



INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY HISTORIC NOMINATION FORM

HRC Staff Use Only

Date Received:.....
 Parcel No.:
 Ward:
 Zoning Classification:
 Bldg. Inspector:
 Council District:

Fee Schedule

Please make check payable to *Treasurer, City of Pittsburgh*
 Individual Landmark Nomination: \$100.00
 District Nomination: \$250.00

1. HISTORIC NAME OF PROPERTY:

former Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Office

2. CURRENT NAME OF PROPERTY:

Citizens Bank, East Liberty Branch

3. LOCATION

a. Street: 6112 Penn Avenue

b. City, State, Zip Code: Pittsburgh, PA 15206

c. Neighborhood: East Liberty

4. OWNERSHIP

d. Owner(s): ARC CBPBGPA010 LLC

e. Street: 2325 E Camelback Road, Floor 9

f. City, State, Zip Code: Phoenix, AZ 85016-9080 Phone: (602) 778-6000

5. CLASSIFICATION AND USE – Check all that apply

Type

Structure

District

Site

Object

Ownership

Private – home

Private – other

Public – government

Public - other

Place of religious worship

Current Use:

VACANT/NOT IN USE

6. NOMINATED BY:

- a. Name: Brittany Reilly
- b. Street: 1501 Reedsdale Street, Suite 5003
- c. City, State, Zip: Pittsburgh, PA 15233
- d. Phone: (412) 256-8755 Email: breilly@preservationpgh.org

7. DESCRIPTION

Provide a narrative description of the structure, district, site, or object. If it has been altered over time, indicate the date(s) and nature of the alteration(s). (Attach additional pages as needed)

If Known:

- a. Year Built: 1969-1970
- b. Architectural Style: Modernism (Functionalist)
- c. Architect/Builder: Liff, Justh and Chetlin Architects and Engineers

Narrative: See attached

8. HISTORY

Provide a history of the structure, district, site, or object. Include a bibliography of sources consulted. (Attach additional pages as needed.) Include copies of relevant source materials with the nomination form (see Number 11).

Narrative: See attached

9. SIGNIFICANCE

The *Pittsburgh Code of Ordinances, Title 11, Historic Preservation, Chapter 1: Historic Structures, Districts, Sites and Objects* lists ten criteria, at least one of which must be met for Historic Designation. Describe how the structure, district, site, or object meets one or more of these criteria and complete a narrative discussing in detail each area of significance. (Attach additional pages as needed)

The structure, building, site, district, object is significant because of (check all that apply):

1. Its location as a site of a significant historic or prehistoric event or activity;
2. Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the cultural, historic, architectural, archaeological, or related aspects of the development of the City of Pittsburgh, State of Pennsylvania, Mid-Atlantic region, or the United States;
3. Its exemplification of an architectural type, style or design distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship;
4. Its identification as the work of an architect, designer, engineer, or builder whose individual work is significant in the history or development of the City of Pittsburgh, the State of Pennsylvania, the Mid-Atlantic region, or the United States;
5. Its exemplification of important planning and urban design techniques distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design or detail;

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6. Its location as a site of an important archaeological resource;
 7. Its association with important cultural or social aspects or events in the history of the City of Pittsburgh, the State of Pennsylvania, the Mid-Atlantic region, or the United States;
 8. Its exemplification of a pattern of neighborhood development or settlement significant to the cultural history or traditions of the City, whose components may lack individual distinction;
 9. Its representation of a cultural, historic, architectural, archaeological, or related theme expressed through distinctive areas, properties, sites, structures, or objects that may or may not be contiguous; or
 10. Its unique location and distinctive physical appearance or presence representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community, or the City of Pittsburgh.

Narrative: See attached

10. INTEGRITY

In addition, the ordinance specifies that “Any area, property, site, structure or object that meets any one or more of the criteria listed above shall also have sufficient integrity of location, design, materials, and workmanship to make it worthy of preservation or restoration”. (Attach additional pages as needed)

Narrative: See attached

11. NOTIFICATION/CONSENT OF PROPERTY OWNER(S)

1.3(a)(2) Community information process.

Preceding submission of a nomination form for a District, the Historic Review Commission shall conduct at least one (1) public information meeting within or near the boundaries of the proposed district, which shall include at least one (1) member of the Department of City Planning and one (1) Commission member, to discuss the possible effects of designation. Notice shall be given to the owners of property in the proposed district in accordance with Section 1.3(b) below. The final public information meeting shall be held no more than six months before the nomination form is submitted.

