LA TALKS MERGING PLANNING AND BUILDING SAFETY DEPARTMENTS

Weight Watchers

“We support the concept, but the devil is in the details” might as well be the mantra for the city of Los Angeles and its constituents as it contemplates the possible merger of the Department of City Planning (DCP) and the Department of Building and Safety (DBS). The topic was the focus of a recent Planning and Land Use Management Committee of the city council.

If completed, the merger would create a Department of City Planning and Development, also folding in key development roles now under the Department of Public Works’ bureaus of Engineering and Contract Administration, and under the Fire Department and the Department of Transportation, according to a joint recommendation  

SPECIAL SECTION: FACADES

SAN FRANCISCO MOVES TO ESTABLISH ECO DISTRICTS

EFFICIENCIES OF SCALE

Student proposal of ceramic roof tile water filtration system for the Central Corridor eco-district.

In the year since AN covered plans for a Seattle eco-district—a sustainability framework in the city’s Capitol Hill neighborhood—other cities from coast to coast have discussed and proposed similar ideas. San Francisco, for one, is examining the incorporation of four types of eco-districts into various zones and  

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GOVAN AND ZUMTHOR UNVEIL NEW MUSEUM

LACMA TAR PATCH

Finally, plans for LA’s most anticipated new piece of architecture in more than a generation are starting to move beyond the realm of speculation. In early June, Swiss architect Peter Zumthor and Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) director Michael Govan sat down in front of an audience to discuss new designs for the museum, while the exhibition The Presence of the Past: Peter Zumthor Reconsiders LACMA opened for previews.

The plans are far from complete, but at this point Govan and Zumthor are hoping to replace most of the museum’s 1960s and 1980s structures with a two-story, amoeba-like building that curves its way around the east side of the LACMA campus. A six-ton (yes, six-ton) model of the design is now the centerpiece of The Presence of the Past. After more than three years of relatively fruitless investigations with Govan, Zumthor admitted that he came up with the sinuous shape “out of pure desperation,” jotting the sketch down in haste. “The only way to relate to everything was to be its own thing.”  

SAN FRANCISCO MOVES TO ESTABLISH ECO DISTRICTS

NATURE'S BEST

The Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County is an excellent primer in the ongoing study of how to fix the sometimes brutal mistakes of midcentury LA. In this case, a beautiful 1913 Beaux Arts Museum had been slowly deadened and broken up through several soulless additions between 1925 and 1976. During the same period, acres of surface parking crept over a once grassy expanse, and the museum slowly lost its stature and popularity.

Just in time for the museum’s 100th anniversary, a team led by CO Architects, Mia Lehrer + Associates, and Matt Construction have returned both the grandeur and the grass, adding a 21st century touch through a combination of hi-tech architectural and organic landscape interventions. The museum’s 3.5 acre Nature Gardens room for which was opened up by a new two-story parking lot at the  

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It seems lately that the center for exuberant urban experiment in Los Angeles is the parking lot. At SCI-Arc’s lot sits the skeleton of P-A-T-T-E-R-N-S multi-story, shape-defying League of Shadows installation, the school’s solar decathlon entry, on rails so it can transform itself, and Oyler Wu’s bellowing Storm Cloud installation made for graduation.

At the MOCA Contemporary’s parking lot I recently visited a thought-provoking exhibition called On The Road, with the work of several young firms presented inside U-Haul trucks. At the Natural History Museum an amazing new garden—where museum exhibits and experiments are now on display outside—was made possible by removing a surface parking lot and building a parking structure on the corner of the site.

And at Cal Poly Pomona I visited an architecture studio in a parking lot where students created mind-warping designs for bicycle racks.

And why shouldn’t the parking lot be the place to be? As architectural experimenters becomes somewhat tired of the saturated virtual world, they are seeking to branch out…gasp…into the physical one. And it seems that our urban realm has become so overdeveloped that there are less and less spaces to do this.

Of course parking lots are not ideal places for such work. In SCI-Arc’s case, all the work has angered students and staff by taking up parking spaces. At many of these locations the heat island effect can be overwhelming; and of course there’s always the risk of getting run over. Maybe what we really need is real public cultural space? Not just leftover infrastructure.

As our urban fabric moves into the 21st century, we need to rethink our infrastructure in serious, holistic ways. While we’re stuck resorting to parking lot cultural space there’s so much wasted infrastructure that could be transformed into something better.

Outside of turning parking lots into parks, why can’t the concrete-lined LA River become a place to show off art? How about the subway? Have you ever seen the amazing subway stations in Stockholm? You should take a look. And why do the spaces under freeways need to be vacant concrete zones? In Mexico City, for instance, they’re the spaces for parks. Smart infrastructure planning goes a long way. Then of course there’s the most famous example: re-using an abandoned train line to become the High Line in New York.

Maybe if architects began to think more seriously beyond the building zones? In Mexico City, for instance, they’re the spaces for parks. Smart infrastructure planning goes a long way. Then of course there’s the most famous example: re-using an abandoned train line to become the High Line in New York.

Maybe if architects began to think more seriously beyond the building

8 OCTAVIA

When a four-block stretch of San Francisco’s Central Freeway—a two-story elevated highway running through Hayes Valley—was demolished in 2002 after being deemed seismically unstable, the California Department of Transportation gave the city the blighted and previously inaccessible land below. Reinvented in 2005 as the ground-level Octavia Boulevard, the area is transforming into a gateway to the city. There is a new park, Hayes Green, and now construction has started on 8 Octavia, a stepped, five-to-seven-story, 47-unit condo designed by Stanley Saitowitz | Natoma Architects.

Occupying a slim, previously undeveloped, sloped piece of land at the corner of Octavia Boulevard and Market Street, the glass curtain-wall clad 8 Octavia will offer flexibility for customization—allowing residents to tailor one-bedroom to three-bedroom layouts to suit their needs. Average units are slightly more than 950 square feet and the building will include seven below-market-rate units. A pod option groups the kitchen, bathroom, and washer/dryer together, freeing up living space. Reconfigurable wall panels allow the interior spaces to evolve easily. Light wells and adjustable colored sunshades help optimize natural light without sacrificing privacy at the busy intersection. 8 Octavia will also include 24 bicycle stalls in addition to parking for cars, with more than 2,000 square feet of ground-floor retail space. ARIEL ROSENSTOCK
The idea of building a little lemonade stand in upscale Beverly Hills is somewhat laughable, but that was nonetheless the inspiration for LA firm Standard, which recently completed Pressed Juicery on Bedford Drive, not far from Gucci and Prada.

The store’s other locations at the time, in Brentwood, and West Hollywood, were both holes in the walls, where you order through a little window. That wasn’t an option in this tony district. The entire space is only 30 square feet. Its bright, simple palette of white oak timbers, white tile, and exposed light bulbs, doesn’t just evoke a stand, it calls out the company’s natural ingredients.

The store’s rhythmically spaced timbers repeat themselves on the walls and on the ceiling. Their pattern, seemingly random, is actually based on the Fibonacci Code, a mathematical sequence often found in nature.

The location has become the prototype for a group of 10 stores that the company has now built throughout California, some of them as small as 100 square feet. Who says bigger is better?

Student proposal for storm water collection system park under Highway 80.

MOCA: THE EAVESDROP THAT KEEPS ON DROPPING

What would Eavesdrop be without a little gossip from the MOCA show A New Sculpturalism: Contemporary Architecture in Southern California? When last we checked in the show was back on, but at a later date. Now we hear that curator Christopher Mount is out and Thom Mayne is in. Mayne, according to his assistant, is merely “facilitating” the show, but we hear from several participants that Mayne’s office has become the primary point of contact. Others say he is adding new firms to the show’s roster. And finally we hear that Mayne has convinced Frank Gehry to rejoin the show after dropping out about a month ago (we like to think it was our editorial, although that’s probably not true). With the outsourcing of LA talent on display in the show, it’s ironic that LACMA director Michael Govan has chosen a Swiss architect to redesign the city’s most important cultural faculty. Can’t LA architects get a break?

