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THE ALLEGHENY RIVERFRONT



Letter from the **MAYOR & URA**

Over the past 30 years, Pittsburgh has set the global standard for regional transformation. The key to our success is reconnecting our riverfronts with our neighborhoods to create economic development opportunities. The Allegheny Riverfront, stretching from Downtown Pittsburgh and touching neighborhoods like the Strip District, Lawrenceville and Highland Park, is a golden opportunity to continue our City's economic and environmental revitalization.

In 2009, the City, Urban Redevelopment Authority and Riverlife launched a market and community-based master planning process to spur development opportunities along the Allegheny Riverfront. We've already received a \$1.5 million grant to unlock the untapped potential of the existing AVR freight rail system. A rail-with-trail "green boulevard" is being created to allow for regional passenger rail use. In addition, new bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure will be realized to help us to achieve a truly sustainable riverfront flanked by a regenerative zone of development and new riverfront housing.

We are committed to working with the communities along the Allegheny Riverfront to realize their shared vision for revitalization. These neighborhoods offer investors and developers valuable opportunities for redevelopment, including large parcels of vacant land, industrial and manufacturing centers, urban business districts and a strong, robust marketplace. We invite you to learn more about these opportunities and partner with us in Pittsburgh's continuing transformation.

"We are committed to working with the communities along the Allegheny Riverfront to realize their shared vision for revitalization."

Sincerely,

Luke Ravenstahl
Mayor, City of Pittsburgh

Rob Stephany, Executive Director
Urban Redevelopment Authority



ART IN THE STRIP

Pittsburgh's vibrant arts scene is stretching beyond Downtown's Cultural District.

Arts organizations in the city are realizing the benefits of the Strip District and neighboring Allegheny Riverfront communities that provide amenities downtown locations can't, allowing them to stretch and expand.

"The most natural extension to the Cultural District is the Strip District," says Christopher Hahn, General Director of Pittsburgh Opera.

When Pittsburgh Opera started looking for a new home in 2007 after the lease for the previous location in the Cultural District expired, the company had some very specific requirements.

"To have enough space to rehearse, we needed a building with an open span within it," Hahn explains. Downtown's narrow lots and buildings held up by supports and pillars would not allow an open space large enough to simulate the stage, so the company looked to the Strip District.

The Strip District already was home to Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre (PBT), which was ahead of the curve in recognizing the area's potential. PBT moved its operations to 2900 Liberty Avenue in 1984.

One of the main reasons PBT moved to the Strip District was the availability of parking, explains Harris Ferris, executive director.

In addition to the world-class ballet company, PBT also operates a rapidly expanding ballet

school with nearly 900 students enrolled. "On a day-to-day basis, there are 400 to 500 people moving through the building, so parking is important," Ferris says.

Like the Opera, PBT also required a space that was conducive to their art, allowing for studios with no pillars and high ceilings. In this case, the building was once a trolley station, so the architecture allowed for expansive spaces.

Other Strip District cultural spots also have taken residence in former industrial spaces including the Sen. John Heinz History Center, located in a building that once housed the Chautauqua Lake Ice Company, and the Society for Contemporary Craft, located in a former produce terminal.

Pittsburgh Opera's new home was once the George Westinghouse Air Brake Factory. Stretching from 24th to 25th streets between Liberty and Penn avenues, the building was formerly home to Smith Brothers, so when the Opera moved in the second floor already was set up for offices and the rest of the space was open for performances, rehearsals and events.

"Now we have everything a company like ours needs," says Hahn. The location also has afforded the company the opportunity to expand its outreach efforts through free performances including the Farmers Market, the new Pittsburgh

Public Market, and Brown Bag Opera series at the building. "It's an ideal place to connect and draw people in," says Hahn. "It has been a brilliant, brilliant move for us."

Welcoming the general public into its home also is a priority for PBT. "We are an elite training center, but we want to be more accessible to the public," Ferris says. While the school offers classes for preschoolers through advanced elite training, it also offers classes for the general public including Pilates and Gyrotonics instruction. And, PBT is looking for ways to expand even further.

Part of PBT's expansion stretches along Liberty Avenue into Lawrenceville with Byham House, formerly the rectory for St. John the Baptist parish, a residence for high school students in the company's elite training program.

It is the first of three phases in PBT's \$6 million expansion project, Ferris explains, which includes improving parking and safety issues, expanding and improving the building's East Plaza atrium entrance, and the addition of three new studios. With those improvements, Ferris says, "I feel confident that we can double the size of our school."



