

“Claes Oldenburg needed some additional help while he was working on the Disney Concert Hall,” said Nogues. “If I remember correctly, I think I worked on an enormous flute.”

Mohamed Sharif, president of the Los Angeles Forum for Architecture and Urban Design and an associate at the Santa Monica firm Koning Eizenberg, added that moonlighting is even more prevalent now in LA due to the surge of single-family upgrades in the last five to ten years, providing plenty of small jobs, most of them done on the side.

Despite its prevalence, moonlighting can often be a source of serious anxiety and burnout, especially for those doing it without permission.

An architect who works for a small firm in Silverlake who preferred to remain nameless said that moonlighting was a source of constant angst for him. “I think in my firm they like to imagine that the focus is always on them and that there is nothing else going on in anyone’s life,” he admitted. He would often run out at lunchtime for client meetings, and for the last two years said he worked consistently until midnight, even on weekends, to get all of his work done. “I think the office job is the necessary evil. The other jobs on the side are the creative outlet,” he said.

Many moonlighters admitted that the schedule is too much for them to handle. “Trying to hide the fact that I have three other projects going on is beyond me,” said a young associate who works for a large firm in Santa Monica. “Carrying around extra clothes and putting my makeup on in the car has become routine.”

Firms, meanwhile, take very different approaches to moonlighters. Some encourage it as a useful tool for younger architects, while others often see it as tanta-amount to cheating.

Steve Kanner of Kanner Architects, based in Santa Monica, has been in the business for 27 years, and admits to moonlighting’s prevalence. He uses it as an incentive. “Getting the right people for this firm and I’m happy to pass it along to our newer architects,” he said. He did admit that he is careful in terms of liability, and always writes a letter divorcing Kanner Architects from responsibility. “I think it can be a tough subject,” he said. “Our firm does not encourage moonlighting for all the obvious reasons; it distracts from the work we do, and ultimately a happier employee.”

When Ball and Nogues are in a position to hire employees for large projects and installations, Ball openly admits that he prefers to hire moonlighters. “I guess I’m the guy that the large, more corporate firms hate,” he said. “But since we can’t offer full-time work, we like to hire people who are working in other places who can bring cutting-edge skills to the table,” he said. “If I were working in a large firm drafting toilets all day long, I think I’d really like to work for me,” he added.

But for many new architects working in larger firms, the no-moonlighting policies that most employee handbooks clearly point out are enough of a deterrent to stay away from taking other work at night or on weekends. And in many firms, there is simply a strong internal voice in the workplace that clearly does not support the idea. A senior associate at a large firm based in Los Angeles who preferred to remain anonymous because “this can be a touchy subject” said: “Our firm does not encourage moonlighting for all the obvious reasons; it distracts from the work in our very busy office. We do, however, encourage staff to mentor younger architects and architecture students through teaching, jury participation, review of students’ work, etc. Teaching is the exception, as we feel it helps individuals to grow, and adds to the growth of our office as a whole.”

It was the pursuit of an academic career that kept Jennifer Siegal, the founder of Office for Mobile Design (OMD), from moonlighting. “I always had excellent employers and I never felt comfortable taking on other work outside the firm,” she said. “Any extra time I had was spent teaching or publishing.” She was quick to point out that if architects sign on with a firm that has a no-moonlighting clause or stipulation, it’s important to stick to it. “This is a business where it’s important to have a level of trust with an employee. If that trust is broken, there’s really no going back.”

Hraztan S. Zeitlian, AIA, director of design at Leo A Daly, understands the impulse to moonlight, but is against it. In his opinion, once you are working for a firm and take on other jobs for profit, you have crossed a line. Prior to joining Leo A Daly, he started a “think tank” for his more creative, not-for-profit architectural pursuits, called Struere (www.struere.com) where he spent outside time developing incredibly experimental schemes. His proposals for a library in Prague and a high rise in Saudi Arabia have won awards from the AIA Los Angeles and the Chicago Athenaeum.

“I think this is a very non-traditional way to advance architecture,” he said. “Other than academia and a handful of boutique firms, there are very few places to do highly experimental work. We need to encourage experimentation, but find honest ways of doing it,” he added.

KIMBERLY STEVENS
The craft of architectural sketching seems all but doomed in this era of CAD, Revit, and Rhino. While just ten years ago it was still a manda-

tory skill in architecture, now it’s seen as an afterthought, or even more depressing, an indulgence.

