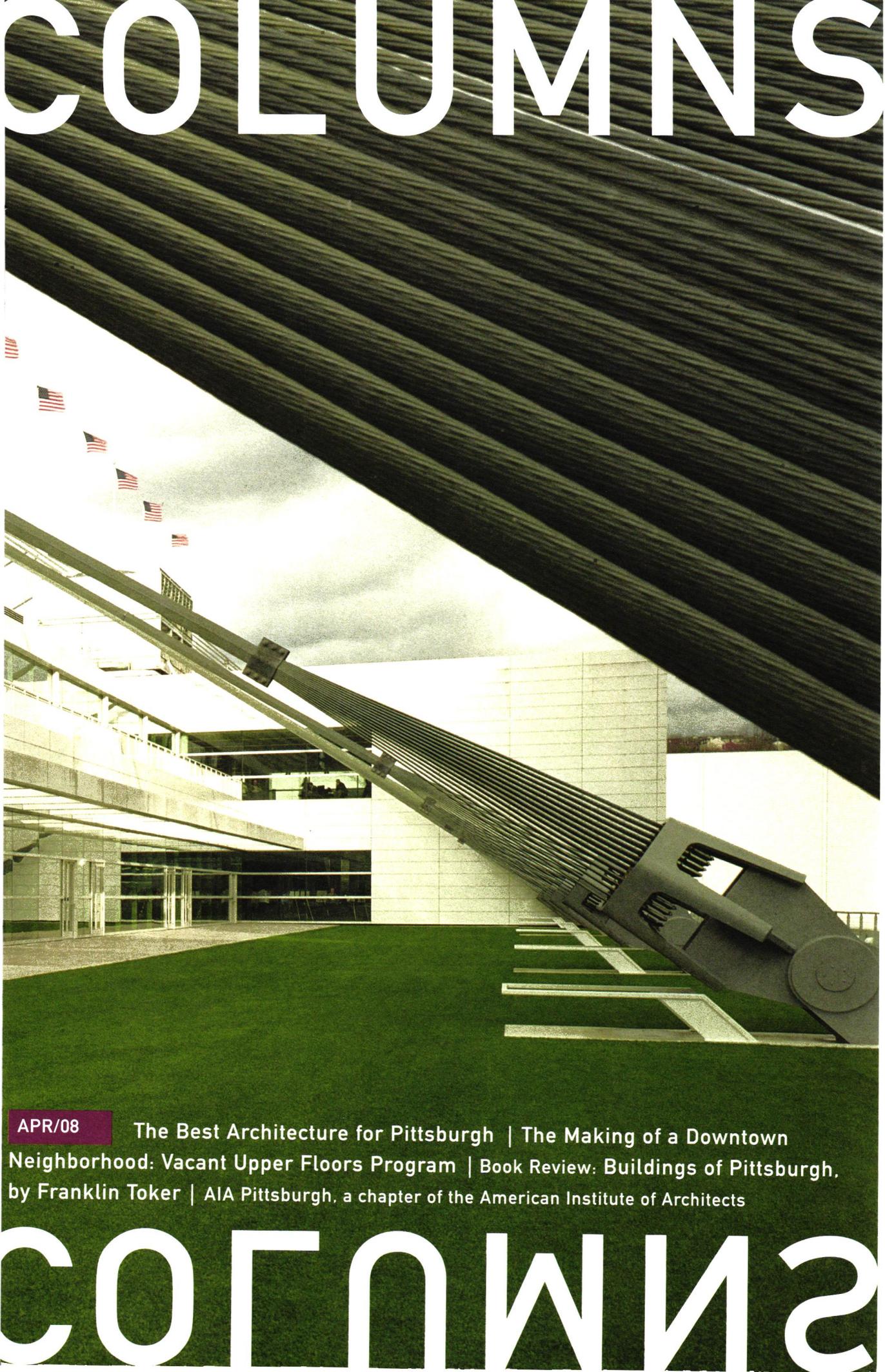


# COLUMNS



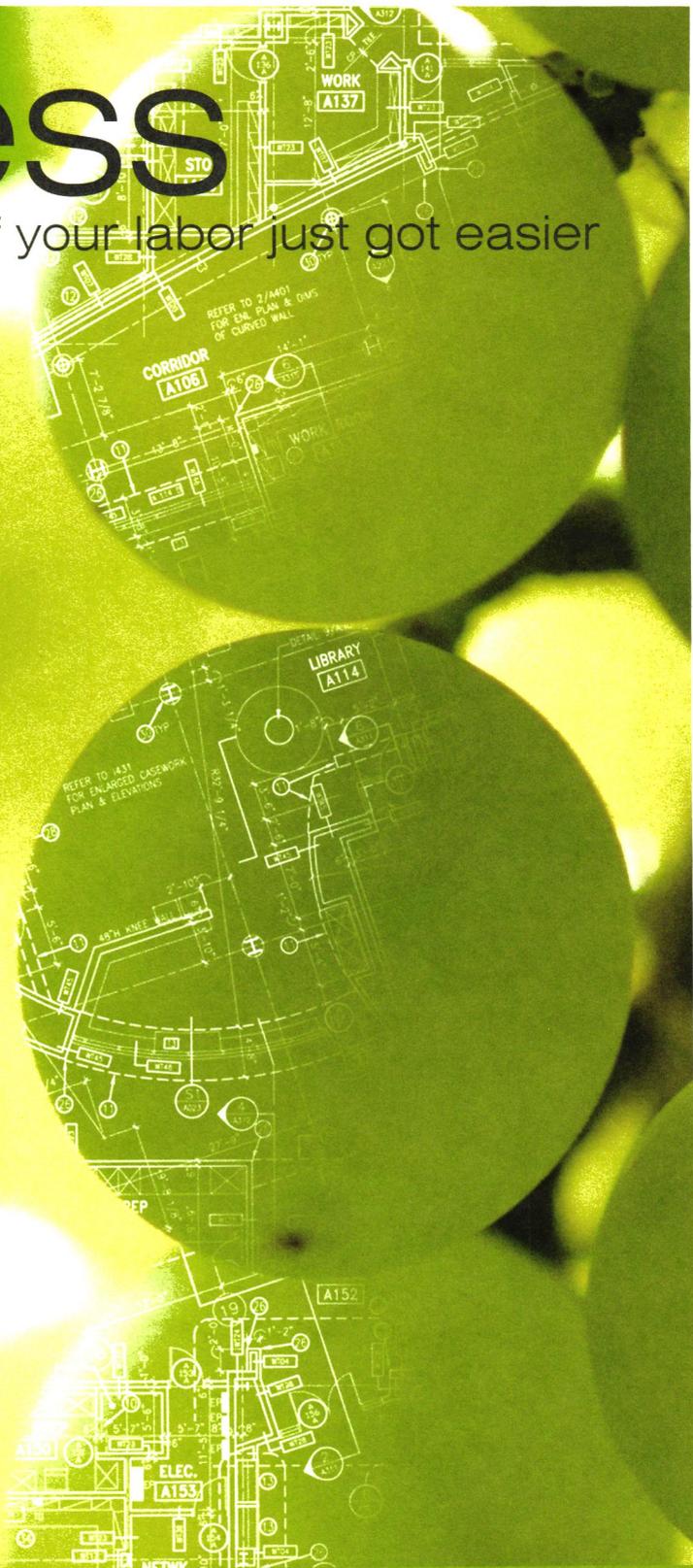
APR/08

The Best Architecture for Pittsburgh | The Making of a Downtown  
Neighborhood: Vacant Upper Floors Program | Book Review: Buildings of Pittsburgh,  
by Franklin Toker | AIA Pittsburgh, a chapter of the American Institute of Architects

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# HOMEFRONT

BY BECKY SPEVACK



**On the road of life**, I am more of a passenger than a driver. Not that I don't care about the journey or where I am going, but I would rather be able to sit back, relax, and take in my surroundings on the way than focus on the road.

Looking back, there is a long history of being a passenger in my life, starting with some of my early childhood memories, one of which is that of the well-known "Sunday drive". As a kid (before gas prices soared through the roof and there was as much knowledge about emissions/pollution) my family would take long Sunday drives. From a starting point in the suburbs of Harrisburg, we would venture south in springtime and summer, heading into Lancaster County, driving the straight, long back roads through fields of grains and corn, a mere speck among the vast growth, stopping at roadside stands to buy a bag of snap peas or strawberries to hold us over on our journey, windows down. In the winter, we would go north, driving through the now-desolate coal towns, learning about and seeing firsthand the area where my grandmother had been born and raised, before moving to New York City to start life down a different path.

As I got older, the realization that I would have to someday learn to drive approached. It was not something I really had any desire for. Many teenagers cannot wait for their sixteenth birthday, when the process towards "freedom" begins. But sixteen came and went for me, with no real mention of a driver's license. I put it off as long as possible, and when I finally went down to the D.M.V. to test for my permit, I failed. My mum thought I was sabotaging this process on purpose. While she had no interest in teaching me how to drive, she also didn't like the idea of having to chauffeur me to soccer, ballet, band, etc., for the next three years. Finally the threat of having to get another doctor's examination to be eligible forced me to retake the test and pass.

