“A city is made up of the people, and right now, New Orleans has no people. Any proposal which is to suggest a successful plan for the revitalization of the city needs to first suggest a way to re-establish a population. When people believe there is a reason to return, that New Orleans is a desirable place to live, then we can open the discussion to more effective methods of inhabitation. Proposed projects must be prepared to deal with both a process of recovery and a process of renewal. One might even rethink the name of the competition, perhaps: Return, Rebuild, Renew.”

-J. Kline

“The work was hard – every shovel load was heavy from being soaked... Some of the items were everyday things – couches, desks, filing cabinets, a piano, lamps and kitchen ware. Then there were personal items – files, correspondence, pictures, books and clothing. It was not long before I began to recognize the reality and the immediate impact Katrina left on the lives of people”

-B. Thompson

“It wasn’t the ‘stuff’ she missed, it was the community. It had existed for 20 or 30 years and was now scattered across the country in a matter of days, and it was gone. She just wanted it to be the same again.”

-K. Mark

“A photo was mounted carefully on a red construction paper card. It wasn’t on the floor; it was posted on the frame of what used to be the closet of a young girls room. Unlike other photos that had succumbed to the deluge, their colors stirred around on the paper and figures barely discernible, this one had remained perfectly intact, in its intended place on the inside of this girls closet. The girl was standing with a friend, her posture upright and her countenance strong and quiet. If I didn’t already feel like a trespasser, I certainly felt like one now. My initial reaction was to keep it. I quickly put it in my pocket. I entertained the rationalization that it was just going in the trash and by keeping it I may somehow be doing her a favor. In the end I couldn’t bring myself to take it off the property.”

-J. Pressly

The city of New Orleans will be rebuilt. The questions that have frustrated the debate for months are—which parts?, under what system of protection? and according to whose rules? In this sea of political uncertainty, only a few things appear to be clear and they are—that the New Orleans that emerges from the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, will be 1) smaller, 2) denser and 3) forced to seek higher ground. This is the premise on which our studio investigation has been designed—to explore the issues of building higher-density, mixed-income, mixed-use housing on higher ground in the historic district of the Bywater neighborhood of New Orleans.

The New Orleans Studio has been constructed around a one-stage, open ideas competition, “High Density on the High Ground”. The competition is sponsored by Architectural Record in partnership with Tulane University School of Architecture. It is our goal to contribute to the rebuilding of New Orleans by offering realistic yet innovative contemporary models for 160 units of multi-density housing able to be transformative while maintaining the city’s unique cultural identity.

Semester Structure

For the first third of the semester, we will be working collaboratively in five teams composed of two students each. The five teams will respond to the competition brief with a studio goal of entering all five proposals in to the competition due, March 1, 2006. This is an ambitious undertaking so the pace of the first third of the semester will be very fast. Over the remaining two-thirds of semester students will be working individually and able to assume a more reflective pace. During this phase students will be asked to respond to the design concepts generated by their team’s competition entry and to develop a particular assembly of buildings to the highest level of tectonic, sustainable and cultural resolution.

New Orleans Service Learning Fieldtrip

During the third week of the semester we will embark on a journey of learning to New Orleans from Feb. 3rd – 6th. This field trip fulfills one of the goals of the semester—that of learning to “design in the moment” and to discover opportunities in a situation still unfolding as a source of innovation and creativity. This trip will be an opportunity to “be in the present” as the human story of how people survive trauma and reconstruct their lives and homes unfolds. The itinerary will include site visits for documentation, interaction with resource people on the ground, a bus tour to survey the most devastated areas and the opportunity to participate in a local recovery effort. Students will meet people, gather stories and explore how story can shape neighborhoods. They will be engaged in new as well as traditional forms of site documentation and urban analysis. Finally, as a way of affording students an opportunity to contribute something of value while there, we will take part in a community service activity—assisting families in clearing out their damaged homes.
Justin Laskin, MArch 2006 & Kathleen Mark, MArch 2006

note: Competition boards published as submitted to the "High Density on High Ground" open ideas competition
Lorenzo Battistelli, MArch 2007, MA '08 & Kristin Ann Hennings, MArch 2007, MA '08

Urban Diffusion:
New Orleanian Character with High Density Program

Maurice Cox

Seeking Higher Density on Higher Ground
Allison Dryer, MArch 2007 & James Boyce Pressly, MArch 2006
Seeking Higher Density on Higher Ground

Maurice Cox

5/2/2006   2:45:06 AM

Jeremy D Kline, MArch 2007 & Benjamin J Thompson, MArch 2007
Shifting and Interlocking pieces... ...framing views

Learning from the PAST and RE-INVENTING places for:
- gathering
- living
- relaxing
- playing

vibrant and still peaceful

PRINCIPLES:
- Build sustainable and affordable units using cross-ventilation, green roofs, flexible units.
- Maximize the open space
- Control breezes/interaction: private terraces, shared terraces, decks, courtyards, and rooftop gardens.
- Provide access from each unit to the common spaces
- Provide views for all units to the courtyard, and the Mississippi River.
- Respond to the existing urban fabric through the grid, size and type of units.

Patricia Vaz de Carvalho, MArch 2007 & Hao Xu, MArch 2007