One architect doesn’t seem to care, William Fain, a partner at LA-based Johnson Fain architects, has published a book of his sketch-

es, created when he spent 2002 on a Rome Fellowship studying the urban design possibilities of the Tiber River. He spent his spare
time both in Rome and on travels throughout the country sketching in his notebook.

Johnson has created stunning sketches of the most beautiful places in a beautiful country. The

piazze of Rome, the skyline of Florence, the canals of Venice, and the villages of Tuscany. These are places that have all been captured thousands of times in paintings and photos, so much so that we’re a little jaded by seeing images of them. Yet somehow the sketches feel new, refreshing, and immensely powerful. They also seem real, not only because of their amazing accuracy and beauty—a testament to Fain’s training in architecture and his lifetime spent sketching—but because of the feelings they provoke. Their rough edges, infor-

mal tone, and almost surreal sense of depth give them a whimsical, dreamy quality that transports you into a frozen, ideal moment.

The close to one hundred sketches in the book, organized by location, are all a testament to Fain’s combination of technical skill, architectural eye, and subtle artistry. A sketch of Venice’s Piazza San Marco captures with eerie accuracy the scale of the plaza, the massing and dimensions of the buildings, and the intricate repetition and rhythm of domes, colonnades, and arches. Yet they are created with a softness and subtle abstraction that makes you forget all of this and long to get on a plane headed there. A sketch of Palladio’s Villa Rotonda captures the building’s perfect symmetry and proportions, but it is the subtle shifts in gradation and shadow that make the building appear as if it is literally popping out of the book like a hologram. Incredibly detailed sketches of other master-

pieces such as the Colosseum, Palazzo Vecchio, and Rialto Bridge have a similar effect. A scene of Lake Como has very little white space, but the subtle grade changes and careful accentuation of certain buildings and landscape elements make the page feel thick with atmosphere and magical realism. A sketch of the Florence skyline appears unfinished, but the few, almost disembodied architectural elements that do pop up—the Duomo, other church spires, and the street wall near the river—appear even more stunning in this context.

And these are only a few of the drawings in the book, whose tiny dimensions make it feel more personal, as if you had just borrowed Fain’s sketchbook for a couple of days.

Choosing to draft fantastic landscapes and architectural masterpieces is the hook, but once you get inside, you begin to under-

stand the power of drawing. In his introduction, Richard Koshyalek, the president of Pasadena’s Art Center College, calls this art of draftsmanship “at once willfully eccentric and charmingly retro-

grade.” And perhaps much of the joy of this skillful work is a sense of nostalgia for what once was. Better yet, a book like this could pique interest in the fine textures, detail, and feeling that sketching can bring to a project that cre-

ations formed on a mouse will never replicate.

SAM LUBEILL IS AN’S CALIFORNIA

EDITOR.

COURTESY BALCONY PRESS
A tide of mediocre building has swept through the Coachella Valley, submerging the desert outpost of Palm Springs in suburban sprawl, but the pristine vision of a modernist oasis lives on in the images of Julius Shulman. More than 160 of his vintage black and white photographs and new color prints, plus renderings and architectural models, are on display at the Palm Springs Art Museum through May 4.

Julius Shulman: Palm Springs is also the title of a richly illustrated companion book from Rizzoli that includes some additional images, an introduction by exhibition curator Michael Stern, and notes on featured architects by critic Alan Hess. The texts are brief and informative; the pictures conjure a world of mystery and beauty. Books about Shulman have proliferated since the master turned ninety and the Getty acquired his archives. The latest three-volume collection from Taschen includes some pedestrian buildings, but the Rizzoli book has a welcome sense of focus and selectivity.

Shulman first went to the valley on a camping trip in 1931 and marveled at the palms and cool swimming holes he found in the arid expanse of desert. There was little in the way of human habitation, and it was the unspoiled natural beauty that lured Albert Frey, a Swiss-born associate of Le Corbusier, to move there in 1934 and become the preeminent local architect until his death in 1998. Shulman portrayed his house for Raymond Loewy and those of Richard Neutra for Grace Miller and Edgar Kaufmann as fragile artifacts dwarfed by the landscape, like pioneer cabins on the prairie. Those images defined Palm Springs in the public mind.