Revisiting of the waterfront in the Strip District. Courtesy of the Allegheny Riverfront Vision Plan.

A RIVER RUNS THROUGH IT

There is a current of revitalization flowing through the Allegheny Riverfront communities.

Whether you are heading out for a day of fishing, meeting friends for a Saturday of lunch and shopping, or simply heading out to work, the Allegheny Riverfront communities are hot destination spots.

Stretching from Downtown along the Allegheny's southern riverbank through the Strip District, to Lawrenceville and into Highland Park, the corridor that once was home to produce yards, railroad switchyards, manufacturing plants and acres of parking is experiencing a renaissance.

Vibrant communities where people can live, play and work are emerging while the industrial base transforms to include everything from inventors to material handlers, transportation workers, gallery owners and more.

The Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh (URA), City Planning Department and Riverlife, along with community development organizations and major landowners, worked in tandem with planning firm Perkins Eastman to

develop the Allegheny Riverfront Vision Plan, a comprehensive plan that sets forth goals and recommendations for the 6.5-mile stretch from the David L. Lawrence Convention Center to Highland Park.

Donald Smith, Jr., Regional Industrial Development Corporation (RIDC) president, says he believes the plan will provide the perfect opportunity for revitalization in the Strip District and Lawrenceville.

"It's an up and coming area of our region. The emergence and renaissance of Lawrenceville and the Strip District has gained a lot of momentum," Smith says. "We need to capture, harness and support this effort to make sure it reaches fruition."

RECLAIMING THE RIVERFRONT

"One of our largest untapped resources is our rivers," says Rob Stephany, URA executive director, "and our greatest asset is our neighborhoods. There are a few places where both can connect."

The Strip District and Lawrenceville present the largest opportunity for reestablishing that connection, he explains. Both neighborhoods are rebounding, but the direct riverfront and the main business districts of the communities are severed by warehouses, acres of parking and manufacturing facilities.

Some of the goals of the vision plan include improving public access to the riverfront, creating a healthier river, creating a wide riverfront riparian zone from downtown to Highland Park, and layering development zones from the riverfront into the communities, all the while applying green design standards.

"Think of what would happen if a development like Washington's Landing were to be located near Lawrenceville or the Strip," says Stephany, but without the disconnect of being situated on an island. He believes such a concept would have significant economic impact.



Current stretch of riverfront from 43rd - 48th streets in Lawrenceville.



Revising stretch of riverfront from 43rd - 48th streets in Lawrenceville. Courtesy of the Allegheny Riverfront Vision Plan.

INVESTING IN THE COMMUNITY

Three distinct investment zones are identified in the vision plan: the Strip District from Downtown to 21st Street, the stretch from 43rd to 48th streets in Lawrenceville, and 62nd Street.

Previously, planning in the city has moved forward neighborhood by neighborhood, explains Craig Dunham, principal with The Rubinoff Company. What makes the plan for the Allegheny Riverfront communities unique is that it spans across multiple neighborhoods and large, complex systems.

"When you talk about planning, you end up talking about the core, the city, the infrastructure. This is an opportunity for the city to look at a large area of land," says Dunham, who sat on the steering committee for the project. His firm, which previously developed Washington's Landing, has long been interested in the area and holds property there.

The common threads that Dunham sees as essential priorities for the plan are creating a cleaner and greener environmentally-friendly community and improving transportation and movement through the area.

Already The Buncher Company and the URA have entered into a public/private partnership to develop 80 acres among three sites in the area.

For the stretch through the Strip District to

21st Street, where Buncher owns a large portion of the property and the URA owns a produce terminal, Stephany says plans are afoot for a vibrant mixed-use development that would extend the Strip out to the river.

In Lawrenceville, the goal, according to the URA, is to make the existing neighborhood a riverfront one by sensitively relocating industrial

"We need to work so what should be in the right places is in the right place."

users over a period of time while developing residential and residential-compatible uses in their stead, explains Robert Rubinstein, director of economic development for the URA. Over time, this will not only increase the economic impact to the city and other taxing bodies by the direct development, but it will create significant off-site value throughout the Central Lawrenceville neighborhood.

Buncher already has agreed to sell a warehouse facility situated in that corridor to the URA, according to Stephany, and in turn the URA will work to develop the property.

At the 62nd Street former Tippins steel mill site, the URA is working with Buncher to build a distribution center and warehouse facility to move heavy truck traffic closer to highway access points.

MOVING GOODS AND PEOPLE

Many transportation issues and conflicts, including large trucks moving through residential areas, are impacting connections in the Allegheny Riverfront communities.

