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LAND BANK AIMS TO STABILIZE CHICAGOLAND REAL ESTATE MARKET
Cooking Up a Solution to Foreclosures
Cook County is home to the nation’s third largest city, as well as some of the deepest economic craters left by the ongoing housing crisis. Some 40,000 vacant units, many of them “underwater,” restrain economic development in the second most populous county in the United States. Now, following similar efforts under way in Kansas City, northeast Ohio’s Cuyahoga County, Atlanta, and Michigan, Cook County will establish a redevelopment authority aimed at stabilizing the region’s housing market.

On January 15, with all present members voting yes, the... continued on page 2

AMBITIOUS RIVERFRONT DEVELOPMENT EMBRACES QUAD CITIES’ ROOTS
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SCAPE WINS THE COMMISSION TO DAYLIGHT AN UNDERGROUND WATERWAY IN LEXINGTON, KY
Bourbon enthusiasts are quick to point out that as water naturally filters through Kentucky’s limestone bedrock, it absorbs just the right combination of minerals to give the spirit its distinctive taste. In honor of that phenomenon, New York-based SCAPE/Landscape Architecture used “karst topography”—a geological formation of water-worn rock—as inspiration for a linear urban watershed running through downtown Lexington, Kentucky. On February 4, SCAPE won an invited competition to daylight the buried Town Branch Creek flowing beneath Lexington. The firm’s proposal—called Reveal, Clean, Carve, Connect—seeks to create a procession of distinct "blue... continued on page 5

MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT SWAPS A GAS STATION FOR DENSITY NEIGHBORHOOD ACCELERATOR
For years a Mobil gas station has conspicuously interrupted a flurry of development along 53rd Street in Chicago’s Hyde Park neighborhood. But in January, Mesa Development and the University of Chicago, which owns the land, announced that they plan to build a mixed-use development on the site by next year. Valerio Dewalt Train Associates will design the building, which emphasizes the pedestrian experience in the Heart of Hyde Park. At 13 stories, it will be among the tallest buildings in the 53rd Street area but not the tallest: A presentation at a public meeting in January pointed out that 12-story Harper Court nearby actually tops out at 160 feet, 20 feet higher than the new development, at 1330 E. 53rd Street. Taller buildings hug the lakeshore east of the Metra tracks, but... continued on page 4

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Despite a $500 billion gross regional product that would make it the 20th largest economy in the world, Cook County—home to the city of Chicago and its suburbs—has long had a reputation for getting in the way of economic development.

Corruption convictions at the county level have a lurid 150-year history that was the subject of a detailed report by the Better Government Association in 2010. Before the current administration, Forest Preserve employees had not undergone a job review in at least 25 years.

From the perspective of planners in the nation’s second most populous county, government was a stumbling block at best. But since Toni Preckwinkle assumed the role of Cook County Board President in 2010, her administration has begun to clean house. And urbanists are taking note.

“Cook County has just blossomed in the last two years under Preckwinkle,” said one analyst with a sustainable development group in Chicago. “In the past they were either non-existent in community development or, worse, a colossal impediment.”

The County previously had little in the way of a strategic development plan, rendering it ineligible for millions of dollars in federal funding through programs like Community Development Block Grants. In addition to remedying that omission, Preckwinkle’s administration has pursued policies of broad-based growth in this county, a county which is among the most economically and racially fragmented.

By consolidating county and city employment assistance programs, promoting car-sharing among employees, and rolling back the controversial sales tax hike enacted in 2008 by Preckwinkle’s predecessor Todd Stroger, the Cook County Board has begun to stem government waste. County Clerk David Orr and Commissioner Bridget Gainer, who chairchilded the land bank, successfully introduced the Lobbyist Sunshine Initiative in 2009, making lobbyists’ activities visible to the public through online reporting.

In approving the land bank, the County has signaled its willingness both to take action on pressing issues, and to get out of the way of stakeholders pursuing neighborhood revitalization. Land bank board members appointed this month include community leaders, conservationists, and advocates for the homeless—not just politicians and developers.

While the county’s problems are too large and longstanding for any administration to solve singlehandedly—economic inequality, urban sprawl, and a broken school system come to mind—its renewed commitment to soothing urban/suburban strife is a refreshing change in tone.

Last fall, Preckwinkle tasked the Council of Economic Advisors with pursuing long-term economic growth in the region, and county initiatives indicate that the administration is moving ahead with development policies already. They are investing in broadband infrastructure and laying fiber optic cables between south suburban communities. The county has been uncharacteristically active in linking the suburbs and the city. Bike trails, trail projects, and freight infrastructure in the Calumet region are long overdue, and could help restore some economic vitality to the region.

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Earlier this month, a judge dismissed litigation against the Forest Preserve District. Michael Shakman, a lawyer who successfully sued the city and could help restore some economic vitality to the region.

Foreclosure rates in the county are often above Illinois’ average and far above the national average. In addition, much of the foreclosure activity is concentrated in the city’s south suburbs, as well as in Chicago’s poor, predominantly African-American neighborhoods on the South and West sides.

Boarded-up homes can have an adverse ripple effect on property values in their immediate area; the land bank will aim, in part, to reverse that trend.

“We have all seen the effects of absentee landlords and predatory lenders,” Sharon Louis, a 50-year resident of Chicago’s South Shore neighborhood, said at the finance committee’s January 15 hearing. Louis works with the South Shore Sustainability Collaborative, one of many community organizations whose work was acknowledged by the board during the meeting’s public comment period.

The testimony focused on housing, but economic development opportunities also received considerable mention. Brian Bernadoni, representing the associations of realtors for both Chicago and Illinois at the hearing, noted that he had moved out of state when his departure from their positions in the past. Talk of stimulating private sector investment, he said, changed their position.

That does not mean the land bank will be a service of the realtor community.

