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Greetings!

Welcome to the November edition of CSL's E-Blast. Since our Placement Director Erin Denham has a background in designing commercial interiors, we hope to share some of her knowledge with you in the coming months. This month we explain what space planning is and how you can benefit from it. We also introduce you to another new face in the office, and hope that you enjoy our neighborhood feature on McKees Rocks.

Next workshop on December 8th. For those of you thinking about moving or growing your business, we hope you can attend our December 8th "Right Size It" workshop. Typically small, these workshops offer the opportunity to get your questions answered by a REALTOR® and will help you determine next steps in the process of finding space for your business or organization. Cost is \$35 per organization. Visit our website for details and registration form.

Thanks in advance for your feedback and requests for future articles!

What is Space Planning?

How do you know if your company will fit into a new space? Will the space be the right size for your company's needs? How can the space be used most effectively? Can't you just guess?

When a person, or a group, decides to relocate or reorganize its company in a space, it is best to consult with a space planning professional to be sure that the company can function as it should. A space planner can help to compile data on

● **The Rocks of McKees Rocks**

Bordering Pittsburgh to the west, on the southern bank of the Ohio River, the neighborhood of McKees Rocks might surprise you. A cliff near the river's edge gave the town its name; General Alexander McKee was granted these rocks for his service in the French & Indian War back in 1769. But the rocks have an even more sacred history as a Native American burial ground from at least 5,000 years ago (known as "Indian Mound"). The area was also surveyed by George Washington as a potential location for Fort Pitt.



● **Featured Neighborhood: McKees Rocks**

personnel, their tasks, and necessary equipment. They can also analyze how the company functions on a daily basis to gain an understanding of the company's culture as well as the needs of the people who make it a success.

Design programs are written documents that help space planners qualify and quantify what clients need for any given project. In addition, most programs are accompanied by diagrams that often express physical planning relationships more accurately than verbal descriptions do. For example, having the reception area adjacent to the conference room spatially makes sense so that clients can walk right into their meeting without disturbing employees as they walk through other parts of the office.

After interviewing and observing how employees in the company work, the space planner then organizes the data. The first phase of building programming involves putting the collected data into a useful sequential format so that quantitative factors--such as square footage, furniture, and fixture tabulations--can easily be extracted. This process is helpful in targeting strengths and weaknesses in the existing space plan and determining what changes should be made to improve the layout.

Since space planning can be challenging, we at Cool Space Locator recommend that business owners consult with space planning

The town's 1.1 square miles currently house 6,200 residents, spread amongst several distinct neighborhoods. Primarily a farming community until Pittsburgh-Lake Erie railroad located a major maintenance facility there in 1882, the town boomed to over 18,000 residents by 1930. Pedestrian friendly, P&LE Rail Road and workers of the several steel companies could easily access their jobs near the river. Today, the P&LE site is ripe for renewal, and only a few specialized steel companies remain.



The town's main street district along Chartiers Avenue is home to several stores, including GRIMES furniture store, Dietz floral shop, the Snack Shop Restaurant, and the town's small library. But alongside of these neighborhood serving businesses are some surprises, including the former Roxian Theater, which opened in 1928 and hosted neighborhood events, movies, live theater, and boxing matches before closing in 1980 to operate as the Emerald Room banquet hall. The McKees Rocks Community Development Corporation (MRCDC), has entered into a sales agreement for the purchase of the Roxian Theater and have secured a long term tenant/operator for the facility. Together, this public/private venture hopes to renew the space as a multi-purpose facility to offer everything from business breakfast meetings, dinner and dancing, movies, and musical acts.

Like many areas around Pittsburgh, McKees Rocks hopes that a focus on the arts can liven up the community and provide jobs. In a partnership with Point Park University made possible with a community outreach grant, the McKees Rocks Center for the Arts is underway on Chartiers Avenue. Just across from the Roxian Theater, the center will provide educational opportunities in areas such as performing, literary and visual arts, and will include a recording studio. The influence can already be felt in the community; elementary and middle school children had the opportunity to participate in an eight-week course in performing arts instructed by Point Park University students. The course recently finished its second semester and has proven to be a big success, demonstrating impact in the neighborhood even before the center has opened!

Other art influences are two murals on Chartiers Avenue. The mural on the wall of Dave Dietz Florist was created by Jim Levendosky with the assistance of six students from Sto-Rox high school. The mural once faced an empty lot, but that lot has grown to a small garden, thanks to the

professionals so that their company can function best in a space.

This article was written with the help of a book called Space Planning Basics by Mark Karlen.

contributions of the floral shop owners and community members. A Sprout Fund mural titled "I myself am that", created by Laurie Marshall, depicts several of McKees Rocks' actual residents beneath scenes and cultural identities of the town. If you're lucky, you'll meet one of these residents and be able to ask about their painted counterparts; a man and young daughter whose shadows are painted black with swirls of white light, explained to us that he sees himself as an inspiring father to his family.

Most Pittsburghers are familiar with Mancini's Bread, baked fresh in McKees Rocks, but you can pick up some other delicious food items along Island Avenue, including famous pizza and wedding soup at Mama Lena's ("Best Pizza in Pittsburgh" several years running), cinnamon raisin bread and other baked goods at the original Jenny Lee Bakery (still family owned and operated), and many varieties of fresh pierogies at Pierogies Plus (visit www.pierogiesplus.com for details). Or, if you've got some time on Friday morning, stop by St. Mary's Ukrainian Orthodox church between 10 and 12 to purchase homemade pierogies from the parishioners!

