



COLUMNS

JUN/10

Developing Community: The impact of local CDCs | Looking Back.

Moving Forward: The future of the arena and the Hill District | Twenty Years of Leadership for AIA Pittsburgh | AIA Pittsburgh, a chapter of the American Institute of Architects

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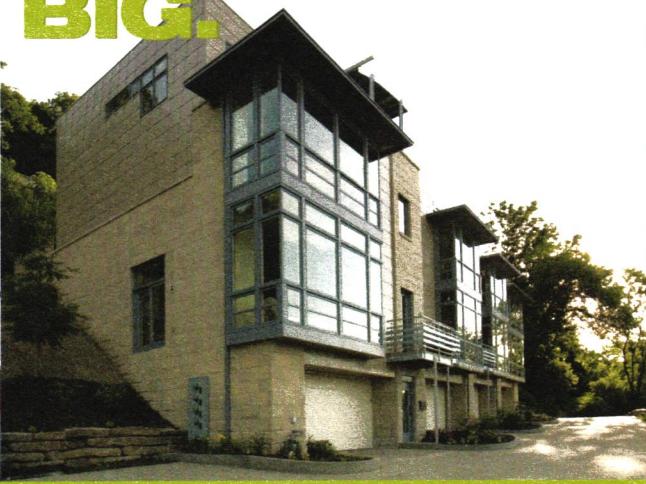


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HOMEFront

BY BECKY SPEVACK



I am writing this while sitting on my front porch on a sunny spring morning. A cup of joe from our neighborhood coffee shop helps provide inspiration. Neighbors are out walking their dogs and the sounds of the season are in the air. Sure, the birds are singing and the breeze rustles through the fresh green leaves on surrounding trees. But it's more than that. I hear neighbors calling out greetings to one another from across the street; lawn mowers roar as they march back and forth, back and forth; and about a block away, I can hear the volunteers who are planting flowers in our community garden at the portal of our neighborhood, spending their precious weekend helping to beautify this place we call home. And this may all seem perfectly normal and banal to you. It is, after all, a commonplace description of life in a community, of which there are so many within these city limits. But for me, it still puts a smile on my face, a welcome change from a childhood spent in an unplanned suburb. Don't get me wrong, I had a great childhood, but the neighborhood I grew up in (using the term "neighborhood" loosely) consisted of three streets in the middle of corn fields, with houses that were built there piece-meal over a period of 25 years. There were no sidewalks, no street lights. No main street or business district. We had a pizza shop less than a mile away, but weren't allowed to walk there because the country roads were too narrow and too heavily trafficked. While we have family friends going on 30 years from living there, there wasn't a 'community', and I grew up wishing I lived in a city or town.

As a child, I didn't know about main street programs or what a walkable community was, although I already knew I wanted to live in one. Since leaving the nest, I have only lived in metropolitan

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Developing Community: The impact of local





tan areas, and don't see that changing anytime in the near future. I am excited to share 'city-living' with my daughter, riding the bus to downtown together, walking to the butcher shop or playground, knowing our crossing guard by name. While she won't know playing hide-and-go-seek in a field of corn that's taller than you are, I think the trade-offs we have made are well worth it.

With each new issue of *Columns*, as I piece together the contents, I like to step back and try to determine if there are any themes within its pages. As each feature came into focus over the past few months, it became quickly apparent that there were a couple of common threads. The first is community – creating, respecting, invigorating community. Our main feature, written by Virginia Shields, takes a look at some local community development corporations and the projects they have and are tackling in the city's neighborhoods. Each place brings with it a different set of problems, but all of the CDCs are working for the betterment of one thing – the community. Another theme that ties into all of our features is revitalization. We have two of our member architects moonlighting as writers – Rob Pfaffmann, AIA and Ken Doyno, AIA – who have taken the time out of their busy lives to contribute their thoughts on the Civic Arena's future. This story has been playing out in city hall and the local newspapers, but these men approach the subject not only looking at what is best for the building, but what is best for the community involved (there's that first theme again). Finally, we are using just a few of these pages to celebrate AIA Pittsburgh's executive director, Anne Swager, Hon. AIA. She celebrated 20 years with this organization in May, and her contributions are innumerable. The work she has done for the chapter, the profession, and the city make her an invaluable asset, and the chapter would not be where it is today without her leadership. She's helped this community of architects become *citizen* architects, guiding volunteer work so that this group of design experts have their voices heard. We thank her for the years she's devoted, and are looking forward to what the future holds. **C**



GUILT BY ASSOCIATION

BY ANNE J. SWAGER, HON. AIA

It is ironic that we are featuring a story in *Columns* this month about local community development corporations. My first interaction with architects began when I ran a local CDC in Mt. Lebanon while sitting on the Board of the South Side Local Development Company (SSLDC). The irony goes even further when you consider that Caroline Boyce, Executive Director of AIA PA was the executive director of SSLDC when I was the executive director for Uptown Mt. Lebanon. We both ran “main street programs” that focused on improving facades and signage in our business districts to attract new businesses and new customers. For both of us, one part of our jobs was managing design review committees which helped determine the awarding of grant money for facade improvements. It became quickly apparent that those projects that came in under an architect’s seal were infinitely better than the ones put together by a local sign company or small general contractor.

Community activism was also a big part of the job. Twenty-five years ago, I got many raised eyebrows and even some sneers when I extolled the virtue of a neighborhood downtown over the mall. “Walkable” did not have any cache and PennDOT, Port Authority, and a host of others were mostly focused on designing for the car and not for the human. The AIA has become much more of an activist organization over the years. But because we are about the profession and for the profession, our mission does not give us a clear cut direction on how to come down on some of the biggest issues of the day. This month we have guest writers giving their perspectives on the Civic Arena. My thanks to Rob Pfaffmann, AIA and Ken Doyno, AIA for being tireless advocates for design and the built environment. They both give inordinate amounts of time and ener-

gy to numerous causes and were very willing to share their thoughts on this issue.

I confess that it feels presumptuous to have an article in *Columns* this month about my 20 year career with the AIA. When the Board and my staff approached me with the idea of celebrating this milestone, I was both deeply flattered and somewhat mortified. My father worked



for Procter and Gamble his entire career. He retired when he was 62, just a couple years short of the 40 year milestone. While this may seem remarkable nowadays, it is what everybody did when I was growing up. From that perspective, 20 years seems like a mere drop in the bucket.

It is very flattering to think I have made a difference but the reality is that the AIA is a “team sport.” My staff does the “heavy lifting” and my role is much more one of pushing, pulling, prodding, guiding, and educating. I am very fortunate to have worked with so many of you over the years. I draw a great deal of energy and enthusiasm from your creative spirit and your desire to do things because “it is right.” I have learned an enormous amount from all of you about design, the business of architecture, and the importance of place-making in society. Your passion for what you do has led me to enter every building looking up to see if the owner skimped on the ceiling, and to think nothing of commenting out loud about what I do and do not like about the design of a space even though I couldn’t design my way out of a paper bag.

The public holds the profession of architecture and architects in very high esteem. In retrospect, guilt by association is a powerful aphrodisiac and keeps me coming to work everyday. Riding on your coat tails has been a great ride and to me the fun has only just begun. **C**

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 24, No. 2



BUILD PITTSBURGH 2010: LESSONS IN TRUST



The "Elephant in the Room" brought together architects, contractors, and developers to address issues of trust among the professions. The panel, from left to right: Susan Lami, AIA, Lami Grubb Architects; moderator Dutch MacDonald, AIA of MAYA Design; Aaron Stauber, Rugby Realty, Inc.; Joe Burchick, Burchick Construction; Jill Swensen, AIA, Burt Hill; Craig Dunham, Rubinoff Company; and Jon O'Brien, Master Builders Association.

AIA Pittsburgh's 9th annual continuing education conference was held May 6th at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center and was a full day focused on building better relationships between owners, architects, contractors, and engineers.

