



Antony Wood

BNN: Antony, I guess I'm kind of curious. What's behind the quest for height? Is it about dominance, is it the sort of typical phallic base symbol we think, or is there more to it than that?

AW: Well I think you're right as you started there. The history of mankind has shown that man has always had this ambition to build high. What's driving it? A lot of it is an iconic thing, to be seen above the masses, and I certainly think that is one of the factors that is driving some of the world's tallest buildings around the world today.

BNN: Let me take a stab at it from a different direction and ask your opinion on this. I've done a fair amount of investing in real estate, and when you start to talk about downtown cores in some of the cities where these buildings are being made, and you're spending 36 to 50 million dollars an acre, the only way to get a return on the investment is to go straight up and get tremendous density. Isn't what's driving height return of capitol, the only thing that really matters, the return of dollars invested in the purchase of the land?

AW: Well I think there's two factors there, I think if you look historically, the real estate prices and the price of land has traditionally driven tall buildings. However, today I think there are other factors involved. I think some of the super tall buildings that are being built perhaps are not inspired only by price of land, I think they're also driven by ambition of people and corporations, and I think the history of the world's tallest buildings has always shown that. I think the difference in the past perhaps decade or five or six years can be seen in the titles of the projects themselves. Whereas for the first hundred years or so of the world's tallest buildings, these were driven predominantly by companies, so you would see the Sears tower, the Chrysler building. I think what's changed in the past ten years or so is that these projects very much involve the governments or city fathers in these countries, and now you can see titles such as the Burj Dubai, Taipei 101, the location of the city is very much part of the title and part of the project. So it's not just about an economic thing. There are people who believe that super tall buildings do not actually stack up economically. The costs of constructing over a certain height perhaps don't make sense and therefore there's other factors driving it.

BNN: Of course Burj Dubai at an estimated four plus billion is pretty costly. It was in part Antony precisely what it expressed that made the World Trade Center a target for terrorists, and it seemed in the aftermath of that that there would be fear around tall buildings. Have we gotten past that, is that now behind us?

AW: Well, I think the answer is yes. However two days after the sixth anniversary of 9-11, I think everybody is aware that that was one of the biggest events to ever happen on a world scale, let alone a building scale. But what that event did was throw a big question mark over the appropriateness of tall buildings in our urban centers. It threw a very big question mark and I think you're right, many people, many organizations questioned whether tall buildings would be suitable into the future. However, six years on from that, I think we can answer that there has been a resounding vote in favor of tall buildings and you only have to look at the amount of tall building construction that is going on in virtually every city in the U.S. and overseas to answer that there has been a vote in confidence in tall buildings. This is driven two fold. First, although the events of 9-11 were obviously grotesque and terrible, on reflection people have taken into account that the chances of that happening to other or all of the tall buildings is very very remote, so people have come to accept that the risk of living in a tall building and suffering a terrorist attack is not particularly high. I think the other factor from 9-11, the question mark it raised was are they safe? Six years later the amount of research that has gone into making tall buildings safer is tremendous, so that buildings, not only ones that are being built now but also buildings that have been in existence for a hundred years or more are having systems applied to make these tall buildings safer than they have ever been. Despite the events of 9-11, I think if you actually look at the history of tall buildings, you will find that there have been relatively few fatalities in tall buildings.

BNN: All right, well they seem to be with us to stay, Antony we appreciate you joining us.

AW: Its been my pleasure, thank you.



Kevin O'Leary & Antony Wood



Amanda Lang & Antony Wood



Burj Dubai