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Special Issue

PHLF News

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Inspiration for Pittsburgh *How Other Cities Are Achieving Vitality*

Lisa Burcham

“Our allegiance is to the future, not the past.”

This statement, spoken during a heated discussion about the fate of historic downtown Pittsburgh in light of the most recent urban renewal proposal, was not entered into the record by a project developer, nor was it stated by city redevelopment staff. Instead, the chairman of the Pittsburgh Historic Review Commission (to accompanying hisses from a packed house of merchants, preservationists, and concerned citizens) made this remark just before a unanimous vote by the commission to approve a \$480 million plan to demolish more than 60 historic buildings and displace 125 tenants for an upscale redevelopment project anchored by a multiplex theater.

Was the chairman’s statement wrong? No. But, what *was* wrong was what didn’t get said, and what many city leaders are eager to say: namely that when it comes to downtown revitalization, a successful city pays allegiance to a future that invests in its past. Richard Moe, president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, summed up the decision this way: “Because it would destroy the historic buildings that represent the best hope for the rebirth of Downtown, this is one of the most wrongheaded revitalization proposals to appear anywhere in the country in the last 30 years.”

So what is the answer to today’s urban revitalization problem? It’s a comprehensive approach, a plan for the future, that addresses mass transit, downtown housing, safety, tax incentives, design controls, night life, public amenities, walkability, livability and, oh yes, historic preservation. More than just an afterthought, historic preservation has served as the impetus for many successful urban revitalization efforts underway today. As case studies from Denver, Dallas, Chicago, St. Louis, and Pittsburgh—yes, Pittsburgh—demonstrate, the successful urban experience is not about multiplex theaters or “category-dominant chain retailers.” It’s about a vital and eclectic mix of niche businesses, night life, housing types, cultural amenities, corporate headquarters, and transportation options.



Lower Downtown Denver’s A.T. Lewis Building (with upper-story loft housing) typifies the economic resurgence generated by the reuse of once dormant historic buildings.

Downtown Denver: A Showplace

Lower Downtown Denver, or “LoDo,” offers an appealing mix of housing, shopping, and entertainment in a 25-block area of warehouses and small commercial structures built between 1870 and 1920. Over the last decade, the district has attracted more than \$120 million in private investment, spurred by tax incentives and a low-interest loan pool for building and streetscape improvements. Vacancy rates have fallen from 40 percent in 1988 to 7 percent today with downtown boasting a 20 percent population increase since 1980. But, it wasn’t always that way for LoDo.

LoDo, a warehouse district around Denver’s Union Station, served as a bustling commercial area during Denver’s early boom years. After World War II and during the height of urban renewal, one-fifth of the area’s building stock was demolished. In order to halt this on-going demolition and preserve the historic character of the area, preservation advocates successfully persuaded the Denver City Council to create the Lower Downtown Historic District in 1988.

A combination of historic district zoning, infrastructure improvements, and a revolving loan fund (which included National Trust National

Preservation Loan Fund support) administered by Historic Denver and the Downtown Denver Partnership generated such activity that Lower Downtown led downtown Denver out of a recession by 1990. Today, most of its 131 historic buildings have been rehabbed for uses that include 550 housing units, 60 restaurants, 40 art galleries, and other retail businesses, hotels, and professional offices. With only a handful of the historic buildings not already rehabbed, developers are now focusing on compatible new construction to replace surface parking lots. In fact, more than \$125 million in new infill projects is under construction in LoDo. ...

Chicago: Technology Starts-up Downtown

Beginning in 1997, with approval of landmark designation of more than 30 historic buildings in downtown Chicago, Mayor Richard M. Daley has put the City of Chicago in the driver’s seat, by investing city resources into a preservation-based renewal strategy.

Project developers are receiving city subsidies through permit fee waivers, tax increment financing, class-L property tax relief, and preservation easements. In addition, they are taking advantage of their buildings’ historic

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This is the second special issue of *PHLF News* that the Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation is publishing in response to the issues surrounding the proposed redevelopment of the Fifth-Forbes corridor. We thank Lisa Burcham of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Terry A. Necciai, architect and preservation consultant, and Gary Carlough of EDGE Architecture for contributing articles to this edition compiled by Barry Hannegan.

status to apply for federal tax credits. Some two dozen rehabilitation projects are underway in the East Loop—Chicago’s historic retail core—a diverse downtown neighborhood which brings together businesses, academic and cultural institutions, large and small retailers, restaurants, hotels, and homes. More than 15 historic buildings, previously Class B or C office buildings, are now being converted to housing or hotels. Notable examples include Daniel Burnham’s historic Reliance Building with a new life as a 122-room hotel and the Fisher Building, converting to rental housing. Additionally, the Carson, Pirie, Scott and Company Building, Chicago’s famed department store, is undergoing a conversion of its

(continued on page 20)



Join Landmarks for free walking tours of the Fifth-Forbes area



Every Thursday, May 4 through September 28
Meet at 12 Noon, at the clock in Market Square

Take a closer look at the richly diverse commercial architecture from 1875 to 1940 that is being threatened by Urban Retail Properties’ plan for the Fifth-Forbes area.

Thanks to the corporate sponsorship of CB Richard Ellis/Pittsburgh, Landmarks also will lead a series of noontime Wednesday walking tours—free to members (\$3.00 for non-members)—June 7 through September 27. Tours feature Grant Street and Mellon Square; Wood Street, Market Square, and PPG Place; and the Penn-Liberty Cultural District. Call (412) 471-5808 for further details, or visit our website at www.phlf.org

CB Richard Ellis



Come again?

The Office of the Mayor has just published the *Pittsburgh Economic Development Report*. On page six these words about the Mellon Bank Building at Fifth Avenue and Smithfield Street occur: *The May Company is refurbishing an elegant bank hall, distinguished by massive Italian marble columns, to house a one-of-a-kind Lord & Taylor store.*

THE TRUTH IS that the May Company has destroyed the elegant banking hall, smashed the Italian marble, and inserted four entire floors for retail in the once grand space.

PHLF News is published four times each year for the members of the Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation, a non-profit historic preservation organization serving Allegheny County. Landmarks is committed to neighborhood restoration and historic property preservation; public advocacy; historic landscape preservation; and education and membership programs. Special issues, devoted to a particular theme or program area, are published on occasion.

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Fifth-Forbes

As Proposed by Ehrenkrantz

On February 2, Stan Eckstut presented his plan to City Council members who have the ability to amend the Urban Retail Properties (URP) proposal for the Fifth-Forbes corridor. We publish here the introductory text to his Pittsburgh Analysis document, along with several plans from the document.

This proposal is based on the initial plan provided to the City by Urban Retail Properties. That plan called for the complete razing of all or part of eight blocks in the downtown area containing an exceptional number of historically significant structures. The development philosophy embodied in Urban Retail’s plan would produce an entirely new zone of the downtown containing a rather humdrum mix of national retail and entertainment venues. A number of the tenants originally proposed by URP have recently filed for bankruptcy. Landmarks questions the appropriateness of the City’s



reliance on URP since that group is known only for its creation and management of shopping malls, usually in suburban locations. Their officials have repeatedly referred to their Pittsburgh plan as a mall; certainly it is based on the “dumbell” concept used by malls: have a major department store anchoring each end of a linear deployment of shops and eateries.

Mr. Eckstut’s plan is based on a preservation

oriented re-working of the URP design. He recommends the placing of a putative Nordstrom’s in the block containing Warner Centre, and he would put the multi-screen movie facility on top of the store, an arrangement that he in fact created in Indianapolis, with the full cooperation of both the Nordstrom and AMC groups. He posits the creation of a new Market Hall on Market Square, providing us once again with the opportunity to buy fresh, high-quality food downtown, and caps this new-old building with a community space or an indoor skating rink, à la Rockefeller Center. He also introduces some 800 apartments into the area by using the upper floors of existing historical buildings and constructing three new medium-rise apartment towers above new retail construction. He produced a vital, electric image of the revived center of the city, a marked improvement over URP’s stolid, conventional series of blockbusters.

Development Plan

Eckstut & Kuhn Architects

THE MAYOR OF THE CITY OF PITTSBURGH unveiled a plan for the rejuvenation of downtown retail centered on the Fifth-Forbes corridor. The plan calls for the demolition of approximately 64 buildings [the actual revised count is 77], the removal of 125 businesses, a total rebuilding partly in pseudo-historic styles and the installation of national retailers throughout the area. The project would be anchored by an AMC theatre complex on one end and an additional department store, possibly Nordstrom's, on the other end. In 1998, a developer was selected, Urban Retail Properties of Chicago, a subsidiary of Urban Shopping Centers, Inc., and planning proceeded with no public participation.

The preservation community made available information regarding the significance of the buildings and facades in the area and repeatedly asked to work with the Mayor's office and the developer for implementing the plan. The requests went unheeded.

After repeatedly trying to enter into discussions, the Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation commissioned Ehrenkrantz Eckstut & Kuhn to look at the area and develop, on a very accelerated schedule, a possible plan that respected the history, architecture, and business of the area. This firm was selected because of its vast experience in working on major urban revitalization projects across the country (for example: Pasadena, Santa Monica, Long Beach, Kansas City, Houston, Indianapolis, Newark, Brooklyn) and because the principals were already familiar with Pittsburgh. The firm had done the master plan for Phase II of Station Square, which had been universally approved at public hearings and adopted by the City of Pittsburgh. The firm also had done early planning for the Heinz History Center and the restoration of Rodef Shalom Synagogue.

The process opened up with public meetings to provide the principals with ideas and recommendations from Pittsburghers. Over 250 people attended the two meetings. Following that, a public meeting was held in which Ehrenkrantz Eckstut & Kuhn presented their preliminary ideas and obtained public reaction. A final public hearing was held for the presentation of the outline plan. At that presentation, the speakers from the audience were enthusiastic about the plan. There are salient differences between the Urban Retail Properties and the Ehrenkrantz Eckstut & Kuhn plans, but there are grounds for hope for arriving at a compromise plan. The preservation community has indicated a continuing willingness to work with the Mayor's office on trying to formulate that compromise. We have also recommended that the members of the City Planning Commission and City Council tour other cities and invite representatives of other cities to gather more experience and that they see the models of many downtown revitalization projects that have been developed in the Ehrenkrantz Eckstut & Kuhn office in New York.

We have also recommended that additional major developers be invited to examine the plans and enter into negotiations with the City to implement them; the City can then determine which developer's program is the most attractive.

The first two steps of the Fifth-Forbes program have already been implemented by the Mayor's office. The opening of the Lazarus department store was step one at a public cost estimated to be nearly \$50 million. Although no sales numbers are available to the taxpayers who invested in it, the store does not yet appear to be popular. The second step was the sale of the Mellon Bank building to Lord & Taylor, a division of the May Company, which proceeded to destroy one of the most magnificent interiors in Pittsburgh in order to insert a four-story department store. This tragic loss was not necessary; Lord & Taylor could have utilized the Frank and Seder Building across from Kaufmann's, which was built to house a department store and is now an office building, or it could have built a new structure across from Lazarus.

Because of the negative character of these first two steps on the Fifth-Forbes project, we believe that this third and final step requires a great deal of public participation and study, and we offer this proposal to expand the conversation. More proposals would be welcome in this process so that we in Pittsburgh obtain a development that is sensitive to its site, to our history, and to our property owners and existing merchants. We seek a plan that retains and uses the best of historic design while inspiring the best of the twenty-first century design for new buildings in order to encourage the development's greatest economic longevity. We also emphasize an ingredient missing in the Urban Retail Plan: housing.

Our proposal for the renewal of the Fifth-Forbes corridor addresses a number of significant issues. We envision a re-invigorated city core which will offer a wide mix of retail and entertainment attractions achieved by preserving the unique architectural character of the district and exploiting it to attain the maximum visual, commercial, and physical richness essential to the urban experience. While addressing the parking requirements of such an intensely visited area, we have sought to provide a fuller and more varied pedestrian experience. In particular, we propose the initiative of new pedestrian ways that will link the Cultural District to the Fifth-Forbes corridor. We also see the possibility of introducing a significant volume of residential facilities into the district as another means of creating the dense, vital mix essential to this type of redevelopment. Our goal is the creation of a vivid, unique urban heart that will draw visitors not only from the Pittsburgh region but from the nation as well.

Pittsburgh's existing historic core offers a unique, one-of-a-kind urban experience; if preserved, it will be a great destination in its own right while helping to reward present and future investments in the primary retail corridor along Smithfield Street and in the emerging district and the adjacent office buildings.

The varied and small-scaled street scene creates a pedestrian-friendly environment offering many shopping choices and an abundance of visual interest in its ground floors, corners, and rooftops. The buildings are often historical and of striking design, and are particularly suited to distinguish one business enterprise from another. The more of these preserved, the greater the value of the whole.

What is less likely to remain is total individual ownership of these buildings. It is sometimes necessary to combine buildings to achieve larger floor plates for tenants, and to create flexibility by bringing related types of tenants together. Leasing flexibility is key to a project's success; most of the buildings in the district need to be seen as a part of the whole and be brought together in a coordinated merchandising plan. Rather than being bought out, owners might be given a pro rata ownership share in the development. If they can remain independent, grants for restoration could be made by the City provided owners and tenants join the leasing and merchandising program.

The ground floors are important; smaller retail stores with sidewalk entrances are preferred. In some cases, larger tenants will be two-level stores with ground-floor entries. Where larger stores are needed, redundant existing ground-level entrances will be altered. Existing store windows, however, should be maintained. No common outdoor areas are needed or desired. Existing shops and additional locally owned shops will be encouraged as well as new national retailers.

Cinemas need larger floor plates than are available at ground level. The entrance to a cinema can be at ground level, with a very prominent, highly visible presence, while the theatres are on a higher floor, accessible by escalator.

Parking is an integral part of the plan. Parking needs to be convenient, visible, and of sufficient quantity to meet market demands. During normal office hours, retail shops and restaurants will rely on the workers downtown. These customers have their parking needs satisfied by their own office tenancies. Parking for traditional daytime shopping will be harder to come by, and cannot be competitive with suburban shopping malls. Residential parking is proposed below the residential sites.

Large open spaces such as squares and plazas are of limited use for retailing and restaurants because open space makes retail appear to be spread too far apart. This can defeat the qualities of density and convenience which help create the appeal of coming downtown.