1.3(a)(1)(a) Subsection F.

In the case of a nomination as a Historic District, by community-based organizations or by any individual, but in either event the nomination shall be accompanied by a petition signed by the owners of record of twenty-five (25) percent of the properties within the boundaries of the proposed District.

- Please attach documentation of your efforts to gain property owner’s consent.-

** The nomination of any religious property shall be accompanied by a signed letter of consent from the property’s owner.

12. PHOTO LOGS: *Please Attach*

13. BIBLIOGRAPHY: *Please Attach*


14. NOMINATION FORM PREPARED BY:

a. Name: Pittsburgh Modern Committee of Preservation Pittsburgh

b. Street: 1501 Reedsdale Street, Suite 5003

c. City, State, Zip: Pittsburgh, PA 15233

d. Phone: (412) 256-8755 Email: info@preservationpgh.org

e. Signature: 



HISTORIC NOMINATION – INSTRUCTIONS

INSTRUCTIONS FOR FILLING OUT THE NOMINATION FORM

1. Indicate the original name of the property if it is currently known by a different name; e.g. Union Station.
2. Indicate the current name of the property
3. Indicate the street address for the property. For districts, attach a separate sheet listing the street address of each property included in the nomination and a clear street map of the area showing the boundaries of the proposed district.
4. Indicate the owner of the property and his or her mailing address. For districts, attach a separate sheet listing the owner of each property and his or her mailing address.
5. Check the classification as indicated.
 - a. **“Historic Structure”** means anything constructed or erected, the use of which requires directly or indirectly, a permanent location on the land, including walks, fences, signs, steps and sidewalks at which events that made a significant contribution to national, state or local history occurred or which involved a close association with the lives of people of nations, state or local significance; or an outstanding example of a period, style, architectural movement, or method of construction; or one of the last surviving works of a pioneer architect, builder or designer; or one of the last survivors of a particular style or period of construction.
 - b. **“Historic District”** means a defined territorial division of land which shall include more than one (1) contiguous or related parcels of property, specifically identified by separate resolution, at which events occurred that made a significant contribution to national, state, or local history, or which contains more than one historic structure or historic landmarks, or which contains groups, rows or sets of structures or landmarks, or which contains an aggregate example of a period, style, architectural movements or method of construction, providing distinguishing characteristics of the architectural type or architectural period it represents.
 - c. **“Historic Site”** means the location of a significant event, a prehistoric or historic occupation or activity, or a building or structure whether standing, ruined or vanished, where the location itself maintains historical or archaeological value regardless of the value of any existing structures.
 - d. **“Historic Object”** means a material thing of historic significance for functional, aesthetic cultural or scientific reasons that may be, by nature or design, moveable yet related to a specific setting or environment.
6. Indicate the person(s) responsible for the nomination. Please note: According to the Historic Preservation Ordinance:

“Nomination of an area, property, site, or object for consideration and designation as a Historic Structure, Historic District, Historic Site, or Historic Object may be submitted to the Historic Review Commission by any of the following:

- a. The Mayor of the City of Pittsburgh
 - b. A Member of the Historic Review Commission
 - c. A Member of the City Planning Commission
 - d. A Member of the Pittsburgh City Council
 - e. The Owner of Record or any person residing in the City of Pittsburgh for at least one year (for the nomination of a Historic Structure, Site or Object)
 - f. A signed petition of 25% of the owners of record (for the nomination of a Historic District)
7. Write a physical description of the nominated property or district. Include the following information as applicable:
- architectural style(s)
 - arrangement of architectural elements
 - building materials
 - method(s) of construction
 - visual character
 - street pattern
 - density
 - type and arrangement of buildings
 - topography
 - history of the development of the area
8. Provide a narrative history of the structure, district, site, or object. Include the following information when available:
- History of the development of the area;
 - Circumstances which brought the structure, district, site, or object into being;
 - Biographical information on architects, builders, developers, artisans, planners, or others who created or contributed to the structure, district, site, or object;
 - Contextual background on building type(s) and/or style(s);
 - Importance of the structure, district, site, or object in the larger community over the course of its existence.
 - Include a bibliography of all sources consulted at the end. Where historical information is uncertain or disputed, reference sources in the text.
9. Listed below are the categories and criteria for historic designation as set forth in the Pittsburgh Historic Preservation Ordinance. Describe in detail how the structure, district, site, or object meets one or more of the criteria. According to that legislation in Section 1.4 of the Pittsburgh Historic Preservation Ordinance, *Criteria for Designation*, a building must meet at least one of the following criteria in order to be designated:
1. Its location as a site of a significant historic or prehistoric event or activity;
 2. Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the cultural, historic, architectural, archaeological, or related aspects of the development of the City of Pittsburgh, State of Pennsylvania, Mid-Atlantic region, or the United States;
 3. Its exemplification of an architectural type, style or design distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship;
 4. Its identification as the work of an architect, designer, engineer, or builder whose individual work is significant in the history or development of the City of Pittsburgh, the State of Pennsylvania, the Mid-Atlantic region, or the United States;

