PIER REVIEW

For the first time in its 100-year history, Chicago’s Navy Pier may be the site of a new hotel. As part of Centennial Vision, a multiphase redevelopment of the Pier, the city and Chicago-based hotel management company First Hospitality Group, Inc. announced plans for a 200-room hotel. Heading the project is Chicago-based hotel management company First Hospitality Group, Inc. announced plans for a 200-room hotel.

TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENTS HAVE ARRIVED IN CHICAGO

HOT TOD-DY

Transit is getting some love in Chicago, and not just in terms of de rigueur track and station improvements. An estimated 30 new transit-friendly residential projects have been built, are under construction, or are in planning since Chicago adopted its first transit-oriented development (TOD) ordinance in September 2013.

“The built and substantially built projects are four or five years in the making, so it’s hard to attribute them entirely to the ordinance,” said Jon Heinert, partner at Wheeler Kearns Architects and project architect for three major TOD buildings.

Real estate microclimates also play a role in where and when housing gets built. Just compare Wicker Park and Woodlawn. But, Heinert added, “there has definitely continued on page 5

The Academy for Global Citizenship in South Side, Chicago, will open out to the neighborhood, providing space for food education and a public market.

STUDIO GANG PROPOSES A NET-POSITIVE SCHOOL WITH ITS OWN GOAT

Build Locally, Think Globally

In the near future, students at the Academy for Global Citizenship will learn firsthand how a net-zero building works, as their campus will collect enough solar power to be completely off the grid. Chances are, though, the thing they will remember most distinctly about their unconventional school will be that it included a working farm, complete with a goat.

The Academy for Global Citizenship (AGCI) on the Southwest Side of Chicago is already unlike nearly continued on page 4

The Milwaukee Arts Barge aims to bring a performance space to far reaching neighborhoods.

Conceived by architect Antonio Furgiuele, a research fellow at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee School of Architecture and Urban Planning continued on page 4

Art Floats Milwaukee’s Boat

The Milwaukee Arts Barge (MAB) is a proposal for a mobile performing arts venue that aims to transform Milwaukee’s waterways into activated public spaces.

Architects create healthcare facilities that foster interdisciplinary collaboration. See page 9

OPERABLE WALLS SUPPLEMENT

The top operable walls on the market slide, glide, and even rotate 360 degrees for countless applications, both interior and exterior. We survey the landscape and profile two outstanding case studies. We also bring you the latest hardware that will bring high design to your windows and doors. See page 13

For the first time in its 100-year history, Chicago’s Navy Pier may be the site of a new hotel. As part of Centennial Vision, a multiphase redevelopment of the Pier, the city and Chicago-based hotel management company First Hospitality Group, Inc. announced plans for a 200-room hotel.
Chicago has a problem. It is not a new problem, but as of late it has been more apparent. For a city whose motto could just as well be Daniel Burnham’s “Make no little plans…” Chicago makes very few large plans. As a result, the city seems unable to realize any plans at all.

At the time of printing, Chicago is about to lose the George Lucas Museum of Narrative Arts (LMNA) to the West Coast. Aside from the conversation of putting private institutions in our public parks (NB: All of the lakefront museums are private), the entire fiasco has brought up a slew of other issues, ones that should make everyone who cares about the built environment take pause. The first is what initially set the downward spiral of the LMNA into motion: The use of the lakefront. The discussion of this one building has all too clearly highlighted the fact that we don’t talk seriously about the lakefront as the resource it actually is: A resource that was made by and for the people of Chicago. For whatever reason, a fundamentalism has arisen that the lakefront should freeze at the shape, function, and character of an artificial line reached a century ago. So often in this argument Burnham is evoked, as if he would somehow be pleased that only a small portion of his plan is complete. The next problem highlighted by this calamity is the city’s apparent willingness to throw away what we have. Chicago has a long history of tearing down the great buildings, buildings that remind us of when it actually was a place that made big ambitious plans. After the loss of Prentice Women’s Hospital, one would think that other eccentrics icons would be given some sort of reprieve. It is more than shortsighted to think that McCormick Place and, for that matter, the Thompson Center are not architecturally significant and worth saving. No one would argue against rethinking and refurbishing, but Chicago would not be better without them. Rather, the city would be losing two of its most unique interior gathering spaces.

Both the protection of the shoreline and the short-term economy of the city are important, but architects understand the larger implications of the built environment. “Make no little plans” resonates with Chicagoans because they can see it every day: The city has been defined by big risks and major projects. Now that same level of ambition can be directed at the betterment of the city for all: While protecting those spaces that make Chicago so unique, architects can also envision new spaces that inspire.

Architects can’t leave the grand plans to politicians. No one is more qualified or willing to imagine a better city than an architect. Architects can’t leave the grand plans to politicians. No one is more qualified or willing to imagine a better city than an architect. Architects will have to take up the mantle and imagine a future for the city. In this effort, we at The Architect’s Newspaper are in good company – the Chicago Architecture Biennial has over the past three years brought forward ambitious ideas for the city and for the public realm.

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Architects can’t leave the grand plans to politicians. No one is more qualified or willing to imagine a better city than an architect—but you’re going to have to fight for it.
ON THE DOTTED LINE
An independent group has delivered a 2,500 signature petition to Friends of the Parks asking the group to drop its lawsuit against the city blocking the construction of the Lucas Museum of Narrative Arts. An earlier petition started by Friends of the Parks to stop the museum has only garnered 1,500 signatures so far. Though the petitions, hosted on change.org, have no legal bearing, both groups have used the platform to advocate for their positions.

