

COLUMNS



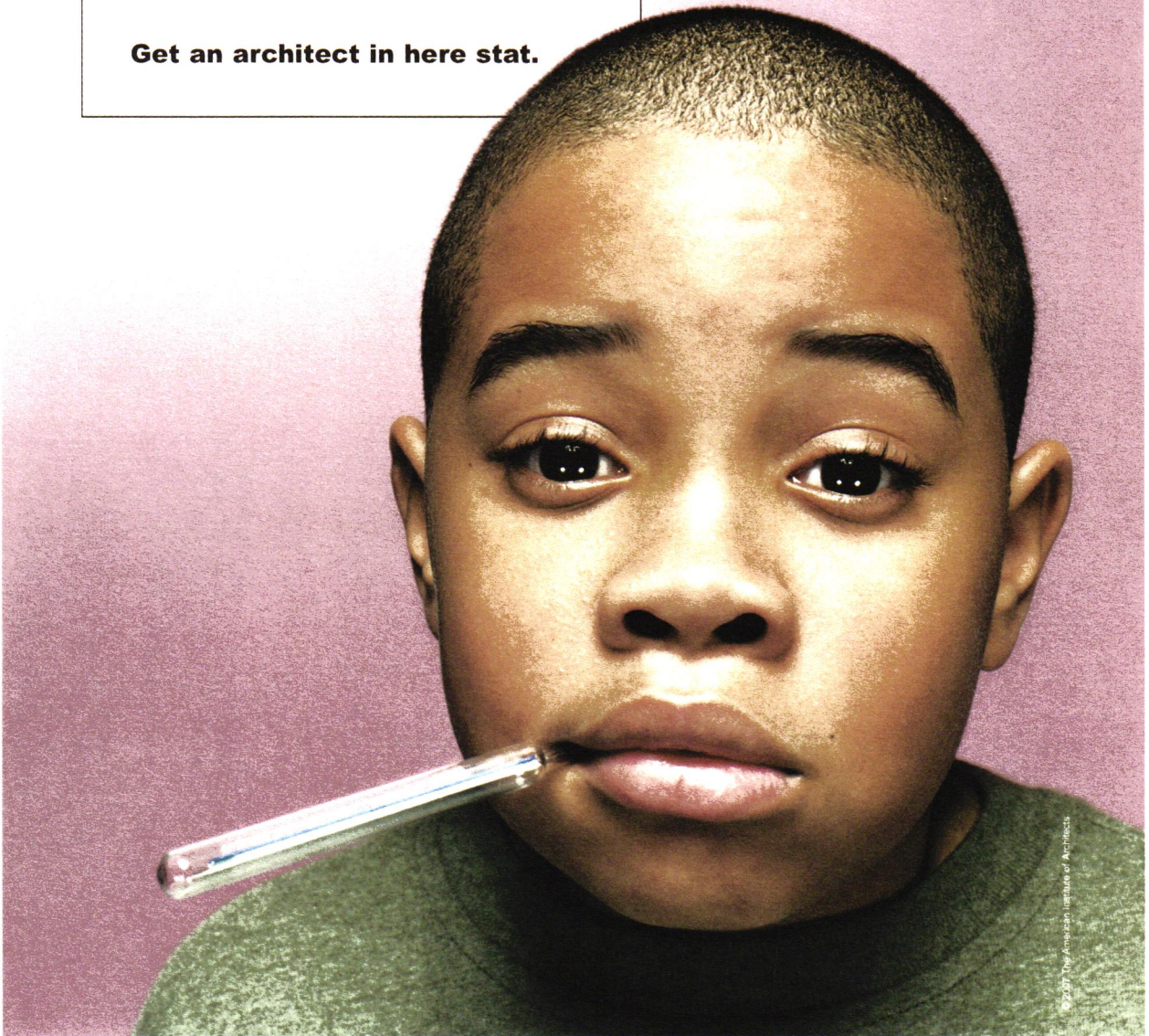
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Reflections on the most livable city: AIA's 10 principles of livable communities | Liability and BIM: Identifying the risks | Design Pittsburgh 2007: Meet this year's jurors | AIA Pittsburgh, a chapter of the American Institute of Architects

COLUMNS

**He feels yucky.
He's frightened.
He has butterflies in his stomach.

Get an architect in here stat.**



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A well-designed health care facility helps patients feel more comfortable. AIA architects use space planning, lighting, and color to design environments that can help ease patient anxiety, increase staff efficiency, and enhance healing. And the sooner you involve an architect, the sooner everyone will feel better. To find an AIA architect, visit www.aia.org. **Good design makes a difference.**



**THE AMERICAN
INSTITUTE
OF ARCHITECTS**

The AIA is celebrating our 150th year with the Blueprint for America initiative to help create more livable communities. Learn more at aia150.org.

