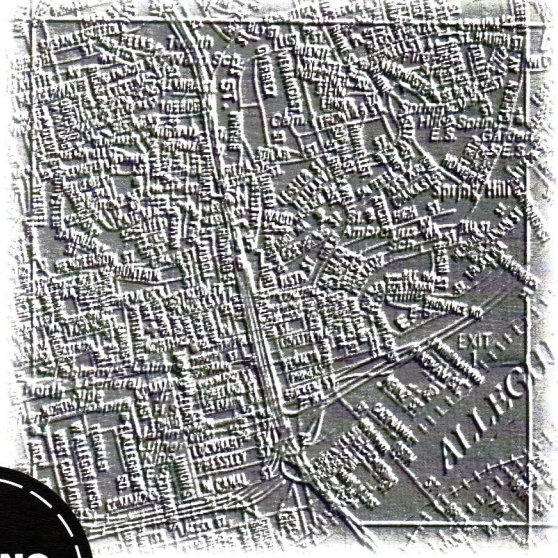


C O L U M N S



**ZONING
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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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AIA Trust Introduces Legaline

The AIA Trust announces the introduction of

Legaline, a service available only to AIA members to help manage an architectural practice and protect it against law suits and claims. John M. Laping, FAIA, 1995 chairman of the Trust, explains that the service was created in response to a recent survey of AIA members in which 60 percent of respondents identified reliable practice-related legal information as the most valuable membership benefit that AIA Trust could offer.

Legaline is a subscription service that provides instant, unlimited access to legal information from experts headed by Charles R. Heuer, FAIA, Esq., an architect, attorney, professional liability consultant, and mediator. He conducted the AIA's "Liability: Prevention and Protection" seminars and is the author of the A201 and B141 Commentaries published by the AIA and of Means' Legal Reference for Design and Construction. He is a member of the Boston Society of Architects and has been operating a similar service in Massachusetts and Virginia for 10 years.

"The service is an excellent complement to the new AIA Trust/Schinnerer/CNA Small Firm Professional Liability Insurance Program," commented Laping. "All of the AIA Trust's services are designed to help AIA members build and maintain a successful practice. Legaline is the newest."

Legaline is designed principally for sole practitioners and small firms. It is priced on a sliding scale according to firm size. Firms with 25 or fewer employees pay only \$400 a year for unlimited access. Firms with 26 to 50 employees pay \$500 annually, and firms with more than 51 people pay \$700 each year.

"My experience is that even principals in larger firms with attorneys appreciate the convenience of the service," says Mr. Heuer. "It assists architects to better understand particularly complicated or unusual problems." Legaline is designed to help AIA members negotiate and interpret contracts, manage risks and prevent lawsuits, improve communication with clients, determine whether a lawyer is required in a specific situation, and resolve or mitigate disputes. In addition, the service will assist with the more routine issues of day-to-day business such as ways to structure profitable joint ventures, the benefits of incorporating your practice, and options for collecting past-due or disputed fees.

For more information about the service, AIA members can write to AIA Trust Legaline, 2170 Lonicera Way, Charlottesville, VA 22901-9037; fax firm letterhead to 1-800-688-9780; or telephone, 1-800-688-9780. ☏

IN THIS ISSUE

Mapping the Future 4
A nearly completed reworking of the City's zoning code has Pittsburgh written all over it.

Zoning Zeitgeist 10
A multimedia prototype makes zoning user-friendly, even (gasp!) fun.

Zoning: It Don't Mean a Thing if it Ain't Got That Zing 12
Cheryl Towers explores the difference between growth and development.

News 3, 9, 17, 18
Breaking Ground 14
Bricks and Mortar 16
Calendar 17
Engineers' Directory 20
Contractors' Directory 22
Chapter meeting info 23



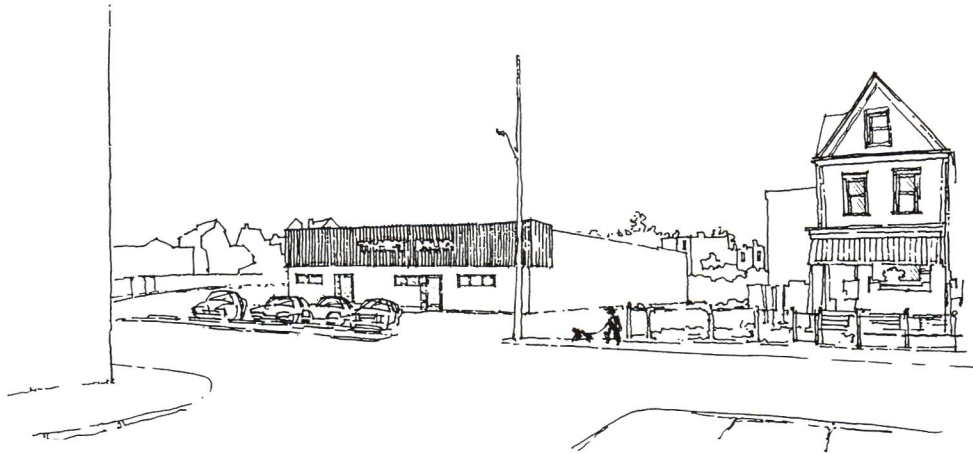
*A nearly completed reworking of the City's zoning code
has Pittsburgh written all over it*

People felt the stress of dealing with the zoning code on a *daily* basis. It was obvious something was wrong and it was also obvious that what we had to work with, at a basic level, was in conflict with the city it was supposed to help shape," says Karen Brean, project manager of the Pittsburgh Urban Zoning Code Project. This three year project, launched by the Department of City Planning, sprung from a need to address numerous out-of-date regulations adversely affecting growth and development in the city. Brean, a key player in the redrafting effort, says the process is now nearing completion.