It is virtually impossible to window shop by looking across broad spaces as compared, say, with walking down either side of a traditional retail street. One idea to be considered for Pittsburgh is refilling Market Square with a significant public building, which would recall the Market House that existed on this site for much of the twentieth century. This new structure would house a traditional food market at street level with one or two upper levels housing a festival hall for concerts and meetings and possibly a year round skating rink, and an open air space looking toward the Monongahela River and Mt. Washington, available to the public. Whatever its myriad of uses, the new building, a true Pittsburgh Pavilion for all the City, should be a great design, the new Pittsburgh's reply to H. H. Richardson's Courthouse. This would still allow the streets to function, as they always have, and outdoor seating can still be available outside along the perimeter of the building.

The connection to Heinz Hall and the Cultural District is very important to future restaurants and shops seeking to attract theatre goers. The connection has to be obvious (not subtle), very welcoming, and as accessible as possible. The walking distances in fact are very short, and only the lack of direct sight-lines currently prevents these two adjacent areas from being linked in a complementary, mutually supportive fashion.

A series of pedestrian arcades, which revive and enlarge on a Pittsburgh tradition, will knit together major areas of the Downtown and will serve to entice the pedestrian to explore more fully the attractions that the combined districts will offer.

Last but not least, we suggest adding as many as 825 new residential apartments to the district. This will occur on the upper floors of retained buildings and in two new large sites fronting on Forbes. The new residential buildings would also have stores and active ground floors. Auto arrival and parking would be individual to each, with access from Fourth. The new buildings would generally be low-rise and obviously contemporary, have internal private courtyards, and would breathe exciting new life into the mixed-use downtown. One of the new structures could also serve as a small hotel. The program requires the retention and restoration of the best historic buildings and facades. New ones must exhibit excellent and creative contemporary design. Diversity and creativity must provide the foundations of this project, and the historic traditions of use, street patterns, and scale must be reflected in it and furthered by it.

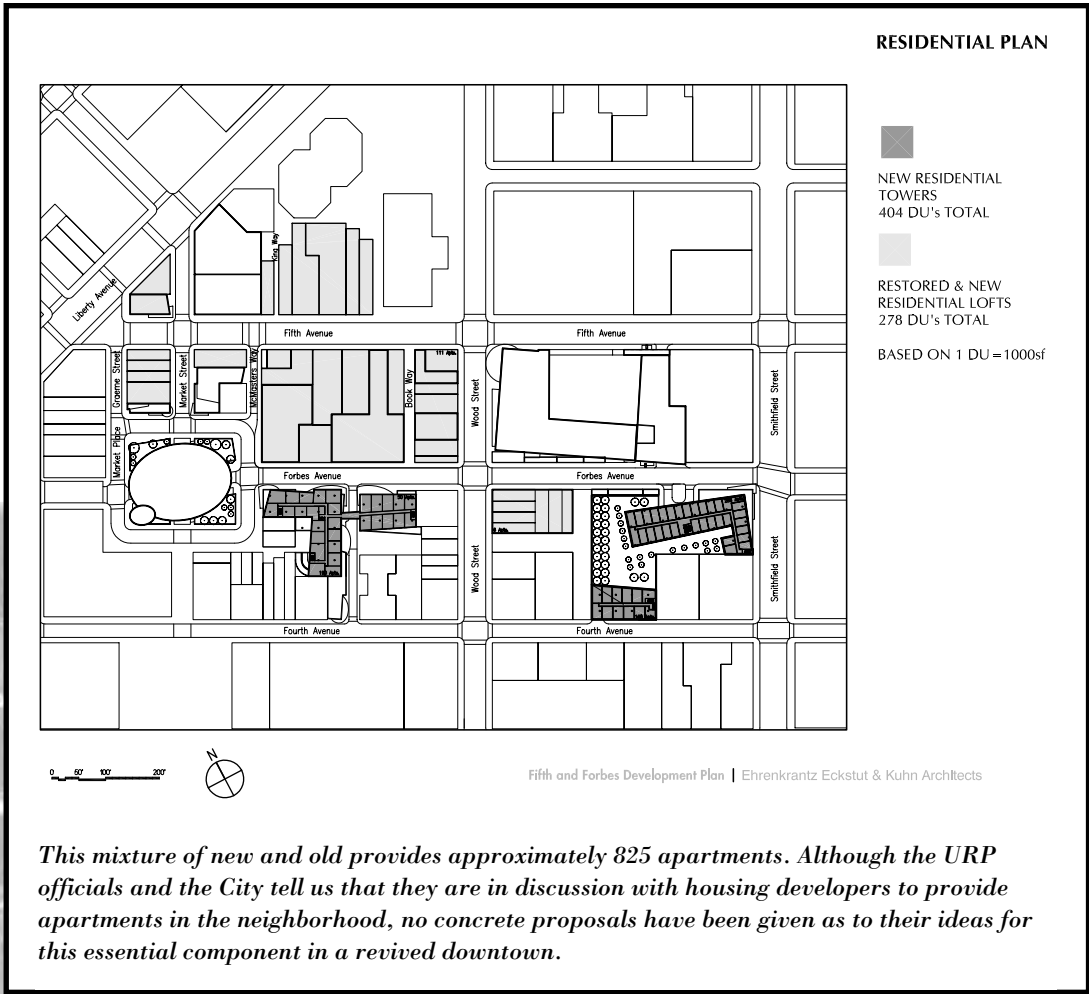
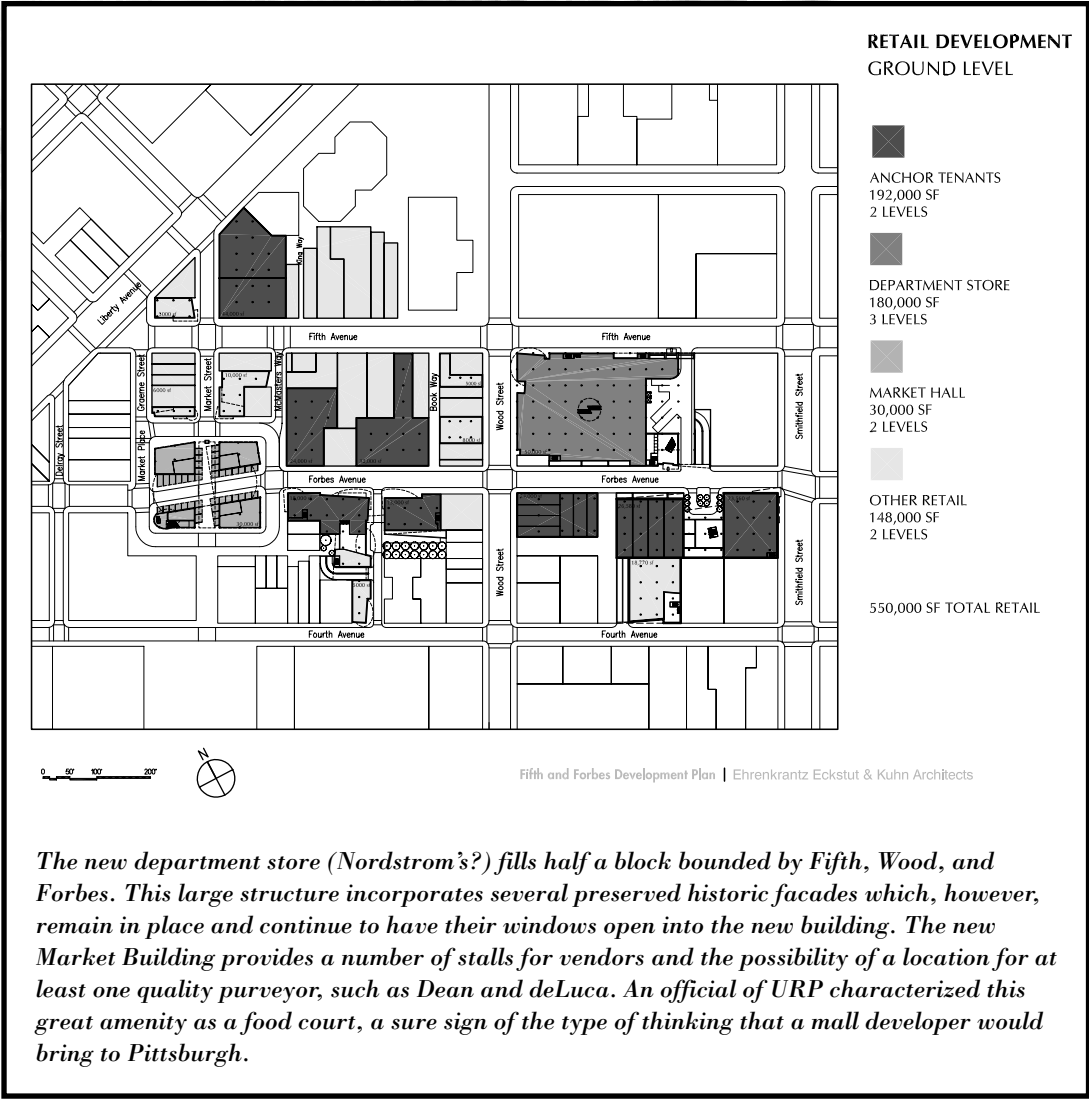
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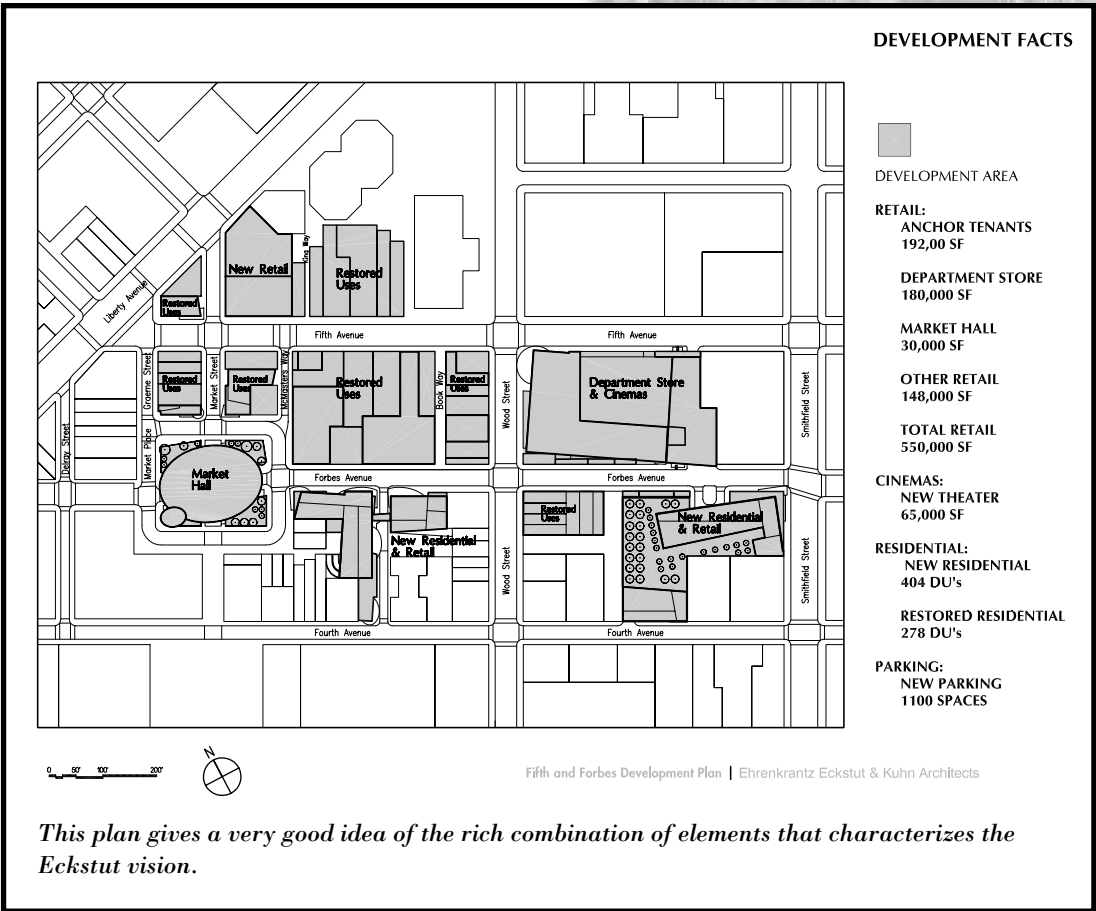
Fifth-Forbes Development Plan

As Proposed by Ehrenkrantz Eckstut & Kuhn Architects (continued from page 3)

Summary of Pittsburgh Analysis Design Principles

1. Retain unique historical fabric.
2. Add residential and hotel uses.
3. Fifth Avenue is the traditional shopping street, linking to and supporting Smithfield Street.
4. Forbes/Market/Market Square are new entertainment/lifestyle streets.
5. Market Square is the Market Hall/Restaurant Row Anchor.
6. A public amenity above the Market Hall.
7. Cinema/Department Store (and parking) on the block between Fifth, Forbes, Wood and Smithfield.
8. Maintain the maximum number possible of historical buildings.
9. Add new thru-block streets and arcades to connect to surrounding downtown area.
10. New buildings to be contemporary design.
11. Utilize historic preservation tax credits.