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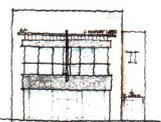
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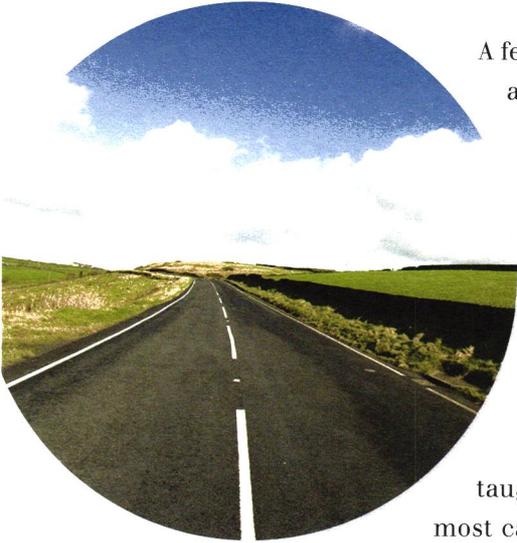


Buildings of Pittsburgh, by Franklin Toker



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A few years passed in which I drove my mum’s car, a small automatic, as need be, without incident. But a planned road trip to Boston eventually created the need for me to learn to drive stick shift, and my future father-in-law took charge. For perhaps three months he took me round and round in circles, repeating: “slowly release the clutch, ok, give it a little gas, ok, steady” and then... *clunk* - stalling out, over and over, in an elementary school parking lot. I passed this road block, was successfully taught how to drive a manual by a very patient man, but still called “shotgun” whenever possible.

College taught me another joy in passenger-hood. College taught me about Amtrak. Now, many people bemoan Amtrak, and in most cases, rightfully so; I understand the complaints, can even agree with them, but I still love traveling by train. Being a passenger on a train is a feeling of calm akin to riding in a car, only better. I spent this time productively – reading, studying, catching up on much needed sleep – but I also spent a good deal of time just watching. Watching as we went along the coast of the eastern seaboard, traveling through small port towns, and then into large industrial cities, through forests and into Manhattan. I loved it!

How does this tie into architecture, you may ask. The following pages focus on how to get the best architecture for this city. Is there one definition of “best”? No, absolutely not. But, as with anything in life – as I’ve learned through my experiences with driving – there are ways that work for you, or, in this case, for our city. Each person, each place, each situation needs to be considered individually, for what it is, and “best” can only be defined after those considerations are outlined. In this issue we’ve looked at Pittsburgh and thought about what defines it, what characteristics create the feeling of being here, and nowhere else. Going about things the same way they are dealt with in New York or Los Angeles, in Philly or New Orleans would all be wrong, would not address the things that make this city unique.

There are also many things Pittsburgh still has to discover and define for itself as a place, as a destination. Continually searching for what is best is a standard to which I feel comfortable holding this community of architects. **C**



# POWERFUL VOICES

BY ANNE J. SWAGER, HON. AIA

**Before I came to** the AIA I worked for a small nonprofit community revitalization group. When I told my Board Chair that I had accepted the job at the AIA, he went on and on about how I was going to hate it. His contention was that architects have huge egos and because of that I would last less than a year. Of course, here I sit many years later, which refutes at least part of his assertion.

The reasons people stay in one job for a long time are easily as varied as the people who do it. For me, it is a combination of the job itself, the architects I represent, and the aspirations and art of architecture. Sure, there are egos and in some cases too much ego, but overly large egos seem to be the exception and not the rule. I wanted to use this column to recognize the efforts of some of your colleagues. The danger of doing this is that invariably I will leave out individuals who are very worthy of your attention. However, I have many more columns to write. So here is a snapshot of what some of the architects from Pittsburgh are accomplishing.

Maura Guttman, AIA has thrown her hat in the ring for Vice President of the Institution. You can see the speeches that each candidate delivered at the recent Grassroots Convention by going to [www.aia.org](http://www.aia.org). When you do, I am sure you will be as impressed with Maura's words as I was.

Maura was President of AIA Pittsburgh in 1996 and went on from there to serve in many roles at AIA PA. Currently, she is our representative on the Board of AIA National. Passionate about the environment and the architect's role in sustainable design, Maura is a citizen architect. She is impatient. She expects architects to participate and to be an effective voice in every level of government. If she is elected to the role of Vice President at convention, we are assured of an effective voice and a positive change agent at AIA National.



Another powerful voice we heard at Grassroots belonged to Andrew Caruso, Assoc. AIA, the current national president of AIAS. Andrew served on the AIA Pittsburgh board last year as the representative from Carnegie Mellon's AIAS chapter. Listening to him explain the passion the students bring to the Freedom by Design program was awesome. He reaffirmed for me a shared vision of architects making a difference.

This year at the AIA convention, we will celebrate the installation of the two architects from Pittsburgh who have been elevated to Fellowship. Jon Jackson, FAIA leads the local office of Bohlin Cywinski Jackson. BCJ is recognized nationally for their many award winning buildings and projects in no small part due to Jon's efforts. Steve Quick, FAIA has been active in a number of local planning efforts, most notably the Riverlife Task Force. I have sat in any number of meetings with Steve completely baffled by his approach to a problem only to be enticed into a whole new way of thinking when I consider what he has said. His gift of creative thinking leads us to creative problem solving.

Finally, I want to mention the latest efforts of Rob Pfaffmann, AIA. Rob is the great great grandson of Daniel Burnham and known locally as a strong voice for historic preservation and adaptive reuse. Rob has organized a screening of Judith McBrien's documentary "Make No Little Plans: Daniel Burnham and the American City". The screening at the Heinz History Center is at 7:00 p.m. on April 9. A reception and panel discussion will follow. You are all invited!

These individuals are only a small sampling of the thriving and successful community of architects in Pittsburgh. Is it any wonder that I stay on the job? 

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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Volume 22, No. 2



## AIA PITTSBURGH MEMBERS RECEIVE TOP HONOR

AIA Pittsburgh wants to extend our congratulations to **JON JACKSON** of Bohlin Cywinski Jackson and **STEPHEN QUICK** of Perkins Eastman, who have recently been selected as Fellows of the Institute in recognition of their longstanding efforts to promote the aesthetic, scientific, and practical efficiency of the profession. 

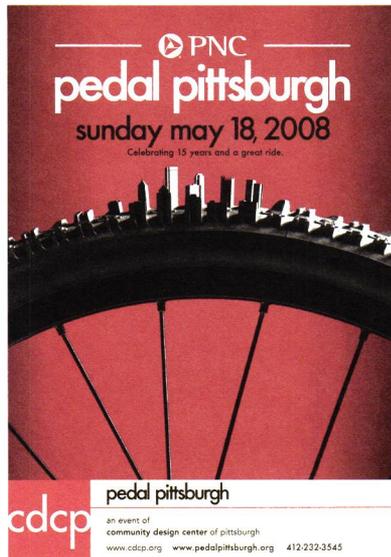


Jon Jackson, FAIA



Stephen Quick, FAIA

## CDCP CELEBRATES 15<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF PEDAL PITTSBURGH



On Sunday, May 18<sup>th</sup>, join the 15th anniversary ride of PNC Pedal Pittsburgh 2008, the region's premier cycling event celebrating design, health and fitness, and urban lifestyles. Cyclists of all riding abilities can participate with routes ranging from 6-60 miles. A fundraiser benefiting the Community Design Center of Pittsburgh, major sponsors include Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield, PNC, Point Park University, WholeFoods and WYEP. Cost is \$25/individual; \$55/family by May 1<sup>st</sup>. To ride or volunteer, visit [www.pedalpittsburgh.org](http://www.pedalpittsburgh.org). 

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## BUILD PITTSBURGH 2008

AIA Pittsburgh's 7<sup>th</sup> annual continuing education conference takes place on **THURSDAY, APRIL 24<sup>TH</sup>** at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center. This all-day event includes a variety of subjects offered within the tracks of **Practice, Technology, and Regional Issues**, a chance to earn up to 7 AIA/CES learning units, a keynote address on diversity in the field, a variety of great exhibitors, and a cocktail reception to wrap it all up.

Build  
Pittsburgh

08 AIA

### SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

Registration and Continental Breakfast 7:30-8:30 AM

#### SESSION 1 8:30-10:00 AM

- Transitioning Into BIM: One Firm's Story
- Simplified Design Production Using BIM – Part 1
- Urbanism of the Twentieth Century: Theory, Market, and Practice

**BREAK** 10:00-10:15 AM

#### SESSION 2 10:15-11:45 AM

- Basic Writing and Management of Specifications
- Intro to the Informational Model - Part 2: Material Take-offs and Budgeting
- Is Anyone Listening? Giving Voice to Design Advocacy

**LUNCH** 12:00-1:00 PM

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS** 1:00-2:00 PM

#### SESSION 3 2:00-3:30 PM

- Changes In AIA Contract Documents
- Intro to the Informational Model – Part 3: Energy Analysis and Daylight Simulation
- Landscape Management in the Vision for Three Rivers Park: How to Create Biodiversity on the Urban Waterfront and in the Creek Behind Your House

**BREAK** 3:30-3:45 PM

#### SESSION 4 3:45-5:15 PM

- BIM: Regional Overview & Associated Production Issues
- Masonry: Beyond the Details
- Award Winning Architecture: A Juror's Perspective