POLITICAL PANTS ON FIRE
Chicago’s 41st Ward alderman Anthony Napolitano and Democratic committee-man Tim Nenagh got into a name-calling match at a public hearing in the northwest side neighborhood of Edison Park. Napolitano called Nenagh a liar over an email that went out to residents regarding a possible development that may include affordable housing. The planned 44-unit apartment building would require a zoning change, which under Chicago’s new Affordable Housing Ordinance would mean the new construction would need to include at least 10 percent affordable housing. Nenagh accused Napolitano of misleading residents regarding the size of the development, while Napolitano accused Nenagh of attempting to scare residents for political gain.

UNVEILED
DAVID M. RUBENSTEIN FORUM
The University of Chicago has announced the approval of the preliminary designs for a new 90,000-square-foot complex designed by New York–based Diller Scofidio + Renfro. The David M. Rubenstein Forum is described by the university as “a place of intellectual, institutional, and educational exchange.” The building will contain meeting and presentation spaces, as well as a Lake View Room at the top of a 165-foot tower. With the largest space able to accommodate up to 600 people, the Forum will be able to host large conferences. A 285-seat auditorium will facilitate more formal lectures and presentations, along with film screenings and performances, and more intimate academic symposia will be held in its many smaller meeting spaces.

GREEN LINE ARTS CENTER ADDITION ANNOUNCED
Los Angeles–based firm Johnston Marklee was announced as the designer for a new addition to the Green Line Arts Center in the South Side Chicago neighborhood of Washington Park. The Arts Center is an arts incubator and social space that has been spearheaded by the University of Chicago. Leading the redevelopment is University of Chicago professor and artist Theaster Gates. The project will rehabilitate and add to a 1920s commercial building, maintaining the building’s glazed terra-cotta facade.

OPEN RETAIL
Chicago and New York–based Norman Kelley recently finished Chicago’s first Aesop store. The high-end Australian skin care company frequently hires young architecture firms to design their stores, and Norman Kelley’s iteration takes its cues from the surrounding historic Bucktown neighborhood. Consisting of ten thousand reclaimed Chicago common bricks, the floor and walls are clad in intricately woven herringbone and pinwheel brick bond patterns. In order to hold the weight of the all-brick interior, the floor of the structure was reinforced from the basement. An unused chimney was removed to create a completely open floorplan. In the center of the space, a black-stained white oak counter and a demonstration island are the only furniture in the space, keeping the focus on the black steel-clad shelves, embedded in the brick walls, holding Aesop’s famed soaps and lotions.

Norman Kelley has also recently finished a second Aesop store in Tribeca, New York.

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BUILD LOCALLY, THINK GLOBALLY continued from front page

any other K-8 school around. Once it moves out of its now-cramped makeshift space into a brand-new, Studio Gang–designed campus, it will be truly one of a kind.

The charter school, as the name would suggest, was conceived with a focus on global stewardship and was in dire need of a space that better reflected its pedagogy and ambitions. With this charge, Chicago- and New York–based Studio Gang set out to produce a campus that would be a productive space for students, faculty, and the surrounding community. Conceived as a series of flexible “neighborhoods” with indoor and outdoor learning environments, the project is designed without typical circulation space. Rather, students will walk through “Wonder Paths” that wind fluidly though indoors and outdoors. Along these paths students will encounter laboratories, presentation spaces, learning stations, and play areas. A central courtyard will connect all of these diverse programs.

The main structure’s design takes cues from industrial building typologies to maximize natural light and solar collection. A sawtooth roofline is set at the optimal angle for solar power, while allowing copious amounts of north light into the learning spaces. Yet the passive and active solar aspects of the project are only part of the school’s sustainability goals. Perhaps the most notable of the school’s amenities is a three-acre urban farm. Along with producing its own power, the school will also produce a portion of its own food. Students will help grow breakfast and lunch for their classmates. The school believes the understanding of agriculture is an important part both of being a global citizen and of creating one’s relationship to food. Anchoring the farm is a greenhouse-barn where classes and presentations can be held for students and the community.

“The whole thing is really all about growing a power- and food-conscious community and designing a replicable system that can be used by other schools in the future,” firm founder Jeanne Gang said.

Working with Studio Gang on the project are Chicago-based landscape architects site design group, ltd. and New York–based environmental consultants Atelier Ten. The school will be completely one of a kind when finished, but the design is specifically done in such a way that it can be repeated around the world. To do so, prefabricated systems and readily accessible materials are being specified.

While Studio Gang is garnering international attention for soaring skyscrapers, it continues to work on smaller-scale projects for socially minded clients. The Academy for Global Citizenship adds to the firm’s list of educational and community projects that includes the award-winning Arcus Center for Social Justice Leadership, the SOS Children’s Villages Lavezorin Community Center, and the Columbia College Chicago Media Production Center. ••

Moveable walls will be able to fold and unfold in order to transform the art barge into different stage and gallery configurations.

relationship with SARUP, where Furgiuele is collaborating with architecture students to develop the project. Together, the team is mapping Milwaukee’s watery infrastructure to demonstrate how the rivers that crisscross the city also constitute and reinforce racial, social, and economic boundaries. The MAB team envisions that floating a cultural space along the very boundaries of urban segregation might create new opportunities for civic participation and social exchange.

