



E-Blast

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This painting, "The Balcony" by Manet, was inspired by those who would sit and watch people walking down the Paris streets. Like flâneurs, they are also an example of idle observers of urban life. This trend began at the turn of the 19th century into the 20th.

Flâneur is a French word. A flâneur is a detached pedestrian observer of a

Greetings!

This month we hope you enjoy our discussion of Community Benefit Agreements and our introduction to the featured neighborhood of Bellevue. As a follow-up to July's discussion of walkability, we highlight the pure enjoyment of walking through urban streets in our feature on flânerie.

We are asking readers to submit what YOU love about YOUR city, neighborhood, or town, so that we can share with readers the excitement we all have for our favorite places (respond to info@coolspacelocator.com).

• **Next Workshop**

Right Size It: Find the Right Space for Your Small Business

Thursday, September 14, 4:00-5:30 PM

Cool Space Locator Office

Are you a start-up or existing business in need of office space and don't know the first thing about the current commercial real estate market? Or are you an existing business with future downsizing or expansion space needs? Need to know whether you should purchase or lease a space?

Cool Space Locator offers a workshop for start-up and/or existing small businesses, artists, and arts organizations that will provide you with basic and essential tools necessary to find the right office or studio space for your business and will help you identify your true space needs to make effective and financially healthy space planning decisions. Typically small, these workshops offer the opportunity to get your questions answered by a real estate professional and will help you determine next steps in the process of finding space for your business or organization.

[Right Size It Registration Form](#)

• **Learning from California: Community Benefit Agreements**

A private developer has proposed a controversial arena expansion in Las Angeles that is not all that different from the proposed new

metropolis, a 'gentleman stroller of city streets', first identified by Charles Baudelaire. The word has no exact equivalent in English. The concept of the flâneur ... is important in academic discussions of the phenomenon of modernity and has become meaningful in architecture and urban planning (from Wikipedia).

Flânerie is the act of walking or strolling, somewhat idly.

An intoxication comes over the man who walks long and aimlessly through the streets. With each step, the walk takes on greater momentum; ever weaker grow the temptations of shops, of bistros, of smiling women, ever more irresistible the magnetism of the next streetcorner, of a distant mass of foliage, of a street name.

—Walter Benjamin

Penguins arena and casino near Pittsburgh's Hill District. The proposed mixed-use arena-casino entertainment district in Pittsburgh includes commercial space, bars, and nearby housing, and in LA, the Staples Center expansion, which is also mixed-use, boasts an expanded convention center, hotel, recreational facilities, housing, and higher-end retail. Just like the infamous building of Pittsburgh's Civic Arena (now the Mellon Arena, completed in 1961) the LA expansion would drop on top of a neighborhood filled with working class and minority residents who oppose the project. A neighborhood battle between local citizens and developers could potentially be resolved by a community benefit agreement (CBA), legally-binding, cooperative deal between a developer, a community coalition, and a local government, in which the developer must provide residents clearly defined benefits from the project—like local hiring and living wages for employees working at new businesses—in exchange for the community's public support.

These agreements originally arose to better involve communities in public-private development partnerships. Historically, new developments were often crafted with minimal input from nearby residents, requiring only a public announcement and a comment period. This mode was especially prevalent during the era of big Urban Renewal and the original construction of Pittsburgh's arena. With CBAs, local citizens can provide more oversight over public money, so it can support items like economically-equitable developments, cooperation among community decision-makers, real (not just symbolic) public input, and environmental sustainability—all possible benefits for the population at large.

In the case of the Staples Center expansion, two community groups—the Figueroa Corridor Coalition for Economic Justice and the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy—crafted a CBA in 2001. Now, the development is required to provide at least 20% affordable housing among residential units, hiring preferences and job training for residents, funding to improve public recreational space, and a commitment to responsible building practices. All of these solutions are common strategies on their own, but the CBA combines all the measures into one agreement.

While community planners and decision-makers often promote those goals, CBA agreements are uniquely enforceable in three ways:

1. The community coalition may not impede development or the granting of permits after the agreement has taken effect. Developers can benefit from construction processes that are cost-efficient, smooth, and unopposed.
2. Community benefits must be measurable. Community groups must ensure that developers provide their promised benefits.
3. CBAs are legally-binding. If one party breaks the deal, the other party may seek legal action to stop the development and ensure their entitled benefits. This reduces the uncertainty of urban real estate development.

In addition to the usual players in community planning, CBAs often solicit input from environmental rights organizations and labor/trade unions to ensure environmental and workplace justice.

The success of CBAs in California have given rise to others across the country, with some local development initiatives adopting similar values of economic justice. Will new programs in the Pittsburgh region follow suit?