(VERY) BIKE FRIENDLY STREETS

It’s summer time! And you know what that means, cycling enthusiasts! Time to (very) carefully cover your bike seats and get ready for the World Naked Bike Ride! Yes, on June 8 cyclists up and down the West Coast (and in other cities) rode completely or partially naked through the streets of their respective metropolises. In San Francisco they braved a recent ban on public nudity. In Los Angeles they cruised through the hipster zones of Silver Lake and Echo Park, and in Portland they even had a naked marching band to cheer them on. If that’s not an argument for bike friendly streets, we don’t know what is.

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EFFICIENCIES OF SCALE continued from front page neighborhoods, seeking to find environmentally friendly solutions to energy demands, pollution, and overcrowding. In SF’s South of Market (SoMa) area, the major effort is called the Central Corridor Eco-District, which will entail a unified approach through transit-oriented development with upzoning and increasing height allowances, as well as energy, water, waste, and green space management. The scope is a roughly 20-square-block area bordered by Mission Street to the north, 2nd Street to the east, Townsend Street to the south, and 6th Street to the west.

As part of the project, the modified zoning would add office space for more than 19,000 workers and 8,000 housing units, intersected by the under-construction Central Subway extension of the Muni Metro. The eco-district is classified as Type Two, or “The Patchwork Quilt,” for its mixture of undeveloped and developed land and range of property use.

While the idea of district-wide sustainability is not new, SF’s proposal takes a holistic approach, unifying critical urban infrastructure, including transportation, human networks, resources, and materials. Advocates claim that, with the district in place, SoMa will be able to take more proactive, deliberative measures to push efficient and effective sustainable solutions. Aggregated resource demands could provide opportunities for a more unified distribution system for water and energy. For example, one property owner could use the recycled wastewater from another property with an onsite water filtration system, or group purchasing could help bring costs down for installing solar systems.

“In a city where neighborhood edges are somewhat blurry, why focus on sustainability at this scale instead of an ‘all-of-the-above, everywhere’ approach?” said Laura Tam, sustainable development policy director at the San Francisco Planning and Urban Research Association.

While the district is currently in the community and stakeholder outreach phase, last summer a group of seven landscape architecture graduate students working with Sausalito-based landscape architecture firm SWA Group put forward several design ideas for the district. One student proposed a pedestrian and bicycle only street.

Another envisioned a storm water collection system as a water park under Highway 80. A third imagined a fence of reused ceramic roof tiles as a sculptural water filter.

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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CENTRAL CORRIDOR ECO-DISTRICT PLAN IS EXPECTED BY LATE 2014.

ARIEL ROSENSTOCK
David Baker & Daniel Simons of the San Francisco–based practice David Baker + Partners focus their firm on urban mixed-use housing, and on using simple forms and materials without stylistic preconceptions. They create a complexity and richness that grows out of working within the many constraints that housing brings to the table. The architects have been busy lately, completing a string of projects in the last year.

Working with an increasingly broad palette of affordable materials, the firm has developed a particular brand of humility. It could be called anti-elitist work, particularly their affordable housing projects. Baker and Simons’ goal is to move away from the mistakes of the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, including cost containment and impersonal design. In the grand scheme of things, the architects hope to promote a greater sense of community experience and customer satisfaction, the customer being the developer and, at the larger scale, the user, who is often overlooked in projects such as these. To Baker and Simons, architecture is meant to be, above and beyond anything else, humane.

STATION CENTER FAMILY HOUSING
UNION CITY, CALIFORNIA
Located in Union City, just south of the San Mateo Bridge and across the bay from Palo Alto, this high-density housing development is made up of 107 affordable rental units in two buildings. The units feature large operable windows, private decks, high-efficiency lighting, and ample sound isolation between units. The project is defined by the staccato rhythm of its individual units, which flow around communal activity zones, including a pool, landscaped areas designed by Fletcher Studio (including a sculpture of two battling gorillas), and a series of programs for youths and teens.

EQUITY POTRERO
LA VALENTINA STATION
EQUITY POTRERO
LA VALENTINA STATION
FILLMORE PARK
STATION CENTER FAMILY HOUSING
LA VALENTINA STATION
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA
Located beside the light rail line in Sacramento, this 63-unit affordable rental housing development aims to become a beacon of the future of downtown. Situated on a previously unused city site, a remediated brownfield, it focuses on simple and effective planning. A painted, and curving polyvinylchloride (PVC) rainscreen creates a memorable striped facade. Now this once-neglected area is more connected to the surrounding neighborhoods and the building brings a high-design sensibility to a once blighted area.

EQUITY POTRERO
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA
This as-yet-unbuilt project slated for the Mission Bay/Potrero Hill neighborhoods of San Francisco features two buildings and a new 40,000-square-foot park. It seeks to hone in on the intersection between public and private lives by weaving their paths together to provide new sensibilities and intermingled experiences. The two mid-rise buildings connect to the neighborhood through street-level commercial retail space. The building can be thought of as a community of its own, producing a sense of place at the borders of a once derelict industrial wasteland.

FILLMORE PARK
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA
This affordable community brings 32 modern homes to San Francisco for working families and individuals. Located in the Fillmore district, this was the final project of the now-defunct San Francisco Redevelopment Agency’s Limited Equity Program, which sought to increase affordable homeownership opportunities to residents of the city. It’s simple color scheme and balanced weight and scale between dwelling and public spaces creates a harmonic and subdued chorus that exudes a certain calm.
LACMA TAR PATCH continued from front page noted Govan of Zumthor’s inspiration, which despite its shapelessness is still very much informed by the site, curving around existing buildings (including Bruce Goff’s Japanese Pavilion, which will be preserved) and landscape features. And from that point the two went about remaking what a museum could be.

In plan, pointed out Zumthor, the jet black building resembles a lake, relating to the adjacent La Brea Tar Pits, which he called the most remarkable element of LACMA’s site. The building will have no primary facade, of LACMA’s site. The building will have no primary facade, and no backside. Those willing to enter can do so through any number of entries on the first floor. The structure, though, will not be an uninterrupted mass. Inside, it will be divided into six cores, unlike the traditional museum composition of a singular structure lined with large hallways with adjoining galleries. Instead of following a strict hierarchy of time and place, the plan, said Govan, will not privilege any one part of the museum more than another. Informal galleries and congregation spaces will dominate the bottom floor, with formal galleries above. Visitors will be able to travel around the building, wrapped on both levels in floor-to-ceiling glass, via a meandering veranda. Zumthor called this overlooking space “looking for a clearing in the forest.” Glass zones near the exterior will allow for congregation and will be able to act as galleries on display to the outside 24 hours a day. “Transparency rules,” said Govan, who proposed “eradicating the idea of storage,” putting as much as possible of the collection on display. The naturally ventilated building, topped by a massive solar array, will seek to generate more energy than it uses. The Resnick Pavilion, BCAM, and the Asian Pavilion will host exhibitions during construction.

Govan’s rationale for tearing down the majority of the museum’s original buildings was impossible because the addition essentially ripped them apart. At that, Zumthor jumped in, summing up his feeling about the current complex. “When I saw this I thought it had to go.” Zumthor told AN that he hoped the museum could be completed in seven years. The new plan’s cost has been reported at upwards of $650 million, a major obstacle in any economy. Other barriers include approval of the scheme by the museum’s board, which has yet to vote on the plan, approval by Los Angeles County, which owns the land, and, of course, the support of citizens and museumgoers.

Already some opposition has emerged in the preservation community. A Facebook page called “Save and Restore the Original LACMA Buildings” has compiled more than 300 likes since being founded on June 1. “This is not the support of citizens and museumgoers. An alternative to Zumthor: “Your last museum took 12 years to build!” he said.
of jagged dry-stacked rock formations overgrown with plants. And the Water Story recreates the city’s water system, starting with a 27,000-gallon pond inset with boulders and trees, progressing into a waterless arroyo and, eventually, into a contained portion reminiscent of the Los Angeles River. Closer to the museum, Nature Lab, filled with more than 200 specimens of animals and insects, allows scientists from the museum to carry out their studies in the open air, rather than being stuck in a lab.

The Otis Booth Pavilion is the museum’s centerpiece, a 67-foot-tall glass cube that now welcomes visitors from Exposition Boulevard. The pavilion is entered via a steel pedestrian bridge, whose taut frame was inspired by the huge fin whale skeleton that hangs inside. While not a wholly original form for a science museum, the cube carries out the institution’s goal of attracting people and connecting inside with outside. A translucent scrim LED wall at the rear of the cube pulsates with colored light and images that reflect off the bones of the 63-foot-long whale.

