



The Missing (Multi-Plex/Mid-Rise) Middle

Professor Ted Kesik

Toronto is a city with a varied architectural history that has, partly by necessity, somewhat by circumstance, mostly due to mediocrity, been borrowed, copied, derivative and never a reflection of anything but what somebody else from somewhere else thought architecture was all about. Every era, particularly the Victorian, has cast a long shadow over Toronto's architectural ideation and this has severely stunted the growth of a vernacular Toronto architecture that reflects its multi-cultural milieu. As a result, to this day, there is not really any significant architectural style or movement that is distinctly Torontonian in the same way as, say, the Group of Seven's art is distinctly Canadian, certainly not one that is internationally recognized, studied and celebrated.

This research studio will critically examine and eclectically explore the multi-plex/mid-rise housing form, not as the mediocre compromise between the low-rise, single family detached house and the ever more repetitively unimaginative glass condo tower, but as a vehicle to enable cultural expression, environmental responsibility, civil urbanity and the genesis of distinctive Toronto genres that hybridize the best of our housing DNA. The studio will be informed through a selective survey of previous research conducted at Daniels that is pertinent to understanding the urban dynamics between amenity, population density and housing form. Field work will investigate how the multi-plex/mid-rise housing form is currently situated within the larger urban context and forecast its potential role for hospitably accommodating projected growth trends in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton (GTAH) region. Subsequently, studio participants will be challenged to develop a manifesto that establishes the absolutely necessary attributes of housing that is liveable, environmentally and socially responsible and accommodating of emerging needs such as multi-generational living, co-housing, aging in place, cooperatives and rent-to-own apartments. From this position, students will be encouraged to explore the dialectics of the "missing middle" agenda through design proposals that may range from the individual suite to complete neighbourhoods, technical investigations to artistic interpretations, etc. - no aspect of this exploration will be permitted to ignore the Toronto-ness of the architectonic discourse as this will form the contextual framework underpinning the "missing middle" design challenge.