The morning started with a keynote address presented by William Black, B.Sc., LEED AP, FIGP. Black is the National Director of Strategic Business Solutions for Haworth and is also a founding member of the group Mindshift, which comprises members representing all aspects of the construction process. The address, "Mindshift – A Culture of Collaborative Design and Delivery", took a hard look at the industry and where it is heading; Black spoke of how to push for the change necessary to survive and emphasized the need for collaboration. "A system in need of change is a system worth changing," he said, "and our future depends on it."

The rest of the day was filled with educational seminars ranging from the "Top Ten Green Building Products" to "What Else Can I Do with This Architecture Degree?". The recurring theme of trust could be found throughout the day's agenda, in sessions such as "The Value of Good Design: Owner Perspectives", "Compare & Contrast: IPD vs. Design/Build", and especially in "The Elephant in the Room: Distrust among Architects, Contractors, and Developers". Moderated by Dutch MacDonald, AIA, "The Elephant in the Room..." brought together a panel of six architects,



NEWS

contractors, and developers to talk over stereotypes of each profession, how those stereotypes impede progress, and how to work to break them down. The panel confronted misconceptions, truthfully addressing how misunderstandings have negatively impacted projects and conversely, how projects that emphasized collaboration from Day 1 ended with a successful product and happy client.

The event closed with a cocktail reception and exhibitor show, where over 25 vendors presented their wares to a receptive crowd. Once again, AIA Pittsburgh created a day full of enlightening and timely information. **C**



Build Pittsburgh keynote speaker William Black

HAVE YOU PECHA KUCHA'ED LATELY?

If not, then now is the time to start! What is Pecha Kucha exactly? It's a fun-filled evening based around a presentation format of 20 images x 20 seconds. Join AIA Pittsburgh and the Pittsburgh chapter of AIGA for PKN (or Pecha Kucha Night) on **Thursday, June 17th** at the **Rex Theater**, 1602 East Carson Street. Cost is \$5; doors open at 7 pm, presentations begin at 8 pm. Guaranteed to be a fun evening, you won't want to miss it! (If you can't make it this time, stay tuned, because the next installation of PKN will be held in the fall.) **C**

PechaKuchaNight

PARK(ING) DAY 2010

PARK(ing) Day is an annual, one-day, global event where artists, designers, activists, and residents independently but simultaneously transform metered parking spots into "PARK(ing)" spaces: temporary public parks. This year's annual PARK(ing) Day is **Friday, September 17th**, and AIA Pittsburgh is looking for volunteers to participate to create a spot Downtown. Anyone can participate, the concept is yours to play with! If you have an idea or would like to be involved, call AIA Pittsburgh at 412-471-9548 or email info@aiapgh.org. **C**

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developing community

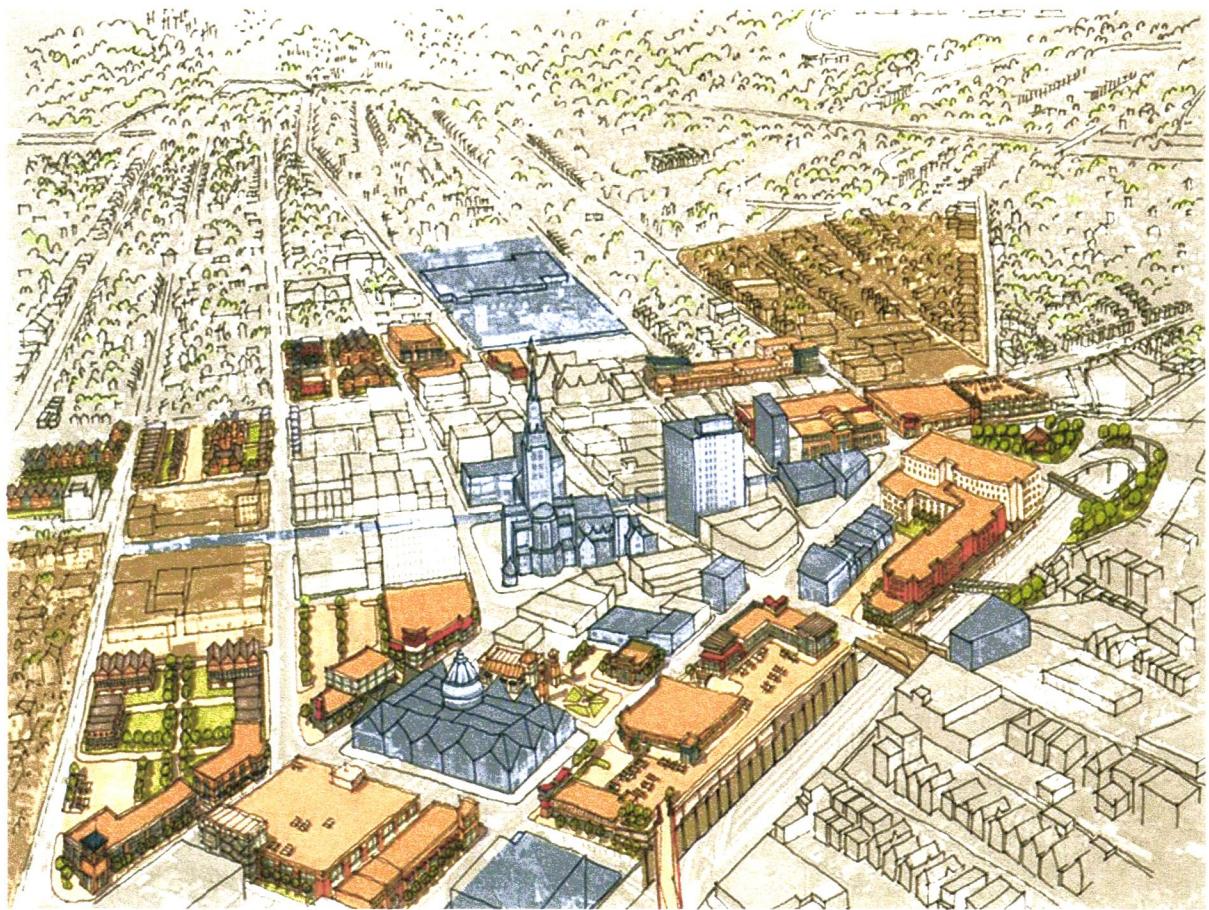
The impact of local CDCs on the neighborhoods where we live

BY VIRGINIA SHIELDS

It starts with a meeting, a seed of concern that grows into a dialog, rooted in the heart of a city. Size, demographics, and location differ at every meeting, but the topic is always the same: how can we make our community safer, more diverse, more livable, and more prosperous? The discussion morphs into analysis. Residents, public officials, police, and community leaders all lend a voice or a concern to address the issues. Market and city data is scoured and absorbed. A plan of action is made and a community development corporation is born.

Pittsburgh is no stranger to Community Development Corporations (CDCs), as the city has been subject to many serious revitalization efforts since its decline after the fall of Big Steel. One local CDC with big plans is East Liberty Development Incorporated (ELDI). They have been working in the community since 1979 to bring businesses and denizens back to East Liberty. One of their priorities is to provide affordable and energy efficient housing for all residents. They have established housing for homeless mothers recovering from substance abuse through the Sojourner MOMS project. These projects help parents get back on their feet and reunited with their children, repairing their relationships and strengthening the community.

