The Bognar Studio -- “REDESIGNING” THE CHICAGO SPIRE
Luxury Condominiums and Hotel with Spa, fostering green-design and human well-being

Some ten years ago the 2,000 feet-high Chicago Spire, designed by Santiago Calatrava, was to be built at the east end of East North Water Street, next to Chicago River and Lake Michigan. However, in 2008, with the foundations finished, the economic recession interfered and the construction stopped; it has not been finished ever since. Thus, work in the studio calls for the design of a completely new urban complex.

Major components of the studio program are condominiums, a luxury hotel, and wellness center / spa. On-site parking is necessary and should be placed underground. With the goal of nurturing health- and environment-conscious living, designing the site or the outdoor areas is equally important. With a tight location, there is a need to establish good accessibility to the site. While your design will be, by default, a landmark building, the work should not be a race to design a structure merely for its excessive height or deceptive image. Instead, you should create genuinely innovative, well-resolved and attractive schemes.

The parameters (size) of the major parts of the program are flexible within limits, and students, working in teams of two, can adjust them according to their design proposal. As your design proposals will, no doubt, include a high-rise building(s), perhaps even a skyscraper(s), structural considerations will be of primary importance. Therefore, consultation with faculty in the structural design area will be mandatory.

The site, approx. 750’ x 470’ in size, is surrounded by water on three of its sides and intercepted by the double-level structure of the Lake Shore Drive. On its west side the foundation of Calatrava’s Spire, a 110’-diameter and 76’-deep open cylindrical RC well, currently remains. It could be either reused in a creative way or “discarded” in your proposed design. Another challenge is negotiating the mega-structure of the elevated road system and provide connections to the east part of the site toward the lake.

Work in the studio involves site visits, keeping a sketchbook / notebook up to date, a PP presentation by your instructor, students researching precedents and their presentations, group discussions, and pin-ups.

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