"We really need to organize from a transit perspective first," Dunham explains. He says one of the best ideas is the establishment of a surface transit system, such as a trolley, to link the neighborhoods with Downtown and eventually, Oakland.

Smith concurs that transit connections are essential to the success of this initiative, both for moving commerce and moving people, which could include trails, light rail, a trolley service or other mode of transportation. "For this region to continue to move forward, we need better access and movement for all uses."

That means starting with small steps, over time, that will work to support the larger vision, Dunham explains. "We need to work so what should be in the right places is in the right place." One "transformative idea," according to Stephany, is a proposition by Russell Peterson, CEO of Allegheny Valley Railroad, to utilize the carrier's short-line freight railroad tracks for commuter rail service.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Revitalization of the Allegheny Riverfront Communities will not happen overnight. Stephany says he sees the initiative unfolding over three decades, although some successes already are being realized.

The Otto Milk Building project already is under construction and is offering residential units for sale. The factory was built around 1865 as the Phoenix Brewing Company, and served as a brewery for several decades before being used by Otto as a processing and storage facility. The development will offer approximately 60 for-sale condominiums and retail space on the first floor.

Once the many improvements are made along the Allegheny Riverfront, Stephany envisions the emergence of a new "Golden Triangle" – one that connects the Downtown business district with the innovation and manufacturing base of Lawrenceville, with the university and medical centers in Oakland.

Stephany sees a regional benefit to these projects as the community reclaims its riverfront while making a commitment to conservation and the environment. "It will add to the richness of the fabric of our region."



UNDER THE RADAR: LAWRENCEVILLE'S UPRISE

Lawrenceville and the Strip District have a rich industrial history, and while both neighborhoods are emerging as lively places to live, shop, work and be entertained, their industrial roots remain strong, yet reinvented to reflect the 21st century economy.

Carnegie Mellon University's Robotics Institute and National Robotics Engineering Center (NREC) have been located in Lawrenceville since the early 1990s. When searching for a location, the university looked to brownfield sites, which generally are situated near a river, explains John Bares, president and CEO of Carnegie Robotics LLC, (CRL) a partner organization of the NREC where he previously served as director from 1997 to 2010. Eventually a five-acre spot in Lawrenceville, a former foundry, was chosen.

"It turns out that this has been a wonderful location," Bares says, and it is just about 3 miles from CMU's Oakland campus.

CRL develops, manufactures and services robotic components and systems in partnership with NREC, creating products based upon technology licensed from NREC, an arm of the Robotics Institute that performs applied research and prototype development for industrial and governmental organizations.

"Our business is a little on the big and dirty side," Bares explains. "We build robots, do some work for the military and other things that are of a high or sometimes questionable profile and we bring in tractor trailers and drive things around, so we needed a place to work and stretch. We are

in that climate here. It has been great for us."

NREC and CRL engage in restricted research, such as for military uses or in cases where intellectual property needs to be protected, so certain measures must be taken to protect security, which Bares says may rub against the grain of a typical university environment. For this reason being located away from the university campus has been advantageous.

Another advantage to Lawrenceville, Bares says, is that it is "an easy place to operate under the radar."

"When it comes to manufacturing, a riverfront community takes on increased importance."

Nearby in Lawrenceville, at The Chocolate Factory, formerly home to Geoffrey Boehm Chocolates, the Regional Industrial Development Corporation (RIDC) has converted the facility into light manufacturing and robotics space.

There are three major tenants at The Chocolate Factory, explains Donald F. Smith, Jr., RIDC president. Tenants include RedZone Robotics, a CMU spin out technology company that designs and manufactures sewer inspection and pipe reha-

bilitation robots; EverPower, a utility-grade wind energy company; and Precision Therapeutics, a life-science company that works to individualize cancer therapy through a proprietary and unique live-tissue platform.

"We have a platform here to help capture what's going on at the universities as they transform into companies," Smith says. "Geographically, the location is tremendous. It is close to Downtown, Oakland and hospitals."

Bares agrees that the access to Lawrenceville is a big advantage – an easy five-minute commute to downtown, accessibility to Oakland, and even a quick commute from communities situated to the north.

And, there is the riverfront advantage. "When it comes to manufacturing, a riverfront community takes on increased importance," Smith explains. In Lawrenceville, the location is cost-effective as well.

"When you combine the vibe (of Lawrenceville) with its proximity to the business center and wealth generation centers, it really is well positioned," Smith says.

