



THE ARCHITECT AS DEVELOPER

Course Summary for the Downtown Topic Studio - Fall 2004

SYNOPSIS

This studio will teach each of you to have a larger vision and purpose. Your education as an architect provides you with opportunities to lead and shape environments that are greater than any other type of advanced education available. Using downtown Los Angeles as a laboratory, this course will teach how you can have a much more significant impact on the design of cities. Students' creative vision and ability to investigate the urban environment will be put to use in the design of a project in a dual role - as both an architect and developer.

BACKGROUND

Downtown Los Angeles is going through a major shift. At present, there is well over \$3 billion dollars worth of projects either proposed or under construction, located over a wide variety of neighborhoods in the area of Greater Downtown Los Angeles. The majority of the civic work, over a billion dollars, will take place on the north side of downtown centered around city hall. The second billion dollars of development is centered around the Staples Center, the pet project of the AEG Group (owners of the Staples Center) and the surrounding properties. The third billion is being carried by a diverse group of residential developers who are building new high-rise apartment buildings and restoring historic buildings into lofts. There some 7,000 dwelling units recently completed, currently under construction, or in development.

COURSE HYPOTHESIS

The course is founded on two primary hypotheses.

1. An Increasingly Proactive Role by Architects - Architects have never reconciled their role in the overall growth of cities. They are qualified to provide the leadership and design skills to create new and evolving environments, but typically fall back on individual projects. They become, not by choice, single project driven and have little impact on the growth and inter-connectivity of the larger context. The architect needs to go beyond his or her traditional role as a hired consultant and use their innate vision to acquire and develop real estate and contribute back to the greater urban good.
2. Defining & Reconciling Downtown - Downtown Los Angeles is a new paradigm. It is in the throes of a major burst of construction spending without a conceptual plan or an overriding view. In addition, it was late to the gentrification cycle and has no "distinctive water-front feature" on which to orient itself. The downtown studio can provide a database of information for developers, investigate various long-term development issues unique to downtown, and create links between each of the sub neighborhoods.

STUDIO STRUCTURE

The course will be divided into three time frames:

1. **During the first third** we will build upon the existing database previously started, including computer models, physical model and a large-scale map to identify development opportunities within the downtown context.
2. **The middle third** will be organized into learning how to develop a real estate ProForma for each project including preliminary architectural designs, market analysis, construction cost analysis, development cost analysis, and cash flow analysis.
3. **The final third** of the semester will be in refining the project design, reiterating the project ProForma and presenting it to the downtown development community.

During our 3 weekly meetings, the studio will walk downtown and establish a physical connection to the target environments. We will regularly have people from the community come and speak to the group consisting of real estate lawyers, developers, building owners, tenants/users and politicians including the downtown council district representatives.

David Lawrence Gray, FAIA and **Edward R. Niles, FAIA** will teach the course. In aggregate they represent nearly 70 years of teaching and have designed and developed several of Los Angeles' architectural landmarks.