



The Metropolitan Exchange
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2008-2009 Lecture Series + Exhibition

Brooklyn Exchanges: Design, Development and the Future of Brooklyn

Brooklyn Exchanges is an exhibition and lecture series intended to spark dialogue about design and development in Brooklyn. From November 2008 – September 2009, the Metropolitan Exchange (MEX) will host architects, community activists, planners, historians, critics, developers, government officials and neighborhood residents to discuss plans for and alternatives to current development in Downtown Brooklyn.

Monthly seminars will feature a variety of speakers from government, activist communities, architecture/planning and academia presenting competing visions of a transforming city. Speakers and audience members will be invited to respond by contributing plans, sketches, schemes, lectures, books and other material to an archive hosted at MEX. This archive will expand throughout the Brooklyn Exchanges program, generating a catalog of spatial alternatives to the luxury-condo-and-chain-store formula that seems to guide current development. Materials from this catalog will be exhibited publicly in MEX's ground-floor exhibition space in the Summer of 2009.

Key Features

- **The Brooklyn Reading Room**, featuring periodicals and publications about Brooklyn in the publicly-accessible architecture and design library at the Metropolitan Exchange
- **Brooklyn Exchanges Lectures and Workshops**, monthly lectures/seminars about design and development in Downtown Brooklyn
- **Brooklyn Exchanges Storefront Exhibition**, showcasing innovative possibilities for design in Downtown, to be produced in collaboration with students in Architecture and Communication Design at Pratt Institute

About the Metropolitan Exchange

The Metropolitan Exchange (MEX) is an architecture, urban planning, and research cooperative located in Downtown Brooklyn. MEX is made up of design professionals, developers, and scholars who come together to collaborate on architecture and planning projects, pursue development opportunities, and sponsor lectures, film screenings and exhibitions.

This series is funded by a grant from the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts, and supported by Al Attara, Interboro Partners, Meredith TenHoor, and members of MEX.

Project Details

Change is coming to Downtown Brooklyn: most of the area has been upzoned; New York City's most dense development, Atlantic Yards, has been planned a few blocks away; cultural facilities are being built in the area surrounding the Brooklyn Academy of Music. The "Brownstone Belt" of wealthy neighborhoods surrounding Downtown pressures real estate prices, de-stabilizing the socio-economically and ethnically diverse regional population that shops, works and hangs out Downtown. Dense development projects are contested as they threaten to displace residents, businesses and institutions.

Such change in Downtown is driven by agencies (developers and government officials) that are typically outside of but dependent upon the design community. Our project seeks to interrogate and clarify a role for design in inventing a more just and creative means of developing Brooklyn. As the real estate market shifts and new possibilities emerge for Downtown, it is crucial for designers to generate and share visions for the future of Brooklyn's built environment. What will a dense regional center look like? Who will go there, what will happen there? And how will it be designed? These questions are not only important in Brooklyn, but in dense downtown districts worldwide.

Brooklyn Exchanges: Design, Development and the Future of Brooklyn, will provide a forum for generating and disseminating these visions. Starting in the Fall of 2008, we will sponsor a participatory exhibition, library, and lecture series on the future of Brooklyn's Downtown. Putting the insights of architects, community activists, planners, historians, critics, developers, government officials and neighborhood residents in dialogue with one another, the exhibition will spark conversation about how design can contribute to the improvement of the Borough's public spaces.

The Brooklyn Reading Room

The Brooklyn Reading Room will consist of books and periodicals about urban design, architecture, theory, and history of Downtown Brooklyn, and will be open to professionals and the public by appointment. A librarian will be available to answer questions and assist with research on a limited basis.

"Brooklyn Exchanges" Lectures and Workshops

The Metropolitan Exchange will host a series of seminars and workshops featuring competing visions for the future of Brooklyn. Potential speakers might include members of the city government responsible for Downtown Brooklyn's economic development, authors of alternative plans for the Atlantic Yards development, architects and landscape architects involved in Brooklyn-based design projects, representatives of the BAM cultural district, theorists of the relationships between gentrification and culture, participatory planners, urban economists, design cooperatives, urban gardeners, and historians of urban renewal and radical urbanism. Considering design in an expanded field, and assembling diverse practitioners, we hope to convene a community that does not yet exist as such, one that is capable of creatively tackling large-scale urban problems with sufficient attention to the needs of all who use Brooklyn's public spaces.

Brooklyn Exchanges Storefront Exhibition

Working with design and architecture students from Pratt Institute, the Metropolitan Exchange will produce and install an exhibition featuring maps, drawings, diagrams, photographs and documentation about alternative visions for Downtown Brooklyn solicited from lecturers and community members. The exhibition of these materials will help to quickly disseminate the wide range of possibilities for development which may not yet have been considered. Located on one of Brooklyn's most heavily-traveled streets, the gallery at the Metropolitan Exchange will attract people from all over Brooklyn, who pass it on their way to work or school, as they shop, dine, and hang out. Because this population is more transient and less wealthy than that of the residential neighborhoods surrounding Downtown Brooklyn, their views about how Downtown should change are not often heard; this exhibition seeks to redress this problem by attracting this population with compelling imagery and an open-door policy, and soliciting and exhibiting responses from the public.