To maintain the feeling of uninterrupted glass, the entire curtain wall, all 144 panels of glass, hangs from steel trusses of similar design to the entrance bridge. Smaller horizontal girders handle wind loads. The glass is clear on the north side and is fritted on the east and west sides. The curtain wall can also be activated by a sound system that makes it vibrate like a speaker.

Finally, after decades of managing in relative obscurity, the museum has a grand new entry and inventive, approachable surroundings.

The museum’s 1913 Beaux-Arts building received a renovation and seismic retrofit. CO has been working on the project for some time. Much of the firm’s renovation and reorganization of the complex—including the renovation of 108,000 square feet of space, with twelve new galleries—was completed a couple of years ago. Now the entire scope of work is complete, including a seismic retrofit of the 1913 building’s grand dome that removed two inches of the concrete slab load and replaced it with lightweight carbon fiber.

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For as much as the rejuvenation of American cities during the past two decades has been accomplished by grassroots, D.I.Y. movements, the 21st Century is seeing a return of the urban master plan. John Gendall goes on a coast-to-coast tour of some of the country’s biggest inner-city development projects to find out how today’s master planners are finding ways to reconcile Robert Moses and Jane Jacobs.

If you’re a reader of design magazines, you may be forgiven for thinking that 21st century urbanism is a product of popsicle stands and micro-gardens. In part, fueled by a distaste for anything that had a hand in the 2008 economic collapse (main characters: bankers, big government, and needlessly risky developers), urban theory took a turn to the grass-roots, self-starting stories that sprang up in the fault lines of the Clinton/Bush-era real estate bonanza. The American city, though, is facing a critical turning point, having to reckon with changing economic engines, the public health realities of environmental abuse, and a cultural reevaluation of the suburbs. While I like artisanal popsicles as much as the next person (truth be told, I like them more), with a glut of these so-called D.I.Y. Urbanism projects pinballing through blogs and magazines, it seems right to ask ‘where has the master plan gone?’

One answer would be Chicago, where what is expected to be a $4 billion development is reconfiguring an entire swath of the South Side. Back in 1901, when U.S. Steel set up shop—a shop in the form of a 600-acre landfill on Lake Michigan—it chose its site directly on the lake, where its long horizontal mills could make use of the water for incoming supplies and outgoing waste. Though the industrial site drove a wedge between the city’s South Side and the waterfront, economic benefits in the form of thousands of jobs justified the location. When it was shuttered in 1992, not only did those jobs vanish, but the environmentally compromised site was left as a blight to the neighborhood. Less than ten years ago, Lakeside Development (a joint venture between U.S. Steel and McCaffery Interests) hired SOM and Sasaki to design a master plan for the future development of the old mill.

“One of our first priorities is to deliver infrastructure to the site,” said Douglas Voigt, SOM’s director of urban design. “And we don’t want those technologies to come from 40 to 50 years ago, but rather 100 years in the future.” The way the designers see that future is in the form of a possible micro-grid (not unlike a university campus), where energy from wind and/or solar technologies could be generated by the district and sold to the city in times of excess. The plan also overhauls the site’s relationship to the water. Taking advantage of the landfill’s porous slag, the designers plan to allow rainwater to filter through the remediated terrain, where it will then return to the lake and recharge its water table. For the design team, the project is not about mitigating the environmental detriments of building, but about casting development as an environmental...
incorporating multi-metal transit at Grimshaw and Gruen Associates, to as well as a multi-modal transit hub.

Left: One possible solution, by incorporating multi-metal transit at Grimshaw and Gruen Associates, to as well as a multi-modal transit hub.

Above: SOM, Hargreaves Associates, and Kiewit are turning Denver's Union Station into a centerpiece for the city, as well as a multi-modal transit hub.

Left: One possible solution, by Grimshaw and Gruen Associates, to incorporating multi-metal transit at La's Union Station.

Previous page: SOM and Sasaki are transforming a 600-acre former U.S. Steel mill on Chicago's South Side into a mixed-use district with parks, a marina, and small block sizes;

Above: SOM, Hargreaves Associates, and Kiewit are turning Denver's Union Station into a centerpiece for the city, as well as a multi-modal transit hub.

Left: One possible solution, by Grimshaw and Gruen Associates, to incorporating multi-metal transit at La's Union Station.

possibility. “We want the project to create a positive contribution to the site’s ecology,” said Voigt. But this is no experiment in environmental technologies. The designers are quick to foreground the human experience of what will become a new district, Parks and open space, a recreational marina, and smaller block sizes will enhance the quality of life for residents.

Mention large-scale master plans and transportation policy is never far behind. “Transportation is still one of the larger challenges,” conceded Voigt. “It's as much cultural as it is an issue of technology.”

Nowhere is this truer than in Los Angeles. The city that mythologized the age of the automobile is now expanding its subway system, seeing surging volumes on its regional rail lines, and is anticipating the arrival of high-speed rail. In the midst of this diversifying transportation network sits Union Station, a 1939 architectural gem ringed by parking. Metro, which bought the 47-acre property in 2011, hired Gruen Associates and Grimshaw Architects to turn the building into an urban workhorse.

Built in the Golden Age of Hollywood, it was designed for 7,000 daily passengers. It now moves 70,000. In the midst of a bourgeoning downtown, and next door to the vibrant Little Tokyo and Chinatown neighborhoods, Union Station was never fully integrated into the urban landscape. “Our first goal is to address the transit needs,” explained Cal Hollis, Metro’s executive officer of countywide planning. “It was built as a transit building, but it’s now a multi-modal transportation hub.” The master plan will also include two office buildings and approximately 250 residential units as a way to link the building with the surrounding area. “It’s now perceived as not a part of downtown, so we want to tie it in better with the area by making better pedestrian connections,” said Hollis.

L.A. can find a useful model in Denver, which, next spring, will cut the ribbon on its own historic Union Station as the center of a multi-modal transportation network. “We had several disconnected elements feeding into downtown,” explained Bill Mosher, senior managing director of developer Trammell Crow and the owner’s representative for the Denver Union Station Project Authority. “The issue was where to put the hub.” That hub, they determined, would be the 19th century train station that the design/build joint venture between SOM, Hargreaves Associates, and Kiewit is now reconfiguring into not only a centerpiece for a revamped city and regional transportation strategy, but also as an important connective public space between downtown and the Central Platte Valley. Owing to the real estate development that the project has instigated, Mosher said the project will account for more than $1 billion of development, dramatically transforming the physical and economic landscape of that area.

The Denver project highlights the critical role of what has become an Obama-era lightning rod: government spending. “There has to be an understanding of the role of government,” said Mosher. Citing voter-approved financing for a 2004 transportation initiative, he added, “there has to be public investment, which is then followed by the private sector.”

This is a formula that New Yorkers will recognize from the much-anticipated Hudson Yards redevelopment, the genesis of which can be found in the extension of the MTA’s No. 7 subway. A master plan conceived by KPF will harness the $2 billion of transportation investment into a 26-acre mixed-use area, zoned for more than 13 million square feet of development, both commercial and residential. Whereas urban development on this scale has been maligned in the past for carrying out heavy-handed top-down approaches, KPF is determined to avoid the mistakes of earlier planners. “The key is to create an exciting urban experience,” said KPF founding design partner Bill Pedersen. “You can’t just build a bunch of office buildings.” Up high, the tilting forms of the two main towers are meant to integrate into the Manhattan skyline, gesturing, on one hand, toward the Hudson River and, on the other, toward the towers of Midtown. But much of the master plan’s emphasis is on the street level. “We considered the position of the human body and its relationship to the environment so that it’s always changing as you walk around,” said Pedersen. Pointing out the way the towers scale down to meet Diller Scfidio + Renfro’s Culture Shed, and the way the Highline will cut straight through the building volume, he stressed that “the connection to the city is the crucial element.”

These immense urban developments point to a changing cultural and demographic reality. The most recent U.S. census data shows that urban populations are growing faster than populations in non-urban areas, meaning that America’s cities are swelling (and are projected to continue that trajectory with increasing volume). Absent an outward expansion of the suburbs, basic arithmetic points to the need for cogently planned densification.