Hollywood stars escaped to the desert in the 1930s, and after World War II, the rich and famous commissioned second homes that were as rational and free-spirited as their vacation attire. Others followed their lead, shedding convention and dressing in vacation attire. Others followed their lead, shedding convention and dressing as readily as their suits. In the two postwar decades, flat roofs and glass sliders were widely employed, and architects such as E. Stewart Williams, William Cody, Donald Norgai to record the latest work and visit the Case Study House program on the cover of the book reveals more than the history of Seattle's downtown. Also evident is the hope of a more economically and demographically diverse downtown, with the eventual goal of making Seattle a "24-hour city." Elenga remarked that "Nine years ago when I moved here, there weren't nearly that many people living downtown. One thing that's unique about Seattle's downtown is virtually every neighborhood has residential development in it. Even the civic and financial district. That is unusual."
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Blum
Axe Light
www.axelight.it
Spring is in bloom at Axe Light. Blum, the latest collection of blown glass-and-metal suspended ceiling lamps by designer Marcello Furlan, is reminiscent of the form of a carnation. Densely populated glass vases seem to blossom out of a chrome-plated sphere at the center; each vase contains a single lightbulb, which helps to propagate light in all directions. Available in crystal (left) or chrome-plated glass, the lamp comes in 31-bulb, 19-bulb, and single-bulb versions. A matching vase is perfect for containing the sorts of pretty, petaled plants that inspired Blum’s form.

The Sottsass Collection
Artigo
www.artigousa.com
Among the last designs to come from the Italian design master Ettore Sottsass, these rubber floor tiles from Artigo introduce whimsy and exotic flavor to a perennial classic product for commercial and residential uses. Kayar is flecked with coconut fibers and comes in 16 colors; Zorco (left) renders Artigo’s most popular raised boll pattern in randomly scattered and sized dots, available in seven colors; and Ebony mimics the texture and striations of wood grain in a three-dimensional pattern in four dark hues, from black to chestnut.

SpaceStation
BlueLounge Design
www.bluelounge.com
If you find it difficult to conceal those messy laptop cords strewn all over your desk (left), SpaceStation offers a solution. Available in black or white, this compact desk organizer (left, below) has an internal cooling system for your cables. A USB plug connects to your laptop, while an internal four-port USB hub is available to connect additional devices, such as a scanner, iPod, and camera. SpaceStation even has a page holder and an accessory slot for business cards, making it a neat freak’s dream.

ProPixel PXG-73 LED elements
Daktronics
www.daktronics.com
Responding to customer requests for media displays that can be sculpted into uncommon shapes, Daktronics came up with these LED elements, called ProPixels. As the name suggests, each element acts as an individually controllable pixel within a larger display. To blend in with its background, the element’s housing can be ordered in a customized shade (left) to match a building’s facade. Along with the 73-millimeter-diameter elements, the company sells software to control their output, as well as optional content and services.

Available in black or white, this compact desk (left), SpaceStation offers a solution. Available in black or white, this compact desk organizer (left, below) has an internal cooling system for your cables. A USB plug connects to your laptop, while an internal four-port USB hub is available to connect additional devices, such as a scanner, iPod, and camera. SpaceStation even has a page holder and an accessory slot for business cards, making it a neat freak’s dream.

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Available in black or white, this compact desk (left), SpaceStation offers a solution. Available in black or white, this compact desk organizer (left, below) has an internal cooling system for your cables. A USB plug connects to your laptop, while an internal four-port USB hub is available to connect additional devices, such as a scanner, iPod, and camera. SpaceStation even has a page holder and an accessory slot for business cards, making it a neat freak’s dream.
John Rahaim, former planning director for the City of Seattle, assumed his duties as San Francisco’s new planning director in January. Kenneth Caldwell finds out what’s on his mind for San Francisco.

The Architect’s Newspaper: What can we do to encourage really first-rate architecture and landscape architecture and urban design in San Francisco? What can we do to achieve the goal of the contemporary building?

John Rahaim: I think highlighting good examples is one way. I think we need to have a discussion about what the key principles are, and about what makes a good urban building—which transcends architecture, in my view.

Part of the solution might be the planning department’s being very cautious about moving projects forward that don’t achieve that good urban quality we’re all looking for. It’s hard, because historically, urban buildings were constructed with a much more limited palette of materials and a much more limited technology. So they had a uniformity that simply doesn’t exist anymore.