“I’m constantly telling people,” Brewer said, “that it is not going to be a Pac-Man that just goes out and gobbles up properties. It will only be upon request, and in collaboration.”

From single- and multi-family housing developments to commercial rebirth, the land bank could create design opportunities for underserved areas.

“You have an opportunity now where architects can come in and suggest better designs, enhanced facilities for their communities,” Brewer said. “You can promote better designs not only for open spaces, but also for better kinds of housing.”

One of the most bitter architectural preservation disputes in recent memory effectively concluded this month. Landmarks Illinois and the National Trust for Historic Preservation announced they would withdraw from legal battle to save Prentice Women’s Hospital, the 1975 icon designed by Bertrand Goldberg.

The Valentine’s Day announcement followed a bizarre replay of the parliamentary maneuver that the Commission on Chicago Landmarks used to withhold landmark status for the building in spite of exceeding the standards for such a designation.

Preservationists alleged in court that the commission exceeded its authority in a November meeting when they gave jobs and tax dollars greater weight than architectural merit. (In that meeting, the commission also revoked the building landmark status, and later revoked its own decision in a second, almost unanimous vote.)

Judge Neil Cohen dismissed that case, but extended a temporary stay of demolition, citing concerns of due process. The repeat hearing in February appeared to respond to those concerns, although another parade of testimony from impassioned preservationists again failed to persuade a single commissioner that the building deserved landmark designation.

The commission’s refusal to protect a building that by their own unanimous admission deserved recognition came as little surprise to preservationists, who viewed the decision as a foregone conclusion once Mayor Rahm Emanuel sided publicly with building owner Northwestern University. Demolition will make way for a new medical research facility.

The unusual nature of the proceedings has led some to question the commission’s worth as a public entity. Northwestern, on the other hand, praised the imminent demolition of Prentice as a triumph for economic development.
We were glad to be included on the Studie Gang’s Archi-Salon panel on “outside research” at the Art Institute of Chicago. Our Clare Lyster moderated an lively discussion that, true to its roots in academic theory, kicked off by questioning the premise in the first place. Are practice and research separated by anything more than semantics? Based on the turnout it seems the discussion series achieved its goal of public engagement—what can we say? We’re thrilled and a bit surprised that you all find architectural theory as stimulating as we do.

During the discussion, Paul Preissner detected a whiff of marketing in architects’ clambering to engage “outside” disciplines. You might have thought he accused them of artistic treason, based on the defensive tone that the discussion took whenever the topic popped back up.

For Chef Gene Kato, design is all about “takumi,” the Japanese concept of artisanal expertise. “I like to focus on one thing and perfect it,” Kato said, who designed River North’s Sumi Robata Bar. Antunovich Associates and G2 Builders helped Kato realize his minimalist vision, which is based around the central element of Japanese robata-style cooking: charcoal. Cedar and oak furnishings reference the “sumi,” or charcoal, used to cook the restaurant’s vegetable and meat skewers—no gas or electric stoves near the authenticity of the 16-foot barbecue experience. A subtle bamboo floor continues the theme, but does not scream typical Asian-influenced design.

The exterior explores the aesthetic of Japanese storehouses. Elsewhere, dark, grainy material mimics the texture of real wood, playing off the light stucco that makes up the frontage’s top half. Sumi Robata Bar’s basement further distills the design philosophy in service of Charcoal Bar, an lounge focusing on providing classic Japanese cocktails. The walls are charred black like the space’s namesake. Most guests think the effect is achieved through painting or wallpaper, Kato said, but it is actually the result of a long day, his sous chef, and mixologist spent hand-charring wood planks. A traditional Japanese fireplace ties together the local materials and the design’s Japanese spirit.

For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction.

Not to trumpet marketing’s praise, but just days later we endured another political pas de deux over Bertrand Goldberg’s former Prentice Women’s Hospital. The museum, with the news (or so said the letterhead) that “Northwestern University is pleased” with the Chicago Commission on Landmarks’ decision to let another four hours of testimony further pack the cotton into their ears. The “preservationists are against progress” trope reared its ugly head again, but we suppose Newton’s third law of motion applies to PR as well—we saw one young Chicago developer corner Northwestern’s reps in their way out to vote to withdraw his interest in the school’s real estate program. That’s one alumni donation NU’s never going to get!

Send white papers and Fig Newtons to ENVESDROP@ARCHPAPER.COM.
Balthazar Korab, 1926–2013

Balthazar Korab, architect and photographer, died January 15 in Royal Oak, Michigan, after a prolonged battle with Parkinson’s disease. He was 86.

Trained as an architect, Korab was deeply concerned with the relationship between humanity and the built environment. He helped pioneer photography as part of the design development process and created some of the most enduring photographs of modern architecture. Yet his work often went beyond his immediate subject matter, capturing a sense of place.

“I am an architect with a passion for nature’s lessons and man’s interventions,” he wrote on his website. “My images are born out of a deep emotional investment in their subject. Their content is never sacrificed for mere visual effects, nor is a polemic activism intended to prevail as an aesthetic balance.”

Born in Budapest, Hungary, in 1926, Korab started studying architecture at Budapest Polytechnic but was forced to flee in 1949 to escape the rise of the Stalinist regime. He landed in Paris, finishing his architecture degree at the École des Beaux-Arts in 1955. While in Europe he worked under various architects, and had a stint as a draftsman for Le Corbusier.

A refugee mentality informed his sense of being, said his son Christian, himself an architectural photographer and filmmaker. Being forced to flee his homeland influenced the elder Korab’s creative journey throughout his entire life.

“My dad behaved as a beauty-seeking missile,” Christian Korab said. “He had this hunting mentality. He was always looking for order, even in the most disordered subject matter.”