A current master plan for The Blairs, in Silver Spring, Maryland, doubles as a diagram of this data. Built by a private developer in the 1960s as a suburban foil to Washington, the 27-acre community had 1,300 residential units in slab buildings surrounded by parking lots. The Tower Companies, the development’s original owner, hired Bing Thom Architects and Sasaki...
to design a plan for a denser development. With a comprehensive approach, the team was able to increase density even while adding open green space by relocating most of the 3,200 parking spaces underground. “The key was to create a series of public spaces that not only allow for recreation, but also to complement the commercial spaces around it,” said Ling Meng, a director at Bing Thom Architects. The plan doubles the residential units to 2,800. As Sasaki principal Alan Ward put it, “The challenge in developing this many units would be that it could have resulted in a mega-tower, but by keeping the geometries varied and developing residential blocks wrapped by townhouses, the entire community will have a very human scale.”

The present debate between D.I.Y. and master planned urbanism still runs on the fumes of what has become an immensely reductive clash between Robert Moses and Jane Jacobs. While there is much to be learned from their legacies, to keep them in the kick-boxing ring of urban theory glosses over much of the nuance in counter-productive ways. The Cross-Bronx Expressway, put in place by Moses, is an urban disgrace. And the fact that there still exists a Greenwich Village, saved by Jacobs, is a delightful highlight in the history of community activism. But there is more to the story than the technocratic power broker setting out to squelch the crazy dame. While the examples above involve decades of contentious public debate, byzantine political processes, and expensive budgets, they also borrow principles from each of the archrivals. To begin with, each of these master plans includes the chorus of many different community voices. “It takes time and money, yes, but it also takes a remarkable amount of civic will and a real commitment to the area,” said Mosher. Sasaki principal Dennis Pieprz put it differently: “We work on projects around the globe, and one of the things that is present in the U.S. that you don’t see elsewhere is the very active process of community engagement.”

“As that movement happens, master plans—having learned from mistakes in the past and responding to active, thoughtful community engagement—have the capacity to render these cities more equitable, environmentally sustainable, and perfectly suitable for all kinds of D.I.Y. interventions. These types of projects are opportunities to do more than just develop an economic expansion of cities. She wanted to see development in the form of mixed-use environments.”

She did write The Death and Life of Great American Cities, yes, but she followed that up with The Economy of Cities and Cities and the Wealth of Nations. To turn that popsicle stand into a popsicle store, and then to parlay that into a popsicle distribution company demands a dense local market complete with efficient transportation networks, diverse housing stock, and infrastructure. The knee-jerk vilification of Moses is similarly unproductive. “Urban renewal is such a loaded term because it is so associated with Robert Moses and with community displacement, but it did some important things, like transit-oriented affordable housing,” said Chakrabarti. “That whole era has been made a caricature of itself.”

Dense urban areas make an environmental and economic case for themselves, but there is also a more intangible argument to be made for this type of urban regeneration: the cultural reconsideration of the suburbs as the desired life endpoint. “The suburbs are not just a consequence of the market,” said Chakrabarti, paraphrasing a theme of his forthcoming book, A Country of Cities (Metropolis Books, 2013). “There is a $100-billion-per-year federal subsidy to support the suburbs. If you were to level the playing field, we’d see even more movement into cities.”

JOHN GENNALL IS A NEW YORK-BASED ARCHITECTURE WRITER.
While designing a sustainable project is a holistic job, one of the largest contributors to the success of a green building—both in terms of energy efficiency as well as occupant comfort—is the facade. In this special section, we look at the manufacturers who are pushing the envelope of building cladding systems, and zero in on five projects that show the design potential of the contemporary facade.
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1 SIKAMEBRAN SYSTEM
SIKA
SIKA.COM

Made from a special EPDM rubber for all climates, the SikaMembran System is composed of a series of sheet materials that bond directly to proprietary adhesives. The sealant solution is not a vapor barrier but a method of control, permitting humidity within construction materials to evaporate. A relatively high diffusion resistance facilitates applications on both the warm and cold sides of construction. When applied to facade elements and windows, SikaMembran ensures resistance against wind pressure and high mechanical stress, including wind loads of up to 4 kPa.

2 SSG4600
GE
GE.COM/SILICONES

GE’s SSG4600 is a silicone-based sealant made for protective glazing applications. In addition to firmly sealing out air and water long-term, SSG4600 can withstand exposure to ultraviolet radiation, high and low temperature extremes, rain, snow, natural weathering, and seismic activity. The two-part elastomeric adhesive/sealant features a handling time of four hours to meet demanding timelines, with a flexible mix ratio that can be adjusted to suit the project or climate at hand. Its smooth consistency adheres to most conventional substrates including anodized aluminum, alodine, PVF2, powder coating, and glass. It is available in Black and Grey.

3 791 Silicone Weatherproofing Sealant
DOW CORNING
DOWCORNING.COM

Designed for general glazing and weather sealing on curtain walls and building facades, 791 Silicone Weatherproofing Sealant cures neutrally by reacting to moisture in the air for a flexible yet durable rubber seal. Ideal for expansion, connection, perimeter, and other movement joints, the sealant extrudes smoothly in any weather and adheres to a variety of building components without any requisite preparations. In addition to reliable weather, sunlight, rain, snow, and ozone resistance, Dow Corning’s 791 meets ASTM requirements and VOC content guidelines determined by the South Coast Air Quality Management District of California. It is available in Black, Gray, Bronze, Limestone, Precast White, and White with the option of a 20-year limited warranty.

4 890FTS AND 890FTS-TXR
PECORA
PECORA.COM

This field-tintable silicone maximizes efficiency with a mixing time of only three minutes, thanks to the absence of an activator. Its oil-free formula doesn’t pick up dirt like traditional silicone products, so the material’s color and texture qualities remain uncompromised. It does not stain marble, granite, or limestone, and bonds firmly to mill-finished aluminum and Kynar without a primer. 890FTS and 890FTS-TXR come in a smooth or textured consistency for a grout-like finish that permits joint movement of +/- 50 percent. Available in Pecora’s 61 standard colors, the sealants also coordinate with the company’s urethane products.

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For the James B. Hunt Jr. Library in Raleigh, North Carolina, Snøhetta sought to relate to the campus’ and state’s historical connection to the textile industry. “The idea of weaving threads and inserting textural quality was very appealing,” said Nic Rader, an architect who worked on the project. The facade itself is a weave of the interior and the landscape as the zig-zag of exterior louvers correlates to the stairs inside the building. Working with executive architects Clark Nexsen to devise the most efficient facade, the design team selected glass with a 30 percent charcoal frit and deflected the wall with aluminum solar blades that reflect and diffuse light, mitigating glare. The panoramic south-facing window features a cantilever that twists at opposing corners to absorb the bulk of summer sun, but maintains solar access for passive heating in winter. Since the state-funded project had to be built to LEED Silver standards, the facade is one of several sustainable building strategies. The building’s roof is white to reduce the heat island effect; solar panels heat hot water; native vegetation dots the landscape; and an automated storage retrieval system reduced the footprint needed to accommodate 2 million volumes by 1/9. The design team also used a chilled beam system in the building’s heating and cooling strategy, an energy-saving approach that is popular in the Northeastern U.S. but has not been utilized with as much frequency in the South.

Architects: Snøhetta; Clark Nexsen (executive)
Engineers: Stewart Engineering (structural); ColeJenest & Stone (civil)
Facade suppliers: AkzoNobel; Viracon (glass); Bonnell (vertical solar blades)
For the renovation of and addition to the Mark Jefferson Science Building at Eastern Michigan University, Lord Aeck & Sargent devised a multitude of opportunities to reduce the building's carbon footprint. In addition to stormwater management strategies and a green roof, updating the building's facade presented great opportunity for daylight management. A new pedestrian walkway shades the original 1960s brick and stone trim along the west side. Elsewhere, metal fabric supplier GKD fabricated exterior sunshades to mitigate direct sunlight, while maintaining the user benefits and energy savings of natural daylight. Applied to all three tiers of the building's exterior, 89 panels of stainless steel mesh shield the curtain wall for substantial temperature control. According to a recent case study, portions of the curtain wall that were shaded on a sunny, 75-degree day were only 9.3 percent warmer than the air temperature at 82 degrees, whereas un-shaded exterior areas were 25.3 percent warmer at 94 degrees.

