

## Today's News - Thursday, July 25, 2013

- Durning explains how "dumb urban policies wiped out the best kinds of housing for the poor, young, and single," and why smart cities are bringing back SROs, rooming houses, and micro-apartments.
- It's a Detroit kind of day: Rybczynski has an I-told-you-so moment, recalling a 1995 column where he "suggested that large Rust Belt cities such as Detroit needed to consider planned shrinkage."
- Olcayto says "Robocop got Detroit about right... prescient in its depiction of urban America" - but not everyone is "as down about its future" (an amusing read).
- Cramer found Detroit's central business district becoming "the Brooklyn of the Midwest" with lots of "do-goodery...Let's hope that downtown's spectacular resurgence has a trickle-down effect."
- Big plans for the city's riverfront are "a bet that urban living in Detroit will remain popular with some young professionals."
- Michigan sees a new (expensive) arena as "a catalyst project"; critics call the "deal as unnecessary subsidies for a billionaire pro sports team owner in a city in municipal bankruptcy."
- Many approaches in dealing with many vacant GM plant sites - they require public and private sectors working together "to figure out how to reuse these 20th century dinosaurs."
- Litt has high hopes that a new convention hotel in Cleveland "could bring life to the Mall and connect a disconnected downtown," but "it's a tall order" that "should make the unfolding design a fascinating architectural drama."
- Hume cheers Toronto finally establishing a Financial District Business Improvement Association - while much of the city's architectural heritage is there, it's easy to forget it's also a neighborhood.
- Eyefuls of what SHoP and Ken Smith have in mind for the next stretch of NYC's East River Esplanade.
- Eyefuls of why China has declared a 5-year ban on new government buildings (yikes!).
- Q&A with MAD's Ma Yansong re: why he continues to practice in China, the state of mainland architecture, and why he goes out of his way to befriend building contractors.
- A new (and very green) library is the first Chinese project to win an Architecture of Necessity award.
- It cost Bermuda big bucks when it "abruptly terminated its contract with the highly respected" Canadian firm (even though it "was fully satisfied with the work") to "employ a local project manager at far greater cost."
- Guellerin explains "highs and lows of 'Design Thinking'": just trying to define it "is an exercise laden with obstacles that can bring the process to a screeching halt."
- Lui pens a most engaging op-ed re: naiveté in architecture, and "how the fact of not knowing can be useful in design."
- Call for entries: CitiesAlive Student Design Challenge.

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[Bring Back Flophouses, Rooming Houses, and Microapartments: Dumb urban policies wiped out the best kinds of housing for the poor, young, and single. But they're finally making a comeback in smart cities. \(adapted from Alan Durning's new book, "Unlocking Home: Three Keys to Affordable Communities"\)](#)- Slate

[A New Detroit Needs Four Cylinders, Not Eight: Now that Detroit has declared bankruptcy, consolidation will probably be put on the back burner. That would be a mistake... "Does this sound heartless?" I asked 18 years ago... Shrinkage is a lot tougher than growth, and Detroit has no other realistic option. By Witold Rybczynski](#)- Bloomberg News

[Robocop got Detroit about right: Paul Verhoeven's Robocop was prescient in its depiction of urban America: Back in the real world, not everyone in Detroit is as down about its future...Multibillionaire Dan Gilbert, for example...owns or runs 30 downtown buildings. The similarities with Verhoeven's film are uncanny...If Gilbert suggests a name change for Detroit...I'll probably choke on my hummus. By Rory Olcayto](#)- The Architects' Journal (UK)

[Hipsters and a Billionaire: While the city of Detroit stares bankruptcy in the face, its central business district is enjoying a renaissance...Lately, the city has become something of a Gen Y paradise, the Brooklyn of the Midwest...The media lionizes the young artists, designers, and urban farmers...reclaiming the inner-city neighborhoods...with more than 70,000 abandoned buildings remaining, there simply aren't enough hipsters to get the job done...Let's hope that downtown's spectacular resurgence has a trickle-down effect. By Ned Cramer](#)- Architect Magazine