His hunt would often compel him to run off at dawn, his wife Monica said, in order to catch the right light falling on the fountains at the Cranbrook Academy of Art campus, a frequent subject. Even when his father was seated at the dinner table, Christian Korab said, he would subject the salt and pepper shakers to his restless energy, rearranging them gracefully as he talked.

A compassionate connection to a sometimes ugly world, his son said, was a hallmark of his father’s work. Monica Balthazar recalled one photograph of a chandelier amid the ruins of a palace.

“He found absolute beauty and destruction harmonizing perfectly,” she said. “In a situation which was not appealing, he always saw hope.”

Korab came to the United States in 1954 and became Eero Saarinen’s staff photographer, while his firm was located in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. Saarinen’s star was rising but much of his best work—and Korab’s—was ahead for the two men.

Saarinen’s TWA Flight Center opened in 1962, and Korab’s photographs of the structure captured the formal reality of the space with the tonal depth and affect of an Edward Weston still life, and the discipline of a designer’s mind.

His famous 1965 TWA Interior shot is somewhat atypical—it implores the viewer to objectively subject and appreciate its formal beauty. Often his work used architectural subject matter as a starting point for moody, even ethereal, journeys to the spirit of a place.

Simultaneously honing his design and photography skills, Korab won international recognition for his work on the Sydney Opera House. In 1964, Frank Lloyd Wright invited him to join Taliesin—Wright’s school and retreat in southern Wisconsin—as an architect and photographer. His 1960 Steel and Glass, ostensibly depicting Mies van der Rohe’s renowned 860 Lakeshore Apartments in Chicago, exemplified his sense of artistic discovery.

“That image has this peculiar affect that is very common to my dad’s work—it is looking at nothing, and at the same time looking at everything. It is very complete in its compositional and formal affect,” Christian Korab said. “That kind of duality asks you to look beyond the surface.”

Korab’s work lives on in many public collections, including the Library of Congress. In 1994, then-President Bill Clinton presented a portfolio of Korab’s photography to the president of Hungary as a gift.

Korab maintained a studio in a 19th century barn in Troy, Michigan. His son and wife are in the process of moving the home-studio and print archives to Minneapolis. After a life spent seeking beauty in fleeting moments, Korab found joy in sharing his experiences with other people, his son said.

“If you’re looking for beauty, you can look for it in the way it affects the people around you, who you share this experience with,” Christian Korab said. “I think he found beauty.”

Guest editorial

Urban Life Comes to College Campus

A new cluster of student apartments at Washington University in St. Louis is redefining the modern residential college and reinventing an active commercial corridor. Construction started this month on the first four of what will be an $80 million, five-building complex along Delmar Boulevard on the border of the City of St. Louis and University City to the west.

Boston-based William Rawn Associates Architects has arranged the mixed-use development to help mend the area’s urban fabric while blending with surrounding historic residential neighborhoods. A pedestrian plaza—called the Mews—bisects the site and aligns with the existing street grid to promote connectivity and expand space for retail. “We introduced the pedestrian Mews as a way of creating a stitch between the Parkview Gardens neighborhood and the dynamism of the Delmar Loop,” said Doug Johnston, principal at William Rawn Associates. “As an urban form, the Mews became an important means of joining two very different sites together.”

Each building is designed to transition between the active Delmar Boulevard and the adjacent quiet neighborhood. Subtle cues are incorporated, from the masonry and materiality of the surrounding red-brick apartment buildings.

The new buildings also step down in height from five to three stories. Johnston said courtyards on the residential side will help to break up the rhythm of the buildings’ facades and connect each loft-style unit with nature and daylight.

Facing Delmar, the south facade is covered in perforated aluminum. “Korab leaves this capture light and provides residents privacy and respite from the sun. Some louvers will be colored, creating a visual rhythm across the facade and evoking the neon lights common along the boulevard. “The Delmar facade is about capturing the dynamism of the Loop district,” Johnston said. “We’re deliberately making a contemporary expression rather than one based in nostalgia.”

A second-story landscaped terrace will allow students to participate in the Loop and also showcase the project’s sustainability. Much of the roof will be covered in solar arrays, making the buildings up to 40 percent more energy efficient than traditional structures.

The development will accommodate 600 residents. Construction is expected to take around 14 months and will be complete by the start of the fall semester in 2014.
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The building features two towers atop a four-story base

218 spaces, are hidden from street view by amenities spaces on the second and third floors. “The Mobil gas station, as it is, really breaks up the 53rd street experience,” Droll said. “Even with two retail spaces and the residential lobby in the middle of that, there was a real effort to have a continuous pedestrian experience knit it all together.” Kimbark Plaza, a retail destination, sits to the site’s west. The new building’s retail tenants are still unspecified, but a 20,000-square-foot space on the west end of the site is intended for a large national vendor, while 10,000-square-feet on the east end could be subdivided for a variety of local retailers. Mesa has said it will pursue minority- and women-owned local businesses. The building’s façade steps in at points to engage the street. “It’s tough, with mid-block retail, for them to create places that draw people in,” Droll said, “so we’ve sort of stepped the facade to create mid-block windows for retailers, as well as create pockets for pedestrian seating. It really contributes to pulling the park across the street.

Although the project sites in the 53rd Street Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District, the developers will not seek any TIF funding. Nonetheless, the building will include affordable housing—15 percent of the units on site will be below market rate, while the University said it will make up another 5 percent elsewhere. There will be 267 rental units in total. James McHugh Construction, which also built Harper Court, is on board for construction, which could start by January 2014. Occupancy is expected for July 2015.

University City

A new cluster of student apartments at Washington University in St. Louis is redefining the modern residential college and reinvigorating an active commercial corridor. Construction started this month on the first four of what will be an $80 million, five-building complex along Delmar Boulevard on the border of the City of St. Louis and University City to the west.

