LARGE URBAN SPA, WELLNESS CENTER, AND HOTEL COMPLEX IN CHICAGO

The studio will have one project in the semester, but it will have two distinct parts. The program calls for designing a large urban spa, wellness center, and adjoining hotel complex in Chicago, just south of the loop and Congress Parkway next to the Chicago River. The two city-block size site is bounded by the River, W. Harrison St., S. Wells St., and extends till W. Polk St. in the south. The size of the site is: N = 536’ E = 800’ S = 400’ W = 840’ ~ 381,000 sft ~ 8.75 acres.

The program, what you will need to detail and adjust according to your interpretation, will include a large, full-fledged spa with several pools (indoor and outdoor) with all the related wellness facilities, such as massage therapy, sauna, small exercise halls, yoga and meditation spaces, as well as a 220-250-room five-star hotel. All these with full services and exquisite landscaping. Proposals should consider the seasonal use of most facilities and their connection to nature and natural phenomena. The site is well connected to downtown Chicago and beyond.

In the first stage of the work you will do site analysis, research, plus planning (working out strategies of siting) of urban design combined with landscape design including addressing of the water front areas (scale 1”/40)’. In the second part of the semester, you will elaborate the architectural design and the landscaping around and or within the complex (scale 1”/32’). Then, you will also need to select the “best” part of your design and work it out in detail (scale 1”/16’).

In the stage of site analysis and conceptual design (urban design) you will be using only sketchbooks with diagrams (about 3 weeks), and keeping them up-to-date with your developing ideas will be required. Physical study models will be used extensively throughout the entire studio and will be one of the most important components of your presentations, both mid-term and final. Presentations will be done on printed boards complemented by CGs and computer projections, animations, etc, as necessary.

Since the program includes some large spaces, such as indoor pools, structural considerations with the most creative approaches will be necessary. Regarding the type of the project, “green” or environment-friendly architecture is a must. Sustainability, however, is the bottom line of any solution; your goal should be designing architecture of highly dignified, public character. A list of precedents will be included in your detailed studio program, all of which you will have to study and “memorize” as much as possible. There will be pin-ups and class discussions as well.

In the studio we strive for professional, and highly creative / imaginative solutions that, in theory, could continue as well as elevate the great architectural legacy of the city of Chicago.

Since the site and the program are extensive, students will work in groups of two.

I look forward to working with you all.

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