With a truly bright future and authentic history, there's something for everyone in McKees Rocks! Visit <http://www.mckeesrocks.com/> to learn more.

Thanks to Taris Vrcek of the McKees Rocks Community Development Corporation for his assistance in writing this article.

● **McKees Rocks CDC**

McKees Rocks Community Development Corporation was formed out of a group of stakeholders that had been meeting since 2000. These neighborhood stakeholders wanted to take advantage of the town's proximity to Downtown Pittsburgh and the Pittsburgh International Airport.



The MRCDC was granted 501(c)3 status in August of 2004 and shortly thereafter, hired their first full-time employee, executive director Taris Vrcek, a 3rd generation resident of the neighborhood who shares the organization's goal of keeping the old [neighborhood character] while bringing in new. They want to renew many of the area's older buildings while maintaining the identity of the neighborhood and its residents. Since founding, MRCDC has worked with consultants to help determine the best course of action for the organization and the community. Their focus is on enacting a Strategic Revitalization Plan,

which was adopted in the spring of 2003 as a way of newly "founding" McKees Rocks.

Fittingly, MRCDC just moved into one of the first neighborhood revitalization projects. The Hamilton building, a former school for 5th and 6th graders which was closed in the early 90s, has since been transformed into office space. Interesting to note is that the third floor of the building is still being used for educational purposes by the Allegheny Intermediate Unit, a county wide educational service agency supporting schools, families, and communities.

Besides the Roxian Theater, other MRCDC revitalization projects include making room for housing along the riverfront and loft apartments in older buildings, such as in the Miles Brian High School, which sits atop a hill with a view of the Pittsburgh skyline, but was closed in 1997. That plan also goes for the former St. Mark's school located in the "Bottoms".

To learn more about McKees Rocks or the MRCDC, visit www.mckeesrocks.com or contact Taris Vrcek at (412) 608-6765 or tvrcek@mckeesrocks.com.

- **Energy Efficient Skyline Pittsburgh**

Located in "The Bottoms" of McKees Rocks, 2005 Cool Space Award recipient Skyline Pittsburgh, The Exhibit Place, is housed in a 50 year old warehouse, which they purchased and renovated in 2003 for their trade show marketing business, with energy



conservation as a priority. Some of the improvements they made included making use of as much natural light as possible, and "stealing" light by using clear panels on office ceilings, allowing sunlight to filter into individual offices from outside windows. A new HVAC was installed, 85 fluorescent lights were replaced, and radiant heat is used in the warehouses. Jeff and Gwen Steigerwalt, owners, are very excited about their investment. They are already seeing lower energy bills and they estimate that costs for the improvements will pay for themselves in as little as three years!

Skyline Pittsburgh was recently awarded the Energy Star Small Business and Congregations Network Award. The terms for the award include "use of energy efficient technologies and strategies" and "use of ENERGY STAR resources such as ENERGY STAR qualified products, tools, and technical support". To be eligible for this award the

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business must be independently owned and operated and cannot exceed 100,000 square feet. (See www.energystar.gov for details). Skyline is also hoping to receive a similar award from the state acknowledging small business energy conservation. When asked about business opportunities in McKees Rocks, Mr. Steigerwalt stated that it is "an untapped resource, especially good for industrial businesses".

- **A New Face at CSL: Lindsey Miller**

Growing up just outside of Carnegie, PA in (what once was) rural Rennerdale, cities offered a unique contrast to the environment I was used to seeing. As a result, I was fascinated by them. I treasure the times my mom took my little sister and me to Mt. Washington to look at Pittsburgh from above, I loved exploring the shops on the South Side, and I still get a kick out of driving through the Ft. Pitt tunnel and onto the bridge with the entire city laid out in front of me.



After four years at Elon University in North Carolina studying environmental science, and before I head off to the University of Michigan to earn my Masters in Landscape Architecture, I decided to spend more time in Pittsburgh to experience the city up close, and have recently moved to Lawrenceville. In grad school, I plan to focus my studies on urban ecology and sustainable development. I feel lucky to be working with Cool Space Locator because I am learning so much about Pittsburgh's neighborhoods, and programs like Main Streets Pittsburgh, which I was unfamiliar with before.

My internship with CSL has been unlike past positions I have had with environmental organizations. The mission is much different, but very complimentary. What I am learning at CSL is making me more appreciative and knowledgeable of the urban environment that I already love. I am excited to see what the rest of the year brings.

- **About Us**

Cool Space Locator, a project of the Tides Center (PA), is a non-profit real estate organization that connects neighborhoods, properties, and businesses in the revitalization of urban communities. We work in the community development realm to promote revitalization of urban areas and walkable communities and match forward-thinking companies with cool urban spaces to create a sustainable future. Aside from working directly with companies to find space, we work with government, economic and community development agencies, and commercial property owners to help boost the growth of office-based jobs in the great urban commercial districts of Pittsburgh. We are supported by:

- Richard King Mellon Foundation
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- City of Pittsburgh, Mayor's Office