

Architecture for the new century

Creating a lasting identity with the design of the Civic Center in Pittsburg, CA

Architect Fani Danadjieva Hansen, AIA

HANSEN ASSOCIATES ARCHITECTS AND PLANNERS

Pittsburg Civic Center, Pittsburg, CA,

The City of Pittsburg has a rich mix of people and colorful history. It had survived through major economic changes in the past.

To stimulate local economy, Pittsburg City Council identified the need for revitalization. In 1995 the Council announced a competition for programming, master planning, design and construction management of a 23 acres in the center of Pittsburg. Experience with designing projects for Cities redevelopment areas was required.

1. Selection

The selection process in several stages identified 5 finalists as candidates for the master planning, design, management, cost control and implementation. Hansen Associates Architects and Planners with Fani Danadjieva Hansen as a design leader/ architect was unanimous selected following the presentations of several nationally well-known firms.

Fascinated with the multi cultural heritage and the diversity of Pittsburg's people, Architect Fani Danadjieva Hansen spent many hours researching Pittsburg's history, industry, environmental assets and needs.

The result is her design, the architecture that is respectful of Pittsburg's history and land. The Architecture, Art and Sculpture, tightly interwoven with light and color promote trust and togetherness. The Architect has successfully integrated the architecture, art, engineering, interior design, space planning and landscape architecture into a single image. The structure expresses the beauty of the locally forged steel, while the building embraces the city into a gentle curve at a minimum cost. The design is of impressive structural integrity and efficient functional purpose. In close collaboration with the internationally well known artist Helen Webber and Pittsburg's native Ron McDowell the Architect weaved the city's history through the interaction of materials, art and space so that the visitor can gain an appreciation of Pittsburg's heritage while admiring the architectural conception of the complex itself.

The framework is simple, reflecting timeless patterns. The steel structure encourages light and ventilation, while expressing the structural beauty of the locally forged steel. It rises three stories and hugs the city with its gentle curve. It captures the natural light and magnificent views of the surrounding hills and bay. Its design connects with the past and responds to Pittsburg's need for identification. It defines the city's roots and rich history with color and poetry.

2. What constitutes the essence of Pittsburg?

The first task of the Architect on the project was to assess what constitutes the essence of Pittsburg, what distinguishes it from anywhere else. The reason for this enquiry was to see how the Design of the Civic Center can reflect the Pittsburg's community, can convey a sense of continuity from the past, through the present, project it into the future.

Fani Hansen began with a trip to the City offices where she met the Assistant City Manager Ms. Lillian J. Pride who was the first to introduce her to Pittsburg, its goals and values. The next stop was at the Chamber of Commerce and the old Pittsburg Museum on Civic Avenue where Fani met Marti Aiello who shared with her the rich Pittsburg's past. Fani was fascinated with the multi cultural heritage, the diversity of Pittsburg's people and the fact that Pittsburg had survived through major historical and economic changes.

She found that what has made Pittsburg tick in the past has changed over the years. Commencing with the American Indians that lived and worked in harmony with one another to the arrival of the first white men in 1772, the Spanish/Mexican rancheros, the founding of the city by Col. Jonathan Stevenson in 1849, the coal mining activities in 1855 with the immigration from Wales and Ireland when the name of a "Black Diamond" became synonymous with the area, to the Italian immigrants that anchored the fishing in 1870, the canning industry in 1882, the steel mill tremendous industrial growth in the area from 1910 on, the Camp Stoneman serving as a staging ground for over 2.5 million soldiers during the World war II years and the closing of the military camp in 1958, Pittsburg has survived through traumatic changes in the past.

Where did the endurance come from?

3. Community input

To find the answers to this question, the Architect spent many hours researching Pittsburg's history, education, jobs, industry and natural environmental assets. She spent many hours meeting with community leaders, city staff, Council members and Mayor Tyler Davis.

