

CENTER DESIGN EMPHASIZES CUSTOMER SERVICE

Pittsburg's Civic Center has a unique design, inside and out: walls of windows, a steel spiral staircase and colorful tapestries are just part of the picture.

On the ground floor is a one-stop Payment Center that accepts water bill payments, permit fees and registration fees for Leisure Services classes and excursions. Also convenient to the lobby is a centralized Records Center. The third floor Council Chamber accommodates twice as many people as the chamber in the old City Hall could.

Every city department is represented in one building, so residents and visitors may conduct their business more easily.

"It's great for our staff as well," said Mayor Lori Anzini. "Everyone is under one roof, and that reinforces the sense of teamwork."

Architect Fani Danadjieva Hansen adds that design elements in the

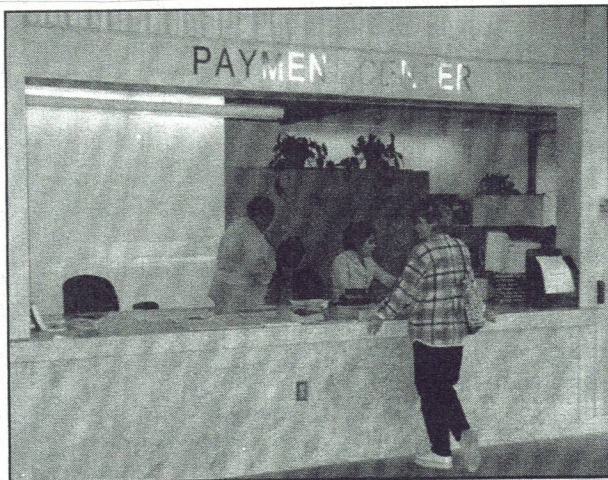


Photo by Joel Summerhill

The first floor Payment Center at the new Civic Center makes it convenient to pay water bills, business licenses, permits and registration fees for recreation programs at one location.

building contribute to the positive atmosphere. "The design of the central stair and elevator encourages people to exchange views," she said. "The open plan is designed to foster interaction among city staff, encouraging collaboration and participation."

Throughout the building, technology has also

improved the flow of information. In the Council Chambers, agendas and the names of scheduled speakers are listed on small monitors at each seat on the dais. Members of the City Council and commissions that use the chambers cast votes using this same monitor. Results are projected on a lighted board

for the audience to see. "It's easier to run the meetings," said Anzini, who presides over Council sessions twice per month. "The automation keeps things moving."

Employees are linked by a single computer network and can communicate by e-mail. This is a change from the days when city offices were spread among several buildings.

While the Civic Center utilizes today's technology, its design embraces the highlights of Pittsburg's history.

"We spent many hours researching Pittsburg's history, education, jobs, industry and natural environmental assets," said Hansen, the architect. During a series of public meetings, residents and community leaders shared their vision of what the Civic Center should be. Hansen said Vice Mayor Robert Lewis summarized the feelings of many who

attended these meetings when he said the Civic Center "should be a credit to the City, reflecting history and culture."

Steel and water, as symbolized by the glass, represent two linchpins of Pittsburg's history. The first people to settle here were drawn by the river. Later, coal mining gave way to commercial fishing and canning. The U.S. Steel plant, now USS-POSCO, drew still more people here, and provided a good livelihood for many families. Steel studs used in the Civic Center were produced at the POSCO plant, which still plays an important role in the local economy.

"We recognized that through the integration of art, sculpture, architecture, light and color, the Civic Center would take on a life and character of its own," said Hansen. The goal was to build on the community's sense of pride and add what she called "contagious vibrancy and optimism."

DID YOU KNOW...

Pittsburg's population reached 51,871 in 1998, and is still growing. Always a community that prided itself on its diversity, Pittsburg is home to a population that is 30 percent Hispanic, 17 percent African-American and 15 percent Asian descent. Thirty-six percent of Pittsburg residents are Caucasian, according to 1998 census data (the most recent survey available).

More than half of Pittsburg's people are married with a family, and the median age is 31 years. The average income among the city's 17,500 households is nearly \$57,000, echoing the economic prosperity of surrounding communities, according to the figures.

DID YOU KNOW...

Pittsburg has three Sister Cities: Pohang, South Korea, Shimonoseki, Japan and Isola delle Femmine in Sicily.