Urban Intergenerational Housing

A Living Environment for Mutual Benefit of Seniors and College Students

This studio will explore the design of a mixed-use building in downtown Springfield, OR. The residential program will serve an unusual mixed demographic of low income seniors and college students who will live rent free, in exchange for a certain number of volunteer hours or events with residents. For example, UO music students might perform concerts throughout the year or LCC nursing students might provide preventive wellness checks under the supervision of an instructor. The idea is to foster meaningful intergenerational engagement that benefits both resident groups and provides housing to cost burdened students. Assisted living facilities in both Europe and the U.S. are experimenting with this model. However, no affordable senior housing projects have incorporated this strategy and most are not designed to support an engaging, intergenerational living environment.

The commercial program will be developed by each student with an emphasis on uses that support urban dwellers and enhance and strengthen the urban streetscape.

Over the past five years, Springfield has enjoyed a renaissance of its Main Street commercial corridor. Inspired by the initial public and private non-profit investments into The Royal Apartments, The Wildish Theater, the Academy of Arts and Academics and the LTD’s Springfield Station, redevelopment has taken off, focusing primarily on the adaptive re-use and rehabilitation of existing structures. Small scale retail and restaurants with limited residential above have created a compact, but lively, mixed use district in the heart of downtown. The scale, rhythm and detail of the existing buildings create a comfortable human scale and pedestrian friendly environment. A primary challenge of this studio will be to reinforce this urban fabric with the insertion of a larger scale, contemporary mixed-use development.

As a practicing architect for 30 years, I hope to provide students with an opportunity to work within real world constraints. Students will collaborate in teams to document and analyze the site and research Springfield’s current zoning requirements & Oregon’s Building Code. Special regulatory standards for affordable housing in Oregon, such as Oregon Housing & Community Services (OHCS) approved design guidelines and sustainability certifications, federal HUD noise regulations and salmon-safe stormwater practices will also be introduced. Individual design work will commence with weekly sketch problems building toward a comprehensive design solution. Field trips may include visits to local construction sites as well as existing affordable housing projects. As with most studios, the pace will be brisk and intense in order to properly engage the design problem.