Through this interactive process Fani Hansen learned that Pittsburg has:

- ❖ A Social need: to promote the significance of the Pittsburg's rich cultural diversity.
- ❖ "Center to celebrate Pittsburg's diversity every time we visit the City Hall (Clarissa Glover)
- ❖ A Spiritual need to improve the city of Pittsburg's image and self-esteem
- ❖ "We would like to look back and say Pittsburg did it" (verbalized by Mayor Tyler Davis)
- "The center should be a credit to the city, reflecting history and culture (Mayor Bob Lewis)
- ❖ "We want a beautiful place to do friendly business and become an identification of Pittsburg." Lillian J. Pride)
- ❖
- ❖

- ❖ An Environmental need: to create a center that attracts high quality development within the area based on Pittsburg's natural landmarks (water and hills).
- ❖ "Include artwork incorporating Pittsburg's history. Include water as our number one asset." Mayor Mary Erbez
- ❖ Functional need: to provide centralized service to the community
- ❖ "The Center should be civic more than a police station and city hall," said Supervisor Joseph Canciemiella
- An Economic need: to increase economic opportunities for local residents and businesses

4. Design solution

Fani Hansen's mission as the Architect of the facility was to crystallize the image of the Civic Center in response to those needs and create an anchor of the cultural diversity that is Pittsburg. It became apparent to her that to create a personal interaction between Pittsburg's rich mix of people, its history and vision would be to harmonize and integrate many elements that respond to Pittsburg's community needs. She recognized that through the integration of the Art, Sculpture, Architecture, light and color, the Civic Center would take on a life and character of its own.

Inspired by the Pittsburg's history she prepared hand sketches, electronic 3-D computer drawings, and models to illustrate each element of the Plan to the community.

To integrate the Art, the Sculpture and Architecture she designed spaces within the structure that invite light, display the history through 6, 14 feet high tapestries and 8 banners created by Helen Webber. The Artwork reveals the rich Pittsburg's history with color and poetry. The tapestries describe in bold color, motion and poetry the important stepping stones of the Pittsburg's history. They promote togetherness, respect and harmony with nature and celebrate Pittsburg's diversity. Within the artwork Helen Webber incorporated the poems she and her partner Jim Peterson, one of the 2.5 million GI's that past through Pittsburg, created.

The Design of the central stair and elevator encourages people to exchange views. The space is a cathedral of light that celebrates the diversity, respect to nature and life. Scenes tie Pittsburg to its water-related activities and industrial past. Fani Hansen designed the elevators' wall as an ocean mural that symbolizes the power of diversity and unity. Exposing us to the reality of life, from the small creature to the largest; the ocean does not know division as continents and rivers do. The ocean is a dramatic symbol of unity and eternity.

Helen Webber masterfully painted the mural. The baby whale is pushed by its mother towards the surface and light. This symbolizes the need to help and educate. The colors were seen to embody a magical power capable of influencing events and bringing a community to function as a whole. The primary colors cross cultures and racial lines. It is this tradition of color that is brought into the Pittsburg Civic Center.

As one enters the building from the south the center plaza area is reserved for celebration of important events that shaped Pittsburg in the past. Here the Architect Fani Hansen created a memorable public plaza incorporating ethnic motives and bronze medallions within concrete paving. Pittsburg's born Ron McDowell sculpted the medallions, unveiling the stories of Pittsburg in bronze. Community's interest in History, Education and Diversity become an inspiring element at the center of the Civic space. Here the public can bring a personal touch by engraving the names of people who "made it all possible".

As the site includes a City Hall, City Administrative offices, Police Facility, Municipal Court, Library, School District Administrative offices and National Guard Armory it was necessary to plan jointly with all property owners in order to achieve economy of development both in land use and project budget. This included land exchanges for the benefit of the development as a whole. The result is

- reconfiguring of all parking area which was moved to the interior of the site. The parking is designed to connect each civic function and serve the Civic Center as a whole, in contrast with the existing configuration where individual lots serve specific buildings. This allowed for developing of Open space that connects the Center to the park and nature and is highly visible and accessible to the public.
- As the natural elements (sun and wind) have significant impact on building systems and their performance Fani Hansen studied several building locations. The chosen building locations connects visually the facilities with the water and the hills and allows them to capture the natural light and views of the surrounding hills to the south and the river to the north.
- A plaza gateway with waterfalls and sculptural elements is located along the historic Railroad Avenue. The structures provide shelter from the wind with a fountain that masks the noise of the nearby freeway.
- The system of internal pedestrian walks focus toward the entrance and meets the need for pedestrian movement between the various functions on the site. The pathways worth strolling—with artwork imbedded in the paving convey a sense of continuity from the past to the present and into the future.
- Towards the North, views will include the symbol of the city logo encompassed by an informal sitting area. The logo is described by a stage as its anchor, rolling hills as grass areas, flowers as the sun. The surrounding pool of water reflects the sky and the multi-colored flags anchoring as a metaphor the cultural diversity of the City.