The MAB team is interviewing Milwaukee’s vibrant arts organizations to better inform the design of its boat. If the performing arts are usually experienced within a fixed institutional framework, then MAB hopes to provide an alternative platform that might empower artists to create new kinds of itinerant performances and to provide a vehicle (literally) for emerging talent. What if the stage prosenium could rotate? What does it mean for a performance to be staged in the middle of Lake Michigan? What if a play could be presented in multiple locations during a single production, coupling scene changes with changing scenery? MAB wants to leverage the opportunity for dancers, theater directors, filmmakers, and musical artists to choose real-time and dynamic locational backdrops to heighten their storytelling practices and performative impacts. The MAB team speculates that the mobile format will be instrumental to advancing performance as an art form, creating new audiences and challenging existing audiences in new ways.

In addition to artistic performances, the MAB team is also studying opportunities for other kinds of cultural, educational, and civic programming. For instance, MAB envisions water scientists and advocacy groups using the barge as an outdoor classroom during non-performance hours to facilitate water-quality testing and outreach events.

While MAB hopes that local residents will take pride in a “born in Milwaukee” project that engages Milwaukee’s specific geopolitical makeup, it also aspires for the barge to “champion a larger exchange” with travel to other Midwestern legacy cities such as Detroit, Cleveland, and Buffalo, Furgiuele said. To that end, the MAB team is calibrating the physical requirements of the barge to accommodate regional travel. Furgiuele said that a 70-by-28-foot vessel provides the “sweet spot” for the barge to be nimble enough to navigate Milwaukee’s windswept rivers but seaworthy enough to traverse the Great Lakes.

What will the arts barge look like? While its aesthetics currently remain schematic, the MAB team envisions a reflective container in which the mirrored exterior walls fold open to create a 40-foot-wide prosenium on either side of the barge. A curved screen at one end encloses a green room and backstage space. When the walls fold back into the closed position, their mirrored surfaces reflect the constantly changing urban surroundings, projecting the city as an image on mobile display.

To share its developing vision with the community, the MAB team recently showcased research and models at the Mobile Design Box, a pop-up gallery space initiated by SARUP. The MAB exhibit, which is part of an ongoing series open through June 30 entitled “Mobility Matters,” includes cartographic constructs, architectural models, and photographic research, among other speculative installations. Pending current grant and sponsorship pursuits and fundraising goals, MAB aims to be in the water by summer 2017.

ART FLOATS MILWAUKEE’S BOAT continued from front page (SARUP), the project is currently sparking dialogue with community partners and local residents to raise enthusiasm, support, and sponsorship to launch the boat. MAB operates through a working
The East Village Association (EVA), in a departure from kneejerk NIMBYism, encouraged developer Rob Buono to work with the city to free the project from its mandatory parking minimum (at the time requiring a one-to-one ratio of parking spaces to residential units). Buono and the EVA won a protracted battle with opposing neighbors and the 99-unit 1611 West Division demonstrated an appetite for TOD buildings are better neighbors in terms of density. Developers are building with more bulk and height [in the neighborhoods].

The parking reduction is a nonissue,” said Heinert, "but the public is more resistant to increased density. Developers are now to increased density. Developers are saying Heinert, “New parking-lite designs do a public perception is somewhat different. “The parking reduction is a nonissue,” said Heinert. “New parking-lite designs do a better job relating to the street and are more pedestrian-friendly. The controversy surrounding this building has since been diluted by a legion of imitators. 1611 West Division demonstrated an appetite among younger renters for smaller units in denser, more urbane buildings—hives of activity. Public perception is somewhat different. “The parking reduction is a nonissue,” said Heinert. "but the public is more resistant to increased density. Developers are

The near northwest side of Chicago has become popular with residents who rely primarily on public transportation, paving the way for a 100 percent reduction in the parking minimum.

HOT TOD-DY continued from front page been an uptick.” The new rules make it easier for developers to revisit their proposals and apply for more units and less parking on the same plot—a potentially big profit booster.

Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel championed a revised TOD ordinance in September 2015 with provisions twice as potent. Developers may now apply for a 100 percent reduction in the parking minimum (up from 50 percent) within a quarter mile of a mass-transit station (up from 600 feet) or within a half mile of within a quarter mile of a mass-transit station in the parking minimum (up from 50 percent) or parking-reduced projects in gentrifying neighborhoods with sizable vacant parcels. Logan Square is the bull’s-eye, but neighborhoods five miles of the Milwaukee Avenue corridor, from downtown north through Logan Square along the Blue Line, are feeling the effects.

By one count, there are eight significantly sized TOD projects—all rental—completed or under construction with some 1,100 apartments in total. More than 330 apartments are spread across three under-construction buildings near the Blue Line’s California station, adding high-rises to the neighborhood mix.

Buono and Wheeler Kearns migrated northwest from their pioneering 1611 West Division to anchor this new blitz. Their Twin Towers, a stone’s throw from the Metra, are 11 and 12 stories with 216 apartments and 56 parking spaces. One block south on Milwaukee Avenue, a topped-out, six-story, 120-unit rental, simply called “L” for the elevated tracks at its door, has given primacy to bike parking. The tally? Bikes: 200. Cars: 60.

