

## Today's News - Tuesday, March 2, 2010

- A tale of two earthquakes: Chile's rigorous building codes vs. Haiti's "incorrigible corruption and carelessness" - but an encouraging "dose of optimism" (a very worthwhile read).
- A professor of architecture in Santiago cheers "stringent building codes and responsible building practices," but bemoans "a degree of relaxation of the proud building standards" that explains why some new construction "built by private companies with government concessions" is now rubble.
- Eminent domain challenge to ever-contentious Atlantic Yards project is tossed out of court; groundbreaking scheduled for next week (but promised housing will have to wait).
- A province in Spain takes an anti-Bilbao-effect approach: "instead of putting all its cultural eggs in one high-priced basket," it's "betting on a decentralized plan to spread cultural riches."
- In Burnie, Australia, "stylish architecture and cranes in the sky" inject "a sense of energy into a town that would otherwise be like so many industrial graveyards that smell of decay and long-gone days of prosperity" - Hobart taps Gehl, hoping for the same.
- Washington, DC, suburbs are finding what it takes to build a winning town center: it'll take more than giving developers incentives, but if done right, they can be "the template for what comes next."
- An urban planner offers a strategy for downsizing Detroit: inform and engage the public (what a concept!) - and dump the "failed rhetoric of recovering the past."
- Calgary and Edmonton to wrap inner-city development around two restored hotels.
- Kamin cheers Helmut Jahn's proposal for a high-speed rail station in Chicago: it's not perfect, "but it gets the civic debate on the right track": will the city "let a golden opportunity pass?"
- King cheers big ideas for Oakland Bay Bridge park in place of "a smear of maintenance yards and parking, stray buildings and scrub": if a "genuinely compelling vision emerges, the funding will follow."
- Redesign of a downtown Omaha run-down street hits a buzz saw, so it's back to the drawing board: "We don't want to be part of another mistake."
- Why Hadid's MAXXI works: her "shrewd solution has been a combination of flamboyant experimentation with implicit respect for the past."
- Two firms eyed for new Silicon Valley Conference Center (now, fingers crossed, funding can be found).
- Hollis deconstructs Eisenman's lecture at the Edinburgh School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture (a most amusing read).
- Q&A with Sou Fujimoto during his visit to Hungary's K&EK: "Japanese architects like to work on more experimental things - and sometimes these are too experimental."
- Excellent news for FLW's Park Inn Hotel in Mason City, Iowa (boutique hotel included).
- Move over Angel of the North and ye giant white horse: Wales has mega-dragon-sized plans (great pix, but oddly no mention of architect, landscape architect, or sculptor).
- Hosey on the "Bloom Box" fuel cell, the "Holy Grail of clean energy": "Ladies and gentleman, iPower has arrived."
- Call for entries: CTBUH 2010 Best Tall Building Awards.

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[Chile and Haiti: A Tale of Two Earthquakes: Donor governments already know why there was so much less destruction in Chile: it's because the government there forces builders to adhere to rigorous codes, while Haiti's incorrigible corruption and carelessness left such regulation all but nonexistent...Anyone in need of a dose of optimism about Haitians' ability to succeed should look at the Haitian diaspora...which has proven to be remarkably entrepreneurial and resourceful"...](#) - Time Magazine

[Op-Ed: Santiago Stands Firm: ...of the thousands of contemporary mid- to high-rises...most were able to withstand the quake...Thank the stringent building codes and responsible building practices...students have begun to discuss how to help the reconstruction efforts...For Chilean architects, this is the challenge of a lifetime: to restore beauty, to preserve history, to build sensibly.](#) By Sebastian Gray - New York Times

[Judge gives Atlantic Yards project the green light; Ratner plans to break ground Mar. 11...tossed a challenge to the eminent domain condemnation - a final blow to property owners who fought the wrecking ball for six years.](#) - NY Daily News

[Art Takes Root in Fertile Soil in Spain: ...as government officials across Spain have succumbed to the so-called Bilbao effect...Murcia has taken another road. Instead of putting all its cultural eggs in one high-priced basket, the local government is betting on a decentralized plan to spread cultural riches throughout the province.](#) - New York Times

[A little bit of planning: Burnie sets an excellent example for other small-sized cities and communities that have felt the ravages of economic change...One of the keys to Burnie refusing to be flattened by the global financial crisis...is business leadership...Stylish architecture and cranes in the sky have a similar impact...injects a sense of energy into a town that would otherwise be like so many industrial graveyards that smell of decay and long-gone days of prosperity.](#) By Greg Barns -- JAWS; Terroir; Designhaus; Jan Gehl - Mercury News (Australia)

