

C O L U M N S



TAKING UP **RESIDENCE**

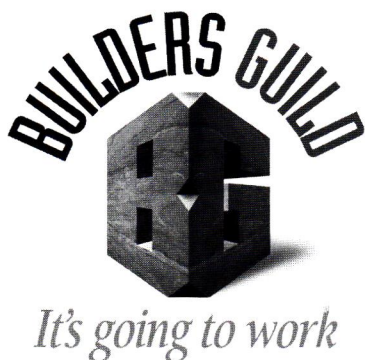
A RESIDENTIAL ARCHITECTURE PORTFOLIO
+
A PREVIEW OF BUILD PITTSBURGH

The Pride of Craftsmanship, the Power of Partnership.

The region's building trades unions and affiliated contractors have a new way of doing business. They have created **The Builders Guild**. This industry-wide initiative combines management and labor unions as partners with a single goal – to move every construction project smoothly from concept to completion, and that means working collaboratively as the premier value provider of construction services in the region.

The Builders Guild effort includes 33,000 southwestern Pennsylvania craftsmen, along with responsible union contractors, contractor associations and industry professionals who have put their good names on the line to provide true *VALUE* for every construction dollar spent.

It's a partnership. The region's trades unions and contractors work together to deliver top quality at every phase of a project. Highly skilled craftsmen will be on site when needed - a professional, committed work force of educated, responsible men and women who take pride in their craft and in the success of the region's construction projects. To that end the union building trades industry is dedicated to meeting project demands from design complexity, to effective team coordination, to expeditious problem resolution.



VALUE is more than an initial bid price. It reflects the highest professional and performance standards from the beginning of a project through its successful completion.

Excellence is our goal and we will work with you to answer questions, solve problems and provide bottom-line, dollar-for-dollar value.

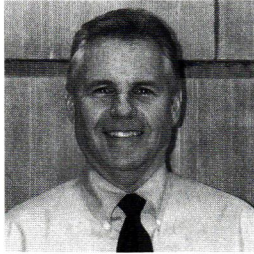
That's our promise -



SIGNED, SEALED AND DELIVERED.

For Information Visit: www.buildersguild.org

Toward Livable Communities By Stephen Quick, AIA



“We can be a strong voice and influence change. And, by speaking together, we can start to bring about change in our communities.”

In his first column as president of AIA Pittsburgh, Stephen Quick, AIA, makes a plea for architects uniting to help make livable communities a reality.

Recently I appeared on WQED's *On Q Magazine* to discuss health and the built environment. In a week devoted to health issues, the segment I was interviewed for was about creating healthy communities. As host Lynn Sawyer and I talked during the course of the filming, I was struck by how much she appreciated what we as architects do in visualizing and helping to create livable communities.

She agreed that livable and healthy communities are valued and should be in the public's consciousness and we both used the terms “livable” and “healthy” interchangeably when talking about good community design. Lynn bemoaned the time she spends sitting in traffic while commuting to work from her Bethel Park home, a short commute by anyone's standards. She also said it is hard to change to a healthier lifestyle. Like most of us, she is dependent on her car. And, with her already overloaded schedule, she doesn't have time for “health” activities.

In a related matter, one of our clients, a local CEO, is now looking for new administrative space to meet his organization's growth needs. Since he is a runner, finding an in-town location near one of Pittsburgh's trails ranks high on his priority list. Understanding the value of wellness and healthy employees, he is also interested in incorporating a small gym with showers. Yet, while creating a model office of the future is high on the agenda, it's also important to him and his top staff that the office location include lots of free parking so all their employees can drive to work.

We can all think of many examples of the contradictions we face trying to reconcile good community design with our daily lives. But we also realize that changes are needed if we hope to offset scary future scenarios such as increasing obesity and unhealthy lifestyles, an automobile population growing faster than we can handle, the increasing privatization of our families and society, etc.

So it's encouraging to see the Institute's work on the AIA Brand which demonstrates the fundamental changes un-

derway as we examine our lifestyles to determine how we can work toward livable communities. The underlying idea? “The AIA is a community of architects, coming together to accomplish things that no single architect can do alone.” That is quite a powerful statement and represents a significant change in the way the Institute relates to its membership and how members relate to one another. The Institute's aim is to “help each other put our talents to work to create better places for people.” The vehicles are Community, Knowledge, and Advocacy. The AIA Pittsburgh board, a strong supporter of this new direction, will focus on community outreach this year. We can be a strong voice and influence change. And, by speaking together, we can start to bring about change in our communities.