Despite sporadic local grumblings, TOD buildings are better neighbors in terms of design. “Pre-TOD, larger buildings springing up in places like the South Loop and River North had a lack of engagement with the street,” said Heinert. “New parking-lite designs do a better job relating to the street and are more representative of classic Chicago.”

Looks like those old urban forms really do hold the answers.

CELEBRATING 45 YEARS
OF PRECAST PROGRESS.
Prescient's new office in the Prudential T Tower in Chicago is exactly what you might expect from a high-tech global security firm's office, and a bit of what you might not. Designed by Chicago-based Perkins+Will, the space is specifically designed to facilitate both human and technological collaborations. Transparency may not be the first thing that comes to mind when thinking about a security firm, yet Prescient's office is predominantly an open space. The main area of the office is filled with staggered standing desks, and there are glass-encased break-out areas around the periphery. Framed windows that once made up the former exterior facade of the building are now used as dividers and are specially coated to act as transparent dry-erase boards for impromptu conversations and meetings. Along with the open lunchroom and break areas, the entire space is specifically designed to encourage free interaction between all of the employees. "We use elegant technology coupled with human analysis to identify and manage threats for our clients," Prescient CEO David Walsh explained. "Our vision for the office was to be able to stand anywhere and take measure of the energy of an adaptable, team-oriented company in a space that fosters collaboration and transparency." Along with the spatial considerations of the office, material details play an important role in Perkins+Will's design. At the entrance, a continuous line of florescent light fixtures guides visitors to the reception area. The linear lighting and corresponding material detailing throughout the space is a nod to the movement of digital information. In addition to the extensive use of glass, steel and walnut make up much of the designed surfaces and furniture. Perkins+Will worked closely with a hushed, dimly blue-lit amphitheater is dominated by a full-wall digital display of the world. Here, employees monitor international security issues 24 hours a day.

From the more serious Prescient Traveler space to the more casual and comfortable meeting areas, every part of the design is an aspect of Prescient's new brand. The company specifically moved from the more suburban McLean, Virginia, outside of Washington, D.C., to this highly visible space in downtown Chicago to complete its new image. Not only does the space bring the company in closer contact to a bustling commercial center, its newly designed office also plays a role in attracting the best young tech workers, who often expect to be able to live in an urban area. With its new office, those young tech workers can watch over clients while also enjoying one of the most envied views in the city.

The Prescient office mixes clean lines and custom details with warm reclaimed materials.

Prescient has high-tech work spaces, like the Prescient Traveler department (shown) as well as more informal meeting and break areas (right).

As an epic glass wall allows views and light into the new stadium.

WINDS OF THOR continued from page 2. The Vikings applied to have Chicago Avenue, which runs for three blocks in front of the stadium, renamed "Vikings Way" due to the team's aversion to a street name that evokes a division rival. Minneapolis City Hall would not budge on the street name, and the Vikings eventually withdrew their application. There was also the dispute over $16 million in cost overruns that had to be settled with Mortenson Construction (and there's yet to be a final tally) and a leak in the snow gutters at the top of the building requiring nearly $4 million in repairs. Lastly, the Vikings announced a "distinct monument": A Viking ship-themed sculpture with an LED screen for a sail on the plaza outside the stadium (by RipBang Studios, a California-based division of the Minneapolis design firm Nelson), as well as The Horn sculpture (by the Minneapolis-based Alliance) inside—both drew criticism from the local arts community.

What's done is done. In August, the Vikings kick off the first game in the new stadium. The structure is more than twice as big as the Metrodome. The first row of seats is a mere 41 feet away from the sideline, and the field seats get fans even closer at 25 feet. The wifi network is capable of accommodating upward of 30,000 fans as well as vendors and staff. While fully enclosed, the stadium's vast expanses of roof, wall, and clerestory glass provide a feeling of openness.

Whether viewed on foot, car, or from a seat on the Blue Line of the light-rail train, it's easy to see how the building fits with surrounding streets amid the fast-changing, rebranded Downtown East neighborhood. To what extent the stadium is a game changer for the City of Minneapolis, and the economic and cultural life of the area, however, remains to be seen.
Pier review continued from front page preliminary design is Chicago-based KOO. Led by Jackie Koo, the office is also responsible for the Wit Hotel in the North Loop and the Inn at Lincoln Park. The new privately funded hotel is expected to cost roughly $90 million. According to a press release, financing has already been secured, and construction is expected to begin in 2017. The preliminary design of the hotel includes five levels of hotel rooms looking out over the south side of the Pier. Located near the Pier’s east end, each room would include a balcony and bay window.

The announcement coincides with events surrounding the Pier’s 100th anniversary. The most visible of these events is the opening of the new 196-foot tall Centennial Ferris Wheel. The new wheel replaces a smaller version, which has been moved to Branson, Missouri. Like the last wheel, the new ride will have light shows coordinated with the Pier’s regular weekly and holiday fireworks shows. At a cost of $26.5 million, the Centennial Ferris Wheel is 50 feet taller, and can hold 150 more passengers than its predecessor. Erecting the 525-ton wheel presented unique problems, which included a limit on crane size due to the parking garage below and the weight limits of the Pier. Chicago’s inclement weather also played a role, as wind speeds and temperatures on the Pier are often much more extreme than in the city. Along with the Centennial Wheel, the Folk Bros Park and a reconfiguration of the general park and entry roadways have been completed. These projects were all part of Phase I of the Pier’s redevelopment. Also nearing full completion is the Wave Wall designed by New York-based James Corner Field Operations as part of its master plan for the entire Pier. New renderings have also been released for additions to the existing Shakespeare Theater on the Pier. These additions, designed by Chicago-based Adrian Smith + Gordon Gill Architecture, are expected to be complete by fall 2017.