The combined strategies yielded a 31.5 percent improvement in baseline building performance and the project was recently awarded LEED Gold in the New Construction v2.2 category.

Architect: Lord Aeck & Sargent
Engineer: Mike Leonard of GKD
Facade consultant: GKD Metal Fabrics
Facade supplier: GKD Metal Fabrics
During the Utah State Capitol renovation and seismic upgrade, 204 terra cotta-clad panels were fabricated and installed on the historic 90-year-old building. Each radial truss was engineered to incorporate both new and restored terra cotta while maintaining the original rotunda drum dimensions and blending harmoniously with the handset terra cotta as well as the pieces that were never removed.

"Your accomplishments on the terra cotta work were extraordinary; the terra cotta column design, fabrication, and erection was definitely 'out of the box thinking', a trait that is common for your group."

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For the winning proposal of a public library in Washington, D.C., Adjaye Associates designed a building that is equal parts transparent and reflective. The strategy draws a connection between the interior and the surrounding woods of Fort Davis Park. A low-E, double insulated, two-story curtain wall combines clear, uncoated glass panels and panels with an 80 percent mirrored finish on the number two surface. The angle of a large, canopied roof that cantilevers over the south side of the building was refined to harvest solar heat gain in winter, while shading the south-facing facade in summer. The diaphragm of the roof is also tied into the glass box to absorb torsion and reduce the need for additional structural steel.

The geometric diamond pattern of the exterior translates to the interior with deep-set wooden window niches that directly correspond to the facade apertures. “The whole approach to the building was to feel like one was still sitting in the park,” said Russell Crader, a project director with Adjaye Associates. “Because the apertures capture the park like settings around the building, seeing people reading in those niches is really quite beautiful.”

A combination of solar management strategies facilitated by the facade, energy efficient heating and cooling systems, and the use of regional materials won the project LEED Silver certification.

**Architect:** Adjaye Associates

**Engineers:** ReStl Designers, Inc. (structural); Setty & Associates (mechanical)

**Facade supplier:** Guardian Industries
Double skin facades are a burgeoning building envelope solution utilized primarily in colder regions. So Ingenhoven’s winning proposal from a 2006 design competition for 1 Blight Street in Sydney, Australia, was a surprising solution for the warmer climate down under. Both of the facade’s curved interior and exterior walls are constructed from glass with 62 percent visible light transmittance, and between the two skins are 1,780 specialty Venetian blinds, controlled by 897 individually programmed controllers. Each of the building’s 64 rentable spaces feature louver angles programmed with unique information that combines the sun’s angle of incidence, absolute positioning within the building, and the space’s relative position to adjacent buildings to determine the degree to which the blinds will open. Due to the elliptical curvature of the plan, each of the 30 stories receives sunlight throughout the day, whereas if the building had flat walls and four corners, the blinds would need to remain closed. The gap between the two skins also keeps the building cool, thanks to operable louvers at the end of each floor slab. Air enters through the base of the building and circulates through the cavity, exiting at the top. This enables natural ventilation of corridors and the reduction of HVAC equipment for an additional 10 percent area for leasing.

Architect: Ingenhoven Architects
Engineers: Enstruct Corp. (structural); Arup (MEP)
Facade suppliers: Horiso (blinds); G.James Glass & Aluminum; Viracon

AL HAMRA TOWER, KUWAIT CITY, KUWAIT

At 1,353 feet tall, the Al Hamra Tower is Kuwait’s tallest building and the tallest stone-clad building in the world. In order to minimize heat gain across the building’s 74 stories, SOM designed the south facing wall with a 130-degree turn from east to west, which also reinforces the tower structurally. While the north, east, and west facades are clad in a reflective glass veil, the south wall features an opaque limestone facade designed to absorb the brunt of direct sun exposure. However, to enable a consistent material application on the upper floors, the 55- by 28- by 2-inch limestone tile format had to be amended. A mesh-mounted trencadis (broken tile mosaic) application was devised to deliver the same color and texture of the lower floors, at a fraction of the weight. The flexible mesh format also proved advantageous in conforming to the tower’s curved surfaces, which has up to 10-degree inclinations. Sheltered windows punctuate the south wall for views over the Persian Gulf.

Architect: SOM
Engineer: SOM
Facade consultant: Entek Engineering
Facade suppliers: Jura Limestone; Laticrete
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MANUFACTURERS

METALS/MESH/TENSILE FABRIC

Alcoa
This manufacturer of aluminum composite material and painted aluminum sheets has recently developed a new process in which EcoClean, a titanium dioxide coating, is applied to the pre-painted aluminum surface of Reynobond, making it the world’s first coil-coated aluminum architectural panel that actively works to clean itself and the air around it.
alcoa.com

Cambridge
Cambridge specializes in the production of woven metal mesh, a durable and sustainable architectural component that is customized to suit an architect’s vision for any type of project.
cambridgearchitectural.com

Doralco
This custom architectural metal solutions company specializes in innovative aluminum fabrication and architectural stainless steel components for projects seeking LEED certification.
doralco.com

GKD
One of the nation’s leading metal fabrication companies, with its headquarters located in Cambridge, Maryland, GKD specializes in advanced metal weaving technology. It offers an extensive selection of weave patterns that will satisfy any project’s needs.
gkdmetalfabrics.com

Rigidized Metals Corp
Rigidized Metals combines functionality and durability with beautiful finishes and rich textures to create three-dimensional metal panels perfect for architectural, industrial, and transportation applications.
rigidized.com

Shaffner Heaney Associates
This manufacturer specializes in custom-designed wall and building panel systems. The company produces architectural cladding systems, curtain walls, windows, entrances, and skylights.
shaffnerheaney.com

Spectrum Metal Finishing
This Youngstown, Ohio–based metal coatings company specializes in the electroplating and electrodeposition of many precious and semi-precious metals using a liquid and powder coating system.
spectrummetal.com

Technical Fibre Products
Using a wet laid process, TFP manufactures high-performance nonwoven mats and veils composed of specialist fibers, including glass, metal-coated carbon, polyester, and aramid.
tfpglobal.com

United Architectural Metals
This engineered wall and facade manufacturer makes preassembled glass structures for large commercial buildings.
unitedarchitectural.com

COMPOSITES

3-Form
3-Form’s global team of artisans produces a line of high-performance Koda XT materials that are made with 40 percent recycled content, are lightweight, designed to resist intense weather conditions and UV exposure, and ideal for exterior use.
3-form.com

Birdair
Birdair specializes in tensile architecture, which incorporates the uses of recycled metals, and translucent fabric membrane roofs that are durable and allow natural daylight to filter through.
birdair.com

Construction Specialties
This global leader of architectural and engineering products has introduced its new Co/Co Bold Line Louvers. High-performance, hurricane-resistant, drainable, acoustical or blast-resistant, the louvers come in a variety of textures, colors, and shadow lines.
c-sgroup.com

Eternit
Eternit produces a wide range of functional and sustainable fiber cement facade panels that come in a variety of formats, forms, and colors and can be customized to the vision and needs of the architect.
eternit.ch

FORMICA VIVIX
This company produces solid phenolic, engineered exterior facade panels that are blast-resistant, weather and UV-resistant, easily maintained, modifiable, and come in a variety of solid colors, patterns, and wood grains.
formica.com

Goetz Composites
Known for building some of the fastest race boats and carbon fiber yachts in the world, Goetz has collaborated with energy generation companies and industrial businesses to produce architectural components and large structures, decks, and wind and hydro energy generation components.
goetzboats.com

Grace Construction Products
Grace offers innovative solutions to construction challenges through concrete admixtures and fibers, liquid pigments, processing additives, concrete masonry products, air and vapor barriers, structural waterproofing systems, residential building materials, and fire protection products.
graceconstruction.com

Kreyler & Associates
This California-based digital fabrication company specializes in making custom composites for historic preservation, new construction, sculpture, and industrial applications.
kreyler.com

