

Today's News - Tuesday, March 20, 2012

- Christchurch is seeing some new redevelopment even without a new city plan finalized - one that many see "as a wish list reflecting naive public aspirations for design and layout of a rebuilt central city."
- Bradbury and Bogunovich put forth the notion that perhaps Christchurch and Auckland should reconsider the rush to density in their CBDs: "low-density cities can assume a coherent urban form."
- King bemoans the downsizing or disappearance of "almost every public feature" in the revised plan for Transbay Tower: it "might be good for the bottom line, but it undermines one of the most ambitious park projects in the nation."
- Crosbie bemoans a "dinosaur in the desert" (a.k.a. the Burj Khalifa): "there is no question that it is an elegant object, glistening on the skyline...But the bigger question is: 'Should it be done?'"
- Hume ponders whether Toronto condo towers are vertical slums in the making: as towers grow ever taller, apartment sizes grow ever smaller, and "the prospect of a new sort of slum tower looms ever larger."
- Benfield x 2: an overview (and links to) some very useful tools to help cities and towns guide green development.
- He cheers Williamson and Vaterlaus's "very appealing conceptual demonstration project" to retrofit failing suburban big-box stores into a green showcase: "if the site isn't ripe for a new concept yet, it's just a matter of time" (useful links here, too).
- The Dirt offers a synopsis of Nordhaus's "blow by blow" rebuttal to global warming skeptics re: why they're wrong - he's "obviously peeved that his research has been misused" by them as well (with link to very lengthy but well worth reading original).
- NYC's CoolRoofs program gets two thumbs-ups from NASA/Columbia University study that "quantifies the true beauty of white roofs."
- Russell roams around Rudolph's Orange County Government Center to see for himself if it deserves a reprieve: "It's not an easy call," but it does "make a powerful case for itself" with an "intricacy of spatial gymnastics" that "entices without overwhelming" (and fab photos to prove it).
- Glasgow's newest church to be made of recycled rubbish (four tons of beer cans included).
- An eye-ful of a new creek running through Salt Lake City - trout included (we want one on our block, too!).
- The office of the future is now - with lots of "room to roam and to think" while using less space.
- Esperdy offers a lively look at Banham's travels in America (great pix, too).
- Berger takes us back in time with a look at "some of the crimes and blunders" of Seattle's 1962 World's Fair: "it's worth remembering that every civic endeavor has its share of challenges and screw-ups, whatever the century."
- Call for entries: CTBUH Best Tall Building Awards 2012 + New Economy Class Layout competition to design a new seat layout for commercial airplanes.

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Handful of new property developments rising in Christchurch: There have been 62 commercial rebuild consents...have proceeded in spite of developers awaiting the approval of the new city plan...regarded by many property professionals as a wish list reflecting naive public aspirations for design and layout of a rebuilt central city. It contains many restrictions that developers say are unrealistic. - National Business Review (New Zealand)

Opportunity in Christchurch tragedy: ...flight from the CBD has often been presented as a terrible problem. But what if it was actually a tremendous opportunity? Christchurch was founded as the 'garden city'...Auckland aspires to become the 'most liveable city in the world'. Both cities owe their lifestyle to being close to nature...What is the problem with low-density cities? ...with strict protections in place...low-density cities can assume a coherent urban form. By Matthew Bradbury and Dushko Bogunovich - New Zealand Herald

Transbay Tower revision downsizes public frills: ...the troubling aspect of the revised plan...is not the addition to the skyline. It's the subtraction on the ground...What has been removed...is almost every public feature of an office tower that would be allowed to climb past current height limits because of public largesse. This might be good for the...bottom line, but it undermines one of the most ambitious park projects in the nation. By John King -- Pelli Clarke Pelli Architects; PWP Landscape Architecture [images] - San Francisco Chronicle

World's Tallest Building: A Dinosaur In The Desert: Burj Khalifa: Dubai tower is something to look at, but wasteful: ...there is no question that it is an elegant object, glistening on the skyline...When architects consider a project like this, the client usually asks "Can it be done?" But the bigger question is: "Should it be done?" By Michael J. Crosbie -- Skidmore, Owings & Merrill/SOM - Hartford Courant (Connecticut)