Navy Pier is considered one of the largest tourist attractions in the Midwest, with over nine million visitors a year. The Pier was conceived as part of Daniel Burnham’s Chicago Plan. In its 100-year history it has been, among other things, a municipal pier, a naval training area, a school of architecture (now the School of Architecture at the University of Illinois at Chicago), and has seen varying levels of popularity and disrepair. The now-packed 50-acre pier and this new redevelopment are playing a large role in the mayor’s goal of bringing 55 million annual tourists to Chicago by 2020. mm
The Big Shift

6/7/16  4:50 PM

STUDIO VISIT > PORT URBANISM

NEWS

It is sometimes difficult for people who encounter PORT Urbanism’s work to know whether the projects are hypothetical or practical urban proposals. Despite this confusion, PORT would tell you that all of its work is practical, if not sometimes fantastic.

With small offices in Chicago and Philadelphia, PORT Urbanism fits into a niche of designers that are not typical urban planners and not strictly architects. As its name would suggest, it works at the urban scale, engaging with city governments and large-scale developers to envision near and far futures for public spaces.

PORT Urbanism is the speculative project to use carbon dioxide released by cars passing through the tunnel to feed algae that can be used to produce oxygen, biofuels, bioplastics, nutraceuticals, and agricultural feeds. Linked to the algae production of Pennsylvania, they were able to practice on their own terms.

With small offices in Chicago and Philadelphia, PORT would tell you that all of its work is practical, if not sometimes fantastic. Whether the projects are hypothetical or practical urban proposals. Despite this confusion, PORT is now moving forward through design development with an improved plan.

Presented at the Chicago Architecture Biennial, the Big Shift envisioned adding a new coastline and additional land east of Millennium and Grant Parks in downtown Chicago. While dismissed by many as too far-fetched, the project struck a chord with the public. “If we had proposed putting an island in Lake Michigan, then nobody would have cared,” Moddrell said. “But when we ground it in the precision of an infrastructural hierarchy and proposed repositioning of Lake Shore Drive, extending boulevards, and turning Grant Park into a Central Park, and pitch it with a straight face, it is not just architects screwing around for other architects. Moddrell stands by the idea, however grandiose, as a serious, though speculative proposal.”

Despite PORT’s small size, it is no stranger to large and complex projects. After being chosen from a request for proposal for a Denver park design with Denver-based Independent Architecture, a NIMBY battle ensued. The project was eventually moved and redesigned for a new park in a neighborhood with a community that appreciated the project. PORT is now moving forward through design development with an improved plan.

In an ongoing collaboration with Chicago developers R2, PORT’s Goose Island 2025 addresses the large industrial Goose Island on the near North Side of Chicago. A planned manufacturing district, Goose Island is new in the middle of a quickly developing part of the city. The island itself, though, has seen little development due to its designation as a planned manufacturing district and the city’s lack of an overall vision. R2 and PORT’s plan looks at the possibilities of the island as it continues as a place of industry, as well as anticipates a future in which some of its land may become available for other programs.
TOGETHERNESS

The Collaborative Life Sciences Building & Skourtes Tower by CO Architects and SERA Architects brings together Oregon Health & Science University, Oregon State University, and Portland State University in one complex. Shared interior spaces are meant to foster interaction among the 30,000 medicine, nursing, dentistry, pharmacy, chemistry, and biology students, as well as the teachers and administrators, who will use the space daily.

"We bring all these practitioners together, they share the spaces, they mingle, and they learn together," said Scott Kelsey, principal at L.A.-based CO Architects. "You're breaking down the traditional boundaries of these buildings as silos." Not only do employees learn from one another, but they share resources and research, and more often than not, they wind up working in all these facilities at one time or another.
CO recently completed the Collaborative Life Sciences Building & Skourtes Tower, a 650,000-square-foot campus in Portland, Oregon, that contains clinical facilities, teaching labs, classrooms, lecture halls, medical research labs, administrative spaces, and ground-floor retail for Oregon Health & Science University, Oregon State University, and Portland State University.

A shimmering aluminum panel skin unifies the complex’s interconnected volumes, but each volume takes on its own character. The five-story south wing is a geometric spaceship, hovering over a glass base. Its connecting glass atrium is clad with light-brown panels and topped with a large canopy—supported by thin tree columns—that shades its large, glass curtain walls. The 12-story Skourtes Tower is a tall silvery bar that accents the building on the Portland skyline.

“We were trying to find that balance between individual expression and combining them with a common language,” said Kelsey.

Much like how the individual formal components are linked, the emphasis inside has moved from the sequestered researcher model to one of collaboration, where people bump into each other instead of working like solo mad scientists. The ultimate expression of this is the central atrium, a wide-open space filled with connecting steel bridges (their diagonal pathways mimic the diagonal pathways of collegiate quads). Terracing and soft seating connect the two flanking buildings and provide additional places for informal meeting and learning.