The Civic Center's space responds to Pittsburg's

- Social need for connecting people with each other, connecting them with the past, with the light, water, hills and nature.
- Spiritual need for self esteem by celebrating the significance of the Pittsburg's diverse community and allowing the light to create magic through the variances in lighting levels that change the space appearance and inspire. The Brazilian granite paving in floral arrangement reinforces the feeling of celebration every time one visits the City Hall. The Design incorporates messages of global values that encourage collaboration and believe that a joint effort toward a worthy goal will enable us to do something great for mankind
- Environmental need to create center that attracts high quality development. The views from the floors promote Pittsburg's natural assets and history such as the fabulous views of river/ fishing and steel industries and hills/ coal mining activities. At night the views of illuminated trees and landscape light the paths through the Center. Green-blue glazing and metal roofing change color under different light conditions. This color palette connects Pittsburg with its water related heritage and activities. The Civic Center has something for everyone and has brilliantly concentrated all those things so that the rest of Pittsburg can have the greater freedom to beautify itself. "This is the new Pittsburg. It lifts our spirits. It gives us millionaires' views of the Pittsburg skyline."
- Functional need to provide centralized service without barriers of any kind The entire design centers on the quality of the work place by focusing on the user/city/public one stop service, where city services are available at a single location. As Jeff Kolin, Pittsburg's City Manager, stated in a letter to the Architect, "The open feeling you featured in the design has encouraged interaction between our departments and has made the public feel welcome in the new government center. This improves our efficiency tremendously."
- Economic need to increase economic opportunities The project was completed below budget and on time. This is unheard of for a large public project. To fulfill the economic need of the community, Fani Hansen analyzed each building element for its value and cost. To include local industries in the project- Architect worked with local manufacturers to define their capabilities and included materials within the building that could be fabricated within the city of Pittsburg. The majority of the structural elements were fabricated in Pittsburg, CA at Concord Iron Works with whom the Architect worked very

closely during the design and construction phase. Steel-framed core went up quickly. This collaboration reduced cost and allowed 26% of the bid to remain in Pittsburgh. This was largely due to the fact that the responsibility for design, cost control and construction management was given to the Architect as the leader in the entire design and construction process.

The building as designed is an organism capable of variation and adaptation with as large a range as the technology and project budget of today permits. The architect with the artists portrayed the city's long history of blue collar industry. The project is a triple success—for the community, the client and the entire design and construction team. The opening celebration was a testimony of this success.

The resulting expression of civic pride generates a contagious vibrancy and optimism, which is the key ingredient of urban redevelopment and revitalization.

Citizens of Pittsburgh expressed interest in making a visit to Pittsburgh Civic Center as memorable as possible, and to expose them to programs, history and activities the City offers on all floor levels.

The Civic Center is already much appreciated by the community as it creates a personal interaction between the people, their past and vision for the future. As mayor Federal Glover said " the building fulfills the dreams of Pittsburgh's community for many years to come." It creates a people-serving project that brings brightness to all citizens - youth, adult and seniors.

The community and the industry brought the right ingredients for the Architect and her team to produce a remarkable building. Hansen Associates Architects and Planners is a multidisciplinary architectural firm that guides the client throughout every step of the design and construction process.

More information.

The Project Consists of:

3-story office building (City Hall and Police Facilities) of approximately 71,000 sf located at 65 Civic Avenue, Pittsburg, CA 94565. Building systems include elevators, plumbing, HVAC, electrical, fire protection and communication systems.

The main building material is metal. The design is a testimony of the creativity of the Architect who achieved a stunning Architecture with standard metal components. Many of the building materials and systems were used in new, innovative ways.

