Re-populating a Frontier Metropolis
Student Competition for Rearticulating Urban Dwelling in Detroit

Illinois Institute of Technology
College of Architecture

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Fall Semester 2015
MWF 2:00 – 6:00 pm
Upper Level Crown Hall

Situation
The city of Detroit has a long-standing history of leading industry – in modernization, scale and influence – it was the “Silicon Valley” of its time. Detroit’s connection to the Great Lakes waterway system and its proximity to the west enabled the French fur trading post to grow into a major urban and industrial center. The advent of the automobile conglomerated many, already strong and viable businesses, into a few industrial titans, which would dominate, and ultimately transform the city into what it is today.

At its peak in the 1950’s, Detroit was the 5th largest city in the US, with a population of over 1.8 million. At this time one-third of all Michigan residents lived within the city limits of Detroit. Since then, a continuous flow of wealthy and educated city dwellers has relocated to the surrounding suburbs. Today, over one-half of all Michigan residents live in the suburbs, and the population within the city limits has dwindled 60% to a mere 700,000 residents. With only the remaining poorer residents as a tax base, and difficult to maintain sprawling and sparse neighborhoods, the City of Detroit ultimately was forced to file for Bankruptcy in 2013.

The rapid depopulation of Detroit was an unfortunate combination of racial tensions and the rise of the automobile. Beginning in 1910, the Great Migration of African Americans from the rural south to northern industrial cities like Detroit brought a large influx of residents looking for industrial jobs. At the beginning, the bustling automotive industry and its associated business provided ample employment opportunities.

During WWII, the world’s automotive capitol was producing war machinery full time, and a shortage of workers forced employers to mix races on the production lines. The resulting strikes and following race riots illustrated the boiling point of the city and a lack of tolerance for its new residents. Following the war, new GI Bills were passed to construct new highway systems and housing for returning veterans. The newly built suburbs provided opportunities for families to move out of the city, but still stay connected via automobile. Meanwhile the automotive industry conglomerated, automated, and had difficulty competing with the new fuel-efficient foreign cars. This only further strained competition for jobs, race relations, and ultimately pushed more people out of the city. The struggle for equal rights, in conjunction, with the slowing of industrial manufacturing, and the construction of the highway system ultimately led to Detroit’s crisis.
Since exiting bankruptcy, a number of private citizens have taken it into their own hands to rebuild the city. The most visible, Dan Gilbert, has actively purchased millions of square feet of real estate, much in Detroit’s historic buildings. An entrepreneur and a catalyst for Detroit’s revitalization Dan Gilbert’s group Bed Rock Real Estate Services is holding a competition amongst the three Colleges of Architecture closest to Detroit, and have asked IIT to be among them to re-envision hybrid housing for the future of urban dwelling.

The competition is a proposal for a new Hybrid Housing Typology that could be used as a prototype for implementation as Detroit repopulates. This new typology will illustrate how urban housing is conceived in the future through the exploration of concepts like co-habitation, sharing cultures, innovative construction techniques, and disruptive technologies. This new Hybrid Housing Typology will engage with itself as it is repeated to rebuild neighborhood and will become its own surrounding context.

**Competition Proposals**

Located in Brush Park, the competition site is a plot within a larger 8.4 acre development which will be mixed use, community approved and context specific. Brush Park is ideally positioned for dense urban residential growth as it is located along Detroit’s premier boulevard - Woodward Avenue - which connects the Central Business District to Midtown, a quickly growing neighborhood with strong cultural amenities. At its peak Brush Park was a gilded neighborhood containing more than seventy Victorian style mansions. Although little of neighborhoods opulence exists today, preservationist and city residents alike are eager to keep what few artifacts remain.

The ongoing development of Brush Park includes the new M1 streetcar, which will run along Woodward Ave. This new 3.3-mile section of streetcar will only begin to replace the 534 miles of electric street network that was dismantled in the late 1940’s. In addition to Bed Rock Real Estate Service’s 8.4-acre development, other developments that are in the planning process include a 200 resident mixed-use development named the Scott at Brush Park, and a 150 resident plus community center in the renovation of the Brewster Wheeler warehouse. In addition, the new Detroit Redwings stadium and associated “arena district” is being construction just on the other side of Woodward Avenue, across from the competition site. The sprawl of open land and vacant buildings of today’s Brush Park is very different then the Brush Park of five years from now. These new developments will need to be carefully considered as they will part of the context around the new Hybrid Housing Typologies.