OPPOSITE: East Liberty transit loop, circa 1928



A vision for East Liberty

A major housing project ELDI helped facilitate is New Pennley Place, a mixed-income residential community named for its occupancy of the corner of Negley and Penn. New Pennley Place is an attempt to fix the errors of the Urban Renewal Project of the 1960s, which had previously built a HUD-insured apartment complex on the site. By 1997, that complex had significantly deteriorated and many homes were left vacant due to defunct mortgages and poorly maintained properties. This is when ELDI partnered with The Community Builder's Inc. (TCB) to reclaim the property and replace the dilapidated homes with new, mixed-income housing with safe, public spaces. TCB, a national non-profit organization specializing in housing revitalization, initiated the several stage renovation and transformed nearly 200 homes. Those still residing in the old HUD housing units (and were in good standing) were allowed to stay during the construction

and move into one of the new homes, often with the unexpected surprise of lowered rent, courtesy of TCB's mortgage refinancing, and lowered utility costs.

ELDI is no stranger to inventive solutions to its housing, either. In 2007, they purchased an abandoned building on Rippey Street after East Liberty residents thwarted plans to convert it into housing for ex-cons. ELDI's innovative resolution for this property was to transform it into a co-housing unit. With co-housing, residents have their own apartments or houses but share public spaces like fitness rooms, dining halls, and rec centers. Like the rest of ELDI's new housing, the building would be fitted with a green roof and solar panels to make it more energy efficient and affordable for its residents. While the project was determined to not be feasible at this specific locale, ELDI learned a lot from the process; to create co-housing is to find a near-perfect match – the right piece of real

estate, a common vision among all partners, and finances to support that vision. ELDI continues to encourage residents to work together and strengthen the community.

Another goal for ELDI is attracting business to East Liberty. They have already made a difference by creating a Small Business Loan Fund and Advisory Committee, allowing small businesses like the Shadow Lounge and Abay to thrive in East Liberty alongside larger corporations (also enticed by ELDI) like Whole Foods Market and Borders. To further the commercial revitalization efforts, ELDI is partnering with the City of Pittsburgh to make Penn Circle more navigable by removing concrete islands, reconnecting streets in a grid pattern, restructuring curbs and sidewalks. The biggest change, however, transforms the one-way section between South Highland and Collins Avenues into a two-way street. The intent is to allow traffic to flow more freely to and from East Liberty and give the business district back its "main street" feeling.

Funding the Penn Circle renovations is the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh (URA), which has been shaping the city since 1946 when it was one of the first restorative agents in Pennsylvania. They take some of the first steps in rehabilitating vacant houses or contaminated building sites, and pave the way for CDCs to build new houses and shops. They also work with communities to assess their needs and develop a plan of action, even educate local leaders about their options and how to take full advantage of their opportunities. The URA also has programs aimed at helping home buyers and home owners. The Pittsburgh Home Ownership Program offers below market mortgages to home buyers. Another, the Pittsburgh Home Rehabilitation Program, offers 0% loans for up to \$25,000 to help home owners make necessary renovations.

Some of its more unique undertakings, however, are the many brownfield sites that the URA has reclaimed and rehabilitated in the years since the end of Pittsburgh's industrial



The Liberty Building, home of East Liberty Development Incorporated, under renovation in 2002



5801 Penn Avenue, designed by Strada LLC, combines 11,000 sf of retail space with 54 mixed-income rental units



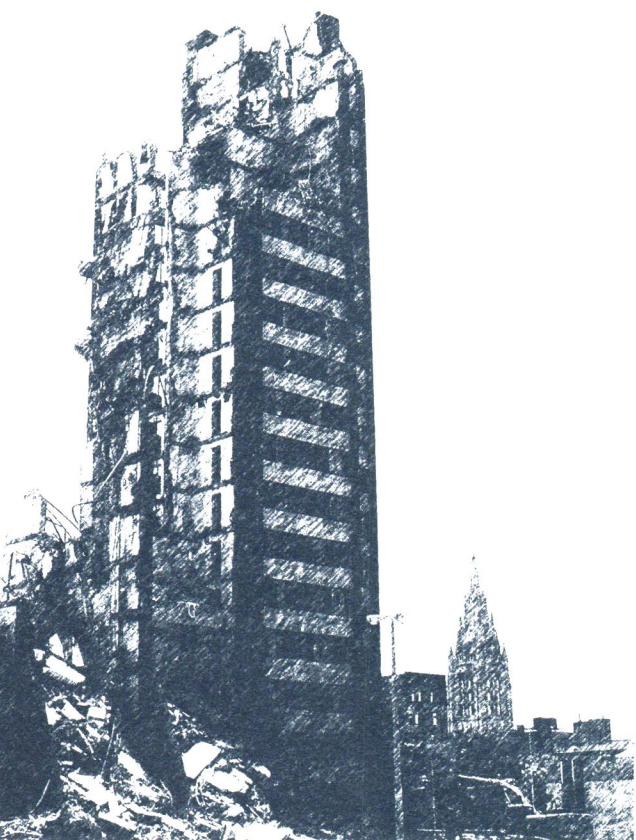
ELDI, with partners S&A Homes, Pfaffmann + Associates, IBACOS, and mossArchitects designed a housing model that is energy efficient and blends into the size and scale of the adjacent architecture



East Liberty Town Square, mossArchitects



5801 Penn Avenue, Strada LLC



days. Brownfield sites are contaminated parcels of land that, typically, were once industrial factories and mills which have long since been abandoned. These toxic areas are often devoid of life and can be very difficult and expensive to restore. Given Pittsburgh's notorious industrial history, it's not difficult to believe that there were many brownfield sites all over the city.

One of the URA's first brownfield projects was Gateway Center, near Point Park, which is still in use today. More recent brownfield projects include the South Side Works. This 123 acre property, once the home of the LTV Steel Finishing Mill, deteriorated into a toxic brownfield river site when the steel industry plummeted. The URA acquired the riverside property in 1993 and since then, has given out over \$14.6 million in grants and loans to fund businesses, which, along with investments from the private sector, has rehabilitated the land and attracted national companies like American Eagle Outfitters to invest in Pittsburgh's South Side. According to the URA, property values for nearby buildings have shot up between 160 and 220% over the last 8 years. When compared to the city average of only 20% during the same time period, the impact of the South Side Works rehabilitation on the area is made abundantly clear.

Another CDC shaping the region is Pittsburgh Partnership for Neighborhood Development (PPND). Formed in 1983, the PPND is an intermediary that connects communities to resources, investors, education options, and others with common goals. They encourage different neighboring communities to work together to achieve similar goals and collectively apply for funding. They also provide funding for training local leaders in fields like business, real estate, and finance, and help those leaders strategize to find the best solutions that fit their neighborhood's specific problems.

In 2007, the PPND partnered with private organizations and government officials in Pittsburgh to form the CD Collaborative. Their mission was to pool their resources to accelerate revitalization across the city and increase their



Rooftop view from East Liberty towards the new Bakery Square

level of impact. They studied city data and best practices from other coalitions in the nation, and decided to focus on four main regions in the city: the Allegheny City Corridor, the East End Corridor, the Greater Uptown Corridor and the Southern Hilltop Corridor. Each geographical region now has a working group, which meets monthly with the community and public officials to address problems and discuss solutions. These groups are devoted to strengthening the assets within the city and believe in revitalization over demolition.

The coalition sparked discourse in the Hilltop communities, who began a seven week discussion process, known as the Dialogues-To-Action, after which 125 people gave their recommendations and voted on which issues they should tackle first. They set their sights on reclaiming vacant properties and coordinating social services, with new discussions covering public safety and the police relationship with residents.

From these discussions the Hilltop Alliance was created, which unites the communities of Allentown, Arlington, Arlington Heights, Beltzhoover, Bon Air, Carrick, Knoxville, Mt. Oliver, Mt. Oliver Borough, and St. Clair under one umbrella organization to serve the greater good of the Hilltop. The Alliance stresses the importance of working together, following a national model of Everyday Democracy, which encourages participatory analysis of a community's needs to address their most persistent problems and find the best strategy to solve them. They work within the ten Hilltop communities to reclaim vacant lots, turn them into affordable housing, and educate members of the community about their rights, available assistance, and education opportunities. Their goal is to maintain and take advantage of the assets already in existence in the Hilltop, so some of its focus is devoted to saving homes by mitigating foreclosures and weatherizing to lower heating

costs, allowing people to stay in the Hilltop and live comfortably.