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Each building is designed to transition between the active Delmar Boulevard and the adjacent quiet neighborhood. Subtle cues are incorporated, from the massing and materiality of the surrounding red-brick apartment buildings. The new buildings also step down in height from five to three stories. Johnston said courtyards on the residential side will help to break up the rhythm of the buildings’ facades and connect each loft-style unit with nature and daylight.

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BRANCHING OUT continued from front page rooms,” where Town Branch surfaces, to create site-specific interactions with surrounding urban conditions. “Rather than taking an idealized vision of the Kentucky landscape and recreating it in the city, we were inspired by the region’s karst topography,” said Kate Orff, partner at SCAPE. “Instead of a contiguous linear stream, we were interested in the multiple conditions of water, like the pockets, holes, and sinks that you see in caves.” Orff said she was also interested in how water moves through an urban environment, so she first carefully studied, in section, how the karst topography affects the water conditions. “The real challenge was to match an urban condition,” Orff said. In SCAPE’s design, the new landscape is carefully woven through the city, often within narrow rights of way, creating a distinctive urban feeling. “We didn’t want to create a romantic or stylized idea of landscape,” Orff explained. “It’s a site-specific way of intervening where water can impact the urban condition. We weren’t interested in a singular gesture. The water becomes a tool to create these different environments.”

The proposal helps to highlight and magnify Lexington’s existing strengths, Orff said. Nearby housing, rapids, and a waterfall complement a children’s play area. Adjacent to the city’s growing theater district, the landscape is more conducive to nightlife, with a series of plazas. At a large bus depot that creates a pedestrian barrier, a walkway arches up to create a small amphitheater and promenade and to connect with the surrounding city.

Each segment of the landscape is also meant to serve as a form of water infrastructure. “Lexington is facing the same issues as other cities, such as sewer overflows,” Orff said. “We’re trying to do a green infrastructure project that deals with the reality of urban waters.”

To mitigate flooding, one of the two existing underground culverts diverting Town Branch will be kept in place to move excess water during heavy rain events. At Rupp Arena, home to several University of Kentucky (UK) sports teams, the site widens and flattens out to create a floodable landscape that provides recreational space and a wildlife habitat. Additionally, the stream is filtered with native grasses and plants as it moves through the various water conditions, and is aerated by waterfalls along its course.

Michael Speaks, dean of the UK College of Design and a member of the competition jury, noted in his comments that SCAPE’s design was “among the few proposals in the competition to transform the Town Branch into a water filtration system in its own right.” Speaks said he was impressed with the site-specific nature of the design and the unique infrastructural systems and armature for future growth that each gesture creates.

“There is a wonderful sense of revelation and concealment that is dramatic without feeling staged,” he continued. Orff emphasized that Town Creek will be a functioning urban waterway, not a linear fountain presenting a “facade of water.”

At the heart of SCAPE’s proposal is an interest in the “processes of natural systems combined with a deep love of the urban condition,” she said.

The competition jury unanimously selected SCAPE as the winner over the other teams. The three other teams were led by Denver-based Civitas, Minneapolis-based Coen+Partners, Inside Outside from the Netherlands, and Danish firm Julien De Smedt Architects. Besides Speaks, the jury included Ned Crankshaw, chairman of the UK Department of Landscape Architecture; Brad McKee, editor-in-chief of Landscape Architecture magazine; local developer Holly Wiedemann; and Aaron Betsky, director of the Cincinnati Art Museum.

The Downtown Development Authority will award SCAPE $200,000 to further refine its proposal. Orff will work with a team of engineers and financial consultants to establish a more detailed master plan, to examine the feasibility of implementing the proposal and develop a phasing plan.
Chicago's West Loop is perhaps the last place anyone might expect to find a farm, but in a way that's exactly what architect Ferdinand Dimailig created. His firm, BOX Studios, started with 12,000 square feet of office space and few precise instructions. "The vision was to create something earthy and open that also reflects who they are," he said. The "they" in this case was client Fair Oaks Farms Brands. And Fair Oaks' founders weren't exactly sure what they wanted their new Chicago corporate headquarters to be, Dimailig said. But discussions kept coming back to the concept of a farm. That's because Fair Oaks Farms is an Indiana dairy that sells a variety of artisan cheeses and Core Power, a protein recovery drink. The company prides itself on dairy products that are hormone- and antibiotic free. "Having our roots in farming, we wanted to reflect where we're coming from," Fair Oaks co-founder Sue McCloskey said. "But we knew, being in an urban environment, that we needed to be modern, too." Dimailig had actually visited the company's Jasper County farm once on a family vacation to Indiana, an experience that made it easier to understand his client. The farm gives tours that provide an opportunity to see a dairy in action and has a café and gift shop that allow visitors to sample its products. Where Dimailig faced special challenges was in turning what was probably once an automotive service facility into a functional office space that would reflect the rolling green hills and bright blue skies of an idyllic American farm. The cavernous space presented its own challenges. The 25-foot barrel-vaulted ceilings that drew Fair Oaks Farms to the property also made it hard to create the cozier spaces the company had in mind and the private spaces every company needs. Dimailig met the challenge by incorporating hues of blue and green, geometric shapes, floating planes of wood, and an existing masonry wall to create separation in an otherwise open space. Wood accents were used to warm up the space. "We started out with a great raw space," Dimailig said. In addition to the barrel-vaulted ceiling, the building had a number of skylights, concrete floors, and a corner location that allowed architects to incorporate several large windows and an operable garage door made of glass. BOX Studios used the masonry wall to separate the office's more public spaces from its more private ones. A reception area, conference room, and meeting spaces sit in front of the wall, while private offices and the office kitchen are tucked neatly behind it. The firm also built a translucent green silo that would become the office's centerpiece and the entryway to a modern interpretation of a barn—which serves as a conference room. The barn's glass doors open to a large seating area featuring a giant white board surrounded by a wall of living plants. "The barn is really the crown jewel of this project," Dimailig said. "As soon as you see it, you know what this company is all about." Another way BOX Studios helped Fair Oaks tell its story was through a milk bar. The long bar, with lighting fixtures made to look like classic milk bottles, welcomes visitors and provides a space for sampling products. "Being a health and wellness food company, we need to sample, to try and figure out and get opinions," McCloskey said. Some West Loop residents see the milk bar through the windows and stop in, expecting to find a trendy cocktail bar or restaurant. Instead, what they discover is a little bit of country in the heart of a big city.