**COCKTAIL RECEPTION** 5:30-7:30 PM 

### ABOUT THE KEYNOTE:

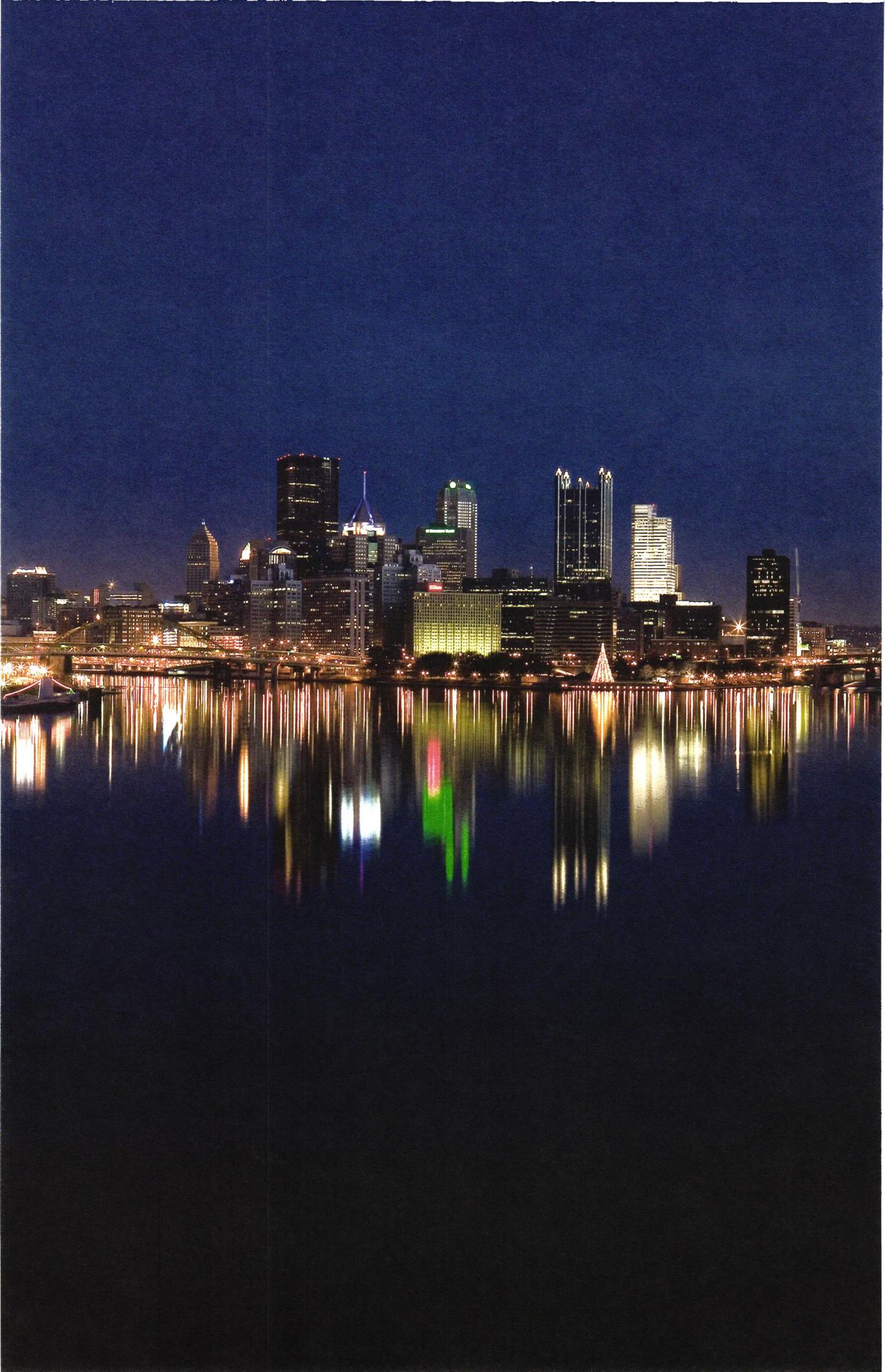


**STEVEN LEWIS, AIA, NOMA**, Build Pittsburgh's 2008 keynote speaker, will address issues of diversity in the profession of architecture with his presentation, *Diversity Now: Architecture's Quest for a Fair, Just, and Equitable Profession*.

Mr. Lewis, the incoming president of the National Organization of Minority Architects (NOMA) and a former Loeb Fellow, recently completed four years as an architect and program manager for the U.S. General Services Administration in the Office of the Chief Architect. Prior to joining GSA, he celebrated his 20th anniversary with the Los Angeles-based design firm RAW International where he began as a partner shortly after the firm's inception in 1984.

Most recently, Mr. Lewis returned to Southern California having joined Parsons, one of the world's largest consulting organizations.

Mr. Lewis is well known within the profession as a leader with strong people-skills, who brings individuals and groups with competing agendas together around shared interests.



# best for the 'burgh

Getting the best architecture for Pittsburgh

BY JOHN ALTDORFER

**When it comes to** finding the best place to satisfy a late-night appetite, Pittsburghers know Primanti's in the Strip District wins hands down. For a view that tops all the rest, Mt. Washington offers an unbeatable panorama. And the number-one spot to rendezvous with an acquaintance Downtown is under the old Kaufmann's clock at the corner of Fifth Avenue and Smithfield Street. Yet determining what's best for Pittsburgh as far as architecture isn't always so easy.



In a city that's celebrating its 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the range of outstanding local architecture spans that same length of time – and then some.

From Point State Park's Blockhouse, constructed by the British in 1764, to the recent renovation of the entrance to Oakland's Phipps Conservatory, Pittsburgh definitely has plenty of reasons to be proud of its architectural heritage.

Still, the question of how to get the “best” architecture raises a host of issues from whether competitions yield the “best” results to how to “best” integrate new structures in the rich landscape of buildings that makes Pittsburgh a real-life textbook of American design history over the past two and a half centuries.

Opposite: Photo by Rob Strovers  
Inset: Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens entrance  
by IKM Incorporated

## THE BEST DEFINITIONS

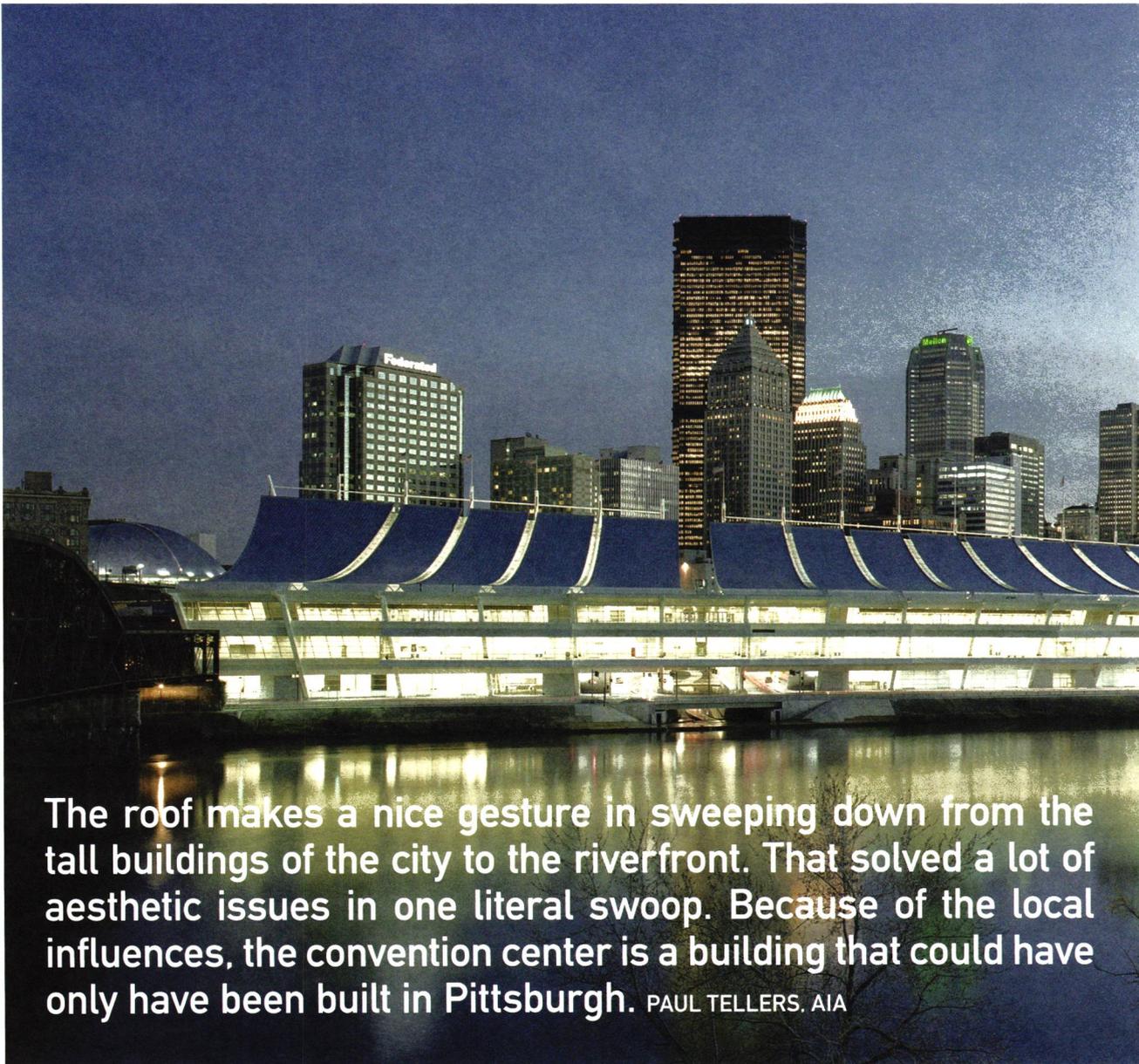
For a word that simply means better than all the rest, “best” takes on more than a few definitions when it comes to describing architecture. Some will tell you that the best architecture fits in the context of a structure’s manmade and natural surroundings. Others will say that the best far surpasses the practical aspects and functions of a project. Truth is, you’ll probably find as many descriptions of best as the number of people with opinions on the subject.