The AIA's Center for Communities by Design, the former Center for Livable Communities, has developed ten fundamental principles that define a livable community:

- Design on a Human Scale
- Provide Choices
- Encourage Mixed-Use Development
- Preserve Urban Centers
- Vary Transportation Options
- Build Vibrant Public Spaces
- Create Neighborhood Identity
- Protect Environmental Resources
- Conserve Landscapes
- Design Matters

These are good, simple and fundamental principles that we talk about daily in our practices and often with clients. Sometimes we even mention them in public forums. But do we practice these in our work? Do we actually apply them in our projects and, if so, how consistently?

What both Lynn Sawyer and the CEO are saying is that they, too, believe in these principles but don't know how to reconcile the contradictions. They are not, nor do they pretend to be, architects or designers. Yet they know they can affect change if they speak out about what they want. It's up to us to help them make it a reality. It's up to us to bring the design perspective and values to making our communities more livable. It's not going to happen overnight, nor is it going to be easy. But as a strong and consistent voice, it is going to make a difference.

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On the cover: House on a Pond in Maine by architects Alan Weiskopf, AIA and Kevin Wagstaff, AIA.

AIA Pittsburgh serves 12 Western Pennsylvania counties as the local component of the American Institute of Architects and AIA Pennsylvania. 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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The So-Not-So-Big-House

By Anne J. Swager, Hon. AIA

My house is too small.

Like every house I have ever been to, the guests always try to gather in the kitchen. Without displacing major appliances there is room for one guest and maybe their emaciated double. The dining room table serves many purposes all of which try to occur simultaneously. The half bath lives under the staircase. My 83-year-old babysitter claims she was once stuck in my too small bathroom. To date, I have been too polite to ask how she extricated herself. When it rains, which it does a lot, the backyard turns into a mini lake. My neighbor tells me that the only time the backyard was dry was when one of the previous owners planted a weeping willow tree. That's pretty telling when you consider that weeping willows grow best next to a body of water or in a swampy environment.



Never had I imagined what he proposed and it was perfect for the way my family lives.

You might ask why I ever bought the house. For one, it was close to where I lived at the time and it was in my price range. I liked the house because of the neighborhood, the neighborhood school, the light-filled first floor and the funky glass block that runs down the front of the house. When it isn't raining it has a generous backyard. True to form, I started drawing alternate floor plans the day I moved in. After all, I read trade publications until they are coming out my ears. I have read or at least seriously perused all of Sarah Susanka's books and I have a whole shelf of home improvement books. I thought I had envisioned every possible scenario but, just to check, I called an architect. I answered his questions about my family's lifestyle and my aspirations for my home. We agreed on a price for conceptual drawings and off he went. Several weeks later when we met again, I was astonished. Never had I imagined what he proposed and it was perfect for the way my family lives.

Fast forward to 5 years later. We still haven't built the addition. We got sidetracked, looked for other houses, questioned whether it was worth the money, etc. Frustrated with the muddy dog from the muddy backyard, I called a landscape architect. Out she came on a truly cold day with the backyard looking its worst. Once again we discussed how my family lived in the backyard. In a matter of weeks I had the plans for another truly remarkable solution but my house was still too small. So after much discussion we decided, finally, to take the plunge.

Our next step is getting it all priced and asking the landscape architect to redo the backyard plans to accommodate the addition. Then we will deal with the lake effect and then add on while redoing the heating and cooling systems. You can check my sanity in November!

Meanwhile, my next door neighbors, just starting in their careers and with two young children, are putting on an addition as well. Since they are both quite handy they decided they could save money by relying on their own common sense. The result, unfortunately, is an addition that looks like a lean-to patched on to their house. An architect would have made all the difference.

The houses featured in the pages of this month's *Columns*, all beautifully designed by architects of course, speak to the aspirations of their owners. Although the owners are from different income brackets, different types of families and different neighborhoods, they share one thing in common: the desire to have their living space reflect the way they want to live. Luckily for them they invested in an architect up front and early to help them make the best decisions on how to realize their aspirations. I am just starting the process but I am looking forward to it (except perhaps the part about living in a construction site). Stay tuned for future installments.