RIDC is planning further development in the area. Smith says his organization is working closely with the Urban Redevelopment Authority on plans for a 10-acre property that is ready to be developed. "We are working to determine what the vision for that should be and hope to get development started soon."

ALLEGHENY RIVERFRONT VISION PLAN: Bringing Back the Waterfront

By Stephen Quick, FAIA, LEED AP

Concept for regenerative zone in the Strip District



From London and Paris to New York, the great cities of the world have developed from the banks of mighty rivers to become concentrated hubs of economic, cultural, and social activities. During the 19th century and first half of the 20th century however, American cities turned their backs to rivers as they became synonymous with industry and its noxious uses and pollution.

Today, our view of the river has changed, and successful rejuvenation projects across the country have once again demonstrated the unbreakable bond between a city and its riverfront.

With its transformative **Allegheny Riverfront Vision Plan**, Perkins Eastman envisions the Strip District and Lawrenceville as vibrant riverfront communities that are poised to become new hubs of economic, cultural, and social activities.

The multidisciplinary planning effort, which is led by the Pittsburgh office of international architecture and planning firm Perkins Eastman, covers 6.5 of the more than 36 miles of city riverfront and encompasses 1,260 acres of land along the Allegheny River.

The support of the community and the City of Pittsburgh, including the Urban Redevelopment Authority, the Mayor's Office, Department of City Planning, and Riverlife (the organization known for its role in reclaiming Pittsburgh's waterfronts since 1999), have been critical to moving the Allegheny Riverfront Vision Plan forward, setting the stage for balanced growth decades into the future.

MOVING FORWARD

Despite the nation's deep economic recession, the Strip District and Lawrenceville have experienced modest growth in recent years. Artists, young professionals, and other creative-class types have taken advantage of the area's storefronts and warehouses turning them into galleries, boutiques, and work spaces. Lawrenceville's

supply of affordable housing has drawn many echo boomers looking to renovate turn-of-the-century town homes at a reasonable cost, while progressive developers in the Strip District have been converting large storage warehouses and manufacturing buildings into chic residential apartments. In October 2008, the New York Times called Lawrenceville a "go-to destination."

An estimated \$3 billion has been invested in downtown riverfront projects in recent years, and these two districts possess significant opportunities for billions more in future investment.

According to Lisa Schroeder, Executive Director of Riverlife, "the Perkins Eastman Allegheny Riverfront Vision Plan offers the opportunity on a new scale to tie together the natural resources with the unique urban fabric and innovative economy." The transformative and forward-looking plan is based on new ecological principles, smart strategies to increase public access to the riverfront and river, high-quality place-making that increases the quality of life in the urban environment, and regenerative and sustainable long-term investments.

Through a series of community meetings, Perkins Eastman and the design team developed framework plans for Ecology, Connections, Market, and Urban Form. Their overarching principles form the vision that identifies actions and projects ranging from large-scale transformative development to maintenance and preservation of the existing fabric. Conceptual design plans include more than 3 million square feet of potential commercial and residential opportunities in four transformative projects on the more than 240 acres of prime real estate along the Allegheny River.

To achieve these goals, Perkins Eastman proposes a network of green streets and open space and provides requirements and incentives for green design and LEED buildings. Vegetated

curb extensions will provide traffic calming benefits along with stormwater management and community greening benefits. The movement of goods and people will be addressed by a comprehensive priority street system. The rail corridor is proposed as a green and future transit connector in which the freight function remains, yet is coupled with a trail that allows the community greater access and appreciation of the riverfront.

Additional transit connections, through improved and new bus, trolley, and commuter rail have also been explored in the plan. An unprecedented 200-foot river buffer will define a new riverfront and new development replacing vacant and underutilized industrial sites while contributing to an overall 40% tree canopy coverage, restoring air quality, and reducing CO2 levels.

Craig Dunham of the Rubinoff Company, a Pittsburgh-based development company says, "the vision is anchored and catapulted by a serious approach to water, rivers, transit and the human scale qualities of the urban environment as guiding principles to the realization of the vision."

A ROADMAP TO THE FUTURE

Currently, the Strip District and Lawrenceville are two riverfront communities that sit on the cusp of a renaissance. Featuring progressive ecological and sustainable design principles, as well as a sound framework for high-quality place-making, the Allegheny Riverfront Vision Plan aims to catalyze and catapult these two communities as leaders in riverfront development.

Perkins Eastman is among the top architecture and design firms in the world, priding itself on inventive and compassionate design that enhances the quality of the human experience. Stephen Quick, a Principal for Perkins Eastman, led the Allegheny Riverfront Vision Plan project.

