Education, Design and Practice – Understanding skills in a Complex World

• Paper / Proposal Title:

Architect-Developer: From Praxis to Academia and Back

• Author(s) Name:

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• University or Company Affiliation:

Woodbury University School of Architecture

• Abstract (300 words):

The City of San Diego faces severe housing shortages that consequently escalate rent costs and reduce availability of affordable housing. In an attempt to find expedient solutions, the city’s government officials and large-scale developers engage in ‘politically loaded’ negotiations to determine ‘fair and balanced’ incentives to produce the much-needed housing. Often the resulting solutions allow developers to consolidate single family parcels to produce unimaginative whole-block projects that negatively impact the scale and character of a neighborhood and displace longtime residents from their homes to make room for the oversized development.

While many of these large-scale developers greatly benefit from federal, state and local subsides to finance and handsomely profit from their developments, a small independent group of Architect-Developers, spear-headed by Professors and Alumni from Woodbury’s School of Architecture, Master of Science of Architecture in Real Estate Development (MS Arch RED) program, have been making incremental and meaningful contributions to the housing stock by designing, developing and building small scale infill projects that provide unique mix-income housing that include market rate, subsidized and, more importantly, affordable unsubsidized housing throughout San Diego’s oldest neighborhoods.

Beyond the obvious benefits of adding much needed housing units within the urban core of San Diego, these architect-developer-builders reclaim the Architects’ role as social agents of
(incremental) change while concurrently gaining a more meaningful and equitable financial benefit for their work by acting as both architect and developer.

This presentation will be illustrated by built and ongoing development projects by Faculty and Alumni of Woodbury’s School of Architecture MS Arch RED program. It will explain the unique and tangible connection between academia, practice and community promulgated by this program, where graduate students learn to identify development opportunities, design innovative housing, quantify scale and costs, qualify financial viability, monetize sweat equity and ultimately build meaningful and profitable small infill projects.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

  Hector M. Perez: Born in 1960 in Guadalajara, Mexico, and educated in the United States & Italy
  B.Arch. California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo 1982-86
  Advance Design Studies, CSU, Florence, Italy 1986-87
  M.S. in Architecture Studies, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, MIT 1998-99

  Hector M. Perez is currently an Associate Professor at Woodbury University School of Architecture in San Diego. He has lectured and taught design studios & workshops at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo (CPSLO), Southern California Institute of Architecture (SCI-Arc), Instituto Tecnologico de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey (ITESM), and many other Universities throughout Latin America and the US.

  Over the last 25 years, Perez has had a small unorthodox design studio in La Jolla, CA with projects that fluctuate between Art, Artifacts, Architecture and Academia. Alternating between solo and collaborative efforts, he has designed a wide range of private, public and self-imposed projects: Collage and Drawing explorations / in(fo)SITE installations - in Tijuana & San Diego / Lifeguard Stations - in La Jolla Shores & Cove / A Community Library - in South Oxnard / Private Residences - in Southern and Baja California.

  In 2012 Perez completed La Esquina - an 8-unit / 4000 sf mixed-use project in Barrio Logan that became his first project as Architect-Developer. As a result of his newly found Architect-Developer modus operandi, in January of 2015, Hector co-founded The RED Office – a design-driven / all-inclusive Real Estate Development Office - with partners Ted Smith & Kate Meairs. The RED Office is currently working on various infill housing projects in some of San Diego’s oldest neighborhoods.