

C O L U M N S

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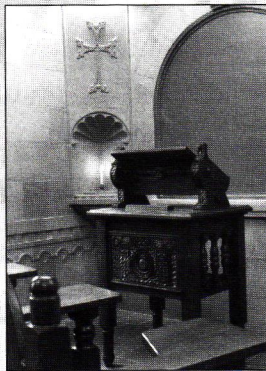
No area general contractor is better known or more respected than John Deklewa and Sons.



Our most recent project, *The Clubhouse at Nevillewood* is now home to the *Family House Invitational Golf Tournament*.

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In the seventy-five years since our founding, we've produced some of the most dramatic and functionally well-integrated buildings in Western Pennsylvania, Ohio and West Virginia.

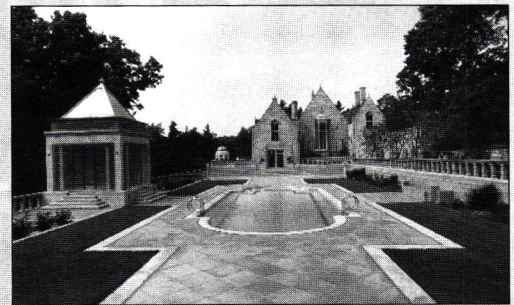


The Armenian room located on the third floor of the Cathedral of Learning at the University of Pittsburgh is the 22nd nationality room to be established at the university. The stone arched room copies the masonry techniques of church and monastery builders of the 11th century. This magnificent classroom was designed by Torkom Khrimiam who emigrated from Armenia in 1978.

We offer a full range of contractor services. Our pre-construction planning and value engineering, for example, can detect trouble spots early to help smooth out the production process. This insures your project comes in on time and on budget.

Whether you're considering renovation and retrofit of an existing structure or new construction, consult the experts at John Deklewa & Sons, Inc.

For a more detailed analysis of your specific needs, contact John E. Deklewa, President at 257-9000.



"Elm Court", a 9-acre private estate located north of Pittsburgh, involves unique additions and renovations. For example, the pool above is heated and has an ozone purification system. The deep blue water is surrounded by a granite surface edged in limestone. The pool is lined with hand made ceramic tile. On the left is a pool house sitting area. To the right is the "Fish Slide" built to hold two antique Indian carved marble panels giving the appearance of two carved fish swimming in the current of the fountain.

JOHN DEKLEWA & SONS, INC. General Contractors

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Suburbs & Us

Karen Loysen, AIA President



In contrast to Arcadian goals of the past, some of today's suburban roadways are the most visually appalling places to be found anywhere.

Once upon a time, the suburb was an

Arcadian escape from the filthy air, soot and grime of the city. Its image was pastoral, green, Jeffersonian.

Fast forward to the 1990s. The suburb of today is a place whose most prevalent image is that of strip commercial development. It is a place for the car. It is designed to enable easy automobile travel to every destination and as a result of allowing such traffic, almost requires it. Nowadays, a car may be needed for the shortest of errands. The roads to accommodate all this traffic can become so wide and frequently traversed they become impossible for pedestrian use. Picture, for example, trying to cross McKnight Road.

In contrast to Arcadian goals of the past, some of today's suburban roadways are the most visually appalling places to be found anywhere—relentless landscapes of asphalt parking lots, garish signs and cheaply made buildings abound. Outmoded zoning is often the culprit perpetuating these strip commercial developments and can be overcome through revisions to existing zoning codes which encourage mixed-use development. It's obviously impossible to break up strip commercial development along these roadways if "commercial" remains the only use allowed. Infrastructure design and short-sighted marketing attitudes are also at fault.

Problems of suburbs are also problems of urbs. Likewise, urban problems effect suburbs. The symbiosis between these two needs to be addressed through regional strategies, which can coordinate the development of infrastructure, help plan for the conservation of natural assets and strengthen centers of development.

Neighborhood Approach

New Jersey has begun to address this interdependency through development of a statewide planning policy. Their strategy coordinates issues of urban, rural and suburban development as well as the pres-

ervation of natural resources. Mentioned throughout the Garden State's document are attitudes and goals which direct the policy, such as:

- "The answer lies neither in limited growth nor in passively accepting its consequences; it lies in managing our public investments in infrastructure and natural resources more wisely.
- ...Disinvestment in urban areas, and the loss of the countryside in rural areas, has social as well as economic costs.
- If the State is to revitalize its distressed communities, the development 'playing field' must be leveled so that distressed communities can compete on even terms with suburban and exurban communities for new development.
- Poorly planned development costs more in property taxes because it uses infrastructure less efficiently.
- The quality of life of New Jersey residents is inexorably linked to the existence and vitality of the State's arboreal resources."