What about some of the fine-grain character? What do you see as some of the greatest challenges and opportunities for the evolution of the neighborhoods, and what do you regard as the role of a tool like residential design guidelines? What we see on a fairly regular basis is the challenge of inserting new development that is often large in scale and contemporary in design into a traditional San Francisco context. I think the residential design guidelines have an important role, but what I don’t believe is that they should go so far as to require mimicry in buildings.

We need to design buildings of our time. One of our great architectural challenges is to design buildings that are contemporary and that work within an urban context. I think most architects haven’t figured that out yet. But I would really like to challenge architects on that front, to design buildings that are wonderful, contemporary, exciting buildings that work on a city street.

I think there’s a pretty broad perception that a lot of the recent high-rise architecture here is mediocre. Do you have some ideas about how we can improve the quality of those large-scale towers? Every city I go to, people complain that the architecture in their city is so much worse than the architecture in the city down the road. Couldn’t we do what Chicago does? Couldn’t we do what Vancouver does? And I go to Chicago and people there are saying, oh, look what’s being built here; it’s so awful. Can’t we do what San Francisco does?

What’s being built in high-rise residential architecture isn’t great architecture. There are some good examples, though. I would argue that not every building should be a landmark, and that if every building tried to be a landmark, we would have no landmarks. There is a difference between building good-quality background buildings that work in an urban environment, and understanding when and how and where a landmark building should be.

That’s why it’s important to talk about contemporary architecture that works in an urban context. How does it work on the street? How does it work on the skyline? How does the facade play off the other buildings on that street?

It’s not our job in planning to dictate our architectural style. Sometimes we may want to go too far in that regard, and I think it’s very important not to cross that line. It’s a fuzzy line, but it’s important for us not to tell an architect how to design a building, but to tell an architect and a developer the principles that the building should achieve.

Yet with redevelopment, and the federal government exempt from planning department guidelines, a lot of what you might want to achieve in a certain area or adjacent area...

You wouldn’t be talking about a certain example? I think that one of the most dramatic new high-rise buildings is one that was exempt, [Morphosis’ Federal Building] Sure. But the federal government, as much as it builds, doesn’t build one of those every year in most cities. How long did it take to get that project built? That building has its own challenges in terms of the tone that it set for that particular neighborhood. But I would also say that I think it is part of the government’s job to push the envelope.

The Seattle Central Library designed by Rem Koolhaas is a very controversial building. It’s essentially a giant experiment, and some parts of that experiment are not going to work. Koolhaas has a tendency to use materials that aren’t tested, are experimental. Some of those materials simply aren’t going to work. But that’s okay.

If we can just relax about that as a society and as a city, there are advantages to having that experiment. There are things about the building that don’t work on the street; I wish it was different on some of those streetfrontages, but all in all, I actually think it’s an exciting new building for the city.

The federal building here is what it is. Part of the problem is that it’s essentially an 8:00-to-5:00, Monday-through-Friday office building. If that building had other uses that activated it, I’m not sure that people would feel so strongly about it. What are some of the lessons from the other cities where you have worked that you can bring here?

I think San Francisco needs to take a little bit of a step back from the conflicts and discussions about details of development projects and neighborhood plans—all of which are important. But we seem to have lost the perspective on why we’re doing all this.

I would like to have a conversation about growth management, about how the city wants to grow, and how we should shape growth. I think Seattle has done a good job with this because of all the issues of growth management and controlling sprawl in that region.

So often the conversation seems to be about a conflict between people who want to build something and people who don’t want it to be built. The conversation should be about how we can shape growth that benefits the city in the long run. The city will grow whether we want it to or not.

Let’s expand on that a little and talk about regional planning. That’s a hot button and very hard to implement, but can we put our local planning efforts into a regional context?

I must say I’m a little disappointed that I’ve not heard more of that. I think it’s important. I think the major urban centers in the Bay Area have a responsibility to accept a fair amount of growth just because of the regional issues and regional sprawl.

Again, Seattle is a good lesson there. It certainly has not solved the regional discussion by any means. And not nearly as much as cities like Portland and Minneapolis have.

Because of the state growth management act, King County [in Seattle] literally has an urban growth boundary, much like Portland and Vancouver. We copied that from Portland. All good things in urban planning are copied from Portland, I guess.

What the state growth management act forces us to do is to talk to each other at a regional level.

There is still a tremendous amount of fighting between urban municipalities and suburban municipalities that will not accept certain minimum densities and all those things that are important to growth management. But at least they are at the table with each other. It isn’t clear to me that people are sitting at the same table here. Yet.
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