

C O L U M N S



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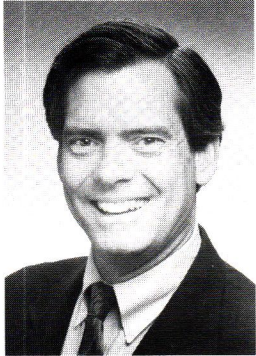
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GENERAL CONTRACTORS BUILDING SUCCESS

Programming Programs

by Roger Kingsland, AIA President



One of this year's goals is to get feedback from our membership regarding program preferences.

On March 29, the Chapter had a highly successful

program at The Andy Warhol Museum. With over 130 attendees, it was standing room only for Richard Gluckman's talk about his work and the design of the Warhol Museum. The program incorporated two components the Board feels are critical to successful events: sponsorship and sales.

A large percentage of the program's cost was underwritten by the museum's project construction team, including Baker Mellon Stuart, Bryan Mechanical, Gerson Electric, Easley & Rivers, and Franco. In addition, each Board member contacted five firms to ask a representative of each firm to spread the word about the event. We realize a good program is not enough. We also have to contact people personally and build enthusiasm. It seems to work.

We have other exciting programs planned for the year, including:


- Karen Loyson, AIA has started a program whereby the Hornbostle lecture will be part of a lecture series jointly sponsored by AIA Pittsburgh, the Heinz Architectural Center and the CMU Department of Architecture.
- On May 17, Thomas Gordon Smith, head of the Architecture Department at Notre Dame University, will discuss the New Classicism movement at Mellon Institute Auditorium.
- Terrence McDermott, CEO of AIA National, will speak on June 29 at Rosebud. I heard Terry speak at Grassroots in January and he bolstered my confidence that AIA National is, in fact, doing good things with our money.
- The Program Committee is considering having a family outing at the Pittsburgh Zoo in July that would allow us to experience the new Children's Zoo, designed by Indovina Associates Architects.
- We have two town meetings a year, one in January and one in the fall, to discuss general business and political issues.

Our most important program of the year is our Annual Design Awards. It is a chance for us to underscore the importance of design to the public and feature our best work. Last year, several members expressed concern over the confusion between the Design Awards and the Building Excellence Awards, awarded jointly by AIA and Master Builders Association.

Apparently, the difference between the two awards was not clearly distinguished. The situation was complicated by the fact that a silver medal was awarded for the Building Excellence Awards, but not for the Design Awards. Many people, including the press, interpreted the silver medal to be the top award for both categories.

The Board addressed the subject and considered expanding the awards program to include other building industry organizations, as well as the possibility of holding separate award programs for non-design categories. We also considered keeping the Building Excellence Awards as part of this year's Design Awards and making an extra effort to distinguish between the two. The Board voted to exclude all organizations, except AIA, from this year's Design Awards. It felt this would give us an opportunity to follow a program format that has proven to be successful while exploring alternatives for subsequent years.

One of this year's goals is to get feedback from our membership regarding program preferences. How many events should we have each year (we currently have ten)? What is the proper mix of social interaction, business, and education? Should we serve meals or just refreshments? How much should programs cost?

Our programs are perhaps the most visible benefit we provide to AIA Pittsburgh members. Kevin Silson, AIA, Chairman of the Programs/Exhibits Committee, has contributed both time and creative ideas to this endeavor and deserves our thanks and appreciation. We hope to further improve programs by incorporating your input; please make an effort to attend and give us your opinion. 

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On the cover: The Gateway House, at Fifth Avenue and Woodland Road, is one of the last remaining Gothic style houses in Pittsburgh. A demolition order for the Shadyside home is presently being fought in the courts. Photos by Mary McDonough.

AIA Pittsburgh serves 12 Western Pennsylvania counties as the local component of the American Institute of Architects and the Pennsylvania Society of Architects. The objective of AIA Pittsburgh 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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Opinions expressed by editors and contributors are not necessarily those of AIA Pittsburgh. The Chapter has made every reasonable effort to provide accurate and authoritative information, but assumes no liability for the contents.

And the Survey Says...

by Michelle Fanzo, Editor

It seems appropriate that May, a time of renewal,

also embraces Preservation Month, a time to think about renewal, renovation, and refurbishment in the built environment. This month *Columns* looks at the historic Strip District, two local preservation projects in progress, as well as the candidates for Allegheny County Commissioner and the AIA's continuing education program.

In this space I would like to share thoughts on another kind of assessment and preservation effort. In January we asked *Columns'* readers to fill out a survey, letting us know what they like and don't like about the publication. Feeling we've received as much feedback as we are going to get, we would like to now share the results with you.

We received 37 responses, 27 from members, 10 from other readers of *Columns*. Not all 37 respondents answered each question, and some questions allowed people to give more than one answer.

Overall, design elements ranked high, with satisfaction with illustrations/artwork the highest. Typography and photography also received praise, with the majority of their ratings coming in as a four on a scale of one to five (five being the highest). Only three people rated any of the design elements less than a three. There was a sense that people would like to see more photographs and illustrations if space permitted. Color as an option was not very popular (though a handful of you strongly supported the idea). Even less popular was raising dues to pay for color capabilities, though four people said they would support the increase.

We received the strongest responses, and some of the most conflicting suggestions, about editorial content. The vast majority of respondents wish to maintain the current balance between general and specific interest information, with six respondents saying they'd like more emphasis on specific (local) information and eight saying they would like

more emphasis on general interest information. Just a few of the topics suggested for coverage in upcoming issues were: land and transportation issues, entrepreneurial architecture firms, local intern focus, firm management concerns, exhibit reviews, liability issues, environmental concerns, changes in code requirements and a call for "more controversy!"

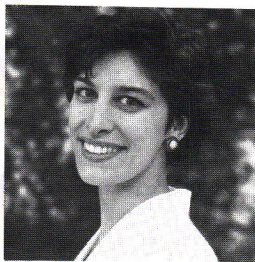
Of the monthly components, the favorite is local news, with the executive director's columns a close second. The next favorite sections (in order of preference, all receiving high marks) were the president's/editor's column, calendar, breaking ground, and bricks and mortar. A number of respondents suggested expanding the calendar to include more local/regional events and possibly having one rather than two staff columns per month.

The tide turned with the dossier, which received three more dislike than like votes (some members suggested it was too "fluffy"), and more people dislike the engineers and contractors directories than like them, though there were two people who said they like them a lot and found them very useful. We are currently exploring redesigning the directories to enhance their readability, which is one of the main reasons people said they didn't enjoy them.

Responses to "what would you like to see more or less of" were extremely varied. Some of the more frequently mentioned were: (more) local news, in-depth features, firm profiles, firm management articles, features/projects by small firms, book/exhibit reviews, committee reports, and letters to the editor (I agree!); (less) firm/member profiles, book reviews, editorials.

The large majority of respondents found the publication readable, visually appealing, informative and an almost unanimous "useful." Almost all respondents said that they read 10 out of 10 issues. Readers were almost equally split between spending less than 15 minutes or 15 to 30 minutes with each issue. Almost all of the respondents have passed copies or articles along to friends or others in their office (Thanks!).

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