A dramatic symbol of this emphasis on connection and collaboration is also seen in another project: The nearly 100-foot-long helical glass-and-steel bridge that Toronto-based Diamond Schmitt Architects built for St. Michael’s Hospital in downtown Toronto. The bridge connects the hospital’s clinical facilities to the Li Ka Shing Knowledge Institute, a bright open space surrounding a multi-story atrium. This public laneway, as it’s also called, connects Li Ka Shing’s research and education wings and is filled with dramatic wishbone stairs, stacked lounges, an auditorium, and other public gathering zones.

“It’s really about public access...
and use by the whole hospital,” said Diamond Schmitt principal Matthew Smith of this effort to get people from varying departments into the same space. The architects are now completing the third piece of this puzzle: A 17-story patient-care tower that will give the less approachable clinical side of the complex a glassy new atrium entry, add open spaces throughout, and, via flanking glass walkways, help improve and simplify circulation.

“We like to think of it as a three-legged stool,” said Smith, who noted that the interaction has been increased not just among different disciplines, but also within the disciplines themselves. “A lot of these researchers didn’t know what’s going on in the lab next door. They didn’t talk to each other. They didn’t bump into each other,” said Ennead Architects’ principal Todd Schliemann, who is also working on collaborative healthcare spaces. The new model, he noted, is built around “productive collisions.” Researchers are talking more to one another. Professors mingle with professors. Other major factors are convenience and proximity, since many doctors are also researchers, and vice versa. They no longer have to travel through the city to fulfill these varied roles. And clinical practitioners can improve their treatments by bringing samples to a nearby lab, while lab researchers can test their discoveries in a clinical environment.

This convenience is typified by Ennead’s new 480,000-square-foot Belfer Research Building in Manhattan, which adds crucial research and medical education pieces to the architects’ earlier Weill Greenberg Center, a clinical facility that was completed in 2007. These resources used to be spread throughout the city. Schliemann calls it an “urban quadrangle” that “sews together” the varied parts. New conference rooms, lounge and study spaces, and a cafe connect directly to the garden, and large glass walls beckon people inside the new building.

On the flip side, an entire campus can be contained in a single building. The Gates Vascular Institute by Yazdani Studio of CannonDesign merges the University at Buffalo, Kaleida Health, and the Jacobs Institute (containing spaces for translational research, education, business, and clinical care) under one roof. The 10-story complex is unified by a cavernous, diversely clad lobby, fronted by a glass curtain wall. Each component is delineated from the outside by a high-gloss resin ribbon that snakes its way through and around the edifice.

“Tying things together” has another benefit besides new relationships and collaborations. “Research is booming. There’s money in it,” explained Schliemann. New discoveries, he said, have advanced at an exponential rate, and these layouts have proven effective in enhancing the process. Challenges continue to emerge, like how to keep buildings variegated to minimize their scale to fit with their surrounding neighborhoods. But as long as this upward trend continues, we’re likely to see more and more combined complexes and more and more productive collisions in the coming years.
Architects Can Learn Anytime! Anywhere!
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By Becca Blasdel
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This system enables fluid, simultaneous sliding of two to three doors weighing up to 176 pounds or four doors weighing up to 88 pounds in both commercial and residential applications. High-quality trolleys allow for easy movement with one hand, and toothed belts provide strong maintenance-free operation.

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Assa Abloy/Pemko

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Design and architecture firm Gensler wanted an office that “embodies function and flexibility through the honest expression of materiality and structure,” according to Harriet Tzou, a marketing specialist at the firm. With existing offices in San Francisco and San Jose, Gensler was attracted to its new East Bay location because of the local community and growing economy.

Gensler’s main multipurpose room is named “Scarlet” after the red oak tree—all of the conference rooms are nicknamed for different species of oak that grow prominently in the region. The room utilizes PK-30’s sliding-stacking pocket movable wall system, which can change from being fully closed for meetings (there are about 130 employees at this location) to being opened up into a larger multifunctional space. Its glass doors can be folded and slid into a discreet pocket in the wall to transform the space into a reception area for events, training sessions, or workshops.

Above: PK-30’s movable wall system transitions the room into an enclosed meeting space.

Below: Gensler’s main multipurpose room has glass doors that can be folded and slid away, allowing it to fulfill many functions, which can change from being fully closed for meetings (there are about 130 employees at this location) to being opened up into a larger multifunctional space. Its glass doors can be folded and slid into a discreet pocket in the wall to transform the space into a reception area for events, training sessions, or workshops. 
Faces of Regent Park, a public work of Dan Bergeron, was realized with SentryGlas® Expressions™ technology by Standard Bent Glass. Twelve photo based mixed media portraits are featured in six double sided laminated glass panels and installed in the City of Toronto. With SentryGlas® Expressions™ virtually any image can be reproduced in vibrant colors on the safety glass interlayer. The result is astonishing imagery and design textures, protected within the laminated safety glass.

