

Band Annex Revitalization

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HOUSTON, Sept. 12, 2007—It's been a print shop, an auto shop and a band annex. This fall, the building adjacent to the University of Houston's Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture reinvents itself once again to become an emblem of innovation and technology.

The Burdette Keeland Jr. Design Exploration Center is opening its doors to a new semester and a new generation of students with a reception from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., Thursday, Sept. 20.

"This center will further extend our students' ability to make their ideas real," said Joe Mashburn, dean of the college. "It's an extension of what we do in the college—make ideas work."

The walls in the entryway are yellow, prompting an affectionate chuckle from friends and colleagues of Burdette Keeland Jr., the man known for his clashing yellow tie. The late Keeland Jr. was a beloved professor, architect and mentor, whose association with the university and the College of Architecture spanned more than four decades.

"This facility is dedicated to our students' exploration of design, an especially appropriate purpose for a building named for Professor Keeland, himself a gifted

designer," said Geoff Brune, associate professor and designer of the Keeland Center.

The Keeland Center will house The Graduate Design/Build Studio and the latest equipment to accommodate digital fabrication projects for architecture and industrial design students. Digital Fabrication refers to objects and prototypes designed and generated on computers using 3-D software and specialized equipment. This process is attractive for the accuracy and quality of its components and the conservation of time and materials. Students will have convenient access to this important tool of their professions, giving them valuable experience as they compete in the industry.

"Digital fabrication is changing both the process of design as well as the methods used to produce designs," Mashburn said. "Students should be introduced to these evolving technologies."

The building also will feature the only sloped, green roof in the city. Green roofs are vegetation-covered roofs on buildings that create a living, aesthetically pleasing and environmentally friendly alternative to traditional roofs. Green roofs help reduce flooding, clean the air, reduce the expenditure of energy and reduce the 'heat island' of the urban core and surrounding large developments. Native plants and flowers, such as Gulf Muhly, Butterfly Weed and Mexican Feather Grass, will top the Keeland green roof.

"This is the culmination of a lot of work by students and faculty who planted native plants in a mock-up of the Keeland roof in late-May of 2005," said Charles Tapley, adjunct professor architecture. "They wanted see which plants would survive and thrive in Houston's weather. We believe this will be the only sloped, green roof on any academic building in the state and has the potential to create a lot of interest."

The project received a Certificate of Recognition from Keep Houston Beautiful, an organization that promotes the protection of the environment through recycling, litter reduction and beautification efforts.

The roof will sit on the southern side of the building, the warmer side of the facility and the place where the air conditioning system will be installed. Temperature readings taken at various times will determine how the green roof is helping to conserve energy and reduce energy costs.

The construction project is a lesson in recycling. The building, one of the first built on the university campus, once was used as an auto shop to teach a trade to returning World War II veterans. It served as a print shop at one time, and, most recently, as the annex for the UH band. While many areas in Houston are demolishing older architecture, UH is recycling, renewing and reusing.

"The design articulates principals of careful planning and energy conservation, including development of ventilated workshop spaces, extensive use of natural light, installation of 'green' products and a planted roof-scape," Brune said. "The details reveal the

'construction' of the architecture, while providing a functional, clean and safe working environment for students and faculty."

The project began with a generous gift from the Harvey R. Houck Jr. and Patricia W. Houck Foundation, and relied on donated materials and labor from area construction firms and other individuals. W.S. Bellows served as contractor for the project, while Brune donated his services.

For more information on the UH Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture and the Burdette Keeland, Jr. Design Exploration Center, visit www.arch.uh.edu/home/index.html.

About the University of Houston

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