MEENA THIRUVENGADAM

RESOURCES:

Conference seating
Keilhauer
www.keilhauer.com

Green Wall
Plants on Walls
www.plantsonwalls.com

Interior Partitions
Macrolux
www.macrolux.net

Lighting
Pendent
ATG
www.atgstores.com

Accent Fixtures
Droog
www.droog.com

Shriner seating
Shriner
www.shrinerinternational.com

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If, as Louis Kahn said, a brick wants to be part of an arch, what does a biopolymer molecule, a block of aerogel, or a slab of metallic foam want to be? The empirical basis for inferring bricks’ intentions is well established, comprising building traditions that have evolved over millennia. For newer materials, the chance of moving from laboratories to construction sites can be a crapshoot. The successful ones not only capture markets but transform behavior.

The most promising approaches, materials specialists agree, emphasize integration rather than isolation. “We don’t just create materials or products; we create information systems,” says architect/author Blaine Brownell, who co-directs the MS in Sustainable Design program at the University of Minnesota and whose most recent book, Material Strategies: Innovative Applications in Architecture (Princeton Architectural Press, 2012), links innovations in minerals, concrete, wood, metal, glass, and plastics to prominent case studies. Using the term hypermaterial to denote the convergence of materials and information processing, Brownell looks to the management of light, energy, and data as the leading edge of materials research.

Jason O. Vollen, associate director of the Center for Architecture Science and Ecology (CASE), a joint project of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and SOM, heralds “a fundamental paradigm shift from moving energy mechanically, which is how we do it now, to moving energy materially.” Instead of multiple layers of a structure performing different functions, Vollen says, as in Mike Davies’ concept of the polyanient wall, “We think one layer should do multiple things: we think a potential solution is the multivalent material. That’s not so far off; it’s speculative fiction rather than science fiction.”

Citing the “holy grail” of Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory’s Stephen Selkowitz—a material optimizing both daylight and insulation—Vollen says “what exists now won’t do that, but what exists around the corner might.” Nano-technology, where categories blend and “metals can become more like glasses, glasses become more like ceramics,” he continues, is yielding unprecedented control over properties such as heat flow and daylight transmittance. With high-performance ceramics in particular offering properties that answer climate-change-driven imperatives, he is convinced, “the industry is poised for a revolution.”

Materials research is often a matter of systematic biomimicry, invoking a parallel understanding of natural processes occurring over time on multiple scales, from the nanoscale to the visible to the ecosystem. “It’s not about translating shape, or a static image of a biological behavior,” says Jenny E. Sabin, assistant professor of architecture at Cornell and a founding member of Cecil Balmond’s Nonlinear Systems Organization. As the architectural member of the National Science Foundation-sponsored ESkin interdisciplinary team, which also includes a materials scientist, a cell biologist, and a systems engineer, Sabin investigates homologies in materials, geometries, and forms. She describes her challenge as “thinking about how those properties could work across scales” and replicating them in “highly engineered, sustainable materials that have very sophisticated responses to environmental cues.”

Generative models based on cellular activity inform her “Branching Morphogenesis” installation at Linz, Austria’s 2009 Ars Electronica (comprising 75,000 cable zip ties in tension, organized according to microscale cellular forces) and her all-knitted myThread Pavilion for Nike’s Flyknit Collective, produced with New Jersey-based fabricator Shima Seiki USA. “It’s not just that we can produce complex organic form,” she continues, but that designers can “directly interact with manufacturing technologies...Working with soft textile-based materials at a large scale is only possible through really cutting-edge fabrication technologies.”

Strategies that arise from these investigations include “embedding a more nonlinear lifespan” into a material, so that products pass usefully through multiple life cycles; porosity, allowing lightness...
and transmissibility as well as strength; geometries that repel or absorb water, a high priority in materials that must endure sea-level rise; and self-organizing properties on nano-to-macro scales. The technological transition suggested by business consultant David Morris, vice president of the Institute for Local Self-Reliance—replacing the hydrocarbon-based economy, with all its externalities, costly extractive processes, and resource-availability constraints, with an older, cleaner system, “the once and future carbohydrate economy”—calls for more use of lifelike materials, Brownell suggests: those derived from agriculture and those deriving knowledge from living systems. A brick may want to be thick, but contemporary materials want to be smart.

**Resource maximizers, beginning with light**

Andrew H. Dent, PhD, vice president of library and materials research at Material ConneXion, sees two broad questions driving research in the field: what does Earth have in abundance, and what are we running out of? To the extent that materials and processes based on ample, readily available resources (from sunlight to silicon) replace those with sources in short supply (petroleum, gold, copper, clean air, and water), materials research represents a critical adaptation to emergent conditions. Much of this work is economic optimization rather than new discovery, Dent adds. Methods of developing biopolymers from a wide range of plants harvested in different regions and conditions (corn, castor, switch grass, sugar cane, potatoes, and others) are already known. “The issue is how to beat out oil,” he says, which “even at a high price is still significantly cheaper.” Tradeoffs of this sort are inevitable. A material may be lightweight enough that its production and transport save energy and yield an admirable overall ecological footprint, but its components pose toxicity concerns, as with ethylene tetrafluoroethylene (ETFE, the transparent insulating “pillow” material seen in the 2008 Olympic Water Cube and other buildings worldwide). Biopolymers for construction, consumer products, or fuel, likewise involve edible crops and thus compete with food production. “Back in 2006 and early ’07,” Brownell recalls, “when there was so much excitement about biofuels and ethanol...states like Iowa were promising all kinds of fuel-making capacity without taking a hard look at how a lot of this corn that we make goes to developing countries in order to feed the world.” Vollen frames this starkly as “a political and regulatory issue: ‘if we replace oil with corn, what do we eat?’”