One of their goals is the creation of a One-Stop-Shop. One-quarter of the Hilltop population lives below the poverty line and many residents don't know how to get needed assistance with finances, utilities and food, or employment. The One-Stop-Shop will be a single location where neighbors could go to learn about and apply for assistance, and search for employment. The Action Team behind the One-Stop-Shop holds monthly meetings and uses grassroots campaigns to get more involvement from the community. Their short term goal is to create and maintain an online directory of available services.

Another notable Pittsburgh CDC is the Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation (BGC). The BGC was formed in 1978 when Reverend Leo Henry, concerned with the deterioration of his beloved neighborhood, gathered his community and urged them to help save Garfield and Bloomfield. That night, he proposed the Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation selling shares to the community for \$5 each to gain their in-

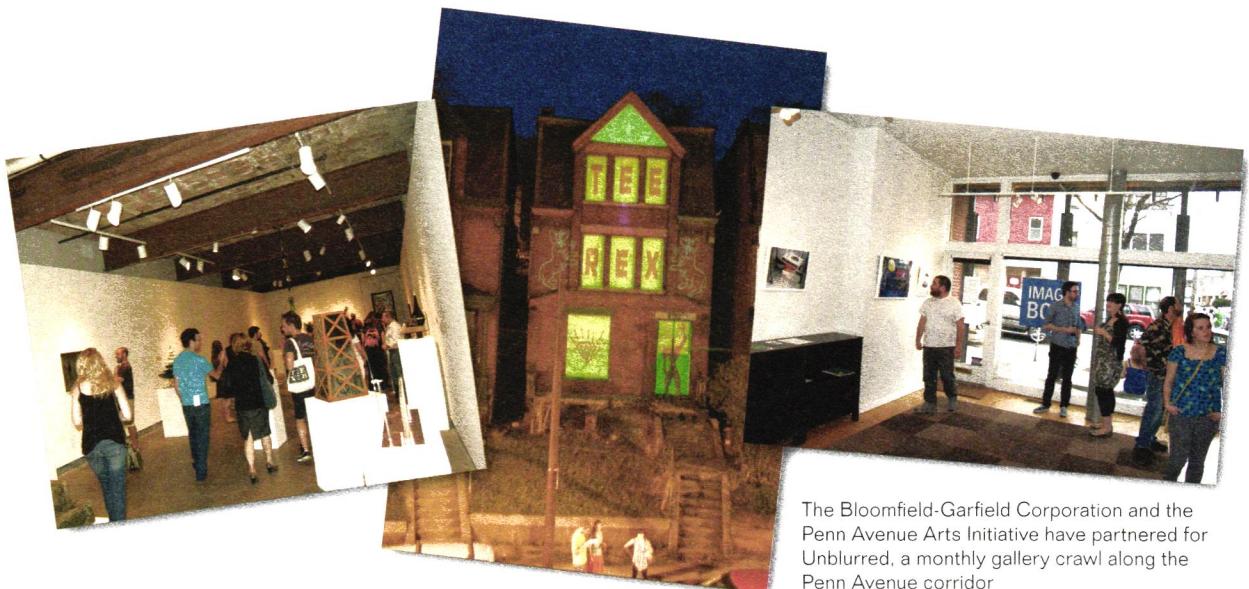
vovement. The BGC became official one year later and its efforts since have been all-encompassing.

They have built new houses and renovated old ones, supplying each house with energy efficient appliances and heating to reduce utility costs. This ensures that people can afford to stay in their homes, strengthening the community and making it safer.

The BGC has revitalized the commercial district along Penn Avenue, bringing in art galleries and restaurants. Vegan-friendly eateries like Spak Brothers and The Quiet Storm as well as hip art galleries and music venues like Garfield Artworks and ModernFormations have transformed Garfield into a happening place. The Penn Avenue Arts Initiative, partnering with the BGC, has quickened the effort by creating Unblurred, a monthly gallery crawl along the Penn Avenue corridor. They have also reduced crime by forming a Public Safety Task Force that meets monthly with police officials and citizens to address problems and strategize the best solutions for making the neighborhood safer.



The Town Square at South Side Works



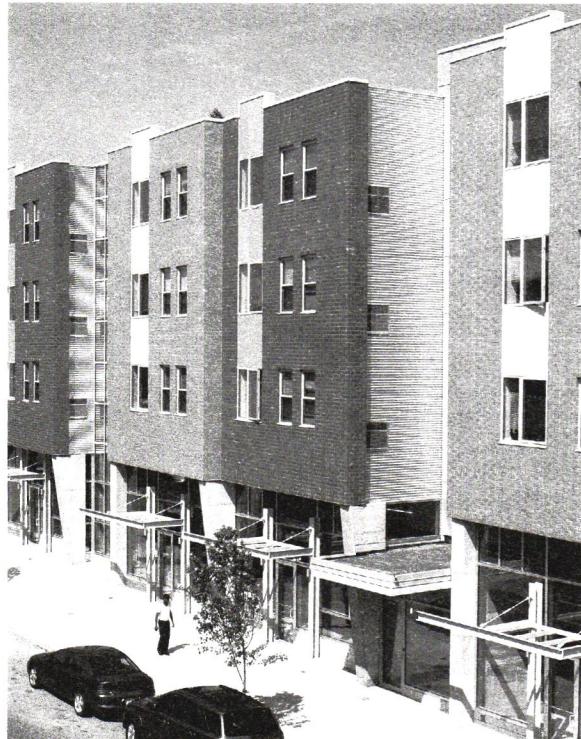
The Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation and the Penn Avenue Arts Initiative have partnered for Unblurred, a monthly gallery crawl along the Penn Avenue corridor

By opening a Youth Development Center, the BGC is also giving area youth a head start. They have created and run over 100 after-school programs that help students graduate, get help with classes online, find internships, and eventually find employment. They have also launched a Youth Employment Program, which helps 17-21 year olds find employment around the region and gain valuable experience. With these programs in place, the BGC is helping to ensure the

continued thriving of Garfield, Bloomfield, and Friendship.

The BGC has also partnered with other CDC's from Bloomfield, Garfield, Friendship, and Lawrenceville to form the Penn Avenue Corridor Phasing Plan Committee (PACPPC). As their name suggests, the PACPPC is responsible for the revitalization of the Penn Avenue Corridor, a project that is slated to start next summer. The Penn Corridor project will improve the deteriorating conditions on Penn Avenue, between 34th Street and Negley Avenue by replacing sidewalks; installing new pedestrian and traffic lights, trees, and benches; and repaving and restructuring the street. The PACPPC has worked closely with the community and developers to pinpoint the community needs and tailor the project to the specific flow of people, cars, and businesses along the corridor. The end result should be a safer, less congested Penn Avenue, which should increase business interest and community pride.

Pittsburgh has come a long way since its smoky industrial days, thanks to the dedication of its people and the CDCs they have formed. Its growing reputation of excellence in energy efficient building and its continued community improvements have started to draw people to the Golden Triangle, and last year Pittsburgh gained residents for the first time in decades. **C**



Penn Fairmont Apartments by Rothschild Doyno Collaborative, on Penn Avenue, Garfield

STILL CRAZY AFTER ALL THESE YEARS

Anne J. Swager, Hon. AIA Celebrates 20 Years at AIA Pittsburgh

BY BECKY SPEVACK



In trying to learn more about AIA Pittsburgh's executive director, I first went right to the source: interviewing Anne over coffee, getting her insights firsthand. But I thought that searching through the only available archives of the chapter would also help guide me in the right direction, exposing what the last 20 years have looked like for this membership organization. So, naturally, I turned to back issues of *Columns...* 20 years worth of back issues. Over the course of a weekend, sitting on my favorite couch, I journeyed through two decades of issues, events, and opinions as printed in this magazine's pages. I learned more about how much this city has grown and evolved over that course of time in a few afternoons than I have in the five years I've lived here. It also helped cement in my mind the role this organization's leader has played in ensuring that architects are seen in the public eye as the experts in design.