Instead of hiding the structure behind layers of sheet rock and acoustical tiles, the Architect exposed the framing inside and out and made all structural connections visible. She reduced the number of structural elements to the minimum and achieved substantial economy in steel fabrication and erection. The inspiring undulated shape of the facility was achieved by standard elements that were repeated in succession. This is a steel-framed building with lightweight concrete floors on profiled metal decking by EPIC and roofing by Loadmaster. Prefabricated standard open truss shapes by Vulcraft form the main structural steel framing system.

Metal Floor and Roof Decking system

The high acoustical rating, linear plank ceiling appearance, grid hanging capability and high reflectivity for indirect lighting of the decking allows for exhibit hangings and banners and provides sound absorbing element, which is very important for the flexible use of the structure. The space can be used for open office, concert or exhibit hall. Decks serve simultaneously as acoustic ceilings and light reflectors.

Exterior and interior wall cladding is of pressed metal corrugated panels by HH Robertson (IW-60A, 22 gauge thick) that evoke Pittsburg's steel heritage.

The metal roof, by AEP-Design Span batten system of 24 gauge thick steel harmonizes with the glazing system. The Architect's design incorporates alternating two standard panels of 12" and 18" width to produce a remarkable design. A single factory cut tapered panel forms the hips and valleys along each grid line. Simplifying and standardizing the details achieved an elegant roofing system at minimum cost. The teal-colored metal roofing panels and the green-blue glazing (Sungate 500, Azurlite by PPG Industries) change color under different light conditions.

Mechanical system is a single duct variable volume system, VAV with visible ductwork

To increase building flexibility and to allow maximum amount of usable space within the building, stairs and duct shafts were located at the exterior of the building leaving uninterrupted floor space that can be modified based on functional need. Exposed ductwork in bright colors brings life into the office space. Natural ventilation is available through operable windows with a backup cooling system. The building is capable of being altered to suit the changing needs of users as easily as possible.

Electrical system

Power distribution is achieved through raceways in Walkercells located in slab at 5'o.c. The raceway is sized to provide sufficient capacity for copper cables for start-up and future fiber optic service. This in-floor distribution system provides the building with power, lighting, electronic and communications capabilities. Future changes could be made with minimum disruption to user.

Energy

To save energy of operation Fani Hansen placed an important value on daylighting the space. Maximum floor depth was determined by heavy reliance on the use of daylight. Daylighting saves almost 70% of the lighting expense and since the daylight generates less heat than office light the peak air conditioning load is reduced accordingly.

The Architect was able to achieve the energy efficient design by:

- The use of high window walls that allow daylight deep into the building
- Opening the central portion of the building to receive daylight
- Designing the balconies and light shelves at the exterior and interior that serve as shading or as reflectors that bounce light onto the interior space.

The daylight is enhanced by the central portion of the building, which is open from the ground floor to the top level and the exterior light shelf on the south facade. In winter when the sun's angle is lower, the "light shelves" diffuse reflected light to reduce glare.

The light levels vary, which upgrades the space appearance. Indirect lighting attached to the lower chord of the structural trusses supplements daylight where needed. It is controlled by multiple circuits allowing lights to be turned on and off, as they are needed. Under normal daylight conditions light would be sufficient in most of the workspaces.

Sun Protection

The other important element was to consider sun protection at the south wall of the building. By shading the building, solar glare is reduced with corresponding reduced demand on the cooling systems. Here the Architect designed a simple, but expressive metal panel solution composed of standard structural members.

Lasting quality

"This impressive building of glass and steel is Pittsburg's newest landmark."

Ledger Dispatch and Contra Costa Times, Jan 29, 2000

What People Say

"It is just absolutely beautiful [building]. It shows the direction Pittsburg is heading. We are proud to be Pittsburg residents. The building, the architecture, with the murals express the feeling, the history. Mrs. Nichols, Pittsburg:

"The new Civic Center is magnificent. The Architect is Fani Hansen who orchestrated the designing of the structure so that it is a testimony to who we are as a people. The fact that cost of the building is coming below budget is a cause for jubilation. We have indeed been fortunate to have chosen the right architect for such undertaking." Marti Aiello, City of Pittsburg

"The building features a spiral staircase in a rotunda and glass elevators. The rotunda floor has a geometric design in blue granite. Colorful tapestries on each floor reflect the many eras in Pittsburg's history. All of this adds up to a Civic Center that is a source of community pride." City of Pittsburg grand opening,

Congressman George Miller

I want to congratulate you the citizens of Pittsburg for this wonderful, wonderful civic center you have constructed. One of the great things about Pittsburg is that this city has constantly reinvented, reconstructed itself. This civic center is an example of that.