In this regard, viewing solar energy as the ultimate free resource, Brownell is particularly enthusiastic about products that harvest and manipulate light, such as Sensitile’s light-piping panels, embedding optical channels in concrete and resin substrates, or a recent breakthrough at Duke University’s Pratt School of Engineering, scattering silver nanocubes on a gold film to “help the substrate absorb virtually all the light...so incredibly efficiently that nothing leaves the surface” and improving the efficiency of sensors. Another promising use of multiwall carbon nanotubes, he says, is field-induced polymer electroluminescent (FIPEL) technology, which generates a warm, nonflicker-wavelength resembling sunlight—“that spectrum that clearly influences human behavior and productivity in workplaces and learning places.” These flat lighting panels offer a distinct improvement over harsh compact fluorescents and heat-inefficient incandescents, with efficiency approaching that of LEDs. Developed at Wake Forest University and licensed for commercial development to CeeLite Technologies, the panels can be integrated with flexible substrates and incorporated into windows or even textiles. Brownell also cites the engineer/designer Akira Wakita’s work with “conductive threads to make thermochromatic and photochromic textiles that can act as computer monitors.” The importance of lighting in the developing world, he emphasizes, makes it a promising field for leapfrogging technologies that address “the good but tough 99 percent question” about new materials’ relevance to global...
populations, as well as a generally fertile field for disruptive technologies. “I’m still marveling at how LEDs have transformed the whole lighting field,” Brownell says. “It wasn’t that long ago [that] it was kind of hard to find an LED.”

Concrete, the most widely used construction material on Earth, is ripe for innovation. Its Portland cement component accounts for an estimated 5 percent of the global carbon footprint; by weight, concrete is environmentally friendlier than metals or polymers, Brownell says, but its sheer prevalence means that improving its performance has considerable ecological effects. Strategies include reducing cement volume with additives like blast furnace slag or rice husk ash (practiced by the Canadian firm EcoSmart). Then there is Calera’s carbonate mineralization by aqueous precipitation, which diverts preheated flue gas into seawater, combines energy production, cement manufacture, and carbon sequestration, and enhances CO absorption by using magnesia silicate. A recent study could end up several materials whose properties have drawn attention. Metallic foams, often aluminum or zinc, combine strength with lightness and thermal resistance; one such product, an aluminum foam marketed by the Canadian firm Cymat as SmartShield, was originally developed as a blast barrier on the undersides of military vehicles that encounter roadside bombs. “An individual at Cymat who had an architectural background recognized that, in addition to having the extreme technical properties, the material was aesthetically interesting,” reports Kelly Thomas, spokesperson for its distributor, Stone Source. Slightly altered in cell structure and slab thickness, rebranded as Alusion, the foam (80 percent air by volume) is now available to serve as walls, partitions, decorative fixtures, acoustic drop ceilings, or exterior cladding. Currently a specialty material, Alusion could conceivably gain increased prominence after the opening of the 9/11 Museum, where it will appear on the undersides of the twin fountains.

A class of even more ethereal materials, aerogels, has existed since the 1930s: they are exceptionally light (often called “frozen smoke”) and highly rated as thermal insulators. Britteness limits their practical use as an achievable goal—provided the newer variants gain market share, despite contractors’ comfort level with current recipes. “What we need,” suggests Dent, “are some high-profile architects to use some of [the new] material and show its advantages by being part of a high-profile, near-carbon-zero building.”

Material moneyball

Untested novelties face market resistance, particularly in areas where suboptimal technologies are entrenched, easily available, and (as Vollen points out insurably. The factors that add up to successful technology transfer are far from systematic; for some materials, decades passed between their invention and commercialization. Dent hails Gorilla Glass, the ultra-strong, scratch-resistant surface that allows durability and interactivity in smartphones, as a transformative material that could also be useful in architecture. Yet when Corning developed the similar Chemcor glass in the early 1960s, it mothballed the product after about a decade, only to revive the idea on request from Apple in the mid-2000s. Serendipity and a suitable niche among related technologies appear essential for promising ideas to migrate from laboratory to the Sweets catalog or the shelves of Home Depot.

One of nature’s recurrent strategies for economizing on material bulk—porous forms—characterizes several materials whose properties have drawn attention. Metallic foams, often aluminum or zinc, combine strength with lightness and thermal resistance; one such product, an aluminum foam marketed by the Canadian firm Cymat as SmartShield, was originally developed as a blast barrier on the undersides of military vehicles that encounter roadside bombs. “An individual at Cymat who had an architectural background recognized that, in addition to having the extreme technical properties, the material was aesthetically interesting,” reports Kelly Thomas, spokesperson for its distributor, Stone Source. Slightly altered in cell structure and slab thickness, rebranded as Alusion, the foam (80 percent air by volume) is now available to serve as walls, partitions, decorative fixtures, acoustic drop ceilings, or exterior cladding. Currently a specialty material, Alusion could conceivably gain increased prominence after the opening of the 9/11 Museum, where it will appear on the undersides of the twin fountains.