Are Toronto condo towers slums in the making? As residential towers grow ever taller, and living units ever smaller, the prospect of a new sort of slum tower looms ever larger...The issue is less height than apartment size...The fight over height is a NIMBY sideshow that's largely irrelevant at this point. When building places for people to live, not just stay, it's size that matters. By Christopher Hume - Toronto Star

Tools to help cities and towns guide green development: ...two great, comprehensive planning assets have been developed for municipalities to draw from in updating their development rules: form-based zoning codes, particularly the "SmartCode" model...and LEED for Neighborhood Development [LEED-ND]... Kaid Benfield [images, links] - Switchboard / Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC)

How to retrofit failing suburban big-box stores into a green showcase: June Williamson, co-author of Retrofitting Suburbia, and landscape architect Anne Vaterlaus have designed a very appealing conceptual demonstration project in the LA suburb of Pico Rivera...if the site...isn't ripe for a new concept yet...it's just a matter of time. By Kaid Benfield [images, links] - Switchboard / Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC)

Why We Can't Delay on Global Warming: William D. Nordhaus...wrote an interesting rebuttal to global warming skeptics...Obviously peeved that his research has been misused by those who argue warming isn't really happening, he gives a blow by blow account of how the skeptics are wrong. - The Dirt/American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA)

New York's White Roofs Prove They're Cool: A new study quantifies the true beauty of white roofs — dramatically cooler surfaces that reduce discomfort, cooling costs, and a tad of global warming...DIY method is being promoted by the city's CoolRoofs program...Worldwide, interest in the benefits of increasing urban albedo is growing among city planners. - Miller-McCune

Wrecking Ball, \$67 Million Bill Hang Over Leaky Landmark: I drove to Goshen to see for myself if this Paul Rudolph deserved a reprieve. It's not an easy call...Insistently attention-grabbing in photos, the building reveals a surprising delicacy in person...The intricacy of his spatial gymnastics entices without overwhelming. He dignifies the mundane tasks of paying taxes, filing permits, and appearing in court...I cannot guarantee that time will...resuscitate Rudolph's reputation. The Orange County Government Center makes a powerful case for itself. By James S. Russell [images] - Bloomberg News

Work starts at the site of Glasgow's rubbish church: It's been called Grand Designs meets Scrapheap Challenge...Colston Milton Parish Church is...going to be built of recycled rubbish...four tonnes of beer cans; a dozen redundant shipping containers; 300 industrial pallets; and 500 used car tyres. -- Hannah Buss [image] - BBC (UK)

City Creek Center Cascades design, engineering feat: ...took six years of planning and design, 275 massive boulders and

more than 600 live trees to recreate the center's namesake within its boundaries...flows across two city blocks...and cutthroat trout inhabit the meandering creek. -- Ross Nadeau/SWA Group [images, video]- KSL News (Salt Lake City, Utah)

In New Office Designs, Room to Roam and to Think: With offices designed by NBBJ, the Gates Foundation and Russell Investments embrace the idea that less space per worker can enhance the working environment, not degrade it. [slide show]- New York Times

Banham's America: Reyner Banham...the Englishman who fell for Southern California and famously learned to drive "to read Los Angeles in the original"...a look at his travels in America in the lively tradition of European travelers from de Tocqueville and Dickens to Alistair Cooke and Stephen Fry, whose observations tell us Americans "something important about ourselves." By Gabrielle Esperdy [images]- Places Journal

Memorable fiascos of Seattle's 1962 world's fair: As we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Seattle World's Fair, it's time to remember some of the crimes and blunders that went along with it. Some even launched new industries...it's worth remembering that...every civic endeavor has its share of challenges and screw-ups, whatever the century. By Knute Berger-Crosscut (Seattle)

Call for entries: CTBUH Best Tall Building Awards 2012; deadline: April 30- Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat (CTBUH)

Call for entries: New Economy Class Layout: propose a new seat layout for the coach and economy class sections of commercial airplanes that will make the flying experience more pleasant and comfortable; cash prizes; free registration deadline: March 22 (fee applies thereafter)- Rivalation

Book Review: Laboratory Architecture for Observing Nature at Play: Books on Luis Barragan's house and BNIM's Omega Center for Sustainable Living reveal how transparently daring designs teach Nature's processes. By Norman Weinstein-ArchNewsNow



Carrilho da Graça arquitectos: School of Music, Polytechnic Institute/Instituto Politécnico de Lisboa, Lisbon, Portugal

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