Anne Swager started at AIA Pittsburgh on May 15th, 1990, diving into a complex organization with no one to guide or educate her. "There was no one to train me," she recalls, "and I spent most of the early years just trying to understand the profession – learning about licensure, what exactly architects do, how firms function, what the AIA really was. It was probably four years until I really felt like I knew what I was doing at the job." But she had also come into the job with no expectations. And that, she feels, enabled her to see and learn in an open way. "One of the first things I realized is that architects are admired and trusted, and I soon began to grasp that that respect would open the door as to what impact the profession could have on the community [beyond designing buildings], and therefore what impact the AIA could have."

With that realization in mind, Swager began to guide the organization and its members, focusing on advocacy. Over the first ten years of her tenure, AIA Pittsburgh held and participated in charrettes and community forums to influence and lend an educated voice to the public processes on a variety of projects, including the Wabash Bridge Tunnel, Pittsburgh's riverfronts (which helped expose the need for the creation of the Riverlife Task Force, now known as Riverlife), the Pittsburgh Downtown Plan, numerous mayoral forums, and more. She has also helped populate volunteer organizations with architect leaders, helping make connections and recommending members for appropriate boards. "We wanted architects to have their rightful impact on these issues, so we had to get involved," she said.

She also recognizes that a lot has changed in the practice of architecture over the past 20 years. With building technologies advancing so rapidly the chapter has positioned itself to focus on educating architects. Swager has always said the role of the AIA was to "build better architects", and providing opportunities to keep them abreast of changes in the profession such as BIM (Building Information Modeling) and IPD (Integrated Project Delivery) is AIA Pittsburgh's main goal to do just that.

When asked why she's stayed these past 20 years, Swager reinforces that the AIA is a leadership organization, and that to build leaders means to constantly be meeting and working with new people. She has worked closely with 20 different board presidents, even more board members, and numerous others. As the issues within the profession and the city are constantly changing, so are the people she finds herself interacting with, and that, she says, keeps her interested in what she's doing. It has helped her to truly learn, firsthand, that everyone has something to bring to the table. "It's hard to open yourself up to thinking in different ways," Swager admits, "but if you listen, really listen, you slowly realize that everyone has something to offer. It took a little while for me to understand this, but it humbled me once I did."

I personally met Anne at my interview in the summer of 2005. My husband and I had moved here a few months before and I knew very few in this city. Being offered a job at AIA Pittsburgh became the link to what would become my family here in the city. We have met almost all of our friends through connections with the AIA. The job also became a place for me to grow. Anne has a long history of hiring 'transplants', creating opportunities for new young professionals within the city, providing them with a reason to stay. And if you look back over the staff she has hired over the past decade, you will find that we all still live here, have made Pittsburgh our home, and are growing into leaders as well.

Ms. Swager has had an undeniable impact, both on the organization as a whole and on the countless individuals she has worked with personally. She approaches her work with passion, drive, and a dry wit that have made her a successful ambassador of the value of good design in a multitude of situations and scenarios. AIA Pittsburgh and the city itself are better for it. **C**



Anne Swager gathers with many AIA staffers, past and present, at the 2009 wedding of former assistant executive director Maya Haptas. From left, rear: Mike Srirrasert, Kate Diersen, Maya Haptas Henry, Rachael Kelley and Becky Spevack. Front: Courtney Curatola and Anne Swager.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 20 Years at AIA Pittsburgh

1991

- AIA Pittsburgh celebrates its 100th anniversary

1992

- Wabash Bridge Tunnel charrette
- Riverweek held in September, including the Riverfront Symposium and Undercurrents Roundtable Discussion, discussing the future of riverside development in Pittsburgh

1996

- Reshaping the Region – a series of community forums and charrette focused on suburban development in the region

2000

- Anne Swager made Honorary AIA
- Future of Pittsburgh's Riverfront Forum, hosted by the Riverlife Task Force and the Heinz Architectural Center

2001

- Steel Valley Revitalization charrette held in Homestead, addressing the areas of Homestead, West Homestead, and Munhall

2002

- Pennsylvania Barrier Project, a process spearheaded by AIA Pittsburgh to redesign the barriers used to line the deck of the Fort Pitt bridge with the hopes of keeping this stunning doorway to the city intact, is successful. The Project goes on to win an AIA National Component Excellence Award for Government Affairs: Single Initiative or Project.

- AIA Pittsburgh holds first continuing education conference, "Tri AIA", which will morph into Build Pittsburgh.

BREAKING

FROM THE FIRMS

Direct Energy Business, one of North America's leading integrated energy companies, came to Pittsburgh in June 2009 when it acquired Strategic Energy LLC for \$300 million. The company signed a five-year lease for 52,000 sf at Liberty Center in Downtown. **Desmone & Associates Architects** provided the interior design and space planning to accommodate 300 people within the space, now the company's North American headquarters.

Strada LLC with Allen & Shariff Engineering have completed the Dick's Sporting Goods Corporate Headquarters in Findlay Township. The \$150 million, 670,000 sf project includes merchandising rooms, executive offices, staff work-places, as well as an athletic facility, auditorium, employ-ee cafe, airstrip, and hangar for the corporate jet. The project recently won NAIOP Pittsburgh awards in the "Built-To-Suit" and "Green Building-Office" categories.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Burt Hill has appointed Kevin Moore to lead corporate development efforts for the firm. In this newly established position at Burt Hill, Moore will work closely with the Board of Directors, the Executive Committee, the Practice Committee, and members of the C-Suite on various assignments.

Edwin Pope has joined **Lami Grubb Architects LP** as a



Direct Energy Business North American headquarters



Dick's Sporting Goods Corporate Headquarters

principal. As an architect with over 25 years of experience, Pope will focus on expanding the banking, medical, educational, religious, and senior care part of the practice. As part of the expansion, the firm has also elevated Clint Myers and **Christian Pegher, AIA** to associates.

MGM Automation has opened its new Design Center on Rt. 19 South in Mt. Lebanon. The 1500 sf space looks more like a home than a business, where patrons can experience the latest in technology from "green" lighting and automation controls to custom audio/video in a real life setting. The space is complete with a home theater boasting a 110" projection screen and 7.1 surround sound system, as well as touch panels that can

automate any system in the home including HVAC and lighting. MGM is also participating in a LEED home in Pine Richlands where the automation system automatically opens and closes windows based on temperatures and humidity outside; the lighting control system also turns lights up or down in the home depending on natural light from outside.

Kelly Brown, AIA and **David Wells, AIA** have become shareholders at **Radelet McCarthy Polletta**. Wells has been at the firm since 1995, and Brown joined in 2002.