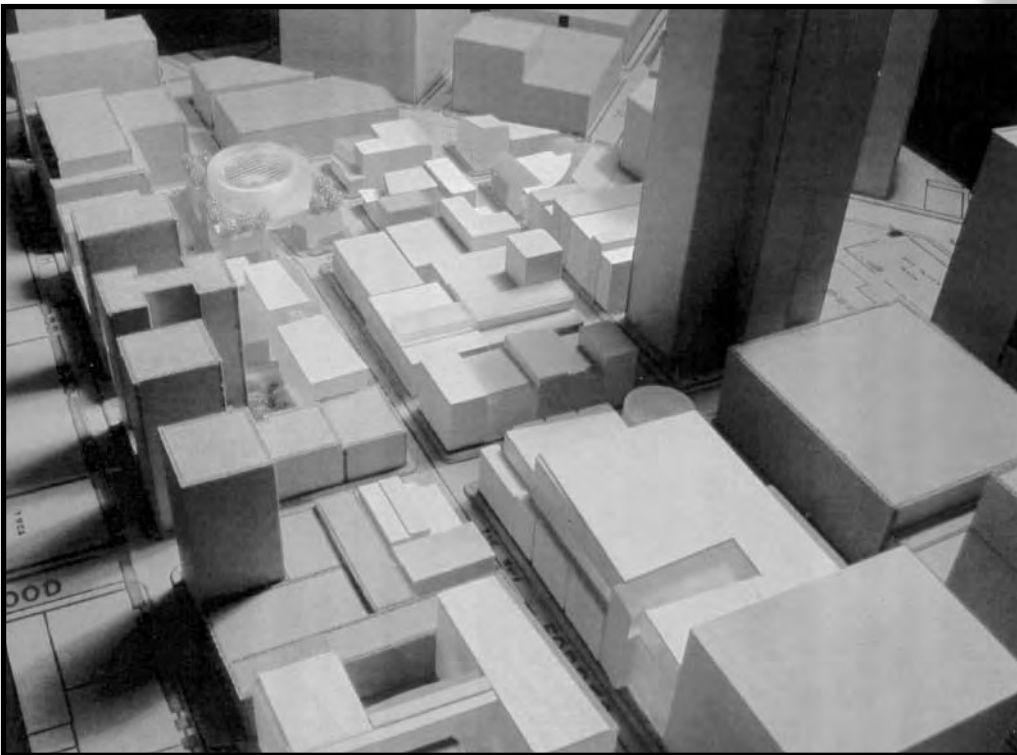
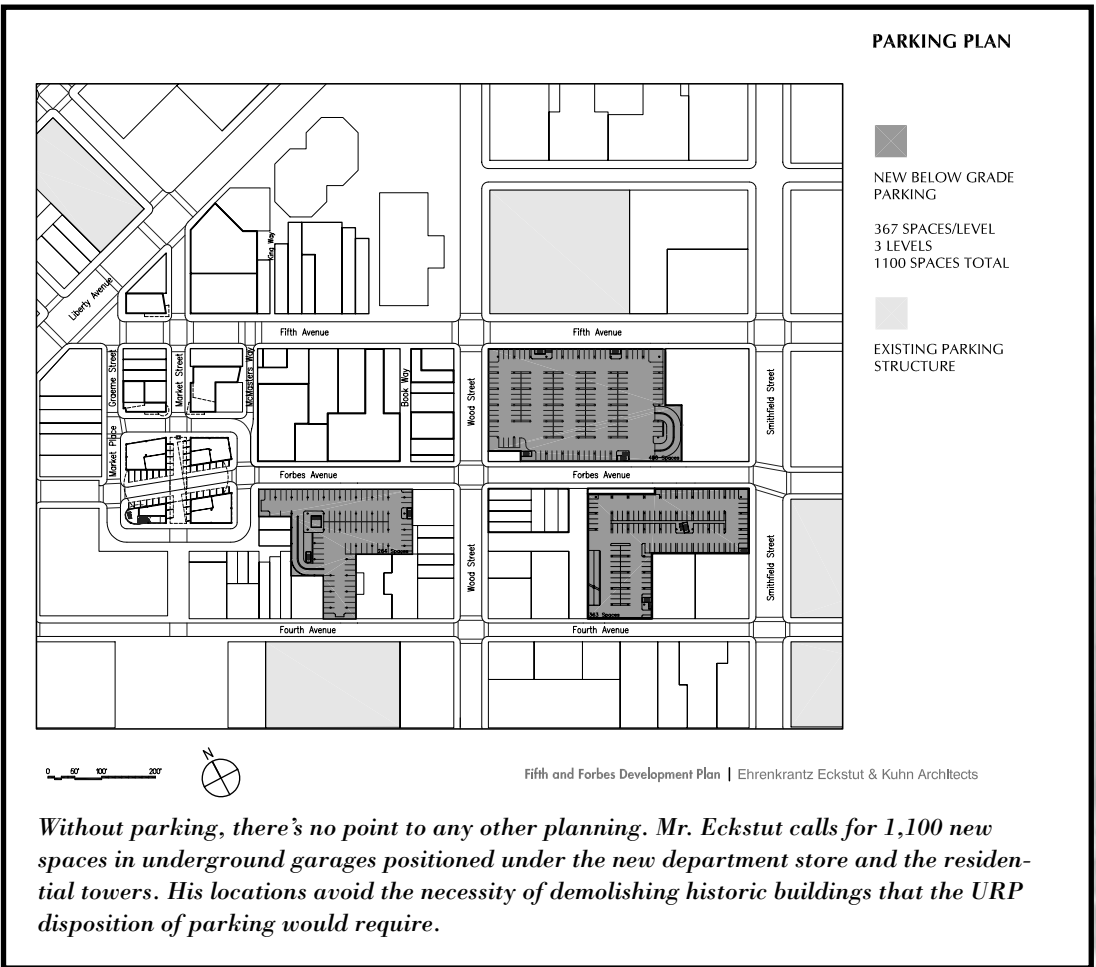


“More proposals would be welcome in this process so that we in Pittsburgh obtain a development that is sensitive to its site, to our history, and to our property owners and



existing merchants. We seek a plan that retains and uses the best of historic design while inspiring the best of the twenty-first century design for new buildings...”

Ehrenkrantz Eckstut & Kuhn



Bird’s-eye view of the scale model of the revised and revived Fifth-Forbes corridor. The large, low block toward the bottom center of the photograph is the combined bulk of a new department store and the superincumbent cinema complex. Just to its left is a new apartment building. In the upper left corner is the airy oval pavilion enclosing the skating rink above Market Square and its revived markets.

The Crux of the Matter

Barry Hannegan

The National Trust for Historic Preservation has prepared its annual list of the 11 most threatened historic sites in the nation. Sadly for us, Pittsburgh is included in this shameful roster, as a direct consequence of Mayor Murphy’s plan for the redevelopment of the Fifth-Forbes corridor with its concomitant demolition of most of eight blocks of the heart of the city. True it is that the plan put forth by Urban Retail Properties of Chicago includes the pious intention of preserving as many as two buildings and a rough dozen facades, but nowhere is there a guarantee of anything being saved; it’s all contingent on structural and economic feasibility.

In the National Trust’s review process for their List of Eleven, they examine the threats and the significance of the sites. Among the material they reviewed in regard to Pittsburgh appeared the following statement:

The essential preservation issue is the impending loss of an entire downtown district to demolition for the sake of massive redevelopment on the model of the great, wholesale destruction characteristic of urban renewal of the 1950s and 1960s. The Fifth-Forbes district is architecturally distinguished by at least three prevailing characteristics. It contains an extremely high concentration of white or ivory glazed terra cotta facades of the period 1900–1930; these confer a perceptibly festive air to the entire

district, and are, moreover, uniformly fine examples of their type. The district contains all of the downtown’s Art Deco commercial architecture, all of which is slated for demolition. These buildings are, again, of real design merit, and they offer an essential contrast with the more luxurious corporate Art Deco embodied in the Gulf Tower and Koppers Building elsewhere in the downtown. A surprisingly large number of the district’s structures incorporate Classical Orders, at a great range of scale, and the variations on the Classical vocabulary provide a pervasive and distinguishing design quality for this area of the downtown. The district is noteworthy for containing the only two examples of the Arts and Crafts aesthetic in the downtown and also for several groups of cast iron facades, which are the oldest elements surviving in the area. The district has no counterpart in the entire downtown area of the city.

It is worth recalling that many of these buildings stand within the Market Square Historic District and have already been recognized by successive City administrations as historic and cultural monuments, assets to the district and to the downtown.

Watch the History Channel on June 26; but check the date because it was tentative at the time of printing. Fifth-Forbes might be featured on “America’s Most Endangered.”

Economics of Preservation

Financial and economic viability of preservation is utterly essential to any reasonable, successful program of retaining older, historic buildings. The National Trust for Historic Preservation is, of course, well aware of this fact, and it has marshaled information that allows a better understanding of the argument about building preservation, an argument that is fundamental to the discussion currently going on throughout Pittsburgh in regard to the redevelopment of the Fifth-Forbes corridor.

Among the data collected by the National Trust, the following excerpts are eloquent.

From *The Economics of Historic Preservation*, published by the National Trust, in 1994:

Three principles have emerged over the past 20 years. These may be summarized thus.

- 1) When complete renovation is required, it is usually possible to build something new that is cheaper. But that something will almost inevitably be a structure of vastly lower quality and shorter life expectancy than the quality rehabilitation of a historic structure.*
- 2) When the cost of a high quality new building is compared to the quality rehabilitation of a historic structure—even considering the costs of complying with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation—the high quality new building will generally be more expensive.*
- 3) While sometimes more expensive and sometimes less expensive, historic preservation—square foot for square foot—is nearly always a cost-competi-*

tive alternative. The National Trust, the Urban Land Institute, the Department of Commerce, the Department of the Interior, the Institute for Health Planning, and others have conducted a broad spectrum of studies on the cost of rehabilitation versus new construction. Construction cost manuals also provide line by line item comparisons for rehabilitation and new construction. While any single project will vary in some ways, a consistent pattern emerges. If no demolition is required, a major commercial rehabilitation will probably cost from 12 percent less to 9 percent more than the cost of comparable new construction, with a typical cost savings of about 4 percent. If, on the other hand, a new construction project includes the cost of razing an existing building, the cost savings from rehabilitation should range from 3 to 16 percent.

From *Economic Impacts of Historic Preservation*, published by the New Jersey Historic Trust, in 1997:

Every \$1 million spent on non-residential historic rehabilitation creates two jobs more than the same money spent on new construction. It also generates \$79,000 more in income, \$13,000 more in taxes, and \$111,000 in wealth.

From *Virginia’s Economy and Historic Preservation*, published by the Preservation Alliance of Virginia, in 1995:

Each million dollars spent on rehabilitation will create 3.4 more jobs and add \$53,000 more to household incomes than will the same amount spent on new construction.

Turning Our Back on Tax Credits

Elisa J. Cavalier

I find it curious: The Internal Revenue Service offers developers a financial incentive to restore historic buildings—the Rehabilitation Investment Tax Credit program (RITC). Yet, when it comes to the Fifth-Forbes project, Pittsburgh’s mayor and Urban Retail Properties do not seem to be interested. The Fifth-Forbes project could be eligible; millions of dollars could be saved; and, in major American cities across the nation, retailers are “fitting” into historic buildings.

The Rehabilitation Investment Tax Credit program (informally known as historic tax credits) is the federal government’s incentive to persuade people to restore historic buildings. Under RITC, certain expenses incurred in connection with the rehabilitation of an old building are eligible for a tax credit (not a deduction, but a dollar-for-dollar credit against the amount of taxes you owe Uncle Sam on your federal return). There are, in fact, two rates; 20% of eligible costs for a historic building and 10% for a non-historic, pre-1936 building.

To be eligible for the 20% tax credit:

- The building must be listed in the National Register of Historic Places, either individually or as a contributing building within a historic district.
- The rehabilitation work itself must be undertaken according to the Secretary of the Interior’s *Standards for Rehabilitation*.
- The rehabilitation work must be substantial and cost at least \$5,000.
- After the rehabilitation, the building must be owned by the same owner and operated as an income-producing property for five years. The RITC is also available to certain long-term lessees of income-producing property. (The RITC is not available for the rehabilitation of primary residences.)

There is paperwork to complete and the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the National Park Service review the project, but the SHPO also provides ongoing technical assistance to the developer.

The eligibility requirements for the 10% credit are different from those listed above. There is less paperwork, and the SHPO and the National Park Service do not review the project. However, the historic (20%) and non-historic (10%) tax credits are mutually exclusive. Which credit applies depends on the building, not the owner’s preference.

Since a large segment of the Fifth-Forbes project area is in both the local Market Square Historic District and the National Register Eligible District, Urban Retail Properties could consider using the 20% historic RITC. On a

\$480.5 million project that has budgeted \$336 million for construction costs, the savings could be substantial. Furthermore, the \$13 million in demolition costs to be paid by the City of Pittsburgh under the current plan could be drastically reduced.

This tax credit program has been used with great success nationwide. In the 1980s, Pittsburghers completed 275 projects—mostly on the North Side—using RITC. In the 1990s, however, only 33 Pittsburgh projects utilized the program. Recently, several high profile,



The Duquesne Market (left) and Bessemer and Natatorium Buildings (far right), shown in this postcard of c. 1915, are no longer standing. But the Fulton Building (center) and Gayety Theater (now the Byham) still face Fort Duquesne Boulevard and the Allegheny River. The Fulton Building is now being renovated for use as a four-star hotel. Landmarks commissioned and paid for several feasibility studies for the building and brought one of the partners to town. For further information see page 13, “The Architecture.”

high-ticket downtown projects in Pittsburgh have or are utilizing historic preservation tax credits: namely the Bruno Building (residential lofts); the Fulton Building (a four-star Marriott Hotel); and the old Gimbel’s building (commercial space).

Pittsburgh is lagging behind other cities that are using the federal tax credit to their advantage. For example, St. Louis is undergoing a \$250 million downtown revitalization project. McCormack Baron & Associates, the project developer, is using both state and federal historic tax credits and expects to save \$50 million. Denver and Chicago have done similar revitalization projects in their downtowns and the developers in each instance used the RITC. In the 1990s, there were 183 tax credit projects worth \$910 million done in Philadelphia (compared to Pittsburgh’s 33 projects valued at \$59.7 million).

The Fifth-Forbes project contains 77 buildings (NOT the “62” that is erroneously but repeatedly reported in the papers: there are 62 parcels). A majority of these buildings are located in a historic district. Why should taxpayers help to pay to (1) buy the buildings, (2) move out the tenants and (3) demolish the buildings so that Urban Retail Properties can have vacant land on which to build? Why not find a developer willing to use the RITC to restore the buildings, pocket the 20% tax credit, reduce the taxpayers’ contribution and, most importantly, save the Italianate, Classical, Art Deco and Gothic Revival buildings in the Fifth-Forbes corridor?

The National Trust Offers Assistance

On January 18, 2000 Richard Moe wrote the following letter to Mayor Murphy.