The unique opportunity to start from scratch in the American urban environment during the last fifty years is unprecedented and should be approached diligently. Although the failure and success of every urban environment is deeply rooted in the specificity of that particular city, much can be discerned from understanding the empty city centers of the American Rust Belt as well as the many new cities that are currently being constructed in developing countries.

City growth is unpredictable and the purpose of a planning is simply to outline the quantifiable constraints and opportunities in order to set expectation and create excitement. The plan is rarely a map for implementation, however the ideas grappled with while understanding Detroit are implementable elsewhere, Chicago specifically.
The studio will perform an in-depth analysis of the rise and fall Detroit’s population in order to understand the politics, economics, culture, and transportation facets that directly affect the urban housing market. Additionally, the studio will focus on the role of the impact that industry has on the urban context and how it can be harnessed to revitalize a city. Through this lens, the studio will create Hybrid Housing proposals, which address the very specific needs of the Brush Park residents and the City of Detroit.

The Hybrid Housing Typology contains dwelling units, but also includes, and or, will knit in its surrounding context to provide program complementary to housing. The studio will investigate what sorts of complementary programs are required for the future urban dwellers as they look to raise families and grow old in the urban context.

The exploration of hybridization of multiple program typologies will allow for the creation of experiences and synergies that would otherwise not exist. Each typology supports the other physically, spatially, socially, and economically. This dynamic prompts new events and consequences to produce community engagement and urban growth. The impact that this has on, not only the larger neighborhood block plan but also on the community dynamic and economic structures will should be explored.

The proposed Housing Hybrid Typologies will use the Bed Rock Real Estate competition brief (attached) as a foundation, the studio will consider the housing delivery method as well as its physical characteristics to promote job growth and even foster new industry.

Brush Park, just north of the Central Business District. Dashed line illustrates the extent of Bed Rock Real Estate Service’s 8.4-acre development.
Schedule

Reference Guide // Team Work (3 Weeks)

Context
The studio will catalog, curate and present a clear understanding of all the facets that contributed to the rise and fall of Detroit as a major urban center and how this affected/created various housing typologies and lifestyles.

Maps
Mapping exercises will outline past, present and proposed future of Detroit’s densities, industry, economics, and demography.

Site Model
A site model will be built at a 1/8" = 1'-0" scale encapsulating the necessary context, transportation arteries, boundaries, municipalities, and densities.

Case Studies
Past Planned Communities: The studio will identify the success and failures of past planned communities such as Weissenhofsiedlung, Nexus World and Linked Hybrid. Thru this investigation of the successful components of planned projects can be discerned.

Building Critique
Each student will provide a written critique of a mixed use building in Chicago (buildings to be determined prior to visiting). The critique will be an exercise in analyzing how the siting, form, tectonics and experience came to be and what value, if any, is derived from these moves.

Site Visit // T.B.D. – Week of September 8-13

Site Visit
A trip to Detroit will be organized to participate in a series of sessions hosted by Bed Rock Real Estate Services. These sessions will provide access to the principal players in the Brush Park redevelopment and provide real time knowledge of the neighborhood.

Program
Upon returning from Detroit the studio will develop a program for investigation. The program should identify the components key to the future of residential dwelling in Detroit and integration into a new community. Components such as amenities, historical context, implementation, constructability, networks, economics and experience should be taxonomized and quantified.

Preliminary Critique // Week of October 5-9
The studio will present their Hybrid Housing Typologies through a series of analytical models and drawings outlining their response to the issues they’ve identified as critical to promoting the future of urban dwelling in Detroit.
Mid Semester Critique // October 28
The studio will further develop and refine the analytical responses to the critical issues. Additional drawings and models will illustrate the proposal’s strategies for spatial organization and considerations, experience and comfort, siting and neighborhood context, and its overall impact to the urban fabric.

Competition Entries Due // First week of December

Jury Convenes // Week of December

Policy

Deliverables
Specific deliverables will be formally outlined and presented prior to each presentation, however final deliverables must meet the format requirements as stated in the attached competition brief.

Schedule
This studio will meet three times a week (M/W/F 2 - 6pm). Students will be expected to use time beyond scheduled class time for their field research.