SPRINGBOARD Architecture Communication Design LLC has added two professionals to its Pittsburgh office. Shannon Ashmore has been hired as a project architect. After receiving her Bachelor of Architecture degree from Virginia Polytechnic Institute, Ms. Ashmore moved to San Francisco where she worked with Skidmore Owings and Merrill and Esherick Homsey Dodge & Davis. Ashmore has extensive professional experience with a variety of award-winning projects including library and classroom buildings, community centers, urban design, and master planning. Ashmore is also an Adjunct Instructor for Architectural Studies at the University of Pittsburgh. She currently serves on the Sewickley Planning Commission and is a former member of the Sewickley Historic Review Commission. Nicolas Hawken has been hired as a project designer. Educated in the United Kingdom and the United States, Hawken received a Bachelor of Arts degree from New York University and a Bachelor of Architecture



MGM Automation Design Center

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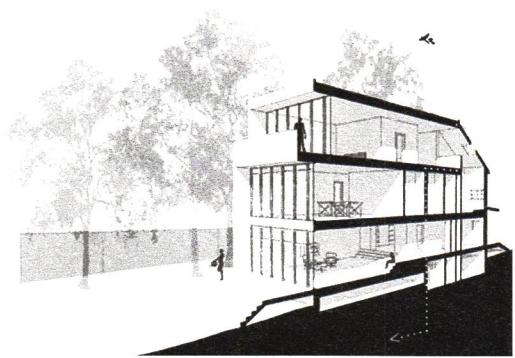
degree from the City College of New York. Before moving to Pittsburgh, Hawken worked at Gwathmey Siegel & Associates Architects. Hawken's emphasis on sustainable design has led to his professional involvement with many LEED certified projects.

Technology consulting firm The Sextant Group, Inc. has agreed to purchase West Coast-based lighting, stage and studio facility planning and design firm Norman Russell Design. This strategic pairing of these two key consultants in the AEC industry will have significant implications in services offered and delivery capabilities for clients, both in California and throughout North America.

KUDOS

Thomas Celli, AIA of **Celli-Flynn Brennan Architects** has recently been named to the Board of Trustees of the American University in Bulgaria. He was also featured in an article in the University's magazine, discussing his ideas on architecture and campus planning.

Desmone & Associates Architects and McKnight Realty's renovation project at 615 Alpha Drive received the 2010 NAIOP Pittsburgh Award for "Best Renovation Project". The 500,000 sf former distribution center was completely renovated into a multi tenant mixed use facility in RIDC O'Hara.



Loft/House renovation

SPRINGBOARD Design's Loft /House will be featured on an upcoming episode of HGTV's Bang For Your Buck. Bang For Your Buck is a half-hour series that focuses on three homeowners from the same city who renovate the same room of the house with the same budget. After the renovation, experts

determine the value of each home, dramatically revealing whose remodeling choices were good investment decisions. In this episode, SPRINGBOARD principal **Paul Rosenblatt, AIA** and his family will focus on the design of the Master Bath-room of their Loft/House renovation.

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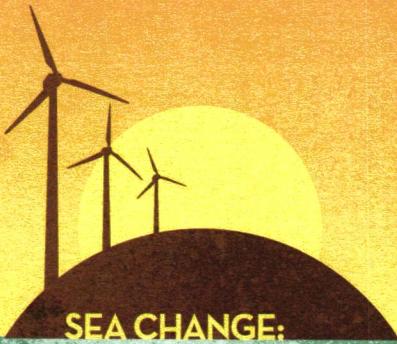
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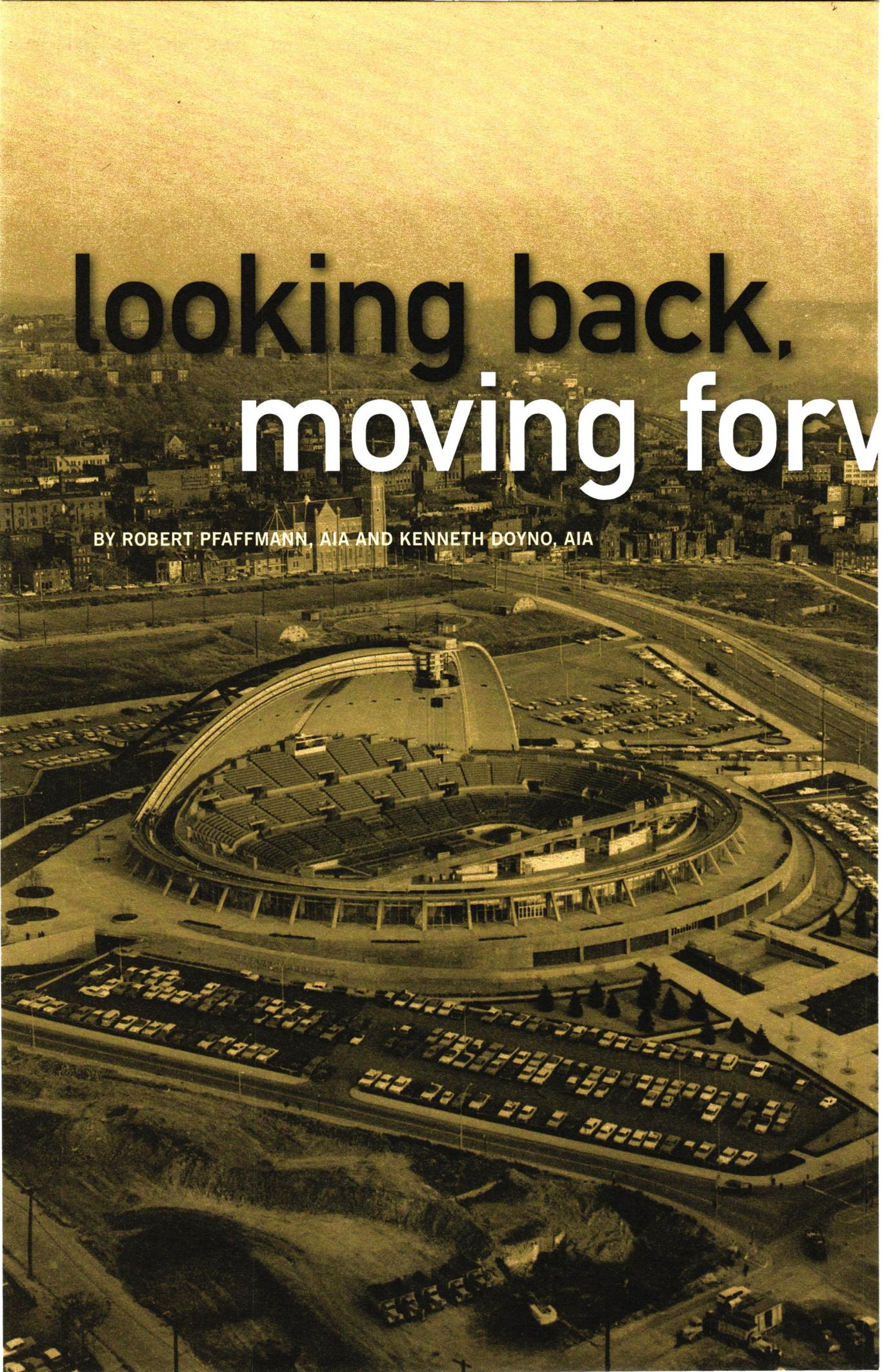
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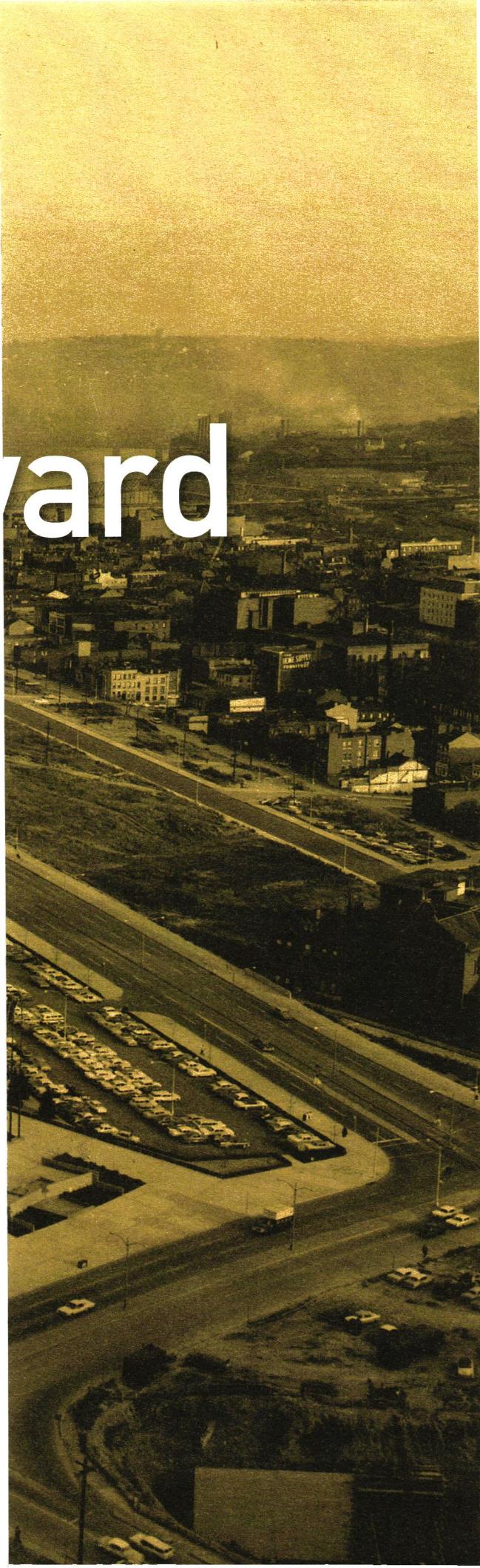
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looking back, moving forward