“Answering that question is the most fascinating thing about initiating a new project,” says Paul Tellers, AIA, director of planning for WTW Architects. “Every architect would say

that ‘best’ should be in the context of this great city of ours. But every architect defines context in a different way. For some, context would be a matter of relating to details of surrounding buildings. Others might be inspired in a more visionary way by the environment in which the project is situated.”

From his North Shore office, Tellers can look across the Allegheny River for an example of a project influenced by its setting – the new D.L. Lawrence Convention Center designed by Manhattan-based architect Rafael Viñoly.

“Viñoly picked up on the environment of the city in ways that no one else did,” say Tellers, who also spent nearly two decades at Carnegie



The roof makes a nice gesture in sweeping down from the tall buildings of the city to the riverfront. That solved a lot of aesthetic issues in one literal swoop. Because of the local influences, the convention center is a building that could have only have been built in Pittsburgh. PAUL TELLERS, AIA

Mellon University as an architect. “The sweeping catenary curve of the roof was inspired by the three ‘Sister Bridges’ [the Sixth, Seventh, and Ninth Street spans] that cross the Allegheny. The roof also makes a nice gesture in sweeping down from the tall buildings of the city to the riverfront. That solved a lot of aesthetic issues in one literal swoop. Because of the local influences, the convention center is a building that could have only have been built in Pittsburgh.”

While fitting in contextually is one way to define best, others provide different points of view, including how people interact with buildings.



## A LITTLE OF THAT HUMAN TOUCH... AND THEN SOME

No matter what the structure’s purpose, just about any new building will play host to people, whether it’s a convention center, baseball park, or bus station. In the eyes of Mary Navarro, senior program officer at the Heinz Endowments, the best architecture responds to the human beings who use it.

“There’s not really a one-word answer to what’s ‘best,’” she says. “For some people it’s a matter of taste. Others would say it’s a matter of quality that goes beyond taste. To me, however, the best architecture responds to people in a positive way. That includes the way a building meets the street and whether people feel comfortable in it. Some buildings have a presence when you walk in them. You know that you’re in someplace special, someplace wonderful, someplace different. And sometimes people will cross the street to avoid walking alongside a building that doesn’t have a positive effect on them.”

Making a connection with people is a plus. Yet Chris Seifert, deputy director of the Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh (CMP), feels that the best architecture is an expression of the client’s program, which includes the activities that will take place in the structure and how it fits in with its neighbors. Seifert doesn’t have to search far for a project that fits his description.



Left: David L. Lawrence Convention Center by Rafael Viñoly  
Above: Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh by Koning Eizenberg and Perkins Eastman

As project manager, Seifert supervised the construction of the CMP's recent addition, which employed design architect Koning Eizenberg Architecture of Santa Monica, CA, and executive architect Perkins Eastman of Pittsburgh, PA. Completed in 2004, the expansion earned the AIA's 2006 Honor Award for Architecture for the innovative way the new structure linked two historic buildings to form one cohesive facility that spans two centuries of design. Flanked by the U.S. Historic Landmark Beaux Art Old Allegheny Post Office on one side and the Art Deco former Buhl Science Center on the other, the new contemporary building stands as an equal beside its older neighbors.

"We had different levels of goals we wanted to reach," says Seifert. "We needed to be responsive to the needs of the children who visit the museum. We wanted a sustainable green building that integrated new technology with an innovative, cost-effective design. And we had to preserve the historic nature of the other buildings while we improved the neighborhood."

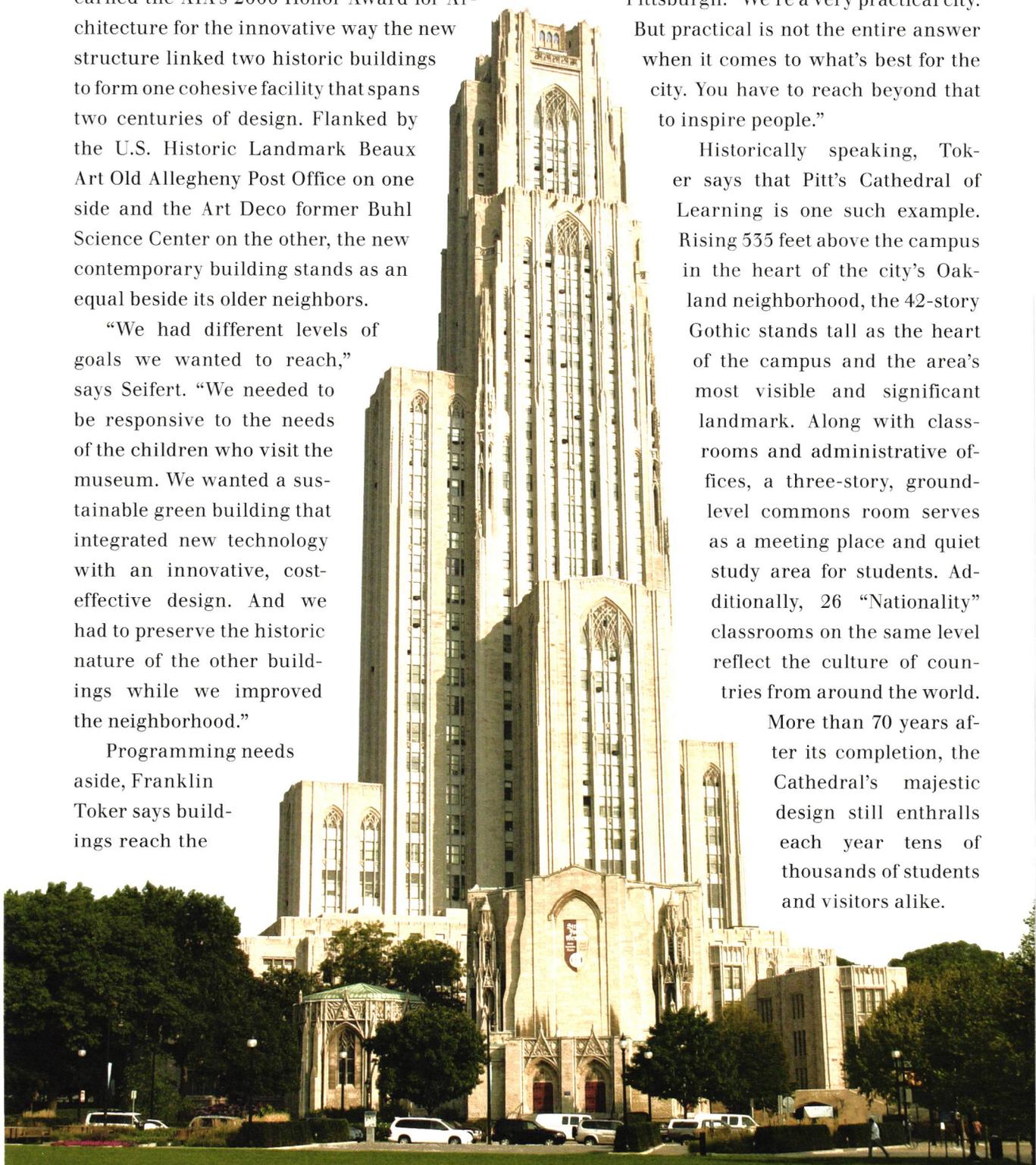
Programming needs aside, Franklin Toker says buildings reach the

"best" stage when they go far beyond their functional purposes.

"Great architecture goes beyond the practical," says Toker, who has written extensively about Pittsburgh's architecture and is a professor of art and architecture at the University of Pittsburgh. "We're a very practical city. But practical is not the entire answer when it comes to what's best for the city. You have to reach beyond that to inspire people."

Historically speaking, Toker says that Pitt's Cathedral of Learning is one such example. Rising 535 feet above the campus in the heart of the city's Oakland neighborhood, the 42-story Gothic stands tall as the heart of the campus and the area's most visible and significant landmark. Along with classrooms and administrative offices, a three-story, ground-level commons room serves as a meeting place and quiet study area for students. Additionally, 26 "Nationality" classrooms on the same level reflect the culture of countries from around the world.

More than 70 years after its completion, the Cathedral's majestic design still entralls each year tens of thousands of students and visitors alike.



University of Pittsburgh's Cathedral of Learning



Above and next page: West End Bridge competition images by EndresWare, courtesy of Riverlife Task Force

## BE A GOOD NEIGHBOR

In many cases, a new building often becomes an instant landmark. On Grant Street, the U.S. Steel Tower dominated the Downtown skyline in ways that the Gulf and Koppers buildings never could. A few blocks away, near Market Square, the PPG complex completely changed the complexion of the landscape in a part of the city where skyscrapers never stood before. Yet both of these iconic neighbors pay homage to nearby structures without dominating them.

“Building in Downtown is liberating,” says Tellers. “Unlike a project in a neighborhood, where a new structure may need to be more like the buildings around it, architects are freed from that more literal sense of context. One building Downtown doesn’t need to look like the buildings around it.”

Tellers points to the former One Mellon Bank Center on Grant Avenue as an example of how a newer building can stand out on its own and still be respectful of its surroundings. Designed by Welton Becket Associates, the 54-story tower mimics the mansard roof of the former Union Trust Building across the street. The steel clad-

ding is a nod to the color of the stone used in H.H. Richardson’s historic Allegheny Courthouse. Moreover, Tellers stresses that because the newer building doesn’t “fill” the block, pedestrians and motorists now can enjoy better street-level views of Richardson’s gem.