It may be that we should challenge and support our own state's policy makers to manage Pennsylvania's growth with this kind of overarching vision. We have not yet ruined our landscape. Perhaps our region's history of old, heavy industry has spared us the uncontrolled peripheral sprawl of modern white-collar cities like Atlanta and Houston. We have not yet succumbed to the endless undifferentiated development of the Washington D.C. suburbs. Only since our recent shift from industrial to service-oriented city is the region beginning to experience significant peripheral expansion. There is still time to manage this growth.

If New Jersey, which has significant urban as well as suburban woes, can attempt to conquer their planning problems, why can't we? 🏡

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On the cover:

Aerial view of suburban America. Courtesy of Rob Robinson.

The Pittsburgh Chapter AIA serves 12 Western Pennsylvania counties as the local component of the American Institute of Architects and the Pennsylvania Society of Architects. The objective of the Chapter is to improve, for society, the quality of the built environment by further raising the standards of architectural education, training and practice; fostering design excellence; and promoting the value of architectural services to the public. AIA membership is open to all registered architects, architectural interns, and a limited number of professionals in supporting fields.

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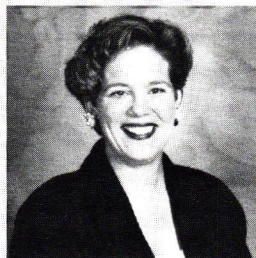
Keep on Movin'

Anne Swager, Executive Director

When I learned to drive a car,

drivers training classes were not yet in vogue. Instead, my dad spent many patient hours teaching me the fine art of the rules of the road and how to parallel park. He thought I was quite a quick study, undoubtedly due to my covert drives behind the wheel of my boyfriends'

cars starting well before the legal driving age. I further refined my skills by driving my dad's VW bug, after Oscar-winning begging sessions, at breakneck speed over the twisty, hilly roads between my high school and home.



Now that the population has relentlessly shifted to suburbia, so have the transportation problems.

While mostly beyond fear, I scared myself badly the day I got the car up on two wheels while rounding a particularly sharp curve, tempering my Mario Andretti urges a bit. I have never owned anything but a standard transmission car mostly because there is still a race car driver lurking in my being. When I drive to and from work, I can be accused of finding every possible *shortcut* to avoid traffic. My search revolves around the desire to

keep moving rather than to get to my destination any sooner. And yes, I did get a ticket on Banksville Road one day for drag racing a Mercedes.

I would consider myself an incurable car addict except that old age has intervened. No matter what I weigh, I can still feel that skinny teenage being in my body. Maintaining that weight is an impossible standard, but rather than sew my mouth shut, I have opted for breakneck speeds on a bicycle. This satisfies both my daredevil nature and allows me to eat and drink three-fourths of what I want. Unfortunately, while I live in a community—Mt. Lebanon—that boasts of superior recreational facilities, biking lanes (and for that matter sidewalks) are in short supply at my end of town. When time is short, rather than load my bike on the back of the car and head out into the country, I walk my highly energetic and excitable dog from hell. This winter, as the

snow piles narrowed the neighborhood roads, I found myself battling with cars. While having the dog growl at the driver and threaten to eat the bumper off the car was effective, it was still unnerving to have to stand my ground against several thousand pounds of metal, plastic and rubber.

Truth is, suburbs revolve around cars. Even in a self-proclaimed walking community (the school district does not bus its students) such as mine, the fact remains that you often cannot easily get from here to their on foot. Sheer distance is often a deterrent as we strive to segregate shopping and working from our residential neighborhoods. For whatever reason, probably some plot by the Big Three car manufacturers, the vast majority of us still strive for the single-family house with two cars in the driveway on the one-third to one-half acre plot of grass that needs continuous mowing. This all seemed to work well when there were fewer people and most everyone still lived in the city or the country. Now that the population has relentlessly shifted to suburbia, so have the transportation problems. Mt. Lebanon is currently studying possible remedies to commuter traffic on its residential streets. One solution to the less developed suburbs is the cul-de-sac. This solution is liberally employed by the suburbs further out than my neighborhood. In the end, this only adds to our traffic woes as cars pour through our neighborhood in search of a faster way to get where they're going.

If the decision is left to PennDOT and the traffic planners, we'll get lots of new roads. In fact, the Southwest Regional Planning Commission (SPRPC) is proposing that we ring the greater Pittsburgh area with a circular highway to facilitate traffic movement. I have heard lots of noise about why the highway shouldn't go through this exclusive suburban development as opposed to another, but as yet I have heard nothing about why it should not be built. In a recent meeting with one of the local state representatives, the leadership