BY ROBERT PFAFFMANN, AIA AND KENNETH DOYNO, AIA

yard



Civic Arena. Mellon Arena. The Igloo. This one place is famous for more reasons than it has names. It was the first major indoor stadium built with a retractable roof. It is home to the Pittsburgh Penguins. It is evidence of urban planning gone awry, cutting off the Hill District from Downtown. And now it is back in the heat of debate over how it should or should not be used in the future once its replacement, the Consol Energy Center, is built and ready for habitation.



Throughout this debate, many voices have thrown their opinions into the ring. Professionals and experts from a variety of backgrounds have expressed what they believe to be the 'best' or 'right' future for Mellon Arena. Others have entered the argument not over what is the best outcome for the arena, but what is the best or right outcome for the communities involved. An exceptional few have taken the time to consider both.

On the pages that follow are two local architects' opinions concerning this historical issue. Both have worked on award-winning projects in the Hill District which have lead to strong relationships with community. The first is brought to you by Rob Pfaffmann, AIA of Pfaffmann + As-

sociates, PC. Pfaffmann won an AIA Pittsburgh Award of Excellence in 2009 for his proposed reuse of Mellon Arena, "A Civic Renewal", and has been an impassioned member of the community in this debate. His work along side Preservation Pittsburgh has made him known throughout the city and his words here present a look at larger design principles, not just one specific solution. The second piece is by Ken Doyno, AIA of Rothschild Doyno Collaborative. While Doyno does not have a strong vested interest in whether or not the building remains standing, he does have a broad view and philosophy of reconciliation. His firm's recent work in the area includes the jazz inspired Legacy apartments and The Uptown Vision which helped the Uptown neighborhood articulate its change agenda. Both men have built careers on not only designing buildings but nurturing communities and the people that live there. The Hill has been no exception. -BS

THE CIVIC ARENA AND THE RHETORIC OF PLACE

BY ROBERT SHAW PFAFFMANN, AIA, AICP

"The artist forges himself to the others, midway between the beauty he cannot do without and the community he cannot tear himself away from." Albert Camus

A book could be written about the subject of the Civic Arena and the Hill, but I only have a few words, so I do not want to merely repeat the ideas and arguments already made in favor of the reuse and transformation of the Arena.

My involvement in preservation advocacy over the last thirty years has never been fueled

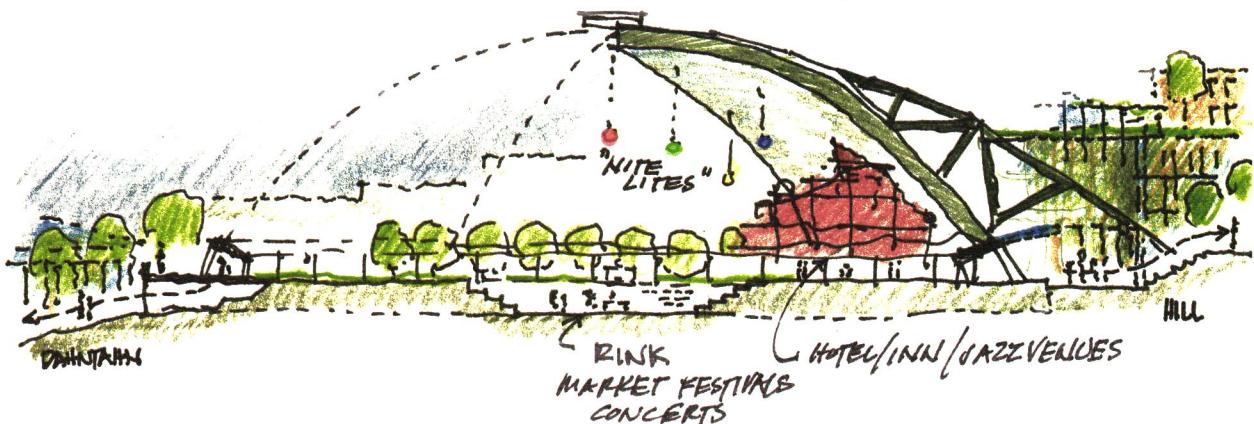
by nostalgia for a building; rather, it has been Pittsburgh's history, authenticity, and sense of place that have been my inspiration.

As architects, we have always been challenged by the need to listen carefully, interpret, and then reconcile our professional, business, and community responsibilities with the intangibles of architecture as a civic art. Each of us has to make a choice, based on the nature of our work, our clients, and our values. Working in neighborhoods, we learn that we can influence a viewpoint by just a few words or sketches. Public officials know that this can be used to inspire change. The cynics would call this "spin" or "architectural rhetoric." It makes effective politics but poor community process. I have always found this creative tension important to the design process, if it is open and transparent.

Architects and urban designers are more than facilitators and neutral vessels for community input. We are at our best when we add value and perspective to a community dialogue, challenging conventional wisdom and expediency.

In the 1960s when I became aware of Moses, Jacobs and their protégés, the urban renewal backlash sparked my interest in architecture's ability to affect the politics of memory, symbol, and place. Robert Goodman's book After the Planners called us the "soft cops" because he understood the power we have to influence for good or ill.

The more I understand Pittsburgh's special qualities of place, the more I question whether "New" Urbanism is the "answer" to the reconstruction of our inner city fabric. While I sub-



scribe to the basic tenets, I am concerned its orthodoxy, even with the best of intentions, seems to not allow for the quirks and imperfections of the city's patterns as they evolve layer by layer over time.

An inspiring example of this, and a spiritual touchstone for me, is the old walled Roman City of Lucca, Italy. In the middle of the city's dense "poche" is a small oval piazza that - much to my amazement - is actually a Roman coliseum transformed into housing and a public square with a market. In my research in Florence I discovered that this characteristic of city form had a couple of names: urban morphology, urban transformation, and my favorite, "urban palimpsests." I believe that the richness of the best cities are layered yet structured like jazz as many players riff and transform a basic theme over time.

In Pittsburgh, preservationists are often accused of peddling nostalgia as a reason for saving a building or place. The irony is that the new urbanism movement is peddling far more nostalgia for street grids, walkability, and classical styles which can be just as lifeless as their urban renewal era ancestors, especially when placed opposite so much that is authentic in Pittsburgh.

So, will demolishing the unique and authentic Civic Arena really repair the racial and economic wounds imposed on the Hill? We know



Arena as originally built

PHASE 1

Interim redevelopment plan that reconciles with Hill and Pens master plans as well as with state and federal funding opportunities.