Back on the North Side at the Children’s Museum, Seifert was charged with finding a design solution that would, according to guidelines for historic structures set by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior, “touch lightly” on the Old Post Office building even as it stood as a building “of its time.” Though the addition bears little resemblance to either of its neighbors, it nicely complements each in terms of bulk, height, and style. In the same vein, the new building partly inspired a plan to revitalize the entire neighborhood in a way that would link the many cultural institutions in the area.

## A COMPETITIVE APPROACH

Since the Renaissance in 15<sup>th</sup>-century Italy, clients have turned to architectural competitions to find the most creative solutions to their design needs. Here in Pittsburgh, the legacy of

competitions is as rich as the city's itself. Of course, the granddaddy of all local competitions was the process that led to the selection of Richardson to tackle the Courthouse Downtown, which initiated a Golden Age of sorts locally. From the 1880s through the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, design con-



tests produced memorable results for the main branch of the Carnegie Library in Oakland; the campuses of the University of Pittsburgh and Carnegie Technical Schools, now CMU; and the Beaux Arts masterpiece that houses Soldiers & Sailors Military Museum and Memorial. More recent notable competitions include the Convention Center, Children's Museum addition, Carnegie Science Center expansion, and West End Bridge pedestrian walkway.

Winning a design competition is a considerable accomplishment, but it doesn't guarantee a project's completion. While the Convention Center and Children Museum are now welcome additions to the city, the Science Center's update never even broke ground because of cost overruns. And securing funds for the West End Bridge walkway is ongoing – two years after the selection of the winning design and firm.

Turning a dream into reality can be one drawback of a competition. Toker says that the process doesn't allow for sufficient interaction between client and architect during the design stage. The expense involved can be another disadvantage, says Navarro, who managed the Heinz Endowment's funding of the convention center competition. Generally, the participating firm receives a stipend. Though that fee usually falls far short of covering each participant's expenses, the money does come from the competition's budget.

Yet, most people involved with competitions readily admit they pay real dividends more often

than not – and it doesn't take a marquee name to make a difference.

"I don't put a lot of stock in the star architects," says Tellers. "A lot of organizations get caught up in attracting big names. I think that quality work that picks up on regional clues can be done by someone other than the stars."

Echoing that sentiment in a practical way, Seifert says that the Children's Museum actually sought what he calls "mid-career" architects and firms that would be "hungry" to prove themselves. Another consideration is whether the inclusion of local firms should be legislatively mandated. Toker and Seifert agree that might be good idea. However, others vehemently disagree.

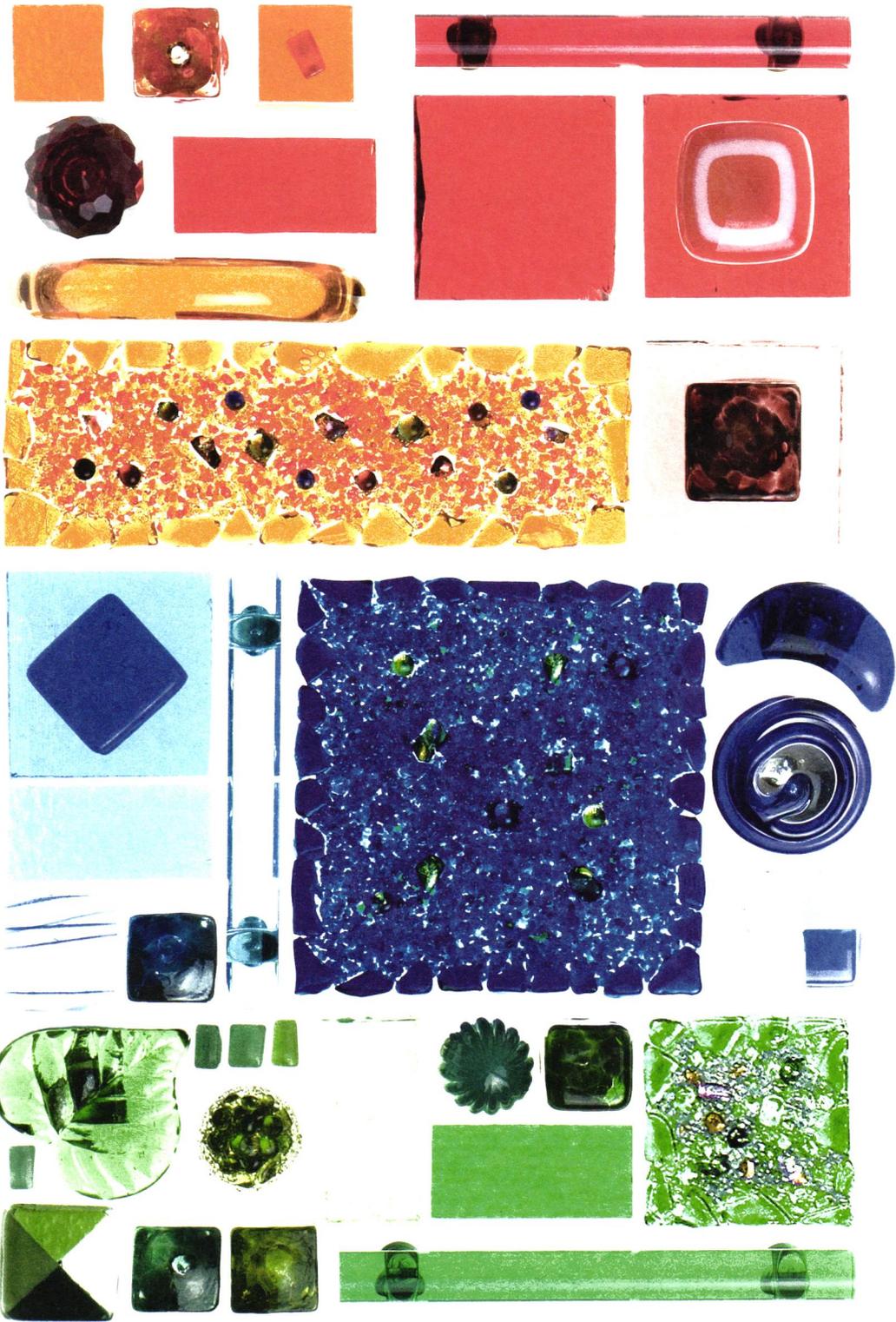
"I don't think that architects in Pittsburgh need protection to get jobs in the city," says Reed Kroloff, director of Cranbrook Academy of Art in Bloomfield, Michigan.

"Pittsburgh is deep and rich with architectural history and talent," says Kroloff, a principal in Jones | Kroloff Design. "My firm managed the competition for the West End Bridge project. What I saw was a city with a mature architectural community that can compete at a nation level for projects of every type."

Pros and cons aside, there's nearly unanimous agreement about the type of projects that warrant a competition. "Not every building deserves a competition," says Navarro, expressing a belief shared by others interviewed for this article. "But when you have a large civic building, such as the convention center, that will occupy a prominent location and involve a lot of public money, then a competition is necessary to get the very best architecture for Pittsburgh." **C**

*John Altdorfer is a writer/photographer who lives in Pittsburgh.*

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# BUILDINGS OF PITTSBURGH BY FRANKLIN TOKER

REVIEW BY ROBERT J. BAILEY, AIA

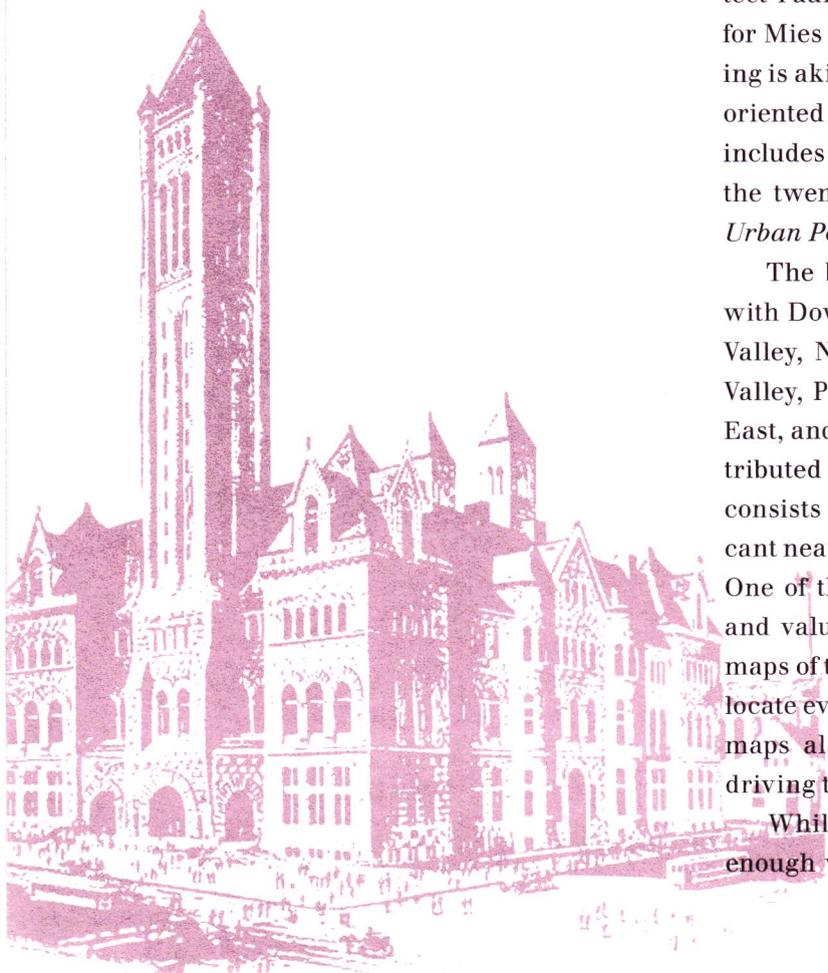
*Buildings of Pittsburgh* is the first city guide in the Buildings of the United States (BUS) series published by the Society of Architectural Historians and the Center for American Places. An eminent architectural historian, Franklin Toker was invited to participate; this volume is one of (at least) two on which Professor Toker has been assigned out of the BUS series of more than sixty. Ten volumes published to date have been state building guides.