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One thing is certain about Beatriz Colomina and Pep Aviles’s Playboy Architecture, 1953–1979: It is an evidentiary display proving that architecture and media are complicit partners in shaping society’s view of itself. Born out of research within the Ph.D. program in Media and Modernity at Princeton University’s School of Architecture, Playboy Architecture is an exhaustive index of the ways magazines, architecture, design, furniture, fashion, and sex influence Western society. From the pages of Playboy, one could dream of a glossy packaged life. However, the role of the architect in this context has never been clearer: a precise model of a complex “lifestylescape,” where design and architecture provide not only the backdrop to where you live, but also a proposition on how to live. The first room in the exhibition when you enter is the Playboy Pads, a circular pedestal are some iconic chairs, like Mies’s Barcelona, coupled with blown-up pages of Playboy showing drawings of different interiors. The most compelling pad shown is the one-inch-by-one-foot-long sectional model of the proposed Playboy House in the Gold Coast of Chicago, which is three stories and divided in the center by a pool with a water-to-glass-ceiling atrium, allowing for views through adjacent windows all the way up—a truly panoptic voyeurism.

This bed was not only meant for the purposes of sleeping and sex, but also was an office and a conference center with shelves and phones, but no chairs. The bed extended past its typical uses and became an ambiguous small architecture in and of itself, suggesting that the real place of modernity in society was to help it reinvent itself, one bed at a time. Finally, viewers enter Playboy Architecture, situated inside the old kid’s playroom of the McCormick House. This section gives users a glimpse into the almost Corbusian floor plan of walls within, replete with the creature comforts of high modernism, extending lifestyle during commutes to other far away pads. In the adjacent room, lies a bed. The Bedroom—or, more specifically, a circular bed—is hidden behind a velvet curtain with peepholes, dimly lit and perhaps the most compelling piece of design in the entire exhibition. The physical and conceptual thread that ties all the rooms together is the original magazines themselves, complete with white gloves to handle them carefully. The back and forth between the curated magazine and the modernist McCormick House provides a ripe environment to imagine oneself within the image of modernism. Playboy has always been equated with male sexual pleasure, but Colomina’s curation suggests a much deeper understanding of the relationship between sexuality, architecture, and design, not from a purely objectified space, where this exhibition might be misunderstood to be, but from a transcendent redefinition of oneself fittingly tied into the construction of lifestyle. This inversion is a critical product of the exhibition curation that directly challenges our historical understanding of Playboy, and uses the revolutionary edge of modernist architecture to suggest that creating future images of visionary, free spaces for anybody is what architects have, and should continue to do.

ANDREW SANTA LUCIA IS AN ARCHITECT, EDUCATOR AND CRITIC LIVING AND TEACHING IN CHICAGO, ILLINOIS.
The main exhibit hall at the Pennsylvania Convention Center in Philadelphia is three city blocks long. This is a universal space, unencumbered by columns and enriched by connection points and affordances that offer access to electricity, light, water, and ventilation. This space could hold and sustain almost anything. Today, as part of the AIA National Convention, it is filled with the elements of building, decontextualized and layered on top of one another in a delirious profusion of texture and meaning. Here, a mock-up of an elevator booth; there, a maze constructed entirely of doors. Signs over the booths invite us to do things like “Re-Think Wood,” and “Build our Community,” and remind us that “Glass is Everything.” A company making doorknobs and handles announces that it is “The Global Leader in Door Opening Solutions.”

This breathless valorization of the normal is infectious. Things and even people here seem on the verge of tipping over into some kind of technological singularity of the everyday. Even ordinary conversations occur with an extra layer of mediation. Each interaction with the staff at a booth is punctuated with an unusual question, “Do you mind if I scan your badge?” Attendees are all wearing custom lanyards with QR codes, which the booth staff photographs using smartphone apps, quantifying and upgrading any simple question about building components into an elevated transactional, informational layer. This halo around space, people, and things is also visible on the official convention app, where continuous back channel discussions and jokes flow in real time, pulling attendees from the gridded space of the convention hall back into its virtual counterpart.

Two architects in particular haunt this universal space: Denise Scott Brown and Rem Koolhaas. The exhibit hall’s collection brings to mind the Venice Biennale exhibition that Koolhaas curated in 2014. His Elements of Architecture show included a suspended acoustic tile ceiling installed under an ornate frescoed dome, and a collection of toilets from throughout history labeled with detailed annotations. Similarly, the signs at the convention’s exhibits recall the gallery work and research of Scott Brown and her husband-partner Robert Venturi. For the 1976 show Signs of Life: Symbols in the American City, at the Smithsonian, the pair gave voices to the ordinary pieces of the domestic landscape: “Historical Elegance” was bestowed on the ironwork of a row house front door; “Regency Style” demarcated a suburban living room armchair. In her 1972 book, Learning From Las Vegas, Scott Brown, Venturi, and a third collaborator, Steven Izenour, drew a warehouse-style building with a large billboard optimistically declaring, “I am a Monument.” And there is the drawing, on a T-shirt available in the gift shop off the main hall. And here is Scott Brown herself, onstage with AIA president Russell Davidson and executive director Robert Ivy. They are awarding the AIA Gold Medal to her and Venturi. This is the first time that this award has gone to collaborative partnership, they announce, and they have voted to change the medal’s rules, just to make this possible. This is extraordinary, and long overdue, but it is also extraordinarily normal.