The Zoning Advisory Group (ZAG), appointed in May 1994 by Mayor Tom Murphy, began meeting regularly 18 months ago to review and discuss code recommendations prepared by a national and local consulting team. The initial review process consisted of a section by section review of the proposed code. Currently, the group has just received the entire code as a single document and will examine the different cross currents and themes present in each component. During this winter and spring, the group will re-

view the entire code in anticipation of City Planning Commission and City Council review by the end of July 1996.

So what is so bad about the existing code? The current ordinance, adopted in 1958, was written to change density patterns in Pittsburgh, eliminating row houses in favor of either single family homes on single lots or multi-family dwellings and single-entry apartment buildings. This was a result of the (now disproved) assumption that there was a direct correlation between more space around buildings and human well being. Planners wanted a more suburban look for Pittsburgh, but realized some areas would have to maintain high-density housing, like the South Side and Lawrenceville, to accommodate the population. Hence, a sizable portion of Pittsburgh was designated for higher intensity residential, commercial and industrial use than was ultimately needed while other areas were zoned to look like an urban Ben Avon. To achieve this, the 1958 code advocated new building types which differed radically from the character of existing urban neighborhoods. Larger lots in residential communities were encouraged, along with a



The revised zoning code will encourage development in neighborhoods, like top illustration, to better fit a residential context, like bottom illustration.

homogeneity of residential development irrespective of historic development patterns and distinctive city geography. The code was shaping development in different directions, with those directions having little to do with the actual context to which they applied.

"Since 1958," says Brean, "we have learned that it is more desirable to continue established building patterns and development appropriate to the city's unique geography. Pittsburgh's traditional structural patterns, such as the compact row houses that are scattered across its hillsides, create the distinct character of the city."

So while you *may* be able to fight city hall, fighting Pittsburgh's mountain and valley laden geography is another story. And that, it has proven, is a good thing. "The '58 code deliberately attempted to reshape the city. Zoning was seen as a way to correct Pittsburgh's 'faults,'" explains Stefani Ledewitz, AIA, who, along with Steve Quick, AIA, was integral in preparing recommendations for ZAG. "At the time, the city was seen as badly flawed—it was too

dense, the streets were bad, mixed-used was considered to be very bad. Much of what made Pittsburgh Pittsburgh was seen as negative."

Topography—the mountains and valleys—and economic decline, says Quick, is what prevented wider application of the 1958 plan to change the face of Pittsburgh. A few major projects related to this view did go forward, such as the redevelopment of East Liberty and the North Side's Allegheny Center.

Among the changes that have emerged from the Urban Zoning Code Project is a broader view of building use. For example, "offices were equated with traffic, hence offices in residential areas were written into the code as bad," says Ledewitz. "Home offices are not necessarily bad. The new code would look more closely at the actual impact of an office in various residential areas." Take that idea further, and the economic and social benefits of neighborhood settlement patterns, such as local mom and pop stores, are also being reassessed as posi-

tive. The existing code advocated larger-scale suburban mall style retail, in designated commercial districts.

When the 1958 code was adopted and implemented, a zoning ordinance based on segregating dissimilar uses held much more logic than it does now. This idea was a reaction to a time when industry meant smokestacks and railroads, and housing meant single-family dwellings and tenements. As cities changed and industry and commerce became more complex, this type of zoning, referred to as conventional zoning, was too static and inflexible to accommodate changing development. A new approach, performance zoning, developed from the desire to solve land use problems with regulations to control impacts. In its textbook form, performance zoning would allow any use to go anywhere as long as its impacts were addressed. Though highly flexible, these regulations proved extremely time consuming, and have led to both arbitration and unpredictable decisions.

The Pittsburgh Zoning Code project is guided by four primary goals: to facilitate new development of good quality, to spur reinvestment in the existing building stock, to recognize and reinforce Pittsburgh's unique characteristics and qualities, to enhance the quality of life in the neighborhoods.

The Urban Zoning Code project team realized that a hybrid code, a middle ground between conventional and performance zoning, was needed for Pittsburgh. This code will contain permitted uses as well as design and performance standards to ensure high quality development. While districts will still be established in order to regulate suitable uses, compatibility standards will be implemented to prevent new development from infringing on the existing quality of its surroundings. Finally, by establishing groups of projects with comparable impacts by use and size, the extent of administrative overview will be reduced and property owners can better understand zoning regulations that affect their property.

While much of the code is being reviewed, Brean states that there have been a number of code amendments since 1958—such as special district, downtown and environmental ordinances—that will not change. Some of the most significant revisions to the code will be strong recognition of the fabric of the city, simplifying the planning and review processes, more opportunity for mixed-use, and a stronger notion of the public realm—with special attention paid to clarifying and reinforcing edge areas where neighborhoods and different uses meet. “In 30 years,” predicts Ledewitz, “Pittsburgh should be a far more livable city than today.”

Karen Brean assisted in the writing of this article.

Focus On: Residential Zoning

The need to rewrite existing residential zoning regulations has been a key force in the Urban Zoning Code Project. Current regulations are at odds with the City's historical development patterns, requiring lot sizes and front yard setbacks that are far greater than traditional settlement patterns. The local population is becoming increasingly older, and the average family size is becoming smaller, requiring more flexible housing stock. The existing code contains a large number of residential zoning districts, but the flexibility within each district is very limited.

Pittsburgh's overall character is defined to a great degree by its diverse and unique residential areas. In order to provide a fresh yet realistic approach to residential zoning, the proposed Residential Regulations have been drafted as a series of subdistricts that can be mapped in various combinations to form complete zoning districts. By providing a broader range of potential districts and separating use from physical characteristics, the hope is to give more flexibility and better “fit” than presently exists. —Karen Brean