Top: Victor Li at the University of Michigan has been experimenting with fiber-reinforced bendable concrete. Middle: Alusion, an aluminum foam that’s 80 percent air, was derived from Cymat, a material used as glass shielding on military vehicles. Bottom: Lafarge’s Ductal is a high performance concrete reinforced by organic, reinforced metallic fibers that increases the material’s compression resistance, ductility, and longevity.
CALENDAR

FEBRUARY 2013

THURSDAY 7
LECTURE

Time in Art
1:00 p.m.
Indianapolis Museum of Art
4000 Michigan Rd.
Indianapolis, IN
imamuseum.org

Urban Ag Rising: The Five Borough Farm Project
12:00 p.m.
Screenland Crossroads
1665 Washington
Kansas City, MO
aiakc.org

WEDNESDAY 6
LECTURE

Abstract Expressionism and Pompeii
7:00 p.m.
The Cleveland Museum of Art
1150 E. 53rd St.
Cleveland, OH
clevelandart.org

Adriana Guerra/West 8
5:45 p.m.
Knowlton School of Architecture
Knowlton Hall
Ohio State University
2120 Fox St.
Columbus, OH
knowlton.osu.edu

Legible Cities: Leveraging Data to Improve Urban Living
6:30 p.m.
Burns & McDonnell Auditorium
4000 Ward Pkwy
Kansas City, MO
aiakc.org

EVENT

Unique Design: Senior Apartments at the Center on Halsted
6:00 p.m.
Gansev
11 East Madison St.
Chicago
aiachicago.org

THURSDAY 7

PANEL DISCUSSION

Committed Culture: A Panel Discussion on Politics and Aesthetics During World War II
6:00 p.m.
Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts Steinberg Auditorium
Washington University
1 Brookings Dr.
St. Louis, MO
samfoxchool.wustl.edu

EVENT

Flashbacks: East German Films on Cold War Screens
6:00 p.m.
610 South Michigan Ave.
Chicago
sperturus.edu

EXHIBITION OPENING

Carlos Estrada Vega
739 North Wells St.
Chicago
royboydgallery.com

MONDAY 4

EXHIBITION OPENING

Science City Design Challenge Showcase
11:30 a.m.
Union Station
30 West Wacker Dr.
Kansas City, MO
aiakc.org

TUESDAY 5

EVENT

Time in Art
1:00 p.m.
Indianapolis Museum of Art
4000 Michigan Rd.
Indianapolis, IN
imamuseum.org

Urban Ag Rising: The Five Borough Farm Project
12:00 p.m.
Screenland Crossroads
1665 Washington
Kansas City, MO
aiakc.org

WEDNESDAY 10

LECTURE

Family Day: Cityscape
12:00 p.m.
Minneapolis Institute of Arts
2400 3rd Ave. South
Minneapolis, MN
artmnia.org

MONDAY 11

LECTURE

Mitch McEwen
A. Conglomerate
6:00 p.m.
Taubman College of Architectes and Urban Planning A+ RA Auditorium
University of Michigan
2000 Bonartes Blvd.
Ann Arbor, MI
taubmancollege.umich.edu

EVENT

The J. Robert Swanson Lecture: Figures and Types
6:00 p.m.
Kranbrok Academy of Art
38221 Woodward Ave.
Bloomfield Hills, MI
kranbrok.edu

EVENT

Poetics of Place: Reading and Discussion
6:00 p.m.
Museum of Contemporary Art
220 East Chicago Ave., Chicago
mcachicago.org

TUESDAY 12

LECTURES

Culture Catalysts: Martin Kastner of Alinea
6:00 p.m.
Museum of Contemporary Art
220 East Chicago Ave., Chicago
mcachicago.org

EVENT

The Poetics of Place: Reading and Discussion
6:00 p.m.
Museum of Contemporary Photography
600 South Michigan Ave.
Chicago
events columnist.org

LECTURES

Studio Talk with Dianna Molzan and Alex Olson
7:00 p.m.
Walker Arts Center
Walker Cinema
1750 Hennepin Ave.
Minneapolis, MN
walkerart.org

Penelope in Persepolis: The Power of Images to Stop War with an Arch-Enemy
6:00 p.m.
Art Institute of Chicago
Morton Auditorium
111 South Michigan Ave.
Chicago
artic.org

11:00 a.m.
Knowlton School of Architecture
Knowlton Hall
Ohio State University
270 W. 12th Ave.
Columbus, OH
knowlton.osu.edu

KATE GILMORE:
BODY OF WORK
MDCA Cleveland
11400 Euclid Avenue
Cleveland, OH
March 16 to June 9

Through performance-based art, Kate Gilmore presents her body battling through strenuous physical abilities while wearing whimsical feminine outfits, like fitted dresses and high heels. Her clothing makes the chaotic and messy actions all the more uncomfortable and comical. Gilmore’s performances reexamine the feminist performance art that became popular in the 1970s. By injecting humor into her work alongside visible awkwardness and distress, she explores the female identity while breaking down accepted mascuine art practices found in modernist history. Her aggressive movements against feminine tones make the performance visually interesting. For her first solo show, the artist will display ten years of video works. The exhibition will also feature a recently commissioned performance in the form of a sculpture and video.

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If you’re looking for a comprehensive history from the late 1800s until today, of how Chicago gave the world “modern living” and a built environment for it, this book is not that. Rather, this collection of essays grew out of a Second City-style anxiety. In 2009, New York was mounting an exhibition on the design school, the Bauhaus, and some in Chicago worried that the equally important modern work being carried out in the Windy City would get short shrift.

Accordingly, those Chicagoans conceived a series of exhibitions, shaped by the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and the Mies van der Rohe Society at the Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT); they have followed those exhibitions with this book. Isn’t that modern: to be fueled by anxiety?

The editors put forth three premises: that Chicago is dedicated to the modern, that “the Windy City continues to drive the world,” and that the rest of the world should pay more attention. Let’s see if they prove their case.