Office Hours
Meetings with the professor outside of regularly scheduled class will be by appointment only. The time and location will be mutually agreed upon at the time of request.

Attendance Policy
Students are expected to attend every scheduled class period and those class activities scheduled in addition to the regular studio hours, unless otherwise excused by the professor(s). If students discover they are unable to attend a scheduled class or activity, they are requested to inform the professor by email or phone beforehand.

Grading Policy
Students will be expected to complete all work in a timely manner and will be responsible for management of their time. Quality of presentations will carry particular weight, as will students’ active participation in class collective works, discussions during class and participation during scheduled times outside of class hours. At the completion of the semester, all students will be required to submit a digital file of their work. Supplemental printed booklets may be requested as well. Students completing all required work on time in a quality manner will receive a B grade. Students demonstrating outstanding quality or work beyond the requirements will be rewarded with an A grade. Students completing all the work with below standard quality will receive a C grade.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with documented disabilities. In order to receive accommodations, students must go through the Center for Disability Resources office. The Center for Disability Resources (CDR) is located in Life Sciences Room 218, telephone 312.567.5744 or disabilities@iit.edu.
THE IMPORTANCE OF BRUSH PARK /// The combined efforts of recent public and private investment and community planning initiatives have brought transformative change and attention to Detroit’s 7.2 square mile greater downtown area. This building momentum in the greater downtown is evidenced by a growing residential base and workforce population, an increase in the number of renovated buildings, new residential construction, and the implementation of the M1 rail – a street car transit line on Woodward.

Brush Park is strategically located between the Central Business District (CBD) and Midtown, two of Detroit’s fastest developing areas and largest employment centers. With its legacy of prestigious historic residences, Brush Park aims to stay at the forefront of progressive design by providing a high quality, sustainable residential environment for employees who desire to live within walking distance of where they work, play and shop.

Brush Park will serve as an active link between neighborhoods in the greater downtown area. Woodward and the M-1 RAIL system provide a critical north-south connection between the CBD, Midtown, and New Center; Brush Park’s east-west streets are equally important, connecting the future Arena District, Brush Park, and Eastern Market with pedestrian- and bike-friendly streets. Furthermore, the Midtown bike loop provides a desirable non-motorized transportation alternative between Midtown, Brush Park, and Eastern Market.

COMPLEMENTARY COMPONENTS /// Because of the importance of Brush Park’s role in the continued regeneration of the greater downtown 7.2 square-mile area, it is imperative that any future redevelopment within Brush Park be considered within its larger urban context.

As illustrated in the future development projects mapping, there are a significant number of development projects that have been recently announced and are currently working their way through the City’s approval process. In addition, the recent demolition of the Brewster-Douglass housing project has prepped approximately 19 acres of land for future development. Furthermore, it is anticipated that the City of Detroit will release a Request for Qualifications for this development within the next few months – asking potential development groups to offer qualifications and proposals for this area of land. Lastly, the City of Detroit and the Detroit Land Bank Authority have control of additional vacant properties scattered throughout Brush Park. In combination, the redevelopment of all of this vacant land should be considered holistically both internal to the Brush Park geography and externally relevant to the surrounding neighborhoods of the Central Business District, Eastern Market, and Midtown.

THE BRUSH PARK DEVELOPMENT COMPANY’S PROJECT /// In the spring of 2015, the Brush Park Development Company – a collaborative team formed between Bedrock Real Estate Services and several partners - was awarded the development rights to 8.4 acres within the Brush Park neighborhood, an area that includes 43 vacant parcels and four historic structures. (See diagram for defined project site.) The vision for this 8.4 acres will build upon the previously released Brush Park Neighborhood Vision Plan (as issued by Midtown Detroit Inc.) in order to design a community approved, context-specific development proposal for this area. Currently included in the proposed development of these 8.4 acres is:

+/- 337 proposed residential units
+/- 6 different residential unit types
+/- 470,500 SF of residential space
+/- 8,000-10,000 SF of retail and/or commercial space
+/- 71,715 SF of open space
With a diversity of housing typologies, architectural aesthetics, and unit costs, the development project will appeal to a broad spectrum of current and future Brush Park residents. In the proposed development, residents will have the opportunity to meet all or most of their daily needs for high-quality housing, services, amenities, employment, and recreation in a setting that is deeply connected, historic, sustainable, and collaborative. The project aim is to protect, preserve, and enhance the qualities of life in the neighborhood so valued by residents, business owners and visitors alike.

