ARC 6911 / Reflective Building: A Design-Build Workshop at the Boys and Girls Club / Spring 2008

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Section 7741 (department controlled)
Tuesday periods 3-5
CBD 316 / 3 credits

OVERVIEW

This seminar explores the design-build process as a hinge between university and community. Design-build work, as service learning, combines active community participation with pedagogical objectives of reflection, collaboration, and hands-on experimentation. In this context, the seminar seeks to understand how "reflective building" links thinking, making, and sustaining.

To open and sustain a dialogue between university and community, we will design and construct a community garden and outdoor classroom at the Woodland Park unit of the Boys and Girls Club of Alachua County. In addition to the site's physical properties, meetings and charrettes with members of the club and the surrounding neighborhood will provide the context for the design-build process, which will proceed quite literally "from the ground" – our work being limited by constraints of time and scale to a primarily horizontal architectonics. One focal point will be the architectural edge of the garden serving as an open-ended, yet highly articulated event-space for reading, conversing, and playing. With the space, we will also seek to make room for existing programs, such as the Sugar Hill Poets and the club's after-school activities.

RETHINKING DESIGN-BUILD

In the spirit of reflective practice, the workshop provides a forum to rethink design-build in a pedagogical and community-oriented context. The loosely held typology of the community garden provides an unexpectedly architectural yet powerfully grounded medium for exploring why and how we build across disciplinary and shared boundaries. Within the seminar group, we will also draw from previous collaborative experiences to understand the dynamics of group work in the context of full-scale, on-site, community-oriented projects. One outcome of the seminar will be critical reflection about the design-build process and recommendations for future sites, projects, and methods.

SUSTAINING COMMUNITY

Another expected outcome of this seminar will be an understanding of how place-making might sustain community. Given the localized context of the plot of land shaded by live oaks next to the Boys and Girls Club situated between Gainesville's Woodland Park and Sugar Hill neighborhoods, the seminar will explore this "common ground" is a physical place as well as a potentially significant situation linked to a community's values and dynamic identities. Consequently, we will find ways of communicating and discussing not only design ideas but also issues of ownership, public space, and programmatic necessities. As the design-build workshop becomes a method for place-making, it is expected that other assumptions about the architectural charrette and the community meeting will also be transformed and rethought.

MAKING GROUND

Taking the community garden as a starting point and a design provocation, the seminar will explore how reflective building engages the ground. What has been called the "skin of the earth" will for us link social, programmatic, natural, and material contexts. This multi-layered activation elicits ground as matter and substrate. Consequently, "grounding" will be integral to the process of making. How might the project float and embed and be simultaneously temporary and permanent, without being ephemeral? How does the

stability of ground accommodate the performative and the flexible? Does making ground allow for such paradoxes as the permanent mock-up and the traveling garden?

BOYS AND GIRLS CLUB OF ALACHUA COUNTY – WOODLAND PARK UNIT

The Woodland Park Boys and Girls Club is positioned between the Sugar Hill community and Woodland Park neighborhood in Southeast Gainesville within a network of governmentally subsidized homes, organized and owned by the Gainesville Housing Authority. The club provides approximately 100 children (ages 5-17) with a place to spend time after school and seeks to enhance the educational development of each child into responsible adults. Wal-Mart recently provided funding to help begin the community garden and also to encourage Gainesville's Community Beautification Program. The Woodland Park Boys and Girls Club is thus seen as a catalyst for proposing additional projects in the Sugar Hill neighborhood and adjacent communities. This project is also seen as an opportunity for School Of Architecture students to complement their design education with greater involvement in the community – in this case, through a project in eastside Gainesville.

OBJECTIVES

- To understand and develop a multi-disciplinary approach to design-build work specifically and future professional activity generally.
- To participate in collaborative activities and discussions with members of the community.
- To develop an ability to select, adapt, and apply methodologies and theoretical approaches related to design-build activity.
- To pursue research methods and design process that reduce disconnections between design and construction.
- To integrate architectural process and cultural values through the design-build approach.
- To synthesize analysis, design process, and implementation.
- To develop graphic, written, and oral communication techniques that integrate aspects of the design-build approach.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Participation in community meetings and design-build activities on-site.
Written reflection on the process.
Documentation and preparation of a booklet.

SCHEDULE

January – February: Site-work [making] group
<built work>
March: On-line dialogue about process and follow-up site-work [thinking] individual-group
<paper due>
April: Preparation of booklet [reflecting] group
<booklet due>

BIBLIOGRAPHY (will continue to be expanded)

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PROJECTS

Bradner Gardens, Seattle, Washington / Howard S. Wright Design/Build Studio
Cheticamp Project, Design-Build Labs, Dalhousie University,
http://architectureandplanning.dal.ca/architecture/visitors/design_build.shtml

PROGRAMS

RESOURCES