Those familiar with local architectural history books are likely to know Franklin Toker's 1986 book, *Pittsburgh: An Urban Portrait*. Do not mistake *Buildings of Pittsburgh* as merely a reworking of that book. The books were written with different intents. *Buildings* is not an exhaustive survey on every notable structure around, but rather serves to present the most influential and characteristic structures that best define the city and its environs. Its organization is designed to encourage the reader to actually tour areas and view the buildings described.

Although Professor Toker certainly has the knowledge to write impromptu about virtually any building in the book, I have to believe he went back and re-researched many of the subjects. The treatment of the subjects gives testimony to the difference between *Buildings* and the earlier *Urban Portrait*. In *Urban*, the Mellon Hall of Science at Duquesne University (Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, 1968) is tersely described as "a standard Miesian temple in black steel," whereas in *Buildings* we learn that local architect Paul Schweikher secured the commission for Mies and that the overall effect of the building is akin to Mies' landmark Seagram Building oriented horizontally. Naturally, *Buildings* also includes worthy new buildings constructed in the twenty-plus years since the publication of *Urban Portrait*.

The book comprises nine chapters dealing with Downtown, Oakland, South Side and Mon Valley, North Side and Allegheny Valley, Ohio Valley, Pittsburgh neighborhoods, the Parkway East, and south suburbs. The final chapter, contributed by author and historian Lu Donnelly, consists of day trips from Pittsburgh to significant nearby buildings in the outlying counties. One of the features that make the book useful and valuable is the inclusion of diagrammatic maps of the particular area being discussed that locate every building described in the book. The maps also give an estimated walking and/or driving time.

While the book is certainly straightforward enough with capsule descriptions of buildings,





there are pleasant sidebars of 1-2 pages interjected throughout the book. These include “Bridges in Pittsburgh,” “The War of the Three Henrys,” “Schenley Park,” “Inclines in Pittsburgh,” “Rising by the Rivers,” “Riverview Park and Allegheny Observatory,” and “Pittsburgh’s Suburbs.” Each shines an insightful light on a particular area, feature, or notion. Satisfyingly, Toker also notes current directions in Pittsburgh’s built environment such as reclamation of the riverfronts, new downtown housing, and the robust green building movement.

Although the book is part of a series intended to be a cohesive study throughout the United States, the language of this book has not been relegated to the flat and dry. Thankfully, the traits that characterize Professor Toker’s writing and lectures shine through in this book. There are pithy descriptions, such as the one in which the Dollar Savings Bank on Fourth Avenue is portrayed as “...an enduring if hyperkinetic piece of Italianate froth...” The language is precise, as in the account of Fort Pitt: “When the British dislodged the French in 1758, they... began construction of an elaborate, five-bastioned, pentagonal fortress with earthen breastworks, thirteen-foot-high brick revetment walls, and stone quoins.” There are occasional allusions to the anecdotal, as in the account of the Frick Building: “Frick’s own offices were on the nineteenth floor, complete with dressing room and the luxurious bathroom at exactly the precise

angle from which – if legend is correct – he could carry out his threat to rain down on Mr. Carnegie.” Above all, one comes away with the clear sense of the author’s profound knowledge of area history and the influences on and of the buildings. (The description of the Allegheny County Courthouse and Jail is particularly outstanding.)

The illustrations are adequate - all are black and white and from the usual variety of sources as well as by the author. Not every building described is pictured. The book concludes with two worthy compilations: a 6-page glossary of terms wherein architectural terms are well defined and not simply slapped with the shortest possible description, followed by a suggested list of films and readings. One might think a list of websites would be in order although the film list does refer the reader to the Pittsburgh film website.

Architects will want to add this volume to their personal library. Those doing local design work certainly ought to add this book to their collection as a valuable guide to the context in which they work. Non-architects will find this book to be a very informative guide to architecture of the area as well as a means by which to engage the interest of out-of-town guests. This book can be found in local bookstores, and both a hardcover and a well-printed paperback are available; the paperback is more commonly found and costs \$24.95. **C**

# BREAKING

## FROM THE FIRMS

Corning Incorporated has commissioned **Burt Hill** to design the renovation and expansion of its Sullivan Park Research and Development campus near Corning, NY. The goal of this project is to expand Corning's research and development capabilities and to provide modern, flexible laboratory space conducive to the development of innovative technologies. All phases of this project are

expected to be completed by 2013. Aliquippa School District – for whom **Burt Hill** serves as architect and engineer – as part of their building renovations and consolidation plans, has decided to pursue a LEED Silver rating for their Elementary and Junior/Senior High School renovation projects. The linchpin to pursuing LEED was the decision to use a geothermal heating and cooling system at both buildings and the Department of Education's increased reimbursement to offset the initial costs.

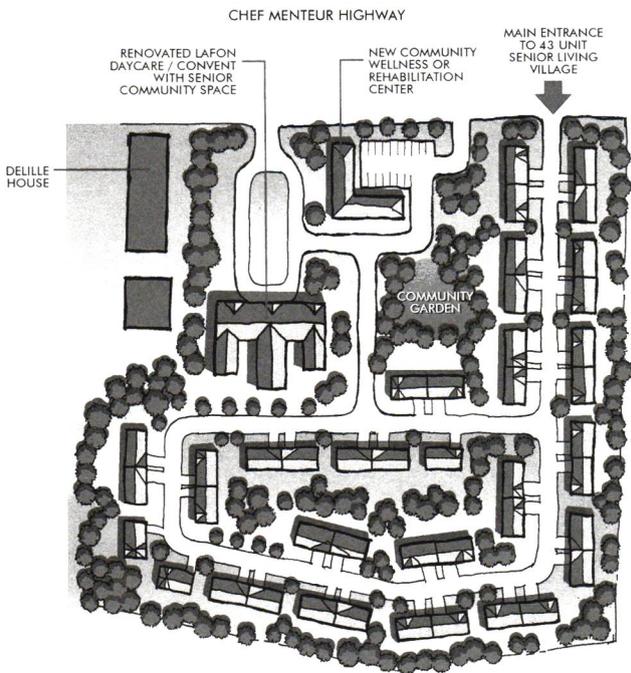
**JSA Architecture Planning Engineering Interior Design** has been selected by the Pennsylvania Wildlife for Everyone Endowment Foundation to design their new 45,000 sf Wildlife Education and Research Center to be located near State College, PA. The center's design will ensure that Pennsylvania is in the vanguard of wildlife conservation. JSA project team members include **James V. Eckles, AIA**, president and **Richard J. Oziemblosky, AIA**, LEED AP, design principal. The firm is also working in conjunction with Ira Peppercorn International, JCH Development and IMACC Concepts LLC, and have completed the first phase of an ongoing project with the Sisters of the Holy Family in New Orleans, LA. This phase was a study identifying prioritized options for land development in conjunction with market analysis for properties, totaling over 50 acres, owned by the Sisters in and around the environs of the city. The next phase will be a comprehensive master plan. JSA project team members are **Richard Oziemblosky, AIA**, LEED AP, design principal and Jennifer Jeffers, project manager.

**L. Robert Kimball & Associates** has been contracted by Calibre, Inc to create renova-

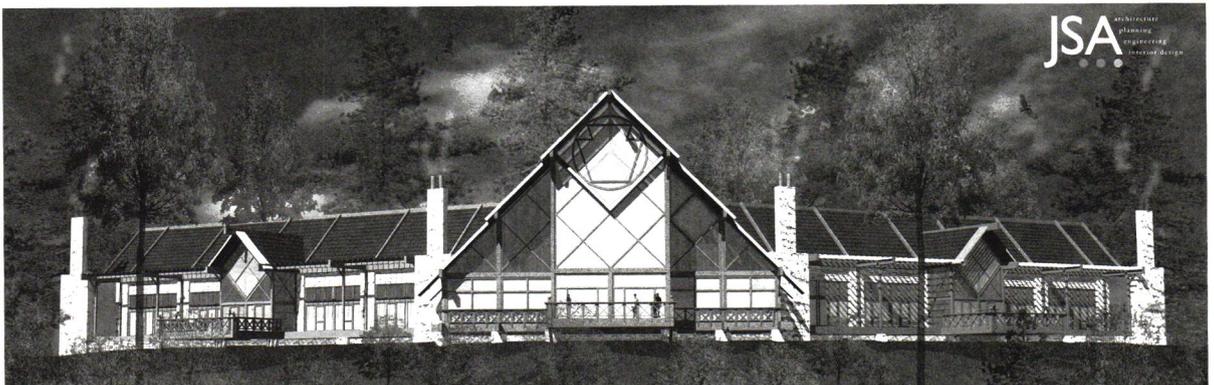
tion plans transforming Keith Junior High School into Keith Hilltop Terrace Apartments, a senior citizen living facility. Once complete the former school will have 53 senior housing units. Construction on the 110,000 sf space will begin during the summer of 2008.

**Perkins Eastman** has been selected to provide the Community College of Allegheny County a comprehensive master facilities plan for its four campuses, centers, and a central office. Additionally, the firm is developing a "Green Vision" plan for East Liberty as a model for a sustainable and healthy neighborhood, which will be used to help guide development and provide a foundation for integrating green practices into neighborhood investments. Perkins Eastman has also been selected to provide a Concept Master Plan for a 1,156 acre site in Orenburg, Russia. The plan will examine street and lot configurations, parks and open spaces and building typology studies for future development, initial development costs, and eventual architectural design.