THE COMPETITION // This competition is facilitated by Bedrock Real Estate Services for the Brush Park Development Company. To aid in their project development, Bedrock wishes to investigate the future of urban housing by utilizing a portion of the 8.4 acre development site for this academic competition. Students are asked to propose a mixed-use project that will address one or all of the following questions:

- How can traditional urban housing typologies evolve to satisfy future urban dwellers?
- How can these proposed housing typologies morph over time to accommodate the aging of future urban dwellers?
- What shared amenities do urban dwellers desire within their community?
- What architectural aesthetics embody today’s multi-faceted societies?
- How can contemporary architecture complement historic architecture within historic districts?
- How can the construction of a major housing development utilize the existing work force and lite industrial production capabilities?

It is also the premise of this competition that all individual housing proposals must be addressed holistically within Detroit’s urban context. Students are asked to not only provide a residential proposal for the project site, but should suggest a strategic development vision for all of Brush Park that outlines key components to their urban design vision. Components could include, but are not limited to:

- Urban connections
- Density standards
- Public transportation
- Diversity of housing typologies
- Public spaces
- Sustainable strategies
- Neighborhood identities

In essence, the students are asked to contemplate the future of urban housing and offer innovative design solutions that will place Detroit at the epicenter of creative urban regeneration strategies.
SPECIFICS /// Within the competition project site as defined by Alfred, Brush, Beaubien, and Division, each student team is to design a mixed-use housing project that considers the following elements:

- Teams should utilize the entire project development site for the mixed-use project
- Programming components should include, but not be limited to:
  - Housing
  - 1 parking unit per residential unit or a combination of shared transportation system strategies with traditional parking
  - Shared amenities
  - Open space (public and private)
  - Neighborhood commercial space
- The development will be a mixed income community with a minimum of 20% of the users requiring affordable housing, the remainder will be market rate housing. There will be no physical design differentiation between affordable and market rate housing (the differentiation will be made by financing programs).
- The intended market audience will be a social-equitable mixture of "empty nesters," single parents, families and young, urban professionals
- Co-housing concepts or other space saving alternative living styles are encouraged
- The development should be economically, socially and ecologically sustainable. Competitors need not focus on any sustainability concepts except to the extent that selected construction technologies should allow for reasonable construction costs.
- Experimental technologies are encourage

PARTICIPANTS /// Participants will include a faculty led studio of students from each of the accredited architecture programs listed below. Teams of up to a maximum of three students each are eligible to participate. Faculty leaders will include:

- Philip Plowright, Lawrence Technological University
- Visiting Professor, University of Detroit Mercy
- Dirk Denison, Illinois Institute of Technology

SCHEDULE /// The competition will commence with the beginning of the academic semester and will conclude at the end of the semester. A few dates have been tentatively outlined below:

- Competition will commence upon the first day of studio in late August, 2015 (this date varies depending upon the university)
- Informative sessions will occur September 8th thru 11th. These sessions are intended to give students access to key stakeholders in an effort to gain real-time knowledge and experience. Sessions to include but not be limited to:
  - Development project introductions (developers, master planners, infrastructure)
  - Site visit
  - Brush Park steering committee meeting (representatives of the Brush Park community)
- Competition entries due the first week of December (TBD)
- Jury will be held the week of December 7th (TBD)
- Winners to be announced and exhibited at a public exhibition event (TBD)
PRESENTATION /// In lieu of traditional competition boards, each team is being asked to submit a project portfolio, “project booklet”, consisting of an assortment of drawings, photos, and documentation that best illustrates their project vision. The project booklet can be a maximum of 25 single-sided 10” x 10” pages, that must include the following content:

- Project title page – 1 page
- Project description – 1 page
- Up to 23 pages of drawings, in any combination of page layouts. For example, teams can place one drawing per page to emphasis a certain central concept or teams can collage multiple drawings onto a single page to hybridize themes. The minimum required drawings are as follows:
  - Masterplan or urban design diagram
  - Project site plan
  - Floor plans
  - Elevations
  - Full building sections
  - Project renderings

Optional pages could include, but are not limited to the following content:
  - Photos or images of physical models – to be photographed and/or documented on a 10” x 10” page layout until the exhibition, at which time we may ask to include the physical models within the exhibition.
  - Photos or images of 3d pages to be made of any media – to be photographed and/or documented on a 10” x 10” page layout until the exhibition, at which time we may ask to include the physical models within the exhibition. 3d pages are defined as 10” x 10” pages with three dimensional items collaged or attached to the page. Examples could include: sectional models attached to a base drawing, collages, mixed media, etc.