Dear Mayor Murphy:

I am writing on behalf of the National Trust for Historic Preservation regarding your administration's recently announced plan for Market Place at Fifth & Forbes in the Market Square Historic District. We recognize and understand the City's desire to bring more people and increased economic vitality downtown, but we do not believe it is necessary to destroy the Fifth & Forbes area in order to save it.



The National Trust was chartered by Congress in 1949 as the private-sector leader of America's preservation movement. Through education, advocacy and assistance, we fight to save historic buildings and the neighborhoods and landscapes they anchor, to revitalize communities and to challenge citizens to develop sensible plans for the future. Fifty years of experience in working with hundreds of communities to bring new life to deteriorated neighborhoods has convinced us that preserving older buildings and developing new uses for them can be an effective catalyst for economic revitalization without sacrificing the community's historic character.

Our National Main Street Center has used historic preservation as a tool to help revitalize historic commercial districts in approximately 1,500 communities since 1980, with results so successful that the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has hailed the program as the most effective economic development effort in the nation. Pittsburgh's own East Carson Street area is a perfect example of the success of the Main Street approach. The lesson to be learned from East Carson Street—and from similarly revitalized areas in cities and towns from coast to coast—is both simple and powerful: Retaining and capitalizing on the historic buildings and unique character of the Market Square Historic District offers a greater opportunity for sound, sustainable revitalization than does an “urban renewal”-style approach that destroys that character for an insensitive mega-development that relies on national chain retailers to attract people.

Cities all over America—places as diverse as Denver, St. Paul, Memphis, even Los Angeles—are showcasing preservation as the centerpiece of innovative, successful revitalization efforts. The National Trust is eager to work with you, the Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation and other interested parties in any way we can to develop an alternative vision for Fifth & Forbes. Pittsburgh has won a well-deserved national reputation for bringing rebirth to historic residential neighborhoods such as Manchester and the Mexican War Streets. It would be a great tragedy—not only for Pittsburgh but also for everyone who cares about the preservation of our heritage—if that same innovative spirit were not given an opportunity to work its magic in the Market Square area as well.

I would be happy to meet with you if it would help to resolve this important issue.

With all best wishes.

Sincerely,

Richard Moe

cc: Members of the City Council
Arthur Ziegler, Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation
Brenda Barrett, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission
Susan Shearer, Preservation Pennsylvania

From Our E-mail Readers

John DeSantis, chairman of the Pittsburgh Historic Review Commission, has turned the city ordinance establishing the historic design and preservation guidelines of this commission inside out and topsy turvy. His reasoning for voting for the demolition of practically every historically significant building within the Fifth and Forbes project is straight out of Alice in Wonderland.

—Charlene Thomas,
Pittsburgh

I commend you for the wonderful Fifth and Forbes Alternative Redevelopment Plan—I was born in Pittsburgh, and it makes me very happy to see a group that not only talks about preservation, but also takes action. Your ideas are positive, and your concern for the human and historical tone of future growth certainly puts the Mayor's plan to shame!

—Alan Rowe,
West Virginia

The proposal sounds like an old fashioned 60's style urban renewal effort...an approach that has largely—and justly—been discredited.

—John and Eileen Yago,
Bethesda, Maryland

I applaud your efforts to protect the Market Square Historic District and to develop positive alternatives that seek to preserve and promote Pittsburgh's proud heritage.

—Dave Hurst, Editor of
Westsylvania Magazine,
Hollidaysburg

I certainly support the re-use of existing buildings. Before coming here in early 1997, I spent 17 years in Boston, where they have pretty much perfected the concept of retaining anything old while encouraging commercial development downtown.

—David Brown, President,
Zelton Altamira,
RIDC Park

The Four Stanzas of Our Battle Hymn

The Main Street Approach

Terry A. Necciai

A group of merchants and property owners in the Fifth-Forbes corridor recently formed the Golden Triangle Community Development Corporation. They are embracing the Main Street revitalization strategy, a formula proven nationwide for significantly improving historic business districts with minimal loss of established businesses and existing buildings.

The battle cry of the Main Street Program is short and easy to remember. It is called “The Four Point Approach”: organization, promotion, design, and economic restructuring. Behind these four concepts is all the complexity of a vital central business district (CBD). Yet the summary is simple. Memorize it, and it will guide you if you are interested in seeing revitalization in your CBDs.

Organization means there must be an organized strategy that has an active organization at the center (usually a new non-profit group). The non-profit group must give all the players, especially all the small businesses and property owners, seats at the table. It must also represent the CBD in competition with outlying business areas. Chambers of Commerce once had this role, but most regionalized in the late twentieth century, an appropriate move for them. Since malls and large corporations are now Chamber members, Chambers can not be the sole promoters of downtown businesses that compete with businesses that are not downtown.

Organization also means having organized committees and a central management approach. The Main Street Program model includes having a Main Street manager. Mall managers can control tenants through leases. Main Street managers rely on persuasion and volunteer participation, often with great success. Most small businesses are hungry to have someone to serve as a community ombudsman;

it is lonely and difficult to steer a small business when you have no way to stay in touch with your neighbors. The Main Street manager can be a master distributor of information and ideas.

Promotion means finding fresh ways to market the business district. Every town has at least one annual parade or festival, but these long-established promotions have lost their connection to small-scale retail. New promotions such as joint advertising, coordinated sales events, and new festivals can provide the means to bring citizens back downtown.

Design means building rehabilitation, but many other things as well. All design activities can be maximized, including graphic design (signs, business cards, menus, etc.), display design, and design of new buildings when they are needed.

Economic restructuring means posturing the business district for success in today’s economy. This includes business planning, business retention and business growth efforts, as well as business recruitment.

The four areas are best handled sequentially. It takes a year to get a new organization up and running. It takes two years to get promotions off the ground (you don’t call anything “annual” until it has succeeded for at least two years). Building rehabilitation projects often require more than two years of planning, especially since a good Main Street manager will work with each owner individually and guide the owners to take most of the initiative themselves. This approach prepares building owners to continue maintaining their buildings on a regular basis. Often the smallest buildings and the smallest businesses take the most planning time.

The Main Street Program was initiated by the National Trust as a “model” program about 1980, as a careful response to problems that had crept up over a half century. By the 1970s, most traditional business districts had lost business to strip malls and enclosed

**The National Trust’s
Main Street strategy
enables merchants
to preserve the vital,
eclectic central business
district and
once again make it
the heart of
the community.**

malls. Most of our “Main Streets,” lined and defined by c. 1850–1920 commercial row buildings, were in dire need of help. Construction of new buildings in the commercial row building tradition stopped around 1930. By 1950, not only was Main Street’s architecture out of fashion, but maintenance had fallen far behind during two World Wars and the Great Depression. After World War II, malls arrived as competitors. Many towns responded by trying to make Main Street look like a mall. Central streets became pedestrian malls—Carnegie and East Liberty are good examples locally. Some places, like Allentown, Pa., decided to build

a roof right over the center of Main Street. Many communities pasted new materials over the peeling traditional facades, making them look dreadfully uniform. Meanwhile, as successful merchants were recruited off Main Street into the malls, the most fiercely independent merchants (and sometimes the weakest merchants) were left with the care of some of our most precious buildings.

The National Trust’s Main Street strategy enables merchants to preserve the vital, eclectic CBD and once again make it the heart of the community.

Revitalization of Pittsburgh’s Fifth-Forbes business district will require a balance of organization, promotion, design, and economics. If our businesses band together, and collect their own resources and not wait for outside help, hire a manager, and go to work, we will see good results. Everyone will benefit from the improvements and coordinated grassroots effort.

Terry A. Necciai is a registered architect retained by the Golden Triangle Community Development Corporation to formulate the Main Street redevelopment strategy.



Downtown's Main Street: a view down Forbes Avenue.

Living with Ghosts

Why We Love Abandoned Buildings

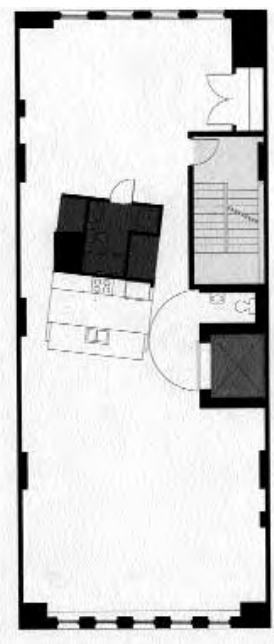
When Landmarks retained Ehrenkrantz Eckstut and Kuhn to amend the redevelopment plan put forward by Mayor Murphy and Urban Retail Properties of Chicago, we realized that significant downtown housing had to be a major ingredient of the new city mix. Accordingly, Landmarks approached EDGE Architecture to develop proposals for the conversion of the upper floors of selected historical buildings in the Fifth-Forbes corridor to loft-style housing. We had been impressed with EDGE's track record in converted housing design and felt that they knew how to realize the great and varied potential of fine old buildings to provide vibrant city living. Gary Carlough of EDGE Architecture shares with us his philosophy of the worth of old, good buildings.

Gary Carlough, EDGE Architecture

Recently, the wholesale destruction of numerous buildings in the Fifth-Forbes corridor has been considered as a means to achieve economic revitalization of the downtown Pittsburgh business district. Few would dispute the benefit of an improved retail district; yet the question arises as to the need for outright removal of such a large number of buildings. The implication is that these buildings are of little value because they are old, underutilized, or even abandoned. In fact, it is important to note that there are very few totally vacant buildings—only five or six—in the Fifth-Forbes corridor.

As architects at EDGE Architecture, we maintain that these old buildings not only hold value but also are highly desirable for re-use as retail shops and urban housing. We believe that these old buildings have the potential to

The floor plan of loft housing at 429 First Avenue shows new construction reduced to a minimum. A single "box" has been inserted into the space, housing the kitchen, bath, and mechanical equipment. The existing elevator has been refurbished to allow direct access to the unit and a new exit stair has been inserted to accommodate building codes.



Here is a view of the bedroom and the "box" at rear left. The texture of the walls and heavy timbers allow "ghosts" of the building's past to live on.

429 First Avenue

project a particular presence, one that is unique and which cannot be duplicated by way of new construction. Old buildings can be more desirable than new buildings.

So...what is it about an old, under-utilized building?

Have you ever returned from a vacation to the eerie sensation that someone has been in your house? You move from room to room checking to see that everything is in its place. You think, "Someone was here, and now they're gone." The further you investigate, you find no physical indication of violation. Yet you wonder, was someone actually here? No, it just feels that way. You have been gone just a short time, but it seems that in your absence your house has been occupied. The space possesses its own essence. There exists in it all of the things that make it what it is. It occupies itself.

An old building's value cannot solely be determined by academic evaluation of its architectural attributes—a cornice, a capital, or dentil molding. There is virtue in the experience of "place" that an old building can provide. Perhaps it has to do with the supernatural influence of inherent and indispensable elements that can be felt and which extend into the future when carefully transformed. We are speaking of the value of experience; the quality of which is shaped by one's perception of a place.

Abandoned buildings establish a potential for pleasure. To appreciate this, we need to consider the meaning of abandonment. A building's presence is projected through our own loss of presence—that somewhat scattered, disconnecting feeling of dislocation. We transcend the limits of our personal space when the character of an aban-

doned place inspires our imagination. Our sense of the present moment is altered as we project our thoughts in an effort to connect to the past. We lose ourselves in a moment of pleasure.

"Someone was here, and now they're gone."

This place had a purpose which it has since lost. The notion of it no longer being "used" presents a sense of emptiness and dis-use...abandonment. Even an abandoned building cannot escape its ties to a sense of purposefulness. It is this connection that provides a singular sense of discovery. The discovery of an abandoned place is about discovering purpose. Vestiges of the building's past imbue the present with meaning, and a strong sense of place.

I was once backpacking in the mountains of Arizona. My intention was to remove myself from the human landscape and enter the "wilderness." I had a need to be alone, to abandon the human world. Out in the Arizona wilderness, I felt that I was where no person had been before. I found a place protected by rock outcroppings and large trees, and made my camp. As I brushed leaves from a spot I chose for my campfire, I unearthed a ring of large smooth stones. The feeling that I was no longer alone immediately overwhelmed me. The realization that someone had been there before drenched me

with a sense of his/her presence. With the discovery of this simple vestige—a ring of stones in the place I chose for my fire—I could feel someone around me. The trace of a previous existence lingered. Someone's ghost lived on.

It wasn't the architectural integrity of that ring of stones that inspired my experience. The existence of a past, the awareness of its absence...ghosts. The discovery of absence allows us to consider the past, and with this reflection, we bring life to our ghosts.

The nature of absence and "dis-use" is what lends confusion to the circumstances at Fifth and Forbes. Some

believe these underutilized buildings have little value, when, it is the fact of their dis-use and abandonment that infuses them with potential. This presence of the past can live on when a building's transformation is sensitive to the ghosts that inhabit it. By sensitively inserting new construction into old buildings, our ghosts will live on. We have a responsibility to refine the sense of place so that the indispensable qualities—the building's essence—are not driven out. By allowing our ghosts to live on, the qualities of our past will bring the pleasure of discovery into the rich fabric of our existence.

This view of the living room shows the character of the unfinished walls of the old warehouse. Traces of paint and signage remain, establishing a connection with the past. The kitchen countertop is in the foreground of the photo.





221 Fifth Avenue

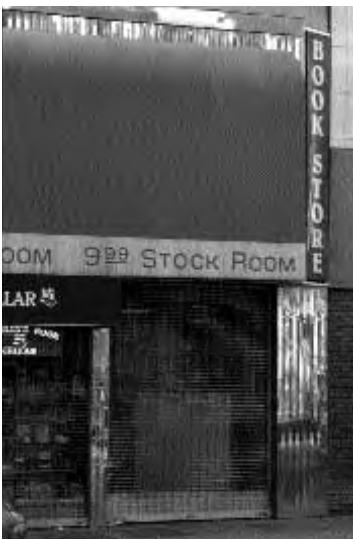


Two Art Deco Commercial Buildings in the Heart of the Triangle

Albert M. Tannler

Jamie Van Trump observed that the technologically innovative and inventively designed buildings of the 1920s and 30s known retrospectively as Art Deco “created the last ornamental style known to Western art by marrying the machine with the old handicraft tradition.”