HOMEFRONT

BY BECKY SPEVACK



I experienced a great moment recently. One that I am sure many, if not all, of you have had at some point in your lives. As you may recall from my column in our August issue, (or from just talking with me) I am fairly new to this city (two and a half years) and even newer to home ownership (13 months! – over a year already?!). As is the ever growing trend with my generation, there is a lot of moving during one’s twenties. Prior to my home purchase, I had lived in 5 different apartments in so many years. I think I would be referred to as a “serial mover”, at least according to a *New York Times* article covering this relatively recent phenomenon. But back to that experience I started out with.....

A few weeks ago my local coffee shop, The Vault in Brighton Heights, held an evening event. Actually, it was an all day affair – “Johnny Cash Day at The Vault” – remembering the Man in Black on the anniversary of his death. Friends gathered on my porch, we walked over to the shop, and upon entering I heard my name. Not only heard it, but knew who had shouted it. As we moved through the crowd, there were at least a few other shouts, some waves, and a hug. Now, this may not seem like a big deal. It’s not, really. (And if this were a sitcom, I believe the closest approximation would be a certain subterranean bar in Boston where everybody knows your...) But the fact that I have lived somewhere long enough to start to know my neighbors, my neighborhood, and my local coffee shop was a great feeling for me. One I’ve started noticing with some regularity. A sense of community – I like the way that sounds.

Another community I am becoming increasingly familiar with is the community of architects. As I’m sure you are aware, the AIA is a national organization, with hundreds of local components scattered throughout the country. Each chapter represents the interests of AIA National, but is also

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Cover photo by Rob Strovers



formed by its location. AIA Pittsburgh is its own entity, deeply impacted by the unique region that it exists in, and the people who live and work here. While keeping the bigger picture in mind, the office tries to focus on topics with strong local interest.

One example of this was a brainstorming happy hour held last month with our programming committee. There is little more encouraging than sitting with a group of young professionals (in this case architects, of course) and being part of a discussion in which passion and intellect both come into play concerning the health and future of the place you call home. The questions, ideas, and exclamations that resulted were like a breath of fresh air. I can't accurately describe how encouraging it is to be a part of this community – even if only on the perimeter – one that understands and celebrates the value of good design, walkable communities, and a thriving urban center.

Another example is this issue of *Columns*. Our main feature is one that was a lot of fun to work on, from inception to final proofreading. Taking something like the AIA's 10 Principles of Livable Communities and applying them to a specific case (our fair city) is always an interesting exercise, but asking some of the main players in the design community to draw the comparisons proved to be a great opportunity to broaden the voice of the architect and the magazine.

As time goes by, I can only imagine becoming more familiar with the various communities I am a part of. Getting to know more of my neighbors and more of our readers, and gaining a larger understanding of the ambitions of this organization. I've started to set down roots and I plan to enjoy the process as they spread and grow stronger, as I become a more active player. Hey, I like the way that sounds. 

The Vault in
Brighton Heights



A VISION FOR (AIA) PITTSBURGH

BY JIM RADOCK, AIA

Earlier this year, I wrote about two major aspects of the AIA's mission: the Community of Architects and the importance of communication between the Institute and its membership. AIA Pittsburgh is currently at work on strategic initiatives that directly address both.

The AIA's mission is tied to relationships with two communities: the community at large and the community of architects. All of AIA Pittsburgh's programs and projects are intended to benefit one (and often both) of these groups. Our major new initiative this year is specifically targeted to provide long-term benefits to both.

As our local project for **AIA150's Blueprint for America**, AIA Pittsburgh has embarked on a cooperative effort with the Pittsburgh Civic Design Coalition to establish a Pittsburgh design center. We envision creating a new home for the chapter offices (as well as other like-minded community design organizations) through the renovation of a building within the Golden Triangle. Our vision is to provide the community with an amenity that increases the visibility and accessibility of design by establishing a tangible, physical presence in the heart of the city that includes a strong educational component on design.

Patterned on the success of similar projects in cities like New York, Portland, and Chattanooga, the establishment of a downtown design center is an opportunity for AIA Pittsburgh to show how good design can make a community more livable.

We are proceeding with our exploration of alternatives for this project with the best interests of the city, AIA Pittsburgh, and our

affiliate partners in mind. We are still in the preliminary stages of investigation, including property and financial considerations, but we are making progress. Expect to hear more in the near future.

AIA Pittsburgh's continued dedication to its ongoing dialogue with its membership is also ready to move into its next phase. In the past

few years, you've seen changes and improvements in the way we get the word out, from the introduction of our e-mail newsletter, *eColumns*, to the most recent (and dramatic) improvement – the new format of *Columns* (which is also now available online at our website, aiapgh.org). *eColumns* gives the chapter the ability to communicate our schedule of upcoming events and, importantly,

breaking developments and updates in an efficient and timely fashion that was next to impossible a few years ago.

With the launch of the redesigned *Columns*, we are ready to address the next two components of our long-range communications plan: the revamp of our website (both technically and graphically) and, along with it, the opportunity to implement a web-based dialogue – a blog for the Pittsburgh architectural community. This development has been on our radar screen for a while now, and the board of directors sees it as the next logical step in the process. We think its time has come.

In the meantime, until you can post a blog online or post a comment in our storefront bulletin board, we continue to value your feedback through the usual channels. 