Luminore
Luminore has a proprietary cold-spray application process that applies a protective layer of metal over a variety of exterior facade surfaces, including concrete, fiberglass, and foam.
luminore.com

mouldCAM
This manufacturer of composite structures uses five-axis CNC machines to create complex 3D molds for the architecture, marine, industrial, and renewable energy markets.
mouldcam.com

TRESPA
Trespa’s premier product line, Meteor, is a decorative high-pressure compact laminate panel ideal for use in innovative and functional ventilated rain-screen cladding systems, on its own, or in combination with other materials.
tresa.com

CERAMICS/CONCRETE

Casalgrande Padana
This company produces cutting-edge cladding systems made from ceramic materials with superior functional characteristics that enhance the thermal performance of walls.
casalgrande.com

casa

Cercasa Ceramica
Spanish company Cercasa manufactures and distributes ceramic and porcelain tile.
valorfabricadirect.com

Cooperativa Ceramica d’Imola
This Italian company produces glazed porcelain stoneware and porcelain stoneware for ventilated facades. The material comes in a wide range of sizes, colors, and finishes.
cimolaproject.com
Daltile

Daltile’s SlimLite Panels are ideal for interior or exterior wall applications. Made from 100 percent natural products, the thin panel design uses less energy during production, reduces carbon emissions by lowering shipping weight, and reduces costs while maintaining quality performance standards. products.daltile.com

EQUITONE

This Etex Group company produces thin, light-weight, and non-combustible sheets of fiber cement, a natural composite material used for facade construction. equitone.com

Florim Solutions

This Italian manufacturer of ceramic tiles, slabs, and porcelain stoneware specializes in ventilated facades for the construction and restoration of large-scale architectural projects. The porcelain stoneware sheets come in three different shades of gray: Ecodark, Ecogrey, Ecolight. florimsolutions.com

Grespania Ceramica

Grespania offers ventilated facades and cladding systems for both commercial and residential applications. grespania.com

Interceramic

This producer of ceramic, porcelain, and natural stone tiles used in floor and wall applications features a green line of durable products manufactured with natural clays and minerals, helping architects attain LEED certification credits. interceramicusa.com

Lea Ceramiche

Lea’s Slintech series is an ideal solution for external cladding. The ultra-thin, large-format porcelain stoneware slabs can be installed on facades with a variety of fastening systems. ceramichelea.it

Marazzi

Marazzi produces a variety porcelain stone-ware cladding solutions for energy efficient buildings. marazziarchitectural.com

NBK Ceramic

This leading terracotta facade company produces high-quality, durable, eco-friendly products. Its TERRART product line provides architects with a suspended facade system that incorporates ventilation and pressure-equalizing elements in order to extend the life of the building skin. nbk.com

Palagio Engineering USA

Palagio specializes in turn-key rain screen wall cladding facades. The company’s terracotta rainscreen is a dry, multi-layered construction system that hangs on the structural wall with an aluminum frame. palagiousa.com

Shildan

Shildan produces terracotta rain screen and sunscreen products for energy efficient building facades. Its Alphoton panel is made from extruded double-leaf terracotta strengthened by a chain of internal i-beam supports. shildan.com

TAKTL

TAKTL employs a new ultra high performance concrete formulation, which has four times the strength of traditional concrete, allowing for the low-cost and environmentally friendly production of structures that require 70 percent less material. taktl-llc.com

Tek Homes

Tek Homes provides high-quality, low-cost services for basement waterproofing, decks and patios, and concrete work. tekhomes.com

YKK AP America

YKK AP assists architects and engineers in achieving LEED certification with products like the recently launched enerGfacade series, featuring Thermashade sunshades, the industry’s only sunshade system with a thermal barrier. ykkap.com

GLASS

CRCURSA

This Barcelona-based company produces curved and flat interior and exterior glass as well as decorative, safety, and energy efficient glass. crcurssa.com

ES Windows

This South American company manufactures, distributes, and installs aluminum and glass windows, doors, and curtain walls to national and international locations. ewsilc.com

Guardian Industries

Guardian manufactures float glass and fabricated glass products such as EcoGuard Pattern, a low iron annealed tempered pattern glass that provides optimal energy and light transmission for photovoltaic energy systems. guardian.com

Hilti

These producers of cutting-edge technology manufacture innovative products like the HDA Undercut Anchor, which sets a higher standard for reliability, performance, and ease of use in the global construction industry. us.hilti.com

JÉ Berkowitz

JÉ Berkowitz fabricates architectural glass products, including insulating, heat-treated, silk-screen, and spandrel glass, laminated glass, all-glass doors and entrances, and point-supported glass systems and canopies. jeberkowitz.com

MechoSystems

MechoSystems is a pioneer developer of energy efficient solar shading systems that provide solutions to brightness, glare, and solar control problems. mechosystems.com

Oldcastle Building Envelope

This company designs, engineers, tests, and manufactures all products necessary in the delivery of the building envelope: curtain wall, windows, storefronts, doors, skylights, and architectural glass. oldcastle.com

PPG Industries

This leading coatings and specialty products company produces STARPHIRE Ultra-Clear Glass which transmits 91 percent of light, providing the highest level of transparency in the industry. ppg.com

SageGlass

The company makes switchable glazing that goes from clear to dark with the flip of a switch, letting natural light fill a building or blocking out unwanted heat gain depending on the needs of the user. sageglass.com

Skyline Windows

When the Empire State Building needed to replicate the windows of its 82nd floor level of transparency in the industry. us.hilti.com

Viracon

This architectural glass maker recently launched a new product, VUE-30, a high-performance glass coating that allows for enhanced visible light transmittance and enables architects to maximize window-to-wall ratios while meeting and exceeding domestic energy code requirements. viracon.com

W&W Glass

This New York-based metal and glass company provides solutions for the most demanding architectural projects through the Pilkington Planar System, which provides all-glass envelopes for curtain walls, storefronts, skylights, and other building structures. wwglass.com
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Ken Yeang, of Hamzah & Yeang, Malaysia, is best known for his signature ecoarchitecture and ecomasterplanning having a distinctive green aesthetic.
JUNE

WEDNESDAY 26
WORKSHOP
Graphisoft North America: BIM for Interior Design Workshop
Four Points Sheraton
5990 Green Valley Circ.
Culver City, CA
5:30–7:00 p.m.
aiaosangeles.org

THURSDAY 27
WORKSHOP
Digital Wall Decor
City of Industry
9:30 a.m.–1:00 p.m.
5662 East Stafford St.
City of Industry, CA
aiaosangeles.org

FRIDAY 28
TOUR
Art of the Ancient World: Egypt
2:30 p.m.
LACMA
5905 Wilshire Blvd.
Los Angeles
lacma.org

EVENT
Extreme Ideas: Runway
7:00 p.m.
Herocles Campus
5885 South Campus Center Dr.,
Los Angeles
aud.ucla.edu

SATURDAY 29
LECTURE
Artists Who Confront Violence: Lecture with Christian L. Frock
2:00 p.m.
925 Mission St.
San Francisco
theintersection.org

WORKSHOP
Chinese Calligraphy
9:45 a.m.–9:45 a.m.
Pacific Asia Museum
46 North Los Robles Ave.
Pasadena, CA
pacificasiamuseum.org

TOUR
Little Tokyo Walking Tour
10:15 a.m.–12:15 p.m.
Japanese American National Museum
369 East First St.
Los Angeles
jann.org

WITH THE KIDS
Auntie Farmers Market
8:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.
The Auntie in Griffith Park
4700 Western Heritage Way
Los Angeles
theautry.com

SUNDAY 30
LECTURE
Community, Needs, Design: Re-Thinking Approaches to Development
2:00 p.m.
Hammer Museum
10899 Wilshire Blvd.
Los Angeles
hammer.ucla.edu

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JULY

TUESDAY 2
LECTURE
Why is Every Building Permit in SF Discretionary?
12:30 p.m.–1:30 p.m.
SPUR Urban Center Gallery
654 Mission St.
San Francisco
spur.org

THURSDAY 4
EVENT
After Dark: BOOM
6:00 p.m.–10:00 p.m.
The Exploratorium
Pier 15
San Francisco
exploratorium.edu