The Art Deco skyscrapers on Grant Street were designed by architects from Chicago and New York; the Art Deco commercial buildings in or adjacent to the Market Square Historic District in the heart of the Triangle include fine designs by local architects.



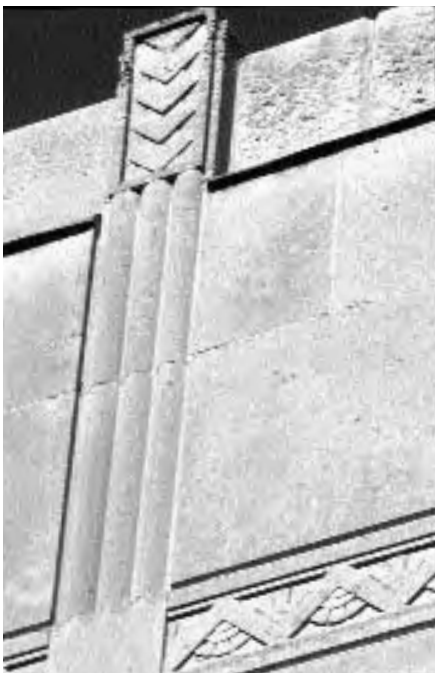
221 Fifth Avenue

Art Deco was a generous style, able to accommodate both traditional and avant-garde forms and materials. At 221 Fifth Avenue—built for Richman Brothers, a national men’s clothier—naturalistic floral designs, Jazz Age geometric patterns, and industrial aluminum appear together. Flowers peep out from under triangles at the top of the building. Below, terra cotta panels of ferns, leaves, and blossoms bloom under the windows. Aluminum pilasters rise out of the sleek first-floor aluminum store front (largely intact but now obscured by a large red awning) and soar up to a crown of terra cotta foliage.

The architect was Robert Maurice Trimble (1871–1966), who was born in Allegheny City, attended Western University of Pennsylvania (now the University of Pittsburgh), apprenticed with local architects, and resided for most of his life in Ben Avon. He designed many residences, the Sarah Heinz House, North Side Unitarian Church, and Perry and Taylor Allderdice High Schools (both on the National Register of Historic Places).

He had something of a national, indeed, international reputation. He served on the Committee on Design of





Deco details at 221 Fifth Avenue.

President Hoover's Housing Conference and designed a series of United States foreign consulates in, among other places, Shanghai, China and Calcutta, India.

Trimble wrote frequently for *The Charette*, the journal of the Pittsburgh Architectural Club. His articles are a window to the architectural profession in Pittsburgh from the 1890s through the years prior to World War II.

G. C. Murphy Company

An equally fine design is the original G. C. Murphy Company store located between Fifth and Forbes Avenues. Today Murphy's occupies several adjacent buildings, built at different times, in different styles, and whose current street numbers can be confusing.

G. C. Murphy Company erected its regional flagship store in 1930 at a cost of \$250,000. The Forbes Avenue façade at 219 is, like the Richman Brothers store, in near original condition from top to bottom.

219 Forbes displays Art Deco terra cotta ornamentation on a buff brick façade. Above the third-floor windows a band of half-circles (the rising sun?) peak out from behind triangles

decorated with cubes and tiny triangles tinted salmon and green. Above, four "frozen" fountains jet upward past the roofline from a bed of lush vegetation. Panels of stylized ferns and flowers dot the façade. A band of geometric ornament and "219" in a jaunty script appear over the original service doorway.

The façade on Fifth Avenue—now the east section of 220 Fifth Avenue—originally looked very much like 219 Forbes. A later remodeling in the Deco style covered the Fifth Avenue façade with salmon-colored tile, painted the ornament white, and a broad undulating salmon-colored tile band tied this building together with its neo-classical partner to the west. This remodeling may have taken place when the older building was acquired or in 1943 after a fire in the store.

G. C. Murphy Company, founded by George Clintock Murphy in McKeesport in 1906, was one of the region's most successful businesses. By 1930 there

were 170 stores in eleven states. At the height of the Depression between 1930 and 1936, Murphy's built some 40 new stores.

The architect for all of these stores was Harold Ellsworth Crosby of McKeesport. H. E. Crosby (1899–1958), a Missouri native, was graduated from Iowa State College in 1922. He joined Murphy's in the late-1920s and became corporate architect, responsible for new design and store remodeling during the 1930s and 40s. From 1947 to 1955 he was vice president, Construction Division. Apparently, Crosby spent his entire career at Murphy's.

In her pioneering 1997 study *America's 5 & 10 Cent Stores: The Kress Legacy*, published by the National Building Museum, Bernice L. Thomas explores the urban commercial architecture created by a nationwide department store chain whose downtown presence and consumer services parallel those of G. C. Murphy Company. Indeed, there are striking parallels between the career of Kress architect Edward F. Sibbert (1899–1982) and H. E. Crosby. Sibbert—who apprenticed in the Florida office of Pittsburgh architect Richard Kiehnel—joined Kress in 1929 and designed some 50 new Art Deco stores and numerous remodelings in the 1930s and 40s. He became vice president, Buildings Division, in 1944, and left the company in 1954. He designed, Thomas writes, "with imagination and creativity to the end of his tenure. No building was without some artistic or intellectual interest, regardless of size."

Thomas explores an important subject hitherto dismissed or overlooked. She writes that "dime-store architecture is not to be equated with dime-store merchandise and thus dismissed as inconsequential. ... Five-and-ten-cent stores fall into a unique category: architect-designed buildings for a single corporate client. Few studies of such buildings exist."

Has Murphy's been overlooked because it is a local firm, and thus considered unimportant or second-rate? I hope not.

Fifteen Kress stores are on the National Register of Historic Places. Although various agencies of the City

of Pittsburgh have dismissed most of the commercial architecture in the heart of the Triangle as second-rate—including the Historic Review Commission which voted to gut the 38-year-old Market Square Historic District—the Federal/State Bureau of Historic Preservation includes the Richman Brothers and G. C. Murphy stores and 36 nearby buildings in a Pittsburgh Downtown Retail Historic District.

Four of the leading 5 & 10-cent stores—Woolworth, McCrory, Murphy, and Kress (established in Nanticoke before moving to Tennessee)—originated in Pennsylvania. These companies employed architects to design handsome, colorful, and innovative Art Deco stores that attracted shoppers and enlivened downtown streets.

In scale, materials, design, and function, the Richman Brothers and G. C. Murphy Company stores are distinguished commercial structures by distinguished Pittsburgh architects.

Portions of this article appeared in Albert M. Tannler, "Take a Closer Look at Art Deco Commercial Architecture in Pittsburgh." Pittsburgh Tribune-Review Focus 25:21 (March 26, 2000), 8–10.



Five-and-ten-cent stores fall into a unique category: architect-designed buildings for a single corporate client. Few studies of such buildings exist.

Bernice L. Thomas



A panel of stylized geometric ferns and flowers on the G. C. Murphy Building.



The plan City Council will vote on calls for the demolition of both G. C. Murphy (above) and 221 Fifth Avenue (opposite page).

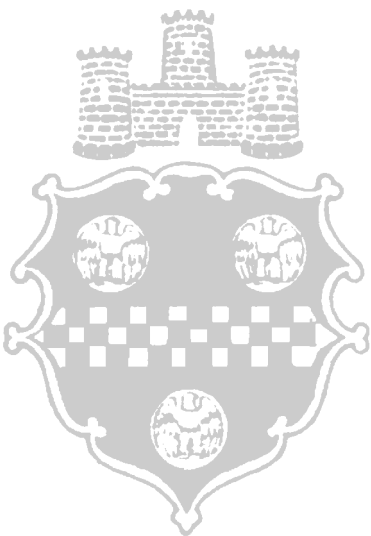
Being Ourselves Downtown

Walter C. Kidney

Chaotic, opportunistic city though Pittsburgh was, archetypical “insensate industrial town” to use Lewis Mumford’s label, Pittsburgh acquired at least the rudiments of a heraldic achievement of arms, an escutcheon and crest based on the arms of William Pitt the Elder, Earl of Chatham. To my knowledge, though, we never created a motto, a statement of what we stand for.

London has *Domine Dirige Nos* (Lord, guide us). Amsterdam has *Heldhaftig Vastberaden Barmhartig* (Heroic, Resolute, Charitable). I suspect—some might disagree—that our motto could be, “We Like It Here.” And if true, that some things that we have been at home with, some buildings and places included, should constitute elements that continue into a developing future.

Pittsburgh is not Charleston, where the city itself is its most notable sales product. But what we are most at home with is most likely, I should think, to appeal to those who might settle here and who might pass the word home if they found things fresh and individual about us, “native” but not pandering.



You Can Help !

Write to Your City Council Representative

Both the *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review* and *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* reported in their March 21 issues that the majority of City Council members would not vote in favor of the Marketplace at Fifth & Forbes Plan, as currently proposed by Mayor Tom Murphy. In his article “Council: Plan must change or die,” Anthony Todd Carlisle of the *Tribune Review* reported the following:

Seven council members—Bob O’Connor, Sala Udin, Valerie McDonald, Alan Hertzberg, Dan Cohen, Barbara Burns and Jim Ferlo—told the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review the current redevelopment plan must change or they would not approve it.

“I don’t think it’s a prudent business deal for taxpayers, and I doubt it will pass,” council President Bob O’Connor said. “Council will not be a rubber stamp for a project that’s this important.”



New Buildings in an Old District

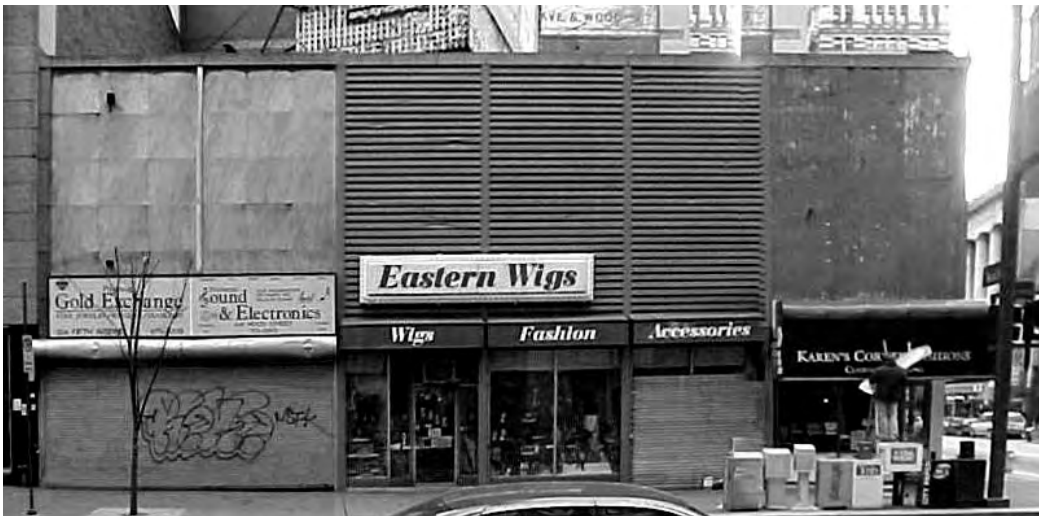
Walter C. Kidney

No matter what happens with the Fifth-Forbes controversy, the district is going to need new construction.

It is hard to put general ideas for this new architecture into words. It should be a positive, bold contribution to the street scene: not fitting between historic facades like dental bridges, not pastiche, not deferential infill. Its architects should have the hope and the intention of surpassing or at least equaling the older architecture in beauty and appropriateness of tone.

The district has known 60 years of Barmecide architecture, new buildings or refrontings that are mute and sullen. Nor is there much anywhere from since 1940 for the downtown visitor to enjoy. We must look back, beyond all the cold white concrete, the anodized aluminum, to the cast-iron palazzi of the 1870s, the vast fenestration and terra cotta of the 1910s, the taciturn Classicism of the 1920s, the flat floridities of the 1930s.

Look to these, but not imitate them. Our time should find its own voice. Materials, technology, and merchandising all may argue against ample fenestration in upper floors. The absence of windows, with the many options of framing them decoratively, may have architects looking for ideas to, say, the lavishly painted facades of Renaissance Germany or to such sculptural compositions as *Regional Patterns*, on the bare side wall of Lubin & Smalley on Market Square.



Modern muteness



More muteness

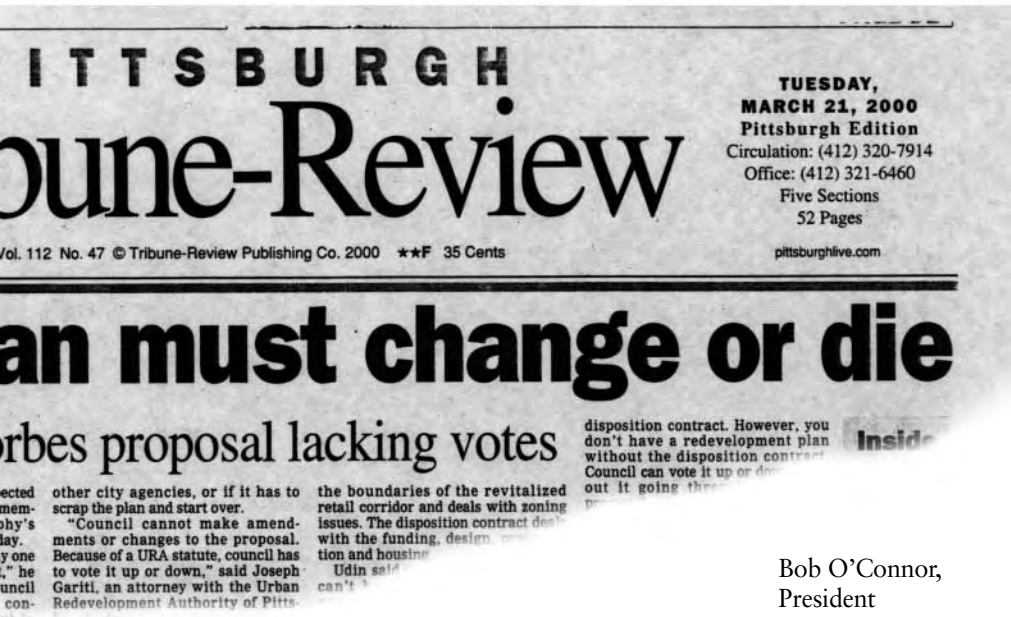


What is left of a cast-iron front, its windows arched for swank.