**Rothschild Doyno Architects** has been selected as the winner of an invited design competition for the Master Builders' Association new



Sisters of the Holy Family, New Orleans, LA



Pennsylvania Wildlife Education and Research Center

headquarters located along the Parkway West corridor. The Master Builders' Association represents many of the region's contractors, and is committed to improving the construction trade through education, advocacy, and technological advancement. The project will advance the mission of the organization and build upon MBA's leadership in sustainable construction.

## BUSINESS BRIEFS

**Burt Hill's** diverse, global family continues to grow, drawing talented professionals to the organization. The Pittsburgh office has added the following staff to its architectural studio: Bianca Beadling, Jeremiah Brooks, Aniel Burrelli, Daniel Cohen, Geetha Muthiah, and Mark Ramos. The Butler office has added to its architectural studio: Jennifer Davis, Morgan Lister, Amanda Neal, Colin Reilly, Kylie Schultz, and Todd Wilson.

Focus Collaborative, Inc., the nation's largest independent specifications consulting firm, has recently opened an office in the Pittsburgh area. Focus offers architectural and MEP-FP specifications, and quality assurance review services to architects, engineers, owners, and manufacturers. Stephen J. Preis is the Pittsburgh office manager.

Mascaro announces several appointments to support strategic growth. Promotions include Jeffrey Mascaro as chief operating officer (COO) and Michael Mascaro as chief communications officer (CCO). Jeffrey is responsible for the finance, legal, administration, estimating, and pre-construction services at the firm. Michael heads up business development, marketing, information technology, and employee development/human resources. Together, they support their father, Chairman John (Jack) Mascaro, and brother, John Mascaro, Jr., president and CEO.

The Board of Directors of the Master Builders' Association (MBA) announced the appointment of Michael Mascaro to its board of directors. Mr. Masacro is chief communications officer for Mascaro Construction Company, LP.

**Arthur Ruprecht, AIA** has been re-elected president of **RSH Architects**, succeeding **Theodore Schroeder, AIA**, who retired earlier this year. **Joel Cluskey, AIA** has been elected vice president-secretary, and **David Noss, AIA** has been elected vice president-treasurer. Additionally, Erin Permar, of RSH Interiors, has recently become a LEED accredited professional, one of less than a dozen interior designers in the region to achieve these credentials.

**Strada** associate **Dina Frederickson Snider, AIA** has accepted an offer to become a principal of the firm, and **Raymond McCaughey, AIA** and **Thomas Price, AIA** have been promoted to associates. Snider has been with the firm since it formed in 2000, and has a Bachelors of Architecture from Carnegie Mellon University.

## KUDOS

**EDGE studio** has been chosen to participate in the inaugural exhibition at Robert Morris University's new **MEDIA ARTS GALLERY** on Fifth Avenue in Downtown Pittsburgh. The Exhibition by **EDGE** will communicate the process taken by the firm to design the gallery as well as show two unique elements not yet built. Those elements include a movable poly-resin pod for viewing film and a sculpted bulk-head over the main gallery space of the same material to direct lighting to the artwork.

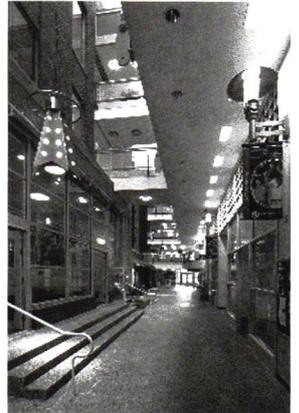


University of Akron

**WTW Architects** and project partners have been awarded three national and two regional awards for the 2007 year. The International Masonry Institute, Ohio Chapter, presented the Golden Trowel Award: Best of Interior – Brick, Stone, Block for use of the material in the Baker University Center at Ohio University, Athens, OH, as well as the Golden Trowel



Stuckeman Family Building



University of Connecticut's Student Union

Award Grand Prize as the best project in Ohio. The Brick Industry Association presented WTW a Silver Brick in Architecture Award for use of exterior and interior brick detail in an educational setting. This award is specifically presented for the work at the University of Akron. The firm was also awarded an American Architecture Award for The Stuckeman Family Building for the School of Architecture at Penn State University, awarded by the Chicago Athenaeum, and a Project Achievement Award for the renovation and modernization for the University of Connecticut's Student Union.

**To be included in Breaking Ground, – sharing news of recent projects, hires or promotions, licensure and registration, awards, or other news of merit – please send press releases, and high-resolution images, to [info@aiaphg.org](mailto:info@aiaphg.org).**



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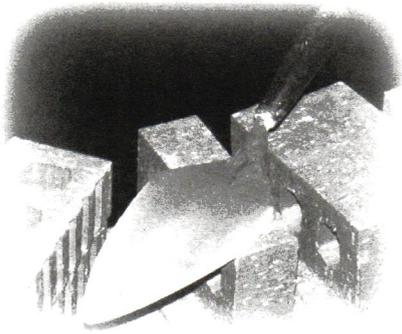
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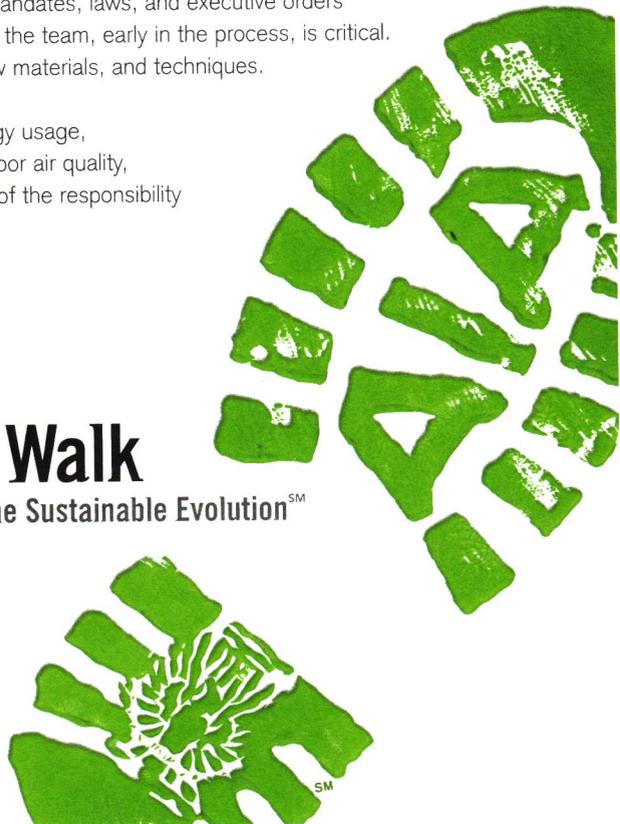
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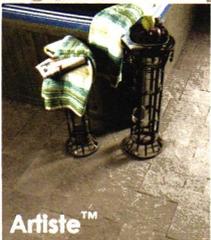
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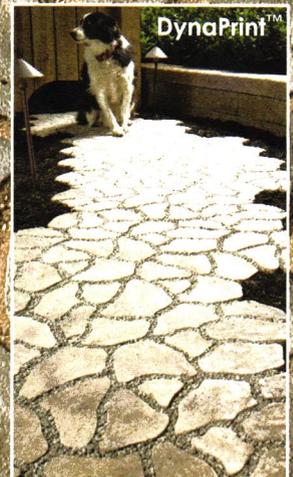
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# moving up

Transforming downtown's vacant spaces

BY JASON VRABEL

**In recent years** Downtown Pittsburgh has welcomed the return of something that has been absent from our world-class skyline for some time: a proliferation of construction cranes. As unsightly as they may be, cranes represent progress, rebuilding, and investment. Whether it has been new high-rise residential developments like 151 First Side or The Encore, or the new convention center and the Grant Street Transportation Center, the return of the crane signals a revitalization of the Golden Triangle.

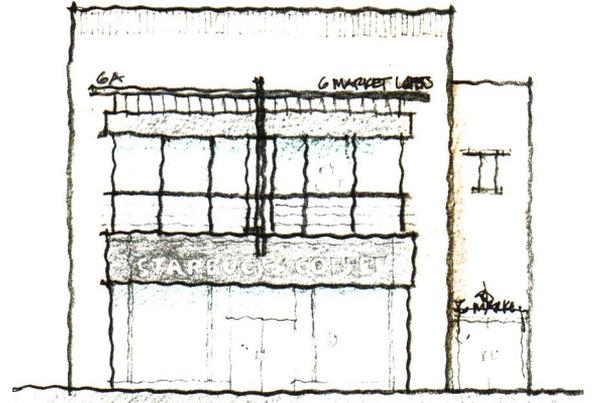


But beyond the erection of glass, steel, and concrete, the true vitality of a downtown can only come from one thing: people. More to the point, it comes from people choosing to make downtown their *home*. This is the impetus behind the Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership's (PDP) *Vacant Upper Floors Program (VUF)*. When walking the streets of downtown, one may stop to observe the seemingly countless buildings, most of which are remarkably rich with architectural history, and wonder just what goes on in the upper floors. One might assume that they are offices or residences, but in fact a great many of them are simply vacant.

Opposite and inset: The Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership's Paris to Pittsburgh program aims to assist downtown property owners in enhancing their storefronts and sidewalks. These renderings, provided by Astorino, are supplements to the design guidelines for the program.