SUNDAY 7
EXHIBITION OPENING
Shaping Power: Luba
Masterworks from the Royal Museum for Central Africa
LACMA
5905 Wilshire Blvd.
Los Angeles
lacma.org

TUESDAY 9
LECTURE
Preparing for Floods and Sea Level Rise in the Bay Area
5:30 p.m.
SPUR Urban Center Gallery
654 Mission St.
San Francisco
spur.org

EXHIBITION CLOSING
Windshield Perspective Architecture and Design Museum
6032 Wilshire Blvd.
Los Angeles
apu.edu

WEDNESDAY 10
LECTURE
Designing Suburban Futures
6:00 p.m.
SPUR Urban Center Gallery
654 Mission St.
San Francisco
spur.org

THURSDAY 11
SYMPOSIUM
Facade+ PERFORMANCE
UCSF Mission Bay Conference Center
1675 Owens St., San Francisco
facadesplus.com/sf2013/

WORKSHOP
Small Firm Practice in the New Normal: Strategies for Post Recession Success
2:00 p.m.–5:00 p.m.
1911 First Ave., Seattle
aiaosangeles.org

FRIDAY 12
WORKSHOPS
Facade+ PERFORMANCE
California College of the Arts
1111 Eighth St., San Francisco
facadesplus.com/sf2013/

ILLUMINATING SAVINGS:
Daylighting and Integrated Lighting Strategies
10:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.
1911 First Ave.
Seattle
aiaosangeles.org

LECTURE
Accessibility Program: Stepping Through Existing Buildings
7:30 a.m.–3:30 p.m.
AVA San Francisco
130 Sutter St.
Suite 600
San Francisco
aisf.org

SATURDAY 13
EXHIBITION OPENING
Brian Nuda Rosch
ACME
6150 Wilshire Blvd.
Los Angeles
acmeosangeles.com

SUNDAY 14
WITH THE KIDS
Navigating Nature: Griffith Park Nature and Scavenger Hunt
1:00 p.m.
The Autry in Griffith Park
4700 Western Heritage Way
Los Angeles
theautry.com

JULY 15
EXHIBITION OPENING
Adapt/Transform/Reuse
SPUR Urban Center Gallery
654 Mission St.
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TUESDAY 16
LECTURE
Parametric Design and You!
12:30 p.m.–1:30 p.m.
SPUR Urban Center Gallery
654 Mission St.
San Francisco
spur.org

WEDNESDAY 17
LECTURE
The Price of Terror and the Cost of Security
7:30 p.m.
Hammer Museum
10899 Wilshire Blvd.
Los Angeles
hammer.ucla.edu

THURSDAY 18
FILM
It Happened One Night
7:30 p.m.–9:30 p.m.
The Exploratorium
Pier 15
San Francisco
exploratorium.edu

SUNDAY 21
EXHIBITION CLOSING
Gardens of Renaissance
The J. Paul Getty Center
1200 Getty Center Dr.
Los Angeles
getty.edu

WEDNESDAY 24
LECTURE
Growing Taller: New Wood Structures
12:30 p.m.
SPUR Urban Center
654 Mission St., San Francisco
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Underground Space and Sustainable Development
12:30 p.m.–1:30 p.m.
SPUR Urban Center
654 Mission St.
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NEVER BUILT: LOS ANGELES
A+D Architecture and Design Museum
6032 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles
July 27–September 29th, 2013
It is difficult to envision the city of Los Angeles any differently than it exists today, but A+D West editor Sam Lubell and co-curator Greg Goldin, in collaboration with Clive Wilkinson Architects, have organized an exhibition at the Architecture and Design Museum that grants visitors the rare opportunity to get a glimpse of the city as it could have been. The team gathered a diverse assortment of renderings, models, and various media depicting parks, buildings, master plans, and transportation schemes that were designed with the intention of being built, but were deemed too novel to actually be brought to life. The collection features unrealized projects, such as Frank Lloyd Wright’s 1925 Civic Center Plan, William H. Evans’s 1939 design for the Tower of Civilization, and B+U Architect’s 2009 design for an office building on Firestone Boulevard; as well as several other projects that had they been carried out, would have completely changed the physical reality of the city of Los Angeles.

NEVER BUILT: SEATTLE
A+D Architecture and Design Museum
335 Powell St., San Francisco
August 1–November 3, 2013
Buster Simpson is a Seattle-based artist who has dedicated his artistic career to developing community-focused and urban environmentalist public art projects. For more than forty years he has created site-specific, agitation and propaganda works that have not only troubled neighborhoods but also suggested local solutions to global issues. This exhibition at the Frye Art Museum features some of Simpson’s most compelling works, filled with explicit messages and rich metaphors, such as his “Hudson River Purge” (1991), a video performance in which he addresses the problem of acid rain by dropping 42 ½-pound soft limestone discs, or “antacid pills,” into the Hudson River, neutralizing the acidity of the water. This collection of Simpson’s public artwork celebrates his artistic legacy and captures the regional and global impact of his work.

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BUSTER SIMPSON // SURVEYOR
The Frye Art Museum
704 Terry Avenue, Seattle
Through October 13
Road Warriors

On The Road
MOCA Contemporary Parking Lot
250 South Grand Avenue, Los Angeles
June 2

This new volume from the University of Texas Press adds architecture and town planning as compelling themes to the body of recent academic literature on the pre-colonial and early colonial Americas. It describes the scope and under-known advancement of western hemispheric civilization prior to European conquest, infection, and conversion. A Mesoamerican culture at least 4,000 years old established a sacred and harmonious system of voids and solids from as much as upon the invaders. It adapted new hybrid forms rooted in the classical Renaissance principles of Greece and Rome that were shaping Spanish cities. Two worlds mutually unaware of the other’s existence suddenly collided, yet the newcomer adjusted rather than eliminated what he found.

While not destined for the best-seller list, the book goes a long way in furthering the status of Mexico as one of the world’s Diamond-labeled “founder” civilizations. 

Ancient Origins of the Mexican Plaza does so with a well illustrated look at the “symphony of volumes” that undergird the orthogonal grid and plaza which most still perceive wrongly as a linear measure of successive (if not de facto progressive) western domination. Instead, one learns how the beloved and enduring zocalo as market site and joyous living room sustains the ritualistic spaces carved from nature by the resident Mesoamericans. Their sites were in sensitive alignment with the surrounding natural terrain in representation of a primordial sea from where they saw humanity rise in subterranean, terrestrial, and celestial equilibrium with their gods. The broad plazas, mountain-like pyramids, and deep wellspring caves were stylized outdoor places designed for the community life and daily rituals overseen by a ruling elite and their religious enforcers. The authors summarize this communal investment as the “creative medium” of symbolic necessity.

In 1521, Cortés conquered Mexico and mendicant priests followed in rapid succession to convert and turn cultural upheaval into sustained political control. Their churches and surrounding fortifications were specifically sited within these sacred precincts for reasons both formal and syncretic. The fusion of their 16th century architectural and decorative vocabulary was executed by the hands of native Mesoamericans, who combined them with the ancient cosmology on which their own building traditions relied. These origins endured in a contact language of colonialism. Extant plazas and ceremonial passages were co-opted in part for the new churches, and the advent of the atrio zone, or walled communal space, for outdoor conversion of the displaced native populations. They fused these new exterior rooms with the act of Christianizing. Colonial form followed Mesoamerican function. Most contemporary Mexican plazas still feature atria alongside their secular plazas as an exemplary achievement of global urbanism.

The book’s third chapter features specific field surveys, amply illustrated by amateur yet fully descriptive photographs along with commendable measured drawings, rendering the text appealing to designers. Additional plans constitute a fine appendix of full-page site drawings, which alone provide a useful template to any practitioner, whether professional planner or eager activist in shaping the civic realm.

The book’s weakest, if well-intentioned, aspect is its concluding chapter, which makes the case for modern application in contemporary American town planning as identified with the [unnamed] New Urbanists. It is the historic Mexican template as an antidote to sprawl. Such a hopeful argument holds up well formally but the complex polemics of land use, environmental

COSMIC AND CLASSICAL UNDERPINNINGS

Ancient Origins of the Mexican Plaza
Logan Wagner, Hal Box, and Susan Kline Morehead
University of Texas Press
$65.00

Food trucks and blogs have changed the food and media industries by removing much of the infrastructure needed to get an endeavor off the ground, and the same thing has been happening in art and architecture. Pop-up exhibitions have begun to emerge as a viable alternative to museums and galleries. A recent example is On The Road, a collection of in-process experiments from more than 15 emerging Los Angeles artists and architecture studios. The show was presented inside several U-Haul trucks in the parking lot of the MOCA Contemporary on June 2.