We can hope for a mix of building uses that promotes a diversity of scale and tone, and serves shoppers, workers, and residents: shops that promise treats within; restaurants that are cozy caves, refuges from the street; places for humble but necessary services and goods; office buildings; apartment buildings: all expressive of their roles and functions. In some, bursts of rich ornamentation, in others, one might say, homeopathic detailing, just enough to

send a good composition in the right direction, give it that little bit of articulation it needs. Over all, a certain light-heartedness, yet never of a sort that patronizes the visitor.

I am not an architect and cannot sketch the sorts of things I mean. I can, however, give a few examples of good and bad from what is in the district now.



At the time *PHLF News* was going to press, City Council was tentatively scheduled to vote on the Mayor’s Fifth-Forbes Plan on May 2. If you have not yet done so, write to your City Council representative and express your comments and concerns.

Bob O’Connor,
President
District #5

Barbara Burns
District #1

Dan Cohen
District #8

Michael Diven
District #4

Jim Ferlo
District #7

Alan Hertzberg
District #2

Valerie McDonald
District #9

Gene Ricciardi
District #3

Sala Udin
District #6

The address for each Council member is:

Office of the City Clerk
510 City County Building
414 Grant Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15219
Fax: (412) 255-2821

Pittsburgh City Council/City Clerk Web Site: www.city.pittsburgh.pa.us

The Architecture

When commercial real estate developers see Pittsburgh, they see magnificent old buildings. Case in point: Denver-based Sage Hospitality Resource’s renovation of the old Fulton Building, at Sixth Street and Fort Duquesne Boulevard, downtown. Sage will spend \$46 million to develop the 14-story dowager, originally developed in 1904 by Henry Phipps, into a boutique hotel.

“We look for large, urban markets that are undertaking a boom,” explains Mike Coolidge, development manager. “The Cultural District location was so unique, and we had a good feeling about what was happening here.”

When complete, the property will be a four-star Marriott property, to open in 2001 as the Fulton Renaissance Hotel. Its lobby lounge will occupy a 40-foot-tall marble-domed space on the main level, with a grand marble stairway sweeping up to meeting spaces, a bar and restaurant.

Coolidge says the convention center and stadium construction bodes well for downtown hotels, but he sees one gap in the downtown scene: housing. Using Denver’s downtown population of about 40,000 as an example, he says that those residents “solidify retail, restaurants, entertainment—the 24-hour city.”

“You’re starting to see some of that in Pittsburgh,” Coolidge notes. “There are great buildings that would make great loft space around Penn and Liberty.”

This is an excerpt, reprinted with permission, from Christine H. O’Toole’s article, “10 Things they Love about Pittsburgh,” from the March 2000 issue of Pittsburgh magazine. “The Architecture” was the third category listed.



Swank in terra cotta.



Practicality in terra cotta.



The reticence of 1920s Classicism. Gray paint disguises the fact that brick and terra cotta are both present. A swagged frieze and a minimal cornice conclude this building of moderate height.

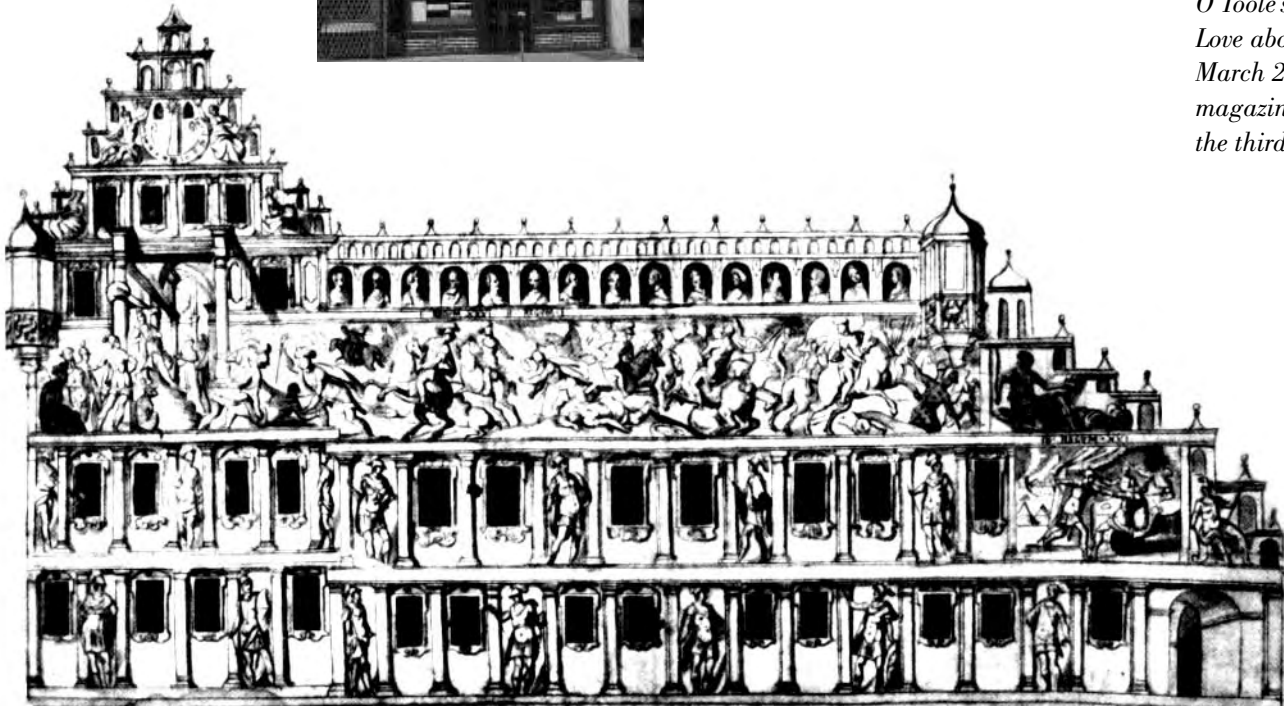


Terra cotta with some of both.



This Old World restaurant promises a refuge from the street, without total isolation.

Liven up those boring blank walls: a suggestion from Germany.





Students from Westmoreland County made models showing how they would restore two landmarks on Forbes: the old Donahoe's building (center) and the adjacent "narrow building" to the right.

Their models were ingeniously crafted, reflecting hours of hard work and cooperative planning; their written reports were thoughtfully composed; and their oral presentations were delivered with confidence. "At times we all wanted to quit and go home," commented one team from Connellsville Area High School, "but we are all proud of what we accomplished and learned while working on this project."

This is the fourth year that the Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation has sponsored an Architectural Design Challenge—or



"Budding Builders" program—for gifted students in Westmoreland County. Each year Landmarks poses a different design challenge and hosts an orientation tour in the fall to introduce students to the project concept and requirements.

After orientation tours on October 6 and 7, 1999 of the Fifth-Forbes area, students were introduced to the challenges of downtown revitalization and discussed qualities of a healthy, livable city. During the next three months students met after school (or during school if time allowed) to construct their models, draw plans, and prepare written reports and oral presentations.

On February 2 and 4 each group discussed its model with a jury of architects. We thank Bob Baumbaugh (Landmarks Design Associates), Joanna Beres (CMU student), Hilda Ettedgui (architectural consultant), Lisa Kozur (Klauscher & Harai Architects), Anne-Marie Lubenau (Community Design Center), Jennifer McCarthy (Henry Hanson Associates), and David Roth (Downtown Design Company) for their constructive comments and insight.



Members of the Donahoe family, including Patricia Donahoe Colavincenzo (left), Ann Marie Donahoe (center), and Michael Donahoe, attended the student presentations on February 2 and 4. They told the students what it had been like to work at Donahoe's and about founder P. J. Donahoe, who had been a newspaper man and member of City Council before establishing his grocery store and cafeteria in 1923. Donahoe wanted his building to be noticeable, stately—a landmark in the city. The business prospered, survived the St. Patrick's Day flood of 1936, and eventually closed in 1970.

On February 2 and 4—when architects Stan Eckstut and Peter Cavaluzzi from Ehrenkrantz Eckstut & Kuhn Architects (New York) and Landmarks' president Arthur P. Ziegler, Jr. were meeting in Pittsburgh regarding the Mayor's Fifth-Forbes plan—150 middle and high school students from Westmoreland County were presenting their ideas about two historic Forbes Avenue buildings to a jury of architects in the GRW Theatre at the Library Center on Wood Street.

Thirty teams of students from 18 schools showed how they would restore the old Donahoe's building and the adjacent narrow building and adapt them for new uses. Their ideas were creative and practical, based on the needs of downtown and the future life they hope the city will have.



Students from Belle Vernon High School created a Dinner Theater and apartments in the old Donahoe's building and an Exotic Tea Shop in the narrow building.

What the Next

The following descriptions summarize projects presented by high school and middle school students on February 2 and 4. In most cases more than one team entered from a particular school. Passages in quotation marks are excerpts from the student reports.

High Schools

Belle Vernon: "Due to the new Pittsburgh City project involving the surrounding area of Forbes & Fifth, this year's mission was to preserve and renovate two buildings [the old Donahoe's building and the narrow building]. ... We tried to convert the buildings to uses that would complement the theater district, contain a fresh idea, and provide a place to encourage people to live in the city."

The result? The Donahoe's Dinner Theater. "The setting is 1928 when Donahoe's business is booming. ... Our first show is Pittsburgh by Gas Light. We Pittsburghers aren't too crazy about candle light; we enjoy gas light! You can come be entertained as you enjoy an authentic Donahoe's Dinner."

Apartments would be located above the Dinner Theater on the second and third floors, as well as a convenience store and day-care center. The roof of the old Donahoe's building and adjacent alley would be outdoor gardens with tables so people could sit and relax. Classic films, motion pictures, and silent movies would be shown on the blank exterior wall of the old Donahoe's building.

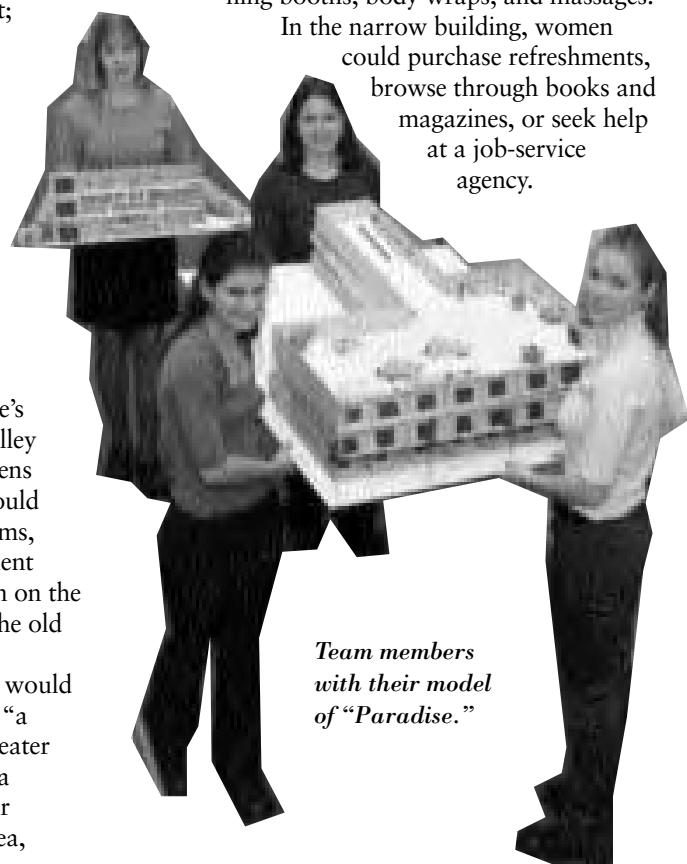
The narrow building would be an Exotic Tea Shop, "a pleasant after dinner/theater spot." There would be a kitchen on the first floor where exotic flavored tea,

danish, and biscotti would be served. On the second and third floors, people could sit at tables and sip tea, enjoying a view of the city. The third-floor windows would be aquariums filled with exotic fish.

Team members are shown with their models in the top three photos on pages 14 and 15.

Belle Vernon: Group members created "Paradise"—a place where women could restore their bodies, minds, and souls—in the old Donahoe's building. There would be exercise classes and equipment; a pool, sauna, spa, and locker rooms; places for relaxing and reading; and a beauty salon complete with tanning booths, body wraps, and massages.

In the narrow building, women could purchase refreshments, browse through books and magazines, or seek help at a job-service agency.



Team members with their model of "Paradise."

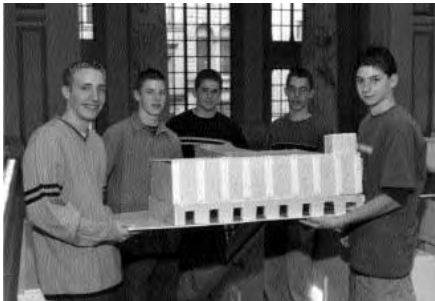


A view into the third-floor apartments and day-care, wallpapered and furnished, created by Belle Vernon students.



The Belle Vernon model, complete with the second and third floors displayed behind.

Generation Thinks



Belle Vernon: Hungry? Need exercise? Then visit the first floor of the old Donahoe's building and enjoy lunch in the food court. Upstairs, enjoy a game of basketball, volleyball, or just relax and watch others play.

The narrow building would include a convenience store, laundromat, and sewing shop.

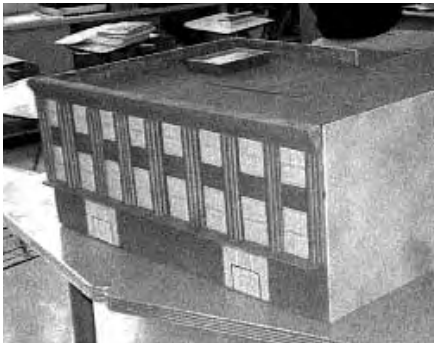


Belle Vernon: If the Mayor is interested in generating business in the Fifth-Forbes area and wants to bring more young people into the city, then convert the old Donahoe's building into a Paint Ball Arena and open a restaurant in the narrow building.