To be exact, 268 buildings have one or more vacant floors, according to a survey conducted by the PDP, and over one hundred of them were identified as good prospects, or “A properties.” Accordingly, the PDP launched a three-phase VUF program to catalyze the transformation of these dusty and forgotten spaces into residential lofts and apartments with stunning potential. To date, 12 properties have received architectural design assistance through VUF in connection with adapting buildings for downtown living. The Keystone Frame Building on Liberty Avenue is currently under construction, and a second building will be joining it soon.

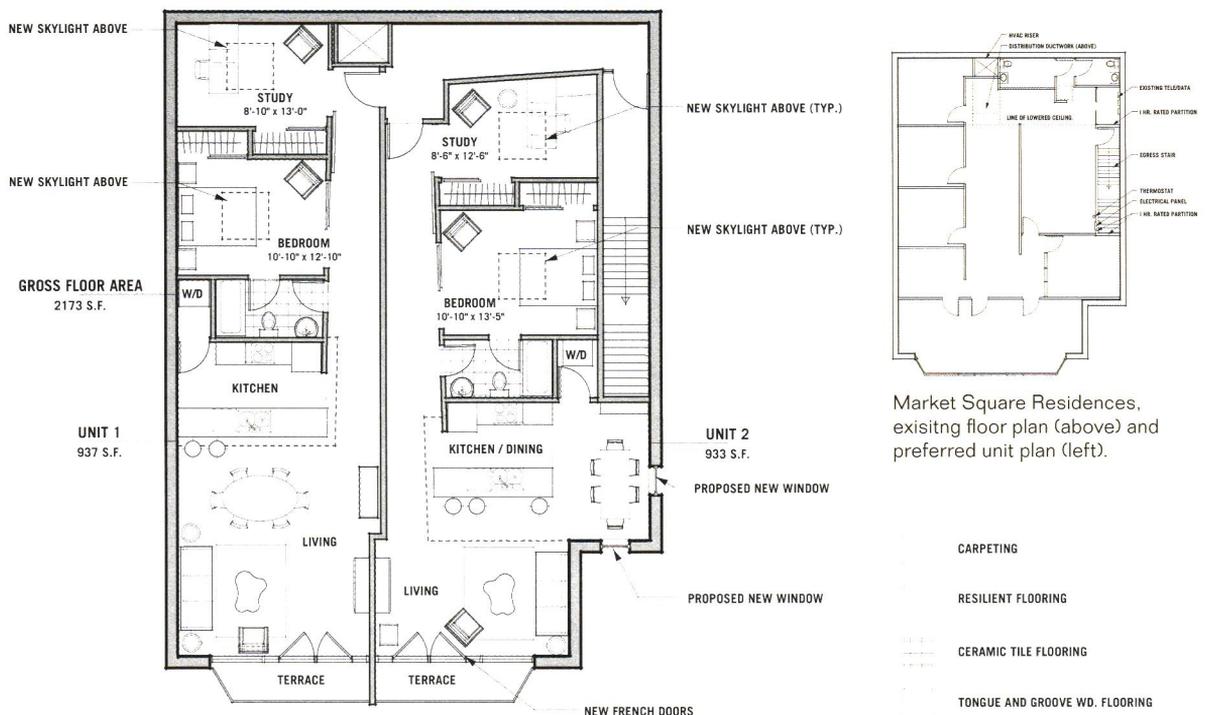
The first phase of VUF, initiated in 2004, was aimed at developing an understanding of what the major barriers were to redevelopment, and to identify a variety of solutions. The PDP contracted with developer no wall productions, local architecture firm Pfaffmann + Associates, and others to undertake the *Vacant Upper Floors Study*. no wall founder, Eve Picker, is frequently regarded as a pioneer developer who was the first to successfully complete a series of renovations to transform underutilized “sliver” buildings into residential use. The study



Market Square Residences, proposed elevation, by Pfaffmann + Associates

produced a handful of case studies of selected building types and identified the opportunities and limitations associated with redevelopment, including common building code issues, versatile floor plans, conceptual costs and sample development *pro formas*. This study was intended to serve as a reference for building owners exploring redevelopment.

It came as no surprise that the renovation prospects for Downtown Pittsburgh’s historic buildings were financially daunting and architecturally complicated, even for experienced



Market Square Residences, existing floor plan (above) and preferred unit plan (left).

developers like Picker. Renovations could prove to be challenging for typical building owners, especially those not well-versed in the design ramifications and code requirements of rehabbing a structure, not to mention the costs, permits, and potential for financial returns.

According to Patty Burk, Vice President of Housing and Economic Development for the PDP, “We found we could interest owners in making their vacant upper floors more profitable with residential units, but progress was thwarted by their limited knowledge of the development process. We knew we had to step in to complete the circle.” Thus, the PDP determined that the next phase of their VUF program would be to bring architectural and planning resources to individual property owners.

In 2006 the PDP hired the Community Design Center of Pittsburgh (CDCP) to develop a system to support property owners through a design process. The CDCP devised a two-stage process that was designed to help property owners understand the feasibility of residential reuse of their vacant space. In the first stage, property owners meet with one of nine architecture firms selected by the CDCP for a two-hour consultation at the property. Each firm has been chosen to participate in the VUF program based on their knowledge of buildings in Downtown Pittsburgh, and their experience with historic buildings, adaptive-reuse, and residential conversions.

After building owners walk the architects through the structure and discuss the possibilities for reuse, the architects draft an *Action Plan* which serves as a written record of the consultation. If the plan is favorably reviewed by the PDP, a second meeting is arranged between the owner, the PDP, and their development consultant to discuss with the owner the financial realities of renovation. If the owner is prepared to move forward, the PDP recommends that the project move into the second stage.

At this time the CDCP initiates a schematic design study of the building with the project architect. Property owners will receive approxi-

**We found we could interest owners in making their vacant upper floors more profitable with residential units, but progress was thwarted by their limited knowledge of the development process. We knew we had to step in to complete the circle.** PATTY BURK

mately \$5,000 in design services (for which they are responsible for paying one-third) that will yield a summary of necessary code improvements, multiple unit layout scenarios, and conceptual cost estimates. The goal is to establish a realistic opinion of the architectural and financial feasibility of reuse in order for the owner to determine if such an undertaking is viable.

According to Bill Jacobowitz, the owner of 6 Market Square, the VUF process has been a very good experience. “The architecture firm that was recommended, Pfaffmann + Associates, has been a pleasure to work with,” he said. Jacobowitz currently has contracts out for bid to create second floor residential units overlooking Market Square. Clearly excited to be adding to what he feels is becoming a vibrant residential district, Jacobowitz noted, “The PDP was the impetus. I wouldn’t have gotten into this on my own – no question about it.”

Lisa Carver, an intern architect with Perfido Weiskopf Wagstaff + Goettel, believes that the VUF program provides a lot of value to architecture firms as well. Not only has it brought projects to the firm that wouldn’t have been on their radar, Carver says, it has also generated ideal opportunities for senior members of the firm to help develop the skills of architects who are still young to the profession. “As an intern architect working towards licensure, this program has been a great benefit to my professional development by allowing me to delve into the issues that

come along with older existing structures.” She also notes that it’s a unique way for architects “to participate in improving the City we all care so much for, one piece at a time.”

The third phase of the VUF program, recently announced at the PDP’s annual meeting, provides gap financing to property owners who undertake residential rehab or conversion. With funding from the Heinz Endowments and the Urban Redevelopment Authority, PDP can provide favorable terms on loans up to \$500,000 to make projects financially feasible.

As a companion program to VUF, the PDP recently launched Paris to Pittsburgh, which aims to assist downtown property and business owners to enhance their storefronts and sidewalks in a manner that creates a lively street atmosphere. Paris is well known for its rich urban experience for residents, pedestrians, and tourists, created through a wide variety of outdoor restaurants, facades that open up to the street, and well-landscaped storefronts. The program, quite literally, aims to bring a little bit of Paris to Downtown Pittsburgh.

Made possible through funding provided by the Colcom Foundation, the PDP will provide matching grants through Paris to Pittsburgh to property owners who choose to invest in high quality improvements that will enhance street activity. New street furniture, landscape, awnings, operable facades, and new lighting are just some of the improvements that may be supported through the program.

Because keeping renovation costs low while achieving high quality results will be a challenge for any project in the Paris to Pittsburgh program, the PDP has put two mechanisms in place to ensure good design. First, a series of design guidelines was written by architect Christine Brill, AIA as a consultant to the CDCP, and are supplemented by a collection of magnificent renderings generously provided by Louis Astorino, FAIA. He, along with Donna Panazzi, who recently retired as Vice-President of Philanthropy at the Colcom Foundation, originally conceived of the Paris to Pittsburgh concept. Sec-



Keystone Lofts by Design 3 Architecture

ond, an advisory team has been established to provide design review and guidance to all projects that choose to participate in the program.

Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the financial heartbeat of the region was felt most strongly in the Golden Triangle. Now that Pittsburgh has reached its 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Downtown celebrates with many notable new development projects, such as a restored Point State Park, the August Wilson Cultural Center, and the PNC skyscraper. But years from now, one of the most notable achievements of our time will be the establishment of Downtown as a true Pittsburgh neighborhood, inhabited by a diverse population of residents ranging from students to empty nesters. And while the pursuit of residential reuse of Pittsburgh’s vacant upper floors may not bring with it the symbolism of the construction crane that compromises our skyline, this transformation will be evident by ubiquitous construction dumpsters cluttering up side streets and alleys. **C**

*Jason Vrabel is the Design Fund Program Director of the Community Design Center of Pittsburgh.*

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