The project booklet (maximum of 25 pages) will be uploaded to a shared box.net website as arranged by Bedrock. Each team is to create a template for their 10"x 10" pages that includes a 4 digit team number. Other than the team’s 4 digit number, no indication of school, faculty or person should be evident anywhere on the front of any of the drawings.

It is Bedrock’s intention to display printed pages, 3d panels (if available), and physical models (if available), in a public event and include the digital booklets on a project website. Bedrock will arrange the printing for the competition review and future exhibition. Bedrock will also design and implement the project website.

PRIZES /// The following prizes will be awarded by the jury:

- First Prize: $2000 for the team. Winning students will also have the opportunity to complete a summer internship within the Bedrock architecture studio and work on the Brush Park development project.
- Second Prize: $1000 for the team
- Third Prize: $500 for the team

POTENTIAL JURORS /// The competition jury will include project stakeholders, a Bedrock representative, and prominent architectural figures. At this time, the jury is still being finalized, but initial members may include, but are not limited to:

- Melissa Dittmer, Director of Architecture, Bedrock Real Estate Services
- Maurice Cox, Director of Planning, City of Detroit
- Dan Kinkead, Director of Projects, Detroit Future City
- Elizabeth Whittaker, Principal of Merge Architects
- Lorcan O’Herlihy, Principal of LOHA
- Mark Peters, Principal of Studio Dwell
SPONSORS AND COLLABORATORS /// While Bedrock will be financially sponsoring the competition, it is the intention that this competition be collaborative in nature between the following organizations:

- Brush Park Development Company
- Bedrock Real Estate Services
- City of Detroit
- Brush Park CDC
- Lawrence Technological University College of Architecture and Design
- University of Detroit Mercy School of Architecture
- University of Michigan Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning
- Illinois Institute of Technology College of Architecture

SUGGESTED RESOURCES /// Bedrock has compiled a list of initial resources to be utilized as initial research sources for the competition:

- Link to articles on bedrock’s project
  - [http://www.mlive.com/news/detroit/index.ssf/2015/05/70m_300_housing_units_coming_t.html](http://www.mlive.com/news/detroit/index.ssf/2015/05/70m_300_housing_units_coming_t.html)
  - [http://www.mlive.com/business/detroit/index.ssf/2015/05/developing_detroit_70m_apartme.html](http://www.mlive.com/business/detroit/index.ssf/2015/05/developing_detroit_70m_apartme.html)
- Link to Brush Park CDC website
  - [http://www.brushparkcdc.org/](http://www.brushparkcdc.org/)
- Link to Midtown Inc.
  - [http://midtowndetroitinc.org/](http://midtowndetroitinc.org/)
- Brush Park Neighborhood Vision
  - [http://squarespace.com/static/53ff5564e4b07577714fb5f7d/t/54d91d9be4b0e5cfc442546b/1423515099275/2013FebUpdate-Summary%2BSurveyResults.pdf](http://squarespace.com/static/53ff5564e4b07577714fb5f7d/t/54d91d9be4b0e5cfc442546b/1423515099275/2013FebUpdate-Summary%2BSurveyResults.pdf)
- Link to other Brush Park development projects
  - [http://www.crainsdetroit.com/article/20150609/NEWS/150609834/work-on-61-3-million-mixed-use-project-in-brush-park-to-begin-this](http://www.crainsdetroit.com/article/20150609/NEWS/150609834/work-on-61-3-million-mixed-use-project-in-brush-park-to-begin-this)
- Links to Secretary of Interiors Guidelines for new construction in a historic district
  - [http://www.nps.gov/history/local-law/arch_stnds_8_2.htm](http://www.nps.gov/history/local-law/arch_stnds_8_2.htm)
- US Green Building Council, LEED Neighborhood Development Standards
  - [www.usgbc.org](http://www.usgbc.org)