News – May 18, 2016

2016 Capstone Workshop Focuses on Historic Flagler Street District

— Six landmark buildings in the historic Flagler Street area, including the Olympia Theater and the Dade County Courthouse, got virtual facelifts last week, thanks to the UMSoA 2016 Capstone Workshop. Each year, the Capstone Workshop brings together faculty and students from every discipline at the School to tackle one big project in just one week.

For 2016, UMSoA partnered with the Miami Downtown Development Authority to focus on key properties that present opportunities to provide a catalyst for the revival of this historic street through adaptive reuse, infill and development. The Capstone teams performed architectural and real estate analyses, carry out design and development scenarios for each property, and present strategies and proposals for the public realm that build on the Downtown Development Authority's (DDA) streetscape initiative.

The Masters in Real Estate Development + Urbanism (MRED+U) Program, directed by Dr. Charles Bohl, is the lead organizer for the Capstone. Miami DDA member Richard Heisenbottle, who also chairs the Collaborative Teaching and Students Project Committee of the MRED+U Advisory Board, is spearheading the organization of this year's Capstone with Dr. Bohl on behalf of both the Miami DDA and the School of Architecture.

The six buildings in the week-long project were the Olympia Theater, the Shoreland Arcade, the Dade County Courthouse, the Biscayne Building, the Dade Commonwealth Building, and the Alfred I. DuPont Building. Most were built in the mid-to-late 1920s and have National Historic Register designations.

After five days of work that included guest lectures on topics that included historic preservation and the commercial office market, tours of the historic district, advice from construction firms and architectural engineers, lots of drawing and design and even more coffee, each team presented at the historic Olympia Theater on Friday, May 13. In addition to drawings and plans for the buildings, each team presented financial projections, including construction costs, revenues and sources of support, for each project. Combined into a single tower, the projects would be a 546 story building!

"The explorations engaged by our students over the week long exercise has crystallized the idea that there is an emerging identity and society in Miami today," said Armando Montero, a lecturer at UMSoA. "As such, a new way of thinking is needed that not only addresses the effect of climate change in Miami's tropical climate but also embraces our changing society where we will find that the established rules and formulas may no longer work. "

The urban design team presented an overview of the current district, how much population density it has and where the historic properties are located. They discussed the DDA streetscape initiative, costs of real estate in the area and more.

For the Olympia Theater, which is already topped by a small tower of subsidized housing and office space, the vision included conversion to market-rate loft apartments and adding an al fresco café and retail to the mix. The Theater itself, which has already been partially preserved, would remain, with additions and changes made around it. The project would assemble six nearby buildings to create space for a parking garage and 67 story condominium tower with outdoor green space.

The neoclassical revival style Shoreland Arcade was designed as a 20 story retail and office building in 1925; however, only two stories were built before the Great Hurricane of 1926 caused a change in plans. It's the last remaining arcade downtown, and was never completed. Plans would maintain the arcade as a pedestrian pass through at ground level, with a park included inside, then topped with two elevated towers, one with a convex base and one concave to encourage air flow, that would include residential and commercial space.

The Alfred I. Dupont Building, designed by Marsh + Saxelbye, was the second skyscraper built in Miami. It opened on Christmas Day, 1939, on the site of the Halcyon Hotel and was declared historic in 1993. The building is entirely office space, and plans include maintaining much of that, while converting some of it to retail, a boutique hotel and restaurants to serve the office community and a vertical urban park that would serve the public.

Built between 1925 and 1928, the Dade County Courthouse was the first skyscraper in Miami. Until 1972, it was the tallest building in Miami, at 28 stories high. The proposal for the Courthouse is to turn it into a hotel, while keeping the already-restored courtroom on the fourth floor along with rental ballroom space, a restaurant on the sixth floor and some commercial office space as well.

The Dade Commonwealth Building, also known as the Meyer-Kiser Building, was also built in 1925, across from the Shoreland Arcade. "At the time of its construction, the Meyer-Kiser Building was thought to be one of the sturdiest and most imposing structures in downtown Miami at a height of seventeen stories," according to the City of Miami Historic and Environmental Board Preliminary Designation Board. "The building was said to be 'another imposing monument to Miami's progress and permanency.' It was one of the first steel frame buildings to contain an elevator."

Today, the building is primarily office space. Working from the word "Commonwealth," and its focus on common interests, the team focused on building community, with ideas for spaces that would let people connect, live and collaborate. Plans presented at the Capstone Workshop call for a new tower to be added; that would include a rooftop pool, residential and hostel mix, a public outdoor park that includes both "forest" and "beach" areas, community workspaces and retail.

The Great Hurricane of 1926 claimed another victim – the Biscayne Building was never completed because of the damage from the storm. Sitting on a 21,000 square foot lot, the building is office space today. Another mixed-use proposal, the team's vision would tear down additions to the building, restoring the original façade that has been replaced over the decades with things such as a 7-11, and then completing the final corner with a tower that would rise to 40 stories, on that corner only. The completed complex would include retail, a fitness club, community workspaces, residential shared living and a hotel.

Bachelor of Architecture students involved in the Capstone Workshio included Irene Balza, Andrew Clum, Andrew Dai, Gerardo Delgadillo, Marissa Guidel, Jonathan Russo, Carlo Mango-Cruz, Alyssa Osborn, Cynthia Pacheco, Catalina Ruiz Luzio, Michaela Senior and Dylan Starr. From the M. Arch. program, Jie Su, Stephanie Tarud, Erikka Vinci, Ana Luiza Pereira Leite and Tom Makowski participated. Faisal Al Ali, Ana Barrera-Ochoa, Abdulaziz Binmoammar, Bryana Cassinera, Natalia Cebollero, Victor Chavez, Virginie Dorris, Daniel Durigon, John Nicholas Dusseau, Nicole Ferrarini, Gabriel Anthony Flores, Elena Gonzalez, Zhucong Guan, Johnathan Hrasar, Savvas Pantelides, Christopher Ross, Eric Sasso and Plinio Schuchovski represented the MRED+U program, while the Master of Urban Design program participants included Bruna Bacchi, Bixuan Meng, Claire Morris, Tingting Pan, Zachary Robinson and Shuzheng Wu.

Faculty participants and advisors included Bohl, Jaime Correa, Josemaria De Churtichaga, Richard Heisenbottle, Ricardo Lopez, Montero, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, Cayetana Quadra-Salcedo, Edgar Sarli, Allan Shulman, Veruska Vasconez, Steven Miller, Li Yi, Esber Andiroglu and Matthew Trussoni.

"The greatest cities in the world are those where history and modernity intermingle and create great places where people are engaged in the past, present and future of the city," Bohl said. "This week the Capstone plunged headfirst into the exciting potential for six iconic historic buildings on Flagler Street to create catalytic projects that connect Miami's built heritage with a soaring subtropical urbanism. Authenticity and gravitas meet Miami fusion!"

http://arc.miami.edu/news/2016-capstone-workshop-focuses-on-historic-flagler-street-district