Assemblyman Tom Torlakson

There's a real vibrant team spirit here in Pittsburg that is a great credit to this community, really for our whole county. This building will stand as a testament to that. The address 65 Civic Avenue will be known as a place where people can come from all walks of life, all neighborhoods. This project at 65 Civic Avenue will stand for progress always.

Supervisor Canciamilla

I think this building truly reflects the community of Pittsburg and I want to acknowledge Fani Hansen for her design effort.

Former Mayor Bob Lewis

Certainly today is the culmination of a long process that began many years ago. It isn't often that a project can be built and stay on time and on budget. And this is the great testament to the oversight that we got from the architect – we made the project manager – Fani Hansen. And Fani, I just want to thank you on behalf of all the city councils and all the citizens of Pittsburg for all the money you had saved us. Thank you very much.

Former Mayor Frank Quesada

Now we have completed the building. It's been a dream for many, many years for me and for the citizens of Pittsburg. Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Former Mayor Federal Glover

The city of Pittsburg has come together and brought together a building we will be able to look at and identify with the diversity that is in this community for years to come. We listen to you, the people, and today we stand in a building that is representative of you each and every individual that lives in the city of Pittsburg. The building fulfills the dreams of Pittsburg's community for many years to come. It creates a people-serving project that brings brightness to all citizens – youth, adult and seniors.

Council member Frank Aiello

What a great day for the entire community. Vision is in the vocabulary. This building is a reflection of what is to come. Let's work together in the future to make this a bigger and better city for all of us.

Comments from February 5, 2000 Opening Guest Book

"Fani, thank you very much for everything. You really pulled it off."

- Gary Ruder, EPIC Metals

"Proud to have raised my children here – made our living here, and lived to see this beautiful building."

- Sal & Georgianna Russo

"I wish my grandfather, Horace Herbert Haynes, who was mayor of this fair city in the 20's, could be here to see this lovely building." - Ed & Sherill Hecock

"A beautiful showcase for the entire Bay Area." - Ted & Shirley Leung

From live interview captured on video with visitors coming out of the civic center building
By Reporter Burt Arnowitz

"First class leadership, which is evident by the results. As I said, we are going to be a town to be recognized in the future. We have the heart, we have the spirit, and we know where we are going. Nothing is going to stop us. I love the design because it respects and honors the tradition of Pittsburg. Our roots are something to build on. The value of the culture where we live and work is something we should pass on and move forward with it."

Mr. Nichols: "The building is what we need to do here. This is what we need."

Welcome to Pittsburg's New Civic Center

This impressive building of glass and steel is the City's newest landmark, rising three stories above Highway 4 and nearby City Park.

The center is the result of years of effort.

The result is a building to make the community proud.

As this new Civic Center brings together city staff, it also represents a coming together for our community.

From *Ledger Dispatch* and *Contra Costa Times*, Jan. 29, 2000

Civic center revisits past – Designers meld old with new

In researching the design, architect Fani Hansen sought to portray the city's long history of blue-collar industry. The result was an effort to "salute the past and how we can grow from the past to the future".

From *Ledger Dispatch*, Charles Levin

9506/Narrative Art tapestries. doc

HANSEN ASSOCIATES
ARCHITECTS AND PLANNERS

Please include the following credits when using the photos:

Architect: Fani Danadjieva Hansen, AIA
Architecture and Construction Management:
HANSEN ASSOCIATES ARCHITECTS AND PLANNERS
P.O.Box 868, Tiburon, CA 94920, (415) 435-5767, Fax (415)435-4240
E mail- FDH@hansenarchitects.com
Copyright © 2000 Hansen Associates Architects and Planners