A Venn diagram of these 300 pages shows the essays divided into research on historical figures, and contemporary creation. The important overlap occurs where today’s Chicago artists, critics, and scholars interpret the city’s legacies.

Mary Jane Jacob, right away, in the first essay, names a trinity of giants. Jacob, who is executive director of exhibitions and exhibition studies at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, connects social reformer Jane Addams, educator John Dewey, and artist Laszlo Moholy-Nagy. Each came here separately, as the 20th century dawned. I write this from a the 1985 Reliance Building on State Street, the world’s first skyscraper, whose facade is comprised of large glass, a harbinger of modern transparencies and reflections.

The goals of that eminent trio, as they looked at working-class citizens and immigrants, Jacob writes, was to make the world a more just, educated, and cultured place. Each developed an experimental institution—which extended into the city—to test ideas. Jane Addams started Hull House, for social services; John Dewey incubated democracy in the Chicago Laboratory School; and Moholy-Nagy spoke of maximizing continued on page 13
Chicago played an incontrovertible role developing modernity, even before Ludwig Mies van der Rohe set up shop here in 1937. City leaders also courted the founder of the Bauhaus, Walter Gropius, to lead an "industrial art school" and only later telegrammed Moholy that: "Marshall Field offers family mansion Prairie Avenue. Stables to be converted into workshops. Doctor Gropius suggests your name as director. Are you interested?"

Moholy tried to adapt to the U.S. capitalist system but "no immediately salable products [were] turned out by any of the workshops." When the boys started shipping off to World War II, and Moholy's funders told him that the school was no longer viable, Gropius suggested your name as director. Doctor Gropius suggested your name as director.

To end then, we quote Moholy-Nagy, from Chicago Makes Modern. He wrote his wife, "There's something incomplete about this city and its people that fascinates me...It seems to urge one on to completion. Everything still seems possible."

We look forward to seeing you at the school, to how the students of today shape our future. May it be as exciting as the work Moholy and Gropius did in Chicago.
Chris Bentley, companies, including Twitter.
offices of nearly two dozen tech
five-story Madison building,
for Bedrock, marking the second-
Bedrock does in the city’s central
Dan Gilbert owns Quicken
transaction.
almost every major real estate
In the City of Detroit, it seems,
and its vision for a new Detroit.
company’s recent acquisitions
and preserve the city’s historic
about Detroit is the architecture.
We believe that is part of
the nuts and bolts of Detroit.
The hardware is there. We want
to maintain the character of
Look at Charlotte, North
Carolina—they’ve knocked most
of that down and started to build
anew, but it just doesn’t have
that same charm, that same feel.
I think one of the special things
about Detroit is the architecture.
As long as a building can be
restored, we will restore it. It
costs us a lot of money to restore
some of these buildings, but
some, if you were to start over
and build from scratch, would
cost more.
The whole concept of what
we’re doing here is to build
a population of office and
residential tenants, so you have
to cater to the tenants’ needs.
And everything we do, we
do as ‘eco-friendly’ as possible.
We’re going to put solar panels
on the 1528 Woodward building,
with a monitor on one of the
floors showing how much energy
is coming from the solar panels.
You mentioned office, residential,
and retail. What more is needed?
Probably the largest need right
now is residential. The demand
for office space is very strong—
we’re running out of space. We’re
probably 97 percent leased,
we’re doing here.
On Bedrock’s homepage, a
message reads, “It’s time
to escape the soul-crushing
suburban sprawl.” But Detroit
is a bit of a sprawl itself—is
redevelopment going to remain
confined to certain nodes, or
is there hope for a citywide
comeback? Won’t certain areas
inevitably fall by the wayside?
The whole metro area is
a sprawl, but it doesn’t have
that feel when you’re in the
heart of the CBD. I think it will
continue to grow. Midtown has
already established itself. We’re
moving forward with the M-1 rail,
which will be a great connection
between midtown, New Center,
downtown, and that will
spur economic development
along the whole rail. Eventually
the rail will get north to Royal
Oak, Birmingham, Pontiac,
and that will spur more economic
development as transit-oriented
development always does.
What is unique about Detroit’s situation?
What can other cities, especially
those in the Midwest, take from
Detroit’s experience?
All real estate is unique, but
what’s happening in Detroit
could happen in a lot of cities.
Chicago has already made
itself into a technological hub,
with unique shops and things
you can’t get in the suburbs.
We do need some chains
and franchises, but you need a lot
of people to come downtown and be
the first to create something. In
Charleston, South Carolina, for
example, you can’t do a bunch
of unique restaurants and shops
you can’t find anywhere else.
What do you know that other
developers don’t?
Part of it is timing, and part
of it is having the belief that it can
be. We believe in what we’re
investing in. We have
moved 7,000 team members down
here and we’re constantly pushing
other companies to become
part of this movement. It’s not
just us—Blue Cross Blue Shield,
General Motors—there are other
companies that have made the
move downtown.
And we very much encourage
other developers to do what
we’re doing. This can’t be just
us. It’s really important
that other people become part of
this growth. These are the early
stages, and it’s growing into
something very valuable. We
feel we can do good and do
well—and it’s going to pay off in
the future.
What are your childhood
memories of downtown Detroit?
Unfortunately, my generation
missed a lot of the downtown.
I would come down to go to Tiger
games, or hockey games, but
that was about it. I did go to the
Hudson’s department store and
I thought, that was the nearest
ever. When my parents were
growing up downtown, was such
a vibrant place and they were
in the city all the time, but my
childhood was mostly in the
suburbs. Now it’s changing again.
What’s next?
We’re going to expand our
target area, which is Jefferson
up to Grand Circuit Park, and
it’s probably going to lean east.
We’re under contract to buy
the Greektown Casino. We’ve
got lots of retailers and restaurants
interested, and we’re working
to find the right spots for them.
There’s still lots to be done here.
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