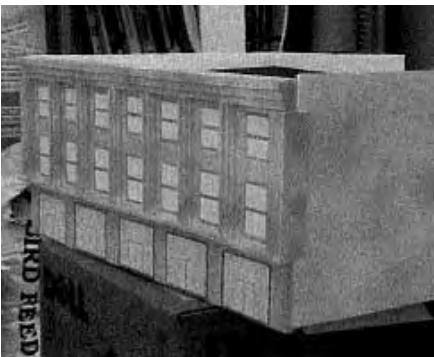
Burrell: The old Donahoe's building, converted into a fitness center, would offer "nutritious, light meals" from the deli bars and drinks from the juice bars on the ground floor. An open track and two racquet ball courts would be on the second floor, and a basketball court and weight room (including a boxing ring) would be on the third floor. "This Center would provide a quick respite for the average working person who wants more than the YMCA as far as atmosphere is concerned, but cannot afford to utilize the Rivers Club."

The narrow building would be converted into a bookstore and coffee shop, with places to read, relax, and drink latté.



Connellsville Area: The old Donahoe's building would be converted into a gym and restaurant on the first floor; a technology training center on the second floor where "companies could send employees for updates on any new software or hardware..."; and apartments on the third floor. Pittsburgh businesses would own the apartments and use them to temporarily house employees being transferred to the city, until they found a permanent family home.

The narrow building would serve as a bookstore.



Connellsville Area: A fresh food market, corporate offices for the market and office space for private businesses, and a safe and alcohol-free meeting place for area youth (including a pool hall and bowling alley) would fill the old Donahoe's building. Amateur bands would play there on Friday nights.

A winery would be located in the narrow building.



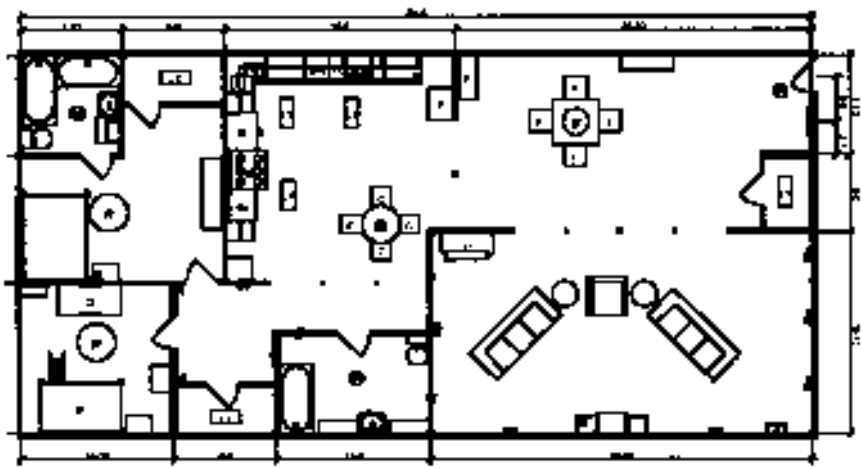
Greater Latrobe: If you are a teenager seeking a safe and inexpensive day of fun, visit the old Donahoe's building that would become a recreational center complete with a bowling alley, roller rink, and nine-hole miniature golf course.

A small café would fill the narrow building, providing light refreshments for those visiting the rec center.

(continued on page 16)



A team member from Burrell describes how she made the columns out of clay.



High Schools

(continued from page 15)

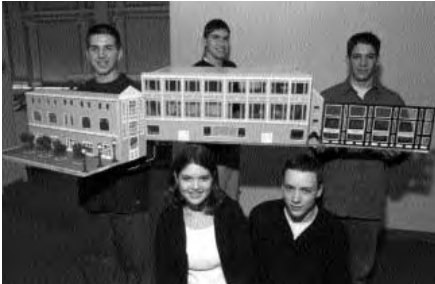
Franklin Regional: The ground floor of the old Donahoe’s building would once again be a grocery store, and a coffee shop would be added. A restaurant, banquet halls for private parties, and a kitchen would be on the second floor. Ten apartments would be on the third floor. (See the plan above.)

The narrow building would include three small shops at street level; a confectionery shop, coffee shop, and reading area on the second floor; and a laundromat and commons area for apartment residents on the third floor.



Franklin Regional: CVS Pharmacy would remain in the old Donahoe’s building, and 12 apartments (six on each floor) would be added to the second and third floors. A fourth level would be added to the building, enclosed by a glass canopy. There would be personal farming gardens, a walk-through greenhouse, an indoor swimming pool, and a playground.

The narrow building would house a nail, hair, massage, and beauty salon, with a spiral staircase connecting the floors.



Hempfield Area: Imagine Donahoe’s as an extreme sports center, “Dynamite Extreme Sports,” with apartments above and an outdoor plaza next door.

The narrow building would serve a practical use: there would be a snack bar at street level, with laundry facilities and storage above, for residents of the apartments.



Hempfield Area students display the narrow building, the second floor, the first floor, and the third floor.

Hempfield Area: The old Donahoe’s would include commercial space for different stores to rent on the first floor, as well as the “Quasar Glitz” restaurant including a star-shaped stage and dance floor. Thirteen apartments would be on the second and third floors, as well as the second floor of the restaurant.

An art gallery would be located in the narrow building.

Upon completion of their project, team members wrote: “We are extremely proud of the time and effort that we put into this project. Our experience participating in last year’s project, the research we did and the time spent brainstorming produced a very rewarding project. We hope that our ideas will add to the creative process that architects and city planners are currently going through to make Pittsburgh an attractive and enticing place.”



Ligonier Valley: You could enjoy all kinds of food from around the world in the handsomely renovated Donahoe’s Eatery. It would be a great place for a business luncheon, family dinner, or date. Local bands would play on a stage area



Ligonier Valley students display their model, rendered in detail with colored pencil drawings.

on the second floor, and there would be a lounge on the third floor loft.

Next door in the narrow building would be “Memama’s Pitt Beef,” (pictured below), a fast-food, family-owned restaurant inspired by our grandmothers. “Inside Memama’s would be a fairly small kitchen, a counter for ordering and taking money, a counter for approximately 10 people to sit and eat, condiments, trash, a restroom, and a jukebox.” More dining space would be available on the second floor, and an arcade would be located on the third floor.



Norwin: The project is well summarized in the group’s written report. Passages are reprinted here:

... To maintain the functional purposes of the Donahoe Building, it was decided to construct the first floor into a Kinko’s copying center for the convenience of many downtown patrons. Offices and businesses are abundant in this bustling area, and thus, much paper work needs to be accomplished. ...

Since a Kinko’s would simply draw consumers during the daytime, it was necessary to develop a plan that would attract citizens of all ages to the nightlife of downtown. At the present time, downtown is a virtual graveyard when it comes to attracting consumers during the evening hours. After all the businesses shut down, crowds dwindle away during those off hours of business.

In our renovations, an under-21 club would occupy the second floor area of the Donahoe’s building. This location was chosen to accommodate those not legally of drinking age from being subjected to a life devoid of the downtown experience. Teenagers would now have

the opportunity to experience the downtown as well as having a place to go, safe from the harshness of the streets. This club would provide the adolescents with such amenities as pool tables, air hockey, a non-alcoholic bar, couches for socializing, and a spacious dance floor. These youngsters would have the opportunity to kick up their heels in a safe and cultural area. ...

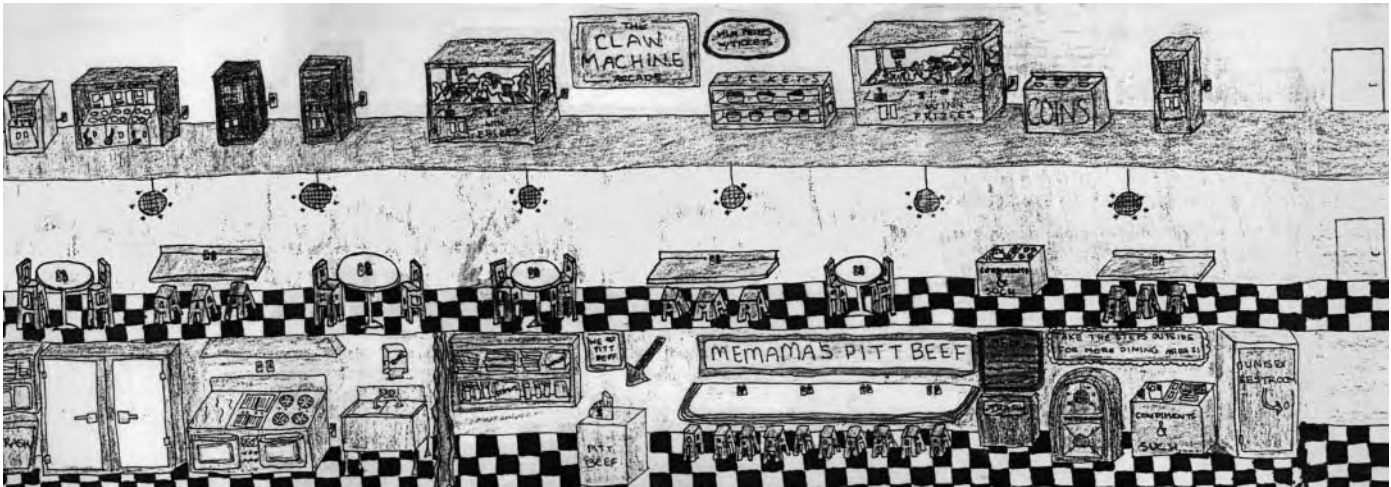
The over-21 club on the third floor would also attract a nightlife that would help stop the diminishing numbers of consumers who leave the downtown when the workday is over. This club would provide many of the same amenities as the under-21 club, as well as a large dining area for those who enjoy meals out. By renovating this now vacant space into such a lively atmosphere, Pittsburghers could retain a sense of heritage as well as simply have a fun time.

The narrow building, as it is referred to, provides the downtown with a history that dates back to 1903. ...Therefore, with the addition of a movie rental store in all floors of the narrow building, space could be utilized and cultural interest could be maintained. ...

...Preservation does not mean the end of excitement and fun, but rather it is an invitation to experience all aspects of life. Subsequently, our design proves that life can be connected to the past as well as the future.



Yough: The old Donahoe’s building would be filled with musical memorabilia, and a kitchen and restaurants. A Hard Rock Café would occupy the narrow building.



Middle Schools



Franklin Regional: “We believe that in order for a city to attract CEO’s, business-owners and investors, as well as other wealthy individuals, it must provide upscale housing that is conveniently located in the Central Business District.” So Donahoe’s would be converted into 10 deluxe apartments, including three two-story ones. Plans also would include a restaurant, bookstore, café, lobby, valet parking, gymnasium, indoor swimming pool, and kitchen.

The narrow building would be an art gallery, displaying the work of local artists, and a modern sculpture hall. Artists would pay to have their work exhibited and advertised. A spiral staircase would connect the upper floors.



Franklin Regional: In the old Donahoe’s building there would be a high-class seafood restaurant with conference rooms above and a two-story gym. The lobby for an ice cream parlor would be on the third floor, as well as a kitchen that would serve the restaurant and conference rooms.

The narrow building would include a concession stand, floral shop, and ice cream parlor (with a connecting walkway to the third-floor ice cream lounge in the Donahoe’s building).



Franklin Regional: Donahoe’s would be converted into a luxury hotel “showing what class Pittsburgh has.” Room numbers for each hotel suite would be the date of a particular year (1816 for instance) marking a historic event in Pittsburgh’s history, and the room would be decorated according to the time period.

The adjacent building would be a flower shop, serving the hotel and passers-by, with a greenhouse on the second and third floors.



Bellmar: CVS Pharmacy would be allowed to remain in the old Donahoe’s building but “we would, however, change the signage at the top and uncover the windows with the inclusion of the old fashioned window blinds. We would install the old slant entry doors [the entrance bays] and fill the windows with greenery.” There would be a deli center on the second floor and a kitchen. Four fairly luxurious apartments would be created on the third floor, “to begin a trend to get people moving back to the city to live.”

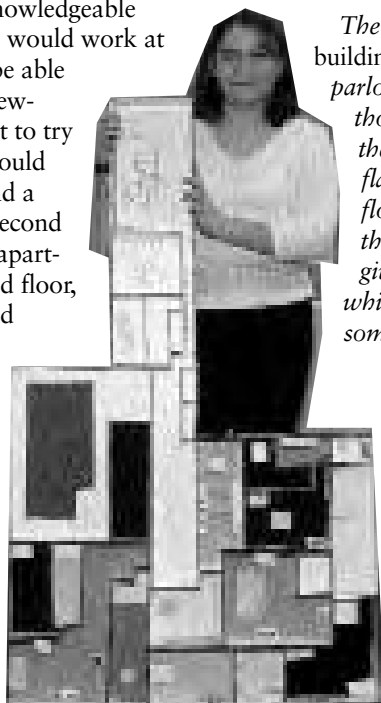


The narrow building would be a coffee and cookie bar. A spiral staircase would connect the three floors. Tables would be on all three floors so people could sit and view the city. The coffee shop also would provide a view so people could appreciate the surrounding architecture. “We kept the tile roof... because it is a very interesting part of the structure.”



Bellmar: Foods from different countries would be for sale in the main floor of the old Donahoe’s building. “A staff of people knowledgeable about the culture would work at each booth and be able to advise those newcomers who want to try things.” There would be apartments and a day-care on the second floor, and larger apartments on the third floor, with a Jacuzzi and weight room.

The narrow building would be a candy store, where candy would be made and sold.



Greater Latrobe:

The Donahoe’s building would be transformed into an elegant restaurant; state-of-the-art conference center; day-care center; two movie theaters;

and a skate park, miniature golf course, and arcade on the rooftop.

An art gallery, showcasing the work of various local, national, and international artists, would fill the first two floors of the narrow building, and virtual reality booths would be located on the third floor. This floor would be linked by a bridge to the new movie theater.

“After working on this project for several months, we have learned a great deal about architecture, more than just building a model. We have a greater appreciation for the people who built the skyline of the city of Pittsburgh.”

Greensburg Salem: Excerpts from the written report describe the project well:

Imagine yourself walking down Forbes Avenue in Pittsburgh, the shining jewel of western Pennsylvania. ...

