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Your Resource for Built Environment Research

Building Ideas Catalog is a periodic index of articles and reports for Town+Gown participants to use as an evolving resource to support Town+Gown's a systemic action research program. For more information on Town+Gown, please visit our website.

Terri Matthews, Director

Management

For built environment research focusing on the City’s capital program spending, the New York City Independent Budget Office makes available historical resources on capital expenditures, debt and debt service, all recently updated.

Economics

For economic impact research on capital investments in local park projects, the Center for Regional Analysis at George Mason University/School of Policy, Government and International Affairs, on behalf of the National Recreation and Parks Association, analyzed the direct, indirect and induced effects of local and regional parks agencies on economic activity, focusing specifically on 21 parks across several park typologies across the country. (via ArchNewsNow 12-15-15 and Next City 12-9-15)

The Citizens' Budget Commission published an analysis of the various factors contributing to the cost of producing affordable residential housing in New York City showing the relationship among factors and suggesting a number of options available to maximize the use of public subsidies devoted to to producing affordable housing. This analysis referred to the September 2015 Market and Financial Study: NYC Mandatory Inclusionary Housing prepared for the New York City Housing Development Corporation.
that estimated construction cost components for the different neighborhood housing markets in the city. The New York City Independent Budget Office has weighed in on the costs of affordable housing, focusing on the impact of applying prevailing wage rates to city-subsidized housing units, with an excellent analysis of how federal and local prevailing wage rules work.

The Regional Plan Association has partnered with St. Joseph’s College to develop data-driven profiles of communities on Long Island, an assessment of housing expenditure potential by income level and a case study demonstrating the benefits of well-designed multifamily housing, with the goal of providing a factual basis for discussion and decisions on current and future housing needs on Long Island. (via Regional Plan Association)

Associated General Contractors of New York State’s Data DIGest reports that construction employment increased in 44 states, with New York among the top three jobs added states, and construction industry employment reached its highest level since 2009 but remained 15% below the April 2006 peak; while underlying construction material and equipment component costs continue to decline and reports of positive outlooks for construction continue, there have been hints of reason for caution; although New York is not among the seven states with population dips, it is among the eight states with the largest out-migration states—negative population trends can affect demand for construction project types and future state and local revenues available to finance public construction projects; evidence of delays due to workforce issues has appeared.

Governing has identified some recent public private partnership initiatives focusing on the public right of way and has also highlighted the potential impact on the costs of state and local government debt used to finance public construction projects from the Federal Reserve Board’s recent increase in short-term interest rates.

In its Fiscal Outlook report, the New York City Independent Budget Office noted that among the factors increasing spending in the financial plan period is a projected increase in debt service; the IBO also noted increased planned capital spending not yet budgeted.

Technology

The Sallen Foundation reported on a November 2015 conference, Extreme Heat/Hot Cities: Adapting to a Hotter World, organized by the American Institute of Architects New York Chapter (AIA NY) Design for Risk & Reconstruction Committee, at which Brian Stone, Professor of City and Regional Planning at Georgia Institute of Technology, discussed deployment of micro-scale ground and air temperature sensors to measure the hotter ground-level temperatures in summer, which could also provide micro-scale data to measure and monitor the impact of local cooling and greening efforts. (via ArchNewsNow)
Design

Architectural Record provided inspiration from examples of prefabricated pavilions and housing, building types typically defined by affordability; see also the thoughts related to “what is design” in the context of prefabricated structures. (via ArchNewsNow 1-4-16)

The positive impacts of excellence in design of a City project that could have been a disamenity within the surrounding neighborhood were noted by The New York Times architectural critic. Also noted by New York Magazine. (via ArchNewsNow)

T+G News

The Annual Review and Open House event with the Gown Advisory Council held on November 20, 2015, at the Municipal Building was a great success. Many members of Town+Gown attended.

They heard presentations on recently completed experiential learning projects—Chris Eshlemann, 2014 Columbia/SIPA graduate, presented his Life-cycle Cost Analysis and Green Infrastructure in New York City (2013-2014) project and Thomas Ngo, 2015 Columbia/SIPA graduate, presented Predicting the Effect of New York City Capital Projects on Nearby Property Sales Prices (2014-2015) capstone project. There was also a presentation on the mechanics of the Academic Consortium Contract, including testimonial on the ease of use from Louann Dunbar who spoke about Department of Transportation’s inaugural task order

The next Town+Gown meeting, Rebooting the Research Agenda, is scheduled for Monday, February 29, 2016, from 3 to 5 p.m. at the lovely Department of Youth and Community Development’s conference room at 2 Lafayette Street, from 3 to 5 p.m. You will be receiving an invitation to this event soon, but in the meantime, please feel free to take a look at the current version of the Research Agenda on the Town+Gown website at http://ddctowngown.org/. If you or your organization would like to propose a new research question or revision(s) to existing question(s) in the Research Agenda, please contact Terri Matthews at matthewte@ddc.nyc.gov.

The most recent Town+Gown symposium event, The Policy of Design and Equity, in collaboration with AIANY/Center for Architecture and the AIANY/Public Architecture Committee, took place at the Center for Architecture on October 28, 2015. The second case study panel focused on two recently completed Town+Gown projects with students at Pratt/Architecture and at New York School of Interior Design, in connection with the New York Police Department’s efforts to implement the Los Angeles Police Department’s successful “Peoples’ Precinct” program in New York. Another completed Town+Gown project with a Columbia/SIPA capstone team was the subject of the last panel. The capstone
under the Contract. Agency representatives and academic institution representatives, including Gown Advisory Council members, then met each other during the concluding conversation segment and talked about potential projects in the future.

students used geocoded Department of Design and Construction project data and Department of Finance property sales data to develop a difference-in-difference hedonic regression model to permit the City to assess the economic impact of its routine capital projects. To read about these Town+Gown projects, please see The Policy of Design and Equity.

Other recently completed experiential learning projects in Town+Gown consist of three data analytic projects with graduate students at Fordham/Gabelli Business School. These students worked with three Department of Design and Construction data sets—two of the projects focused on the spread between initial design estimates and accepted bid prices, one for horizontal infrastructure projects and the other for vertical building projects, and the other project focused on 20 years of financial indicator data collected from apparent winning bidders as part of the responsibility determination process.