[\\$60M east riverfront development in Detroit to bring housing, streetscape: ...a bet...that urban living in Detroit will remain popular with some young professionals...a \\$28-million planned transformation of the abandoned Strathmore Hotel in Midtown...dichotomy in Detroit's real-estate market...a few trendy areas...as most other city neighborhoods cope with a decaying housing stock, abandoned structures...](#)- Detroit Free Press

[State approves \\$450M in bonds for Detroit Red Wings arena: The facility, which would replace Joe Louis Arena, is part of a wider \\$650 million plan to create a 45-acre district... "This is a catalyst project"...Critics have blasted the arena deal as unnecessary subsidies for a billionaire pro sports team owner in a city in municipal bankruptcy. -- HKS; NBBJ](#)- Crain's Detroit Business

[How to give old plant new life? Communities mix planning, patience in revival of vacant GM sites: ...public and private sectors need to work together to figure out how to reuse these 20th century dinosaurs.](#)- Crain's Detroit Business

[Cleveland's new convention hotel could bring life to the Mall and connect a disconnected downtown: Convention hotels often have a generic, plastic-wrapped look...a chance to do better - much better...It's a tall order...project merits very close watching...The public is primed and ready to participate...should make the unfolding design a fascinating architectural drama over the next few months. By Steven Litt -- Cooper Carry \[images\]](#)- Cleveland Plain Dealer

[Toronto Financial District a neighbourhood without an identity: It isn't just the headquarters of Canadian capitalism, it is also a neighbourhood...that's easy to forget...much of Toronto's architectural heritage, especially of the modernist variety, is concentrated down here... "We're not hoping for street festivals, but we want to make people aware of what we have." By Christopher Hume Mies van der Rohe; I.M. Pei; Edward Durell Stone](#)- Toronto Star

[SHoP Architects and Ken Smith Workshop Unveil Another Piece of the East River Esplanade: ...adding recreational amenities and addresses the challenges of building a new landscape beneath an elevated highway...aims to create a "front porch" for the Lower East Side... \[images\]](#)- The Architect's Newspaper

[These Gilded Government Buildings Explain Exactly Why Beijing Is Banning New Ones: ...ban may be difficult to carry out, given that authorities are building dozens of new cities every year as well as expanding emerging ones...crackdown is all part of a wider effort to eliminate corruption and excess... \[images\]](#)- The Atlantic Cities

[A renowned architect on the struggles of building in China: Q&A: The future of Chinese cities: ...buildings](#)

springing up during this rapid expansion of cities range from the bizarre imaginings of the future to grim utilitarian structures purely focused on their immediate economic role...why he continues to practice in China, the state of mainland architecture and why he goes out of his way to befriend building contractors. -- Ma Yansong/MAD Architects - China Economic Review

Sticking up for sustainability: Liyuan Library integrates architecture into the natural landscape using traditional Chinese architectural concepts...was one of the winning designs in the 2013 Architecture of Necessity competition held in Sweden...making it the first Chinese project to claim the honor. -- Li Xiao-dong [images]- China Daily

Firing architect cost taxpayers over \$4m: ...former Government was fully satisfied with the work...but abruptly terminated its contract with the highly respected firm in December 2008 in order to employ a local project manager at far greater cost. -- Carruthers, Shaw and Partners/CS&P Architects; Conyers and Associates - The Royal Gazette (Bermuda)

The Highs and Lows of "Design Thinking": Today's designers need to play a strategic role to bring business into the 21st century: What makes Design Thinking so attractive in the first place, is its modularity...The act of defining Design Thinking is an exercise laden with obstacles that can bring the process to a screeching halt. By Christian Guellerin/Cumulus - Metropolis Magazine

Op-Ed: Thoughts on Naivete as Design Method or, Why Our Entry Didn't Have a 6" Curb: My partner and I recently won a Jury Citation — a euphemism for 9th place — in a competition for bus rapid transit stations...the night before we submitted our entry, I reviewed the FAQ and had a moment of panic...What I told myself in order to hit "send" on the competition entry. By Ann Lui - Archinect

Call for entries: CitiesAlive Student Design Challenge (North America): create 'resilient communities' by using living architecture - green roofs and walls - to redesign a community center in central San Francisco; cash prize; deadline: September 22- Green Roofs for Healthy Cities / Nemetschek Vectorworks / Land8

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