Architects have been working together in partnerships for centuries. To adapt Scott Brown’s own language, this moment—that has the audience of thousands on its feet and overcome with emotion—is heroic and original, but it’s also ordinary, and the failure of the AIA to recognize this normal everyday mode up until now is certainly a bit ugly. Architecture, like Main Street, is almost all right. After Scott Brown, we hear from Koolhaas, onstage with Mohsen Mostafavi, the dean of Harvard’s GSD. Although the two interlocutors never mention Philadelphia, the title of Mostafavi and Koolhaas’s talk is “Delirious Philadelphia.” Billed by Ivy as “a real kick in the pants,” the talk turns out to be quite an ordinary, low-key conversation. Reminiscing about Learning From Las Vegas, Koolhaas said, “I remember very clearly when I first saw a copy of that book. It was extraordinary, I bought it right away.” Koolhaas has just finished signing hundreds of copies of his own 1978 book Delirious New York, A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan for sale in the bookstore alongside the “I am a Monument” shirts.

That book chronicled the assimilation of the disruptive effect that several new technologies had on architecture in Manhattan: the steel frame, the elevator, the electric light, and the air conditioner. This renormalization had taken place in the universal space of the 1811 street grid, allowing for the accommodation of difference in a way not unlike the neutral space of the convention center’s exhibit hall and its diverse booths.

FRED SCHARNHEIM IS A DESIGNER AND RESEARCHER IN BALTIMORE. HE ALSO TEACHES ARCHITECTURE AND URBAN DESIGN AT MORGAN STATE UNIVERSITY.
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There is often a barrier to entry when it comes to talking about Detroit. No matter how empathetically one approaches the subject, there is the distinct possibility of being accused of insensitivity. Detroit has been through, and continues to go through, some of the most difficult urban issues in the country. And, naturally, many Detroiters are downright tired of outsiders coming in and proposing “solutions” to the city’s ills. So when it was announced that the United States Pavilion for the 15th Venice Architecture Biennale would focus on the city, it was not surprising that some would take issue.

The United States Pavilion is explicitly about Detroit. The pavilion is organized by the University of Michigan Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning and curated by Mónica Ponce de León, former dean at Michigan and current dean at Princeton University, and Cynthia Davidson, editor of the journal Log. Titled the Architectural Imagination, the two curators charged 12 design firms to speculate on four sites throughout Detroit—the former Packard Automotive Plant, the U.S. Post Office on Fort Street, and city-owned sites in Mexicantown and the Dequindre Cut. The firms range from lesser-known talent to well-known names like Stan Allen and Greg Lynn. All firms were given free rein to imagine what program and form should go on their sites. They met with city and community representatives to discuss their projects and gain a better understanding of the sites. Overall, the exhibition is fairly typical of what one might expect to see in a show about architecture, with large models and drawings filling the pavilion.

Before the exhibition opened, well before any of the designs were revealed, criticism was leveled against the show. Most notably this critique came from a group called Detroit Resists. Remaining anonymous, Detroit Resists released a statement linking architecture, and the institutions that generally support building, to some of the systemic issues that plague Detroit—mass water shutoffs, evictions, gentrification, and spatial racism. The group accused the organizers, and indirectly the participating firms, of political indifference.

And Detroit Resists was far from alone in its skepticism, if not in its fervor. The conversation of Detroit and its relationship to contemporary design and architecture is a popular one. The U.S. Pavilion is not the first, and will not be the last, to speculate on Detroit. The general criticism of any design proposals produced for the city is that the egoism of the designers and their lack of connection to the city mean that they could not possibly contribute to the betterment of the people of Detroit.

One could not have a conversation about the possible designs without also having a conversation about whether it was even appropriate to talk about architecture and Detroit together. Just weeks before the Biennale opening, New York’s New Museum hosted a week-long workshop titled Ideas City in Detroit. The workshop brought together Detroiters, other Americans, and international designers and architects to discuss and think about the city. Similarly, the U.S. Pavilion participants engaged the community in conversations throughout the design process. A great deal of the conversation in that week, and in the concluding public forum, revolved around the role of outsiders in the reimagining of Detroit. Ideas City made very few proposals for the city, though. Instead it reserved most of its actions to discussion and listening. By most accounts—from Detroiters and others—the event was productive.

Yet the skepticism of the U.S. Pavilion is not what is at issue. Rather, it is the preemptive cynicism and dismissive posture that came with that skepticism. To say that architecture, from within or from without Detroit, is inherently a negative for the city, is to negate any possibility of it being anything else. Having a serious conversation about architectural ideas means admitting that Detroit is not a wartorn wasteland, because it isn’t, and engaging with architects means accepting Detroiters as urbanites as much as any other city dwellers. Now that the pavilion is open, we are able to look at the projects and judge whether they are doing the harm of which they have been accused. Proposals range from complex abstractions of information gathered from the community to complex postindustrial tech complexes. Others take on community gathering spaces, and yet others reimagine infrastructural amenities, such as urban farm space and material reclamation. Now is the time to carefully read the projects and decide whether they live down to the allegations of cultural insensitivity that were laid against them.

Detroit, like all cities, is inseparably linked with architecture, old and new. No matter how badly, or well, things are going, architecture is part of the city-making conversation. It will never heal the ills of any city. It is not a solution or a means to specific ends. Yet to dismiss the possibility of architecture is to close the conversation on the built environment. And though it is naive to think that architecture won’t be used for nefarious purposes, it is cynical to think that it has to be used as such. Where exactly it fits into improving the postindustrial city, or the racially segregated city, is still unclear. But there are people working on it.

The U.S. Pavilion, The Architectural Imagination, will be open from May 28 through November 27 at the 15th Venice Architecture Biennale in Venice, Italy. thearchitecturalimagination.org

More information on Detroit Resists can be found at detroitresists.org
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