NORTH CITYFRONT PLAZA HOTEL/CONDOMINIUM TOWER:
A VERTICAL CITY IN CHICAGO’S STREETERVILLE DISTRICT

Skyscrapers are important landmarks of the city and contribute to urban quality, density, sustainability, and livability. Mixed-use high-rises, that combine residential, hotel, and retail spaces, can make a positive contribution to Chicago’s Loop (Central Business District) in terms of iconic significance, urban vitality, and urban infrastructure. The project is designed to explore the relationship of the skyscraper to a complex physical, social, and environmental context while engaging issues of detail and construction in expressing architectural ideas and concepts. Students who wish to integrate technical knowledge with design are encouraged.

Site. The site is located on the north bank of the Chicago River in the 200 block of Chicago’s Streeterville District, immediately south of the NBC Tower. North Cityfront Plaza Drive on its western edge, North Water Street on its northern edge, and North Columbus Drive on its eastern edge define the site. Even in the current recession, this is an area of growing demand for housing and hotel accommodations.

Requirements. The studio will require at least two field trips to Chicago to visit the site and to meet with principals at Solomon Cordwell Buenz. The nature of the project requires research about the city and precedents in order to understand how to design a skyscraper that is programatically and technically feasible as well as site-specific. The first few weeks of the semester will focus on site and case study research and building a site model. Students will have input from architects and engineers who are experienced in tall building design as project advisors. The design process will require multiple reviews (formal and informal) with expertise from related areas, such as structural engineering and mechanical systems. Special attention will be given to the integration of physical systems that has to occur at the very initial stages of the project.

Team Projects. Integration of complex building systems is required of all buildings but especially in skyscrapers. Consequently students will work in teams simulating the real world needs of collaboration.

Reviews. Pin-up reviews will occur weekly and bi-weekly with models and drawings. There will be two formal reviews: a mid-term with schematic designs and a final review with design development. A detailed model and a full set of drawings of the project will be required for the mid-term and final reviews. The studio will culminate with a public presentation of the projects with invited architects as gust reviewers.

Field Trips. Two field trips are required. An Introduction Field Trip at the beginning of the semester includes an introduction at the Chicago office of Solomon Cordwell and Buenz by Martin Wolf, FAIA, Design Principal/Senior VP, and Mark Frisch, FAIA, LEED AP BD+C, Technical Design Principal. A second field trip will be scheduled to coincide with mid-term reviews conducted at the SCB office.

Required Texts.