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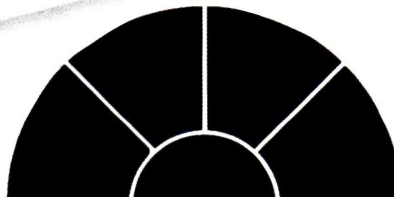
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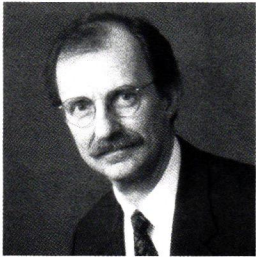
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Exploration, Discussion and Action

By Rich DeYoung, AIA



The board has identified a wide range of issues to reevaluate AIA Pittsburgh's role and effectiveness. We encourage your input, member and non-member alike.

On the first weekend in March,

your board of directors retreated to a stunning state park in Ohio to strategize and plan for this year and beyond for AIA Pittsburgh. Be assured that in opting for the out-of-town retreat to avoid everyday distractions, we also opted to pay for our travel and lodging. It was a worthwhile trip, and I'm happy to make the following report.

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. Based on this common understanding of our broader mission, we established several key themes for our planning process. Briefly, we determined that AIA Pittsburgh as an organization and through its professional members should:

- Be strong and inclusive at all levels
- Be leaders in influencing public design decisions
- Grow through expanded customer value and strategic alliances
- Further develop the AIA brand and enhance its value in the marketplace
- Grow the Foundation as the public outreach arm of the Chapter

To accomplish these ends, we identified several areas to be explored this year. To champion exploration, discussion, and action, each of these areas has been adopted by a board member.

The perceived, and perhaps actual, value of membership may vary depending on one's current situation in the profession. To create a compelling argument for membership, and attract a more diverse membership, we must understand and address these varied viewpoints. Three board members will study various perspectives: Rebecca Henn, AIA non-member registered architects; Art Sheffield, Assoc. AIA intern architects; and Jon Shimm, AIA senior members. Through a series of focus groups, surveys, and other techniques, these board members will be taking the pulse of our profession's view of AIA membership.

Architects have a rich tradition of advocating for the quality of the built environment. What should AIA Pittsburgh's advocacy role be while respecting diverse member perspectives? Do we become the convener of public dialogue on issues of public improvements facilitating the process

in which design implications are explored and discussed? How do we encourage our public officials to see the value of drawing upon the broad and diverse expertise of our profession? Tom Briney, AIA will be addressing this important and potentially controversial issue.

AIA members enjoy a valuable "brand" associated with the high ethical and professional standards of the organization. To have real value, the general public must share the perception of an AIA architect. How do we effectively build on AIA National's initiative to market what we do? How do we strengthen and enhance the value of the brand, perhaps as related to firms as well as individuals? Jim Radock, AIA will be looking at establishing the brand and Steve Quick, AIA will study the development of a marketing plan using positive public relations.

The financial aspects of AIA membership affect every one of us. What is a logical and effective dues structure that might encourage broader membership? Marty Powell will be studying the options and what other chapters and organizations are doing to create a structure that enhances membership.

Central to all of these issues will be how we communicate with both our members and non-members. The board has approved implementation of a discussion board to our Web site later this year as one means to encourage broader dialogue. What other tools would improve open discussion on issues affecting our profession? What opportunities are there to improve the consistency of the AIA Pittsburgh brand in communication tools we use? Dan Rothschild, AIA will be leading this effort.

Finally, Ed Shriver, AIA will be leading the efforts to consider how the Foundation can best serve the needs of the Chapter and the profession in its goal to further public outreach.

As you can see, the board has identified a wide range of issues to reevaluate AIA Pittsburgh's role and effectiveness. We encourage your input, member and non-member alike, to help the continual process of reshaping this organization that represents and serves architects. You may be called upon this year to contribute your thoughts, concerns, and ideas about how we can better serve you and the profession in general. Please be generous with your candor and creativeness.

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