[It takes more than stores to build a winning town center: Local governments see town centers as a form of suburban renewal...and some are providing developers with incentives to help make it happen. But planners say that does not guarantee success..."If they can survive \[economic downtown\], they'll emerge on the other side as the template for what comes next."](#) - Washington Post

[Op-Ed: Getting to a smaller Detroit: ...as happens in other cities, engaging the public in updating information and contributing their ideas, their vision, will help move Detroit forward...The vision that is so badly missing needs to be just that - visionary, and absent the tired, failed rhetoric of recovering the past.](#) By Robin Boyle/Dept. of Urban Studies and Planning, Wayne State University - Detroit Free Press

[Vintage hotels check in to development rehab: Plans are under way to breathe new life into two infamous Alberta buildings - the King Edward Hotel in Calgary and the York Hotel in Edmonton. While neither is considered architecturally significant, both cities aim to wrap inner-city development around these restored commercial properties.](#) - Globe and Mail (Canada)

A high-speed rail station proposal from Helmut Jahn: Not perfect, but it gets the civic debate on the right track...Chicago and Mayor Richard Daley have a choice: Are they going to get on board and create a railroad gateway worthy of the city - or are they going to let a golden opportunity pass, cramming new passengers into an already-jammed Union Station? The stakes are enormous... By Blair Kamin -- Murphy/Jahn [images]- Chicago Tribune

Big ideas sought for Oakland Bay Bridge park: ...government planners are floating the idea of a much different role for the 1.5-mile-long strip: a park that would celebrate the bridge and the region...There's no design and no budget - yet...boosters argue that if a genuinely compelling vision emerges, the funding will follow. By John King -- Perkins+Will; PWP Landscape Architecture- San Francisco Chronicle

Redesign ordered on redesign: ...downtown Omaha's run-down 16th Street...project had seemed to be gaining momentum...hit a buzzsaw this month when it went before a new city board...which grew out of the Omaha By Design initiative..."We don't want to be part of another mistake." -- HDR- Omaha World-Herald

Why Hadid's MAXXI Works: The building's strangeness is beguiling rather than jarring...Concrete suggests modesty...a discreet display of engineering bravura, dispel any sense of cheapness or crudity...Her shrewd solution has been a combination of flamboyant experimentation with implicit respect for the past...bold and intriguing, but also inviting and accessible.- Wall Street Journal

Two architects eyed for Milpitas Silicon Valley Conference Center: All of this is contingent on its cost and funding. "If we can't find an outside source of funding it's unlikely that it will be built." -- Group 4 Architecture Research + Planning; Fentress Architects- Mercury News (California)

Deconstructing a visit from Eisenman: ...spoke for authenticity, and for the honest expression of the zeitgeist and genius loci in architecture. Contemporary architecture expresses neither...there's only one sort of modern architecture that can do crumbling walls and picturesque nooks, and that's found inside a themed casino...what he is creating in Santiago de Compostela is...a high-culture theme park, a spectacle as weird as Vegas, and as banal as your local mall. By Ed Hollis- BD/Building Design (UK)

Q&A with Sou Fujimoto: Providing a field for people to behave: "Japanese architects like to work on more experimental things -- and sometimes these are too experimental, not so well-connected to real world...Isolated, experimental architecture is like a play, even if it can open door to new possibilities." -- KEK/Contemporary Architecture Center [images]- hg.hu (Hungary)

Full Speed Ahead for Iowa's Wright Park Inn Hotel: After minimal interest, a group of residents of Mason City, Iowa...celebrated an official groundbreaking ceremony that marked the beginning of an \$18.5 million renovation...Together, the buildings will be transformed into a boutique hotel. -- Frank Lloyd Wright [image]- Preservation Magazine

Enter the dragon: England has the Angel Of The North (and a giant horse coming soon). Now Wales wants a 200ft sculpture to roar across the border..."Waking the Dragon"...near Chirk, North Wales...would sit within a landscape of formal and informal pathways...cultural centre...museum..."celebrate our unique heritage and culture"... [images]- Daily Mail (UK)

Power Plant in a Box: K.R. Sridhar's "Bloom Box" fuel cell...is being called the "Holy Grail of clean energy"...Ladies and gentleman, iPower has arrived. By Lance Hosey- Architect Magazine

Call for entries: CTBUH 2010 Best Tall Building Awards; nomination deadline: April 30, 2010- Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat (CTBUH)



-- Competition winner: Steven Holl Architects: Shan-Shui Hangzhou, Hangzhou, China  
-- Anmahian Winton Architects: Community Rowing Boathouse, Cambridge, Massachusetts

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