The location next to MOCA was a direct response to the museum’s A New Sculpturalism exhibition, which attempts to document the last 25 years of the city’s architecture. The goal of On The Road, said curator (and former AN editorial assistant) Danielle Rago, is to set the stage for the next 25 years. Of course, no exhibition can come close to distilling the direction of an entire generation, but this show does give continued on page 31
COSMIC AND CLASSICAL UNDERPINNINGS continued from page 30

impact, gates, and cars is not fleshed out fully. In its totality, however, it succeeds in conveying the authors’ introductory claim: The communal open spaces of Mexico delight all of our senses. When we can also sense the layers of Mesoamerican and European history creating the place, the passion in the iconography and the human art and labor of building, along with the people moving around us, the space consumes us with its spiritual and sensual qualities.

PAUL GUNTHRER IS THE PRESIDENT OF THE INSTITUTE OF CLASSICAL ARCHITECTURE AND ART IN NEW YORK.

ROAD WARRIORS continued from page 30
us some insights into what’s coming. From this very small sampling we get a sense of a group of architects who are reassessing the profession. They’re interested in further engaging the public sphere, in merging architecture with art, and in questioning the formal norms that have come to define what they do, especially with the ascent of digital technology.

In terms of the public/private sphere, the very first truck contained Studio Bonner and Stayner Architects’ Made In Opa-Locka, a project to turn private lots in Opa-Locka, Florida, into public spaces. The layout is fairly abstract; shiny gold circles inset with horizontal structures (those would be houses) glommed onto a sea of blue; but its graphic form is arresting and the idea—turning a mass of private lots into public spaces—is an important one that has resonance in an urban realm with so little public space. Just across the truck, Curt Gambetta has proposed turning waste infrastructure—trucks, plants, etc.—into public tools. While these plans aren’t really that doable, the hand drawings (a welcome escape from digital images, which make up most of this exhibition) are fantastic, and the idea is thought provoking: Why not use all this public infrastructure a little differently?

A couple of trucks down, architect Maxi Spina shared his entry in a recent competition to design Taiwan’s Keelung Harbor. Again, this idea might not have been a practical cinch, but formally it’s a unique experiment in which the forms of the buildings are imprecisely mirrored in a process called twinning. Through this technique, Spina has produced a pattern of strange symmetry inlaid with a moiré pattern. The section and plan of the building merge into what, at least on paper, is a gorgeous artwork. The images look perfect at first, but it’s their imperfections that make them much more compelling than most digital work.

Indeed, since digital design is becoming so familiar, several of the instigators here, as they like to call themselves, have delved into old school explorations of form and spatial manipulation. Jonathan Louie employed semi-transparent forms on translucent film over three-dimensional frames to blur the line between mass and 3D geometry. James Michael Tate mashed together plans from famous buildings around the world and rendered them all but imperceptible. Yet their abstracted combinations make for a new and sometimes powerful art form. Nothing is sacred, Tate seems to be suggesting. Bryony Roberts translated a three dimensional model into two dimensions, inlaying it with spatial and even color incompatibilities that force your brain to try, unsuccessfully, to figure out what’s going on. She even invited participants to try to rebuild the model again out of cardboard, completing the unusual loop. Jimenez Lai drew unpacked geometries onto the 2D surfaces of the U-Hauls, in a six-hour “Endurance Drawing Project.” Andrew Kovacs mashed together world monuments into bizarre formations that conjured up the end of the world, or a bowl architectural oatmeal.

Of course, not all of the art and architecture in the show was groundbreaking. A few projects had the feeling of unresolved student works. Other pieces leaned too heavily toward the realm of art and not heavily enough on rethinking the architectural discourse. But overall both the ideas and the execution were of quite high quality. While I hope this generation will figure out how to further their explorations into the built realm, for now they’ve deftly integrated ideas from many professions and reframed the expectations that past generations have hefted on them. In so doing, they’ve helped rethink a profession, and an urban ethos, that often becomes calcified by its infrastructure and its thinking. SL

Bryony Roberts, Between Coherence and Incoherence

SAM LUBELL

SL

REVIEW

31

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The Persiera fans don't usually like the old buildings. You'd have to restore those old buildings. And so the alternative is to close the museum for four years, is now taken care of. We have 100,000 new square feet between the new buildings by Renzo. You'd have offices across the street. The original buildings were only 160,000 square feet, so you’d have about two-thirds the space as the original museum. Second was that people objected to the Rem design. They objected to the roof, to how it was laid out, to whether our collections really fit that grid. I think this new building works perfectly, so that would solve the design question. This building has easy light control, a diversity of spaces, room for the collections. It’s all worked out. So I’m hopeful that people like the design. And the third was public money. The largest amount of money for Rem’s scheme was requested from a bond issue with a public vote. We are not proposing that. We’ve already raised $350 million for our newest buildings and sculptures. So I’m proposing that the largest portion of the money be private money. If the public contributes through a bond issue it would be only a small segment. Instead of asking for 50 percent of the money from the public, you would be asking for about one-tenth of the money.

But it’s a very daunting fundraising task. In both cases it’s a daunting fundraising task. What’s changed? There’s a different scene has been even larger. Besides commissioning several architecture-sized installations, Govan hired Renzo Piano to design the Broad Contemporary Art Museum (BCAM), the Resnick Pavilion, and the plaza and restaurants in between. Now he’s embarking on his biggest project—a complete recreation of the museum by Peter Zumthor. AN: Why do you want to demolish the existing LACMA complex? There are all kinds of design problems with it: circulation, size of galleries, the plazas, and how they function. The bigger issue is that they were not built extremely well, and that they’re now in need of massive repair. So you have to decide whether you’re going to raise hundreds of millions of dollars for a renovation. That’s the question. Would you want to put the money into repairing them? And the answer is not at all. So that was the analysis that Rem [Koolhaas] did, and that’s analysis that still holds today, that it makes no sense to throw hundreds of millions of dollars into those old buildings. And so the alternative is to go new. And then you have a second question: If you’re going to go new, what will you build? So this is the proposal.

If this new project for whatever reason gets stopped, what is plan B? Do you then rehab these buildings? I don’t know, where would you get the money? I don’t have a plan B. I have tested this out. I have not sensed that there is enough interest to raise the kind of money that the museum would need to restore those old buildings. You’d have to find somebody.

Maybe some William Pereira fans would differ! The Pereira fans don’t usually like the Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer addition. So then what do you do? You can only restore aspects of the Pereira. And if you tore down the Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer building, which several people have suggested to me, then you don’t have any exhibition space. So then it’s a serious mistake. There are not a lot of alternatives. And I don’t know any Pereira fans who have that kind of resources and wherewithal to restore those buildings. And I don’t know that they would have the guts or interest given that you really couldn’t remove the Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer addition. So then you have to find somebody who’s willing to love those.

Rem Koolhaas wasn’t able to get his plan for LACMA through. What is the difference between now and then? A lot of difference. One is that one of the practical objections, that nobody wanted to close the museum for four years, is now taken care of. We have 100,000 new square feet between the new buildings by Renzo. You’d have offices across the street. The original buildings were only 160,000 square feet, so you’d have about two-thirds the space as the original museum. Second was that people objected to the Rem design. They objected to the roof, to how it was laid out, to whether our collections really fit that grid. I think this new building works perfectly, so that would solve the design questions. This building has easy light control, a diversity of spaces, room for the collections. It’s all worked out. So I’m hopeful that people like the design. And the third was public money. The largest amount of money for Rem’s scheme was requested from a bond issue with a public vote. We are not proposing that. We’ve already raised $350 million for our newest buildings and sculptures. So I’m proposing that the largest portion of the money be private money. If the public contributes through a bond issue it would be only a small segment. Instead of asking for 50 percent of the money from the public, you would be asking for about one-tenth of the money.

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