To learn more, check out the following:

- [Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy \(LAANE\)](#)
- [Community Benefit Agreements: Holding Developers Accountable](#) by Good Jobs First and the California Partnership for Working Families
- ["Big Project Agreements Yield Big Community Benefits"](#) by Charlene Crowell, Michigan Land Use Institute (July 7, 2005)

• Featured Neighborhood: Bellevue



Lincoln Avenue

As a gateway to Allegheny County's northern boroughs, Bellevue ("beautiful sight") offers some amazing vistas of the upper Ohio Valley from its cliff-side streets. While Pittsburgh is not traditionally well-known for French influence beyond the French & Indian War and place names like Duquesne and Bellevue, one could argue that the town has a welcomed French influence in the town's *flâneur*. While the meaning of the word varies depending on the speaker, in its romanticized, European context, it refers to a thoughtful pedestrian contemplating and enjoying the surrounding life. In Bellevue, *flânerie* is a part of life. The caliber of mid-day walkers on Bellevue's central Lincoln Avenue, an extension of the Northside's California Avenue, rivals that of many other walkable communities in the Ohio Valley and the Pittsburgh Region. The afternoon walk is a matter of unstated, daily routine, and the Friday evening stroll is a recognized weekly tradition.

Lincoln Avenue embodies Bellevue's slogan of "Live – Worship – Shop" that hundreds of commuters see daily on Ohio River Boulevard. The community's main artery unites stately early 20th-century homes, art deco apartment buildings, active religious institutions, and an eclectic collection of retail shops. In a single trip, the Bellevue *flâneur* can find the day's groceries, vintage and antique items, nationally-acclaimed fine dining, and, sometimes on the same plate, comfort food. Lincoln Avenue's diversity of services and its surrounding streets make this town one of the region's hidden gems of a walkable community.



Assumption Church

When in the neighborhood, check out the three award-winning eateries on Lincoln Avenue. The first is Vivo, a restaurant locally famed for its all-verbal menu and food. Another stop is BYOB-friendly Roberto's Pizza, which food critic Ed Levine selected as one of the 13 best pizza places in the country and one in a handful that makes an authentic Neapolitan pie. Finally, for dessert or a mid-day buzz, the café Affogato currently occupies AOL CityGuide Pittsburgh's top choice for coffeehouses. Affogato's Friday night live music performances and Saturday night DJ sets typically draw a younger crowd. Victoria Green, Affogato's owner and recent transplant from Washington, D.C., has noticed a more youthful spirit trickling into town.

Bellevue is evolving along with the tastes of the new school of urban pedestrians. A vintage store in a space known simply by its street number, 517521, carries items like costume jewelry, retro rotary dial and neon light phones, slogan t-shirts, a variety of comic books and graphic novels, and well-read traditional books in the back. Just upstairs is Thinktank, a collaborative concept in office and creative space. A few blocks away from Lincoln Avenue, the former Grant School is being converted into loft apartments. Some of these spaces will integrate many of the old school symbols of older city educational institutions, like painted gym floor lines and cloakrooms.

Making all of this thoughtful walking safe and easy on Lincoln Avenue are sets of clear crosswalks and responsive, well-timed pedestrian signals. Many of the walk/don't walk signs show a countdown until the signal changes, so the Bellevue *flâneur* can contemplate more important things than the act of walking. Luckily, walking for most people is a daily activity, and Bellevue welcomes all visitors, *flâneur* or not, on any day of the year.

Cool Bellevue Tenant: Thinktank



Thinktank interior

After viewing cooperative writing communities in New York City, writer Tom Buell decided to bring back his inspiration in the form of Thinktank, a collaborative space for creative professionals. Buell envisioned a workspace that retained the "incubator-type atmosphere" of a coffeehouse and the professional necessities—a copier, fax machine, and generous electrical outlets—of an office. Here, members pay a small fee for a key to the space, where they can work anytime. The membership is not just limited to writers—anyone who wants a collaborative, creative environment is welcome to join.

Occupying the upper floor of the former G.C. Murphy variety store building, this space consists of an eclectic collection of cubicles, desks, tables, a few sofas, and chairs so members can choose a different space to work every time they enter. Large windows flank each of the exterior walls, letting the muted sounds of Bellevue remind members of the community outside. The openness of Thinktank's layout, one of the space's cool characteristics, encourages collaboration and inspiration among its members.

Thanks to Rich Cefalo of Northwest Savings Bank, Tom Buell of Thinktank – Workspace for Creative Minds, and Victoria Green of Affogato, for their assistance with the Bellevue Featured Neighborhood.

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 companies with cool urban spaces to create a sustainable future. Aside from working as a licensed real estate brokerage to help companies 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 the Pittsburgh region.

We are supported by:

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