PHASE 2

Repurpose demolition funds to remove seating bowl and prepare for initial open and recreation space. Issue a development RFP/competition for additional development within arena footprint



PHASE 3

Private Development utilizing historic tax credits, green incentives, etc. Civic space maintained through a NID or Bid for Lower Hill development area.

that a wide range of policies, top down processes, and outside economic events, over a long period of time, were the true cause of the Hill's decline. Is destroying a conflicted symbol of innovation on one hand and planning failures on the other really righting a wrong or helping support a political/ideological/economic agenda of a few?

If we can get past the rhetoric of "either/or" polarization so common in our public discourse and get to the diversity and richness of "both/and" collaboration, we have a chance to create something that reconciles our mistakes with a vision that transcends the here and now. Most importantly, it enables the Hill (and the region) to achieve something far greater for its people.

THE CASE FOR COMMUNICATION

BY KENNETH DOYNO, AIA

The clearing of the Lower Hill – along with similar ill-conceived redevelopment projects in the centers of East Liberty and the North Side – left a legacy of mistrust between classes and races which continues to hinder our region's social cohesion. It also created a culture of disbelief in our government's capacity to stand with the neighborhood interests rather than project-specific capital interests. This disbelief similarly hinders our growth and development. This is why it is heartening to hear our current leaders cite the clear voices of Hill District leaders when supporting the removal of the Civic Arena and the reconstruction of a neighborhood street grid.

Yet we know that a street grid does not ensure a community. In fact, what we have seen to date are discrete histories battling with periodic public pronouncements about the validity of their position. What we don't see is broad community dialog about the future state of the Lower Hill. I fear that without a continuum of such public dialog there is little prospect for a reconciled future being forged. Yet – for the very reasons stated above – it is this reconciled future that is essential to the Hill District, to our City, and to our region's future.



I believe that the richness of the best cities are layered yet structured like jazz as many players riff and transform a basic theme over time.

ROB PFAFFMAN, AIA

Far more important than the physical plan will be the social and economic reconciliation that can only come about through exchange and partnership.

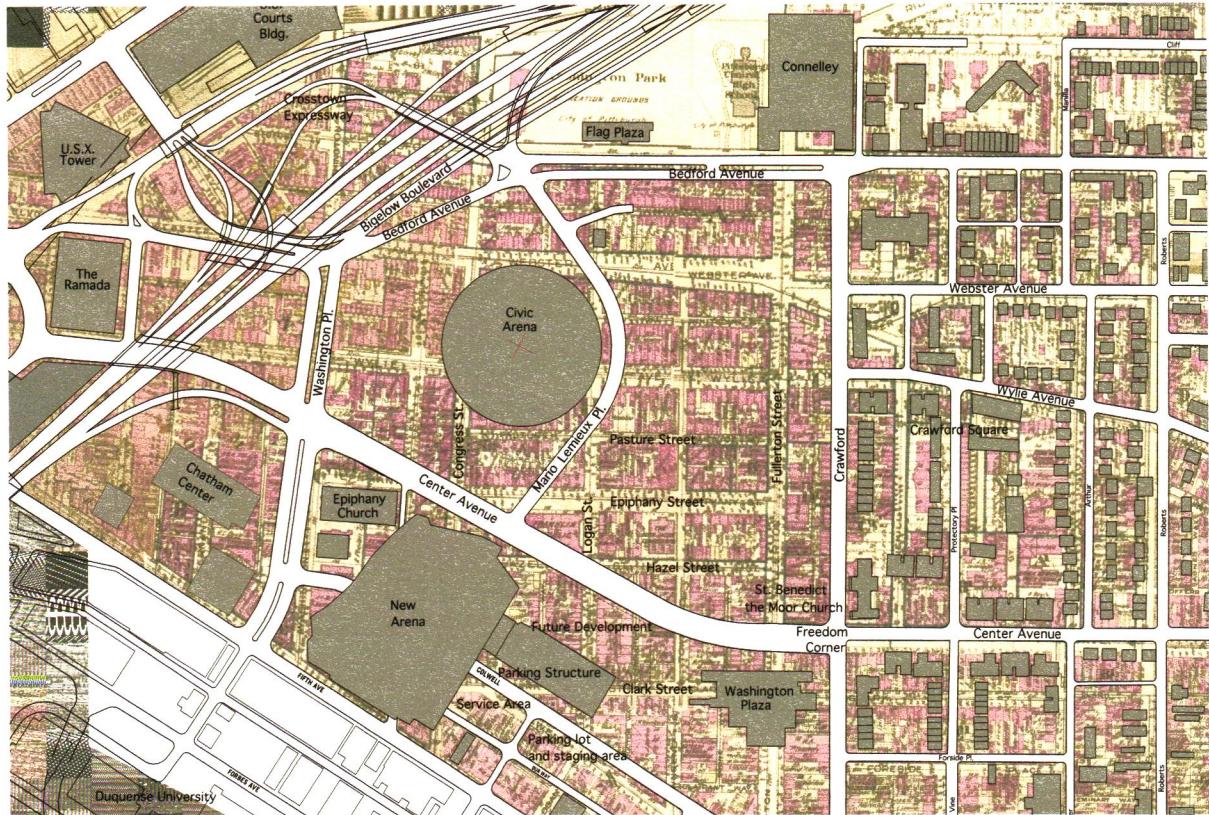
KEN DOYNO, AIA

The first history I hear conflates historic urban form with social fabric. The 300 small businesses, thousands of residents, hundreds of land interests, that squabbled, subdivided, rebuilt, and shaped the urban space and the people who lived there over one hundred years are gone. No street grid will ever bring this back.

The second history that I hear is the admiration of the crisp modern world of bold engineering – the brave new world (devoid of diversity and difference) hewn in a simplified singular geometric vision of perfection.

So what is the third history of the Lower Hill? Who will create this history? Who will invest in it? Who will own it? The ownership of development rights by the Penguins, coupled with the Hill District community's decades-

long effort to develop its leadership and voice provides a remarkable opportunity to align interests and seek reconciliation through a community based planning process. Based upon the latest salvos in the media, the demands of the community groups, and the quiet pursuit of the plan by the Penguins, I am fearful that we are heading for another planning clash that will reinforce the mistrust and increase the very divisions that need to be bridged in order for Pittsburgh to be a place of renewal, reinvestment, and growth.



Current street grid over 1923 grid

Far more important than the physical plan will be the social and economic reconciliation that can only come about through exchange and partnership. Regardless of how beautiful a plan may be, no one wants to invest in a social minefield. And no matter how strong the desire to bridge the economic differences of our region, no one will invest in property that loses money. These realities can be bridged but only through the creation of a shared and supported vision developed in the open light of the day. There will be dissent and disagreement, perhaps with plenty of messy vibrant open exchange, but why not? If that is what is necessary to establish broad community ownership, I think we can handle that.

1961 saw the inauguration of the Civic Area, the publication of The Death and Life of Great American Cities, the world population hit three billion, and Pittsburgh mark its first decade of population decline after 150 years of continuous growth. Half a century later the world population has doubled and our city's halved. I think it

is safe to say, if we are smart enough, and work together, we are ready to grow again. Though I have been unable to find any materials that show the Penguin's vision for the site, I can imagine the economic sense and clear urban form of UDA's in their client and I am stirred by the firm message of social justice emanating from the One Hill Coalition's Principles. I also admire Rob Pfaffmann's physical reuse proposals. Mostly, I do not see these economic, social, and physical agendas as being particularly at odds with each other, just not effectively in conversation with each other. Personally, it does not matter to me if the future includes all, part, or none of the silver dome of the civic arena so long as the outcome belongs to all of the people that call this great city home. The Vision for this site must be at peace with the community so it can open its arms to thousands upon thousands of more people of all race, class, and creed that will join us in creating our region's future.

Buildings and cities are for people; may it be so for Pittsburgh. **C**



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