The lower floor [of the narrow building] would have a small ice cream parlor that would attract children and those who would like to experience the city while enjoying the sweet flavor of ice cream. The upper floors would have an alcove for the homeless and less fortunate, giving them some place to live while they find a job or work of some sort. ...

The first floor [of the old Donahoe’s building] would house a comedy theater to bring plenty of laughs to the Pittsburgh region and Forbes Avenue. The second floor would have a small hotel for tourists who want a place to stay. The third floor would contain the Starlight Café, an exquisite dining experi-



ence for the whole family. The third floor also would have all of the kitchens for the restaurant. The roof would have the rest of the tables and seating for the Starlight Café so that families could dine on summer nights under the stars.”

Greensburg Salem: DeLallo’s (photo on next page), an Italian specialty store, would open in the old Donahoe’s building with a lounge, internet café, and nursery on the second floor. Parents could leave their children in the nursery during their visit to the student art gallery, located in the narrow building and connected to the old Donahoe’s building by a walkway. The third floor of the old Donahoe’s building would include storage for everything, as well as the building manager’s office. There would be a public “rent-a-plot” garden on the roof. The alleyway between the two buildings would be well lit and include benches.

In their written report Greensburg Salem students noted that:

Planning how to fit all this into our building was one of the hardest parts. We talked to a myriad of people concerning the subject including Jennifer Bee, an architect, Craig Tatro, a floor salesman, and Patricia Bamback, an interior designer. They gave us many tips: for instance how wide halls should be, how large public restrooms need to be, and other information pertaining to these subjects.

(continued on page 18)

The third floor of the Bellmar model.

Middle Schools

(continued from page 17)



Greensburg Salem’s model of DeLallo’s and a student art gallery.

Every day we set goals to keep ourselves on track. We worked toward them all day and tried to live up to our own expectations. It did not always work, especially during the hard, boring math parts, but it constantly reminded us of our deadline.

During our next step, we needed to decide how we wanted to represent everything in our building. We took time mixing paints to the perfect shade and looking through wallpaper sample books. We also picked out wood strips of different thicknesses and shapes for the siding on our buildings. We also spent a considerable amount of time in actually painting, cutting, and putting together our buildings. The final product, though, proved that we had not worked in vain.



Harrold: The student report is so entertaining that we are reprinting most of it:

Desiring to shop in fascinating downtown Pittsburgh? Looking for a place to drop off those irritating children of yours as they whine and complain about going with you? Why not drop them off at Harrold’s Childcare Center?

We are Harrold Middle School—here today to present our new building—Harrold’s Childcare Center. Harrold’s is a marvelous way of getting the most out of one’s free time. When a parent is on his/her way to the store of his/her choice, he/she may drop his/her children off at Harrold’s and continue on his/her way for shopping pleasure. The parent may pick up his/her child after visiting shops and buying the coveted belongings. Is this building, however, merely a holding tank for children? Certainly not!

As the child enters the child care center, his/her parent must sign him/her in at the Information Desk. This desk is very noticeable when walking through the front doors. Depending on what time it is, the child will start the day’s activities. On the first floor, a medical center, restrooms, and cafeteria are located. The medical center (complete with a restroom, cot, and medicine cabinet) is located catty-corner from the cafeteria.

Entering the second floor, one might see a free-for-all, since this entire floor is dedicated to the fun and amusement of young people. This floor is completely open, including slides, swing sets, and tubes to crawl through.

The third floor is just as interesting as the previous two. A children’s library is located here with thousands of books and many bean-bag chairs. The “Naptime Room,” a favorite for toddlers as well as older children, is complete with cloudy, sky blue walls and several comfy cots. This room is soundproof, due to the obnoxious yelling and running of children on the floor below. The arts and crafts area is also a wonderful place where children of all ages can come to build, paint, or color anything imaginable.

The narrow building, located across the alley, is a tiny storage area for the daycare center’s belongings and supplies. There is a registration desk on the first floor to tell what is being brought in and taken out of storage. Many food bins, refrigerators, and lockers used for diapers and art supplies are scattered throughout the construction. A bridge connects these two buildings to make handling supplies easier. ...

The Budding Builders program was a very fun, yet sometimes grueling, activity, which we were all glad to have worked on. As we plastered walls and painted ceilings, a few laughs and many stories were shared. We have learned a lot more about each other through this project, and have discovered that through teamwork and a little bit of creativity, a little work goes a long way.

We have learned a lot more about each other through this project, and have discovered that through teamwork and a little bit of creativity, a little work goes a long way.

—Harrold Middle School



Laurel Valley: If you need to do a report on a foreign city or country, go to the World Information Educational Center featuring 10 countries—complete with books, maps, and artifacts—and an international café and computer center for students, all in the old Donahoe’s building. And once your report is complete, enjoy a miniature golf game on the roof!

The narrow building would include an ice cream shop, candy store, and computer lab on the third floor connecting with the lab in the Donahoe’s building. Benches would be set up on the roof of the narrow building so people could enjoy a view of Pittsburgh’s skyline.



A detail of Laurel Valley’s drawing of the Pittsburgh World Information Center.

Ligonier Valley: The old Donahoe’s would become a “24-hour grocery store because in a large city people are out at all different times.” The Rain Forest Café, a family-oriented restaurant with a jungle-like atmosphere, would be on the second floor. Apartments would be on the third floor, and a garden would be on the roof so apartment-dwellers could have their own backyards.

The narrow building would be a street café, selling pretzels, coffee, and ice cream. Tables would be set up in the alley connecting the two buildings.



The facade of the Ligonier Valley model lifted up (thanks to hinges) to reveal a cross-section of the interior.

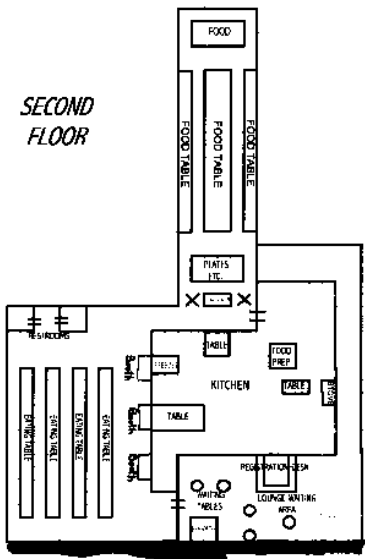


Rostraver: “The philosophy of our group...was to restore the exciting dining and shopping atmosphere of the old Donahoe’s building plus add some modern excitements.” Donahoe’s would be a restaurant recalling “the days of wonderful homemade foods” and a grocery store. A kitchen for the restaurant would be on the second floor and several apartments “for young and old” would complete the third floor. There would be outdoor dining on the roof, as well as lounging space and thermo spas.

The narrow building would include “businesses that take little space to run.” The Crepery, “a counter-type restaurant with a little music playing,” would be at street level. The kitchen servicing The Crepery would be on the second floor. The chefs flipping crepes would catch the eyes of passers-by. A pet grooming service on the third floor would connect via a glass tube walkway to the roof garden on the old Donahoe’s building.

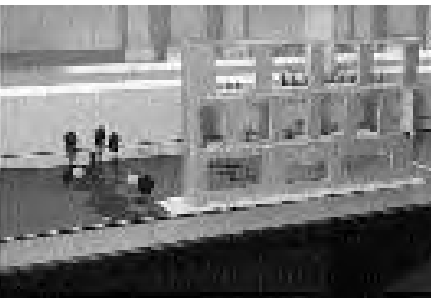


Rostraver: “We turned the old CVS building into a store just like the old Donahoe’s,” selling “dairy products, baked goods, ethnic foods, and prepared meals.” A kitchen and cafeteria would be on the second floor. Then, on the third floor and roof, imagine rooftop dining on a moonlit night or sunny day. On the third floor of the old



Donahoe’s building, there would be a restaurant featuring a retractable roof, allowing for open air dining on clear, warm nights.

Eager to view the city? Then take a stroll on the walkway surrounding the rooftop restaurant. “Our hope is that the emphasis on novelty food items, specially prepared food items, and Pittsburgh food items will bring in people from all over. ...The restaurant would be open before and AFTER theater performances. ...”



The PPG (Pittsburgh Plant and Greenery) would be located in the narrow building. A pulley system on either side of the building would allow people (and plants) to move from one floor to the other.

“Our aim [in this project] is to make such a wonderful spot that workers, tourists, and those living outside of town would think it well worth the trip to come and experience it.”



Yough: A movie theater would open above CVS Pharmacy, in the old Donahoe’s building. The narrow building would become a lounge called the “Pitt Stop,” where people could rest or relax.



Yough: Get in shape at the full-service fitness center located in the old Donahoe’s building (including a kitchen and day-care facility). Sip a soda in a restored 1950s soda fountain café in the adjacent narrow building.

*We hope
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creative process
that architects
and city
planners are
currently going
through to make
Pittsburgh
an attractive
and
enticing place.*

—Hempfield Area
High School



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Inspiration for Pittsburgh

(continued from page 1)

upper floors to office space and the developer on the project has agreed to restore the historic cornice, long ago removed from this National Historic Landmark building.

The Wabash and State Street National Register Historic District has approximately 100 contributing buildings and under the mayor's leadership, the City is pushing a technology initiative for this area. In addition, the City is willing to step up as developer, acquiring the Lytton Building and using federal investment tax credits and tax increment financing to convert this former office building and department store into the city's first center for information technology with offices for high-tech start-up firms. Located in the Wabash & State Street National Register Historic District, this building is a highly visible corner property, and the City sees its rehabilitation as a catalyst for further downtown revitalization efforts. ...

Dallas: In-town Living

On Wednesday, January 12, 2000 the Dallas City Council voted unanimously to approve a new preservation ordinance that will allow demolition denial, address demolition by neglect, and establish a city-wide historic preservation fund. Preservation Dallas Executive Director Catherine Horsey sees the passage of this new ordinance as reflective of a new preservation spirit in Dallas culminating a decade-long struggle by preservationists to demonstrate to city leaders that preservation pays. ...

The City of Dallas offers tax exemptions to property owners in the downtown and the adjacent residential area within a one-mile radius around downtown, with additional exemptions for residential and retail conversions in that area. Depending on the location, property owners are eligible to receive a 10-year abatement on added value created by historic building improvements on City of Dallas land and structure taxes or a 100 percent exemption on land and structures for 10 years. Dallas County also participates with tax incentives for larger projects.

Since 1993 when the property tax abatements were enacted, approximately 50 buildings have been rehabilitated within the targeted historic area. Today bringing a permanent population base downtown is critical to the downtown's future. Demand for housing downtown is estimated at 14,000 units. Hundreds of new housing units have been completed in historic buildings, with one large project adding 800 new units. ...

St. Louis: Would Never Happen Without the Tax Credit

While the reuse of historic buildings has a solid history of success in downtown Denver's revitalization strategy, the City of St. Louis is just now picking up where it left off in the early 1980s with the adaptive reuse of historic buildings in its downtown core. And it's the recently passed state historic tax credit that's driving downtown revitalization. ...

Missouri is one of the growing number of states that has enacted a state historic preservation income tax credit, providing a 25 percent transferable, credit toward eligible rehabilitation costs for both residential and commercial projects. This new credit has resulted in nearly 20 new preservation projects in downtown St. Louis.

Building on the city's reinvestment in downtown with the construction of a convention center, a 70,000-seat stadium, and an 18-mile light rail system connecting downtown to the airport, preservation-minded developers are contributing to a \$1.2 billion investment in downtown. Cupples Station, a historic railroad-freight depot featuring 10 historic buildings on 12 acres, is at the heart of that revitalization strategy. And, it's the \$50 million projected in state and federal historic tax credits that's going to make this \$250 million renovation project succeed, according to Cupples Station developer Richard D. Baron, president of McCormack Baron & Associates. ...

Two other historic hotel rehab projects and a dozen loft building housing conversions are planned for the old garment district. Even small business owners will benefit from the new incentive with local SJI, Inc., a marketing and promotions firm, slated to finish a rehab on its 176,000 square foot headquarters building utilizing \$1.3 million of state tax credits.

According to Carolyn Toft, Executive Director of the Landmarks Association of St. Louis, the downtown revitalization effort stunted in the 1980s is reborn. "Rehab is back. People throughout the city are reinvesting in historic buildings. A preservation industry has emerged once again."

Lessons Learned

So what should Pittsburgh, Baltimore, and other cities considering urban renewal learn from other successful big-city revitalization efforts?

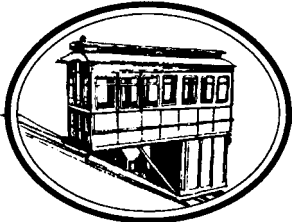
- It takes committed, visionary leadership to remake downtown. The mayor plays a key role, but it requires other business and civic leaders, including a non-profit partner who can advocate for incentives, market downtown resources, and promote historic preservation.
- It requires coalitions to implement and sustain a long-term strategy for downtown revitalization. All partners—business groups, housing advocates, social services, law enforcement, preservationists, property owners—must be at the table. Through partnerships, obstacles to redevelopment are identified, creative solutions are found, and the benefits of economic expansion are credited to all.
- It won't happen without local and state tax incentives and other forms of local financial assistance. Whether it's a local tax abatement, a historic state tax credit, bridge financing, or bonds, local and state governments must make the same commitment and be willing to risk short-term tax revenues toward the revitalization of the urban core.

- It takes a catalyst. In most cases, a key redevelopment project can serve as the catalyst for a larger revitalization plan, but in some instances it might be the designation of a historic district, the election of a new mayor, or the creation of a new tax incentive.
- It won't succeed without housing. Bringing people downtown means more than 9 to 5. It means 24-hour living. Eliminating impediments and creating incentives for downtown housing must be part of the redevelopment plan.
- It takes a plan! A comprehensive, phased strategy for downtown revitalization requires significant financial investment, buy-in by local and state stakeholders, and participation by the citizenry. A public process inclusive of all the stakeholders including local businesses, investors, non-profit organizations and affected government agencies will result in a better plan with a greater chance of success.

Piece-meal approaches to redevelopment eventually fail, as have expansive tear-it-down, pave-it-over urban renewal programs. Cities with successful downtowns today started with the basics—creating a plan, building consensus, investing in existing building stock and local businesses, and making it easier to redevelop in downtown. And, ultimately what they've found is that preservation pays.

Our allegiance is to the future, but not at the expense of our past.

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