-
5. Its exemplification of important planning and urban design techniques distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design or detail;
 6. Its location as a site of an important archaeological resource;
 7. Its association with important cultural or social aspects or events in the history of the City of Pittsburgh, the State of Pennsylvania, the Mid-Atlantic region, or the United States;
 8. Its exemplification of a pattern of neighborhood development or settlement significant to the cultural history or traditions of the City, whose components may lack individual distinction;
 9. Its representation of a cultural, historic, architectural, archaeological, or related theme expressed through distinctive areas, properties, sites, structures, or objects that may or may not be contiguous; or
 10. Its unique location and distinctive physical appearance or presence representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community, or the City of Pittsburgh.
10. In addition, the ordinance specifies that “Any area, property, site, structure or object that meets any one or more of the criteria listed above shall also have sufficient integrity of location, design, materials, and workmanship to make it worthy of preservation or restoration.”
 11. The nomination must be accompanied by evidence that the nominator has made a good-faith effort to communicate his or her interest in the historic designation of this landmark or district to the owner(s) of these properties. Describe how this was done, and attach evidence that the owner(s) of the nominated landmark or of the properties within the nominated district have been informed of the nomination. This may include a copy of a notification letter with a mailing list, a letter confirming phone calls, or a petition signed by affected property owners.
 12. Clear photographs of the nominated buildings or districts should accompany the nomination form. The applicant shall include photographs of all elevations of an individual building and its setting, or the front elevation of each building in a district. In the case of closely spaced buildings or rowhouses, several buildings may be included in one photograph. Each photograph must be labeled with the street address of the building(s) and the month and year the photograph was taken.
 13. Copies of major supporting documents should accompany the nomination form. Such documents may include, but are not limited to:
 - historic photographs;
 - historic and contemporary maps;
 - historic or contemporary texts describing the subject property or district;
 - historic or contemporary texts describing people, places, or events that comprise the historic context of the subject property or district.
 - Oversized materials (such as architectural drawings) and materials too fragile to copy may be accepted.

PLEASE NOTE: It is the responsibility of the nominator to provide the Historic Review Commission and its Staff with information sufficient to fairly evaluate the nomination. **Incomplete nomination forms will not be accepted. Fee must be included. Nominations must be submitted in both electronic and hard-copy format.**

CHECKLIST: *former Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Office*

- #1-6 Nomination Form:** Address, Ownership, Classification, Nominator Info.
 - #7: Description
 - #8: History
 - #9: Significance
- #10 Integrity**
- #11 Consent of Property Owners**
- #12 Photographs of Property:** numbered and labeled
- #13 List of Supporting Documents**

- Fee**
- Hard-Copy nomination**
- Electronic nomination (Word Format for text).**



Former Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Office
City of Pittsburgh Historic Landmark Nomination

Prepared by the Pittsburgh Modern Committee of Preservation Pittsburgh

February, 2021



**PITTSBURGH
MODERN
COMMITTEE**
OF
**PRESERVATION
PITTSBURGH**

Individual Property Historic Nomination Form

Historic Name(s): former Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Office
Current/Most Recent Name: Citizens Bank, East Liberty Branch
Location: 6112 Penn Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15206
Parcel ID: 0084-C-00051-0000-00

Neighborhood: East Liberty
Ownership: ARC CBPBGPA010 LLC
2325 E Camelback Road, Floor 9
Phoenix, AZ 85016-9080

Type: Structure
Historic Use(s): COMMERCE; BANKING
Current Use: VACANT/NOT IN USE

Section 7: Descriptive Narrative

Description:

Year Built: 1969-1970
Period of Significance: 1970 (Date of Completion)
Architectural Style: Modernism (Functionalist)
Architect: Liff, Justh and Chetlin Architects and Engineers, in conjunction with the Building Supervision Department of Mellon National Bank, *(Attributed)*

Hereafter, the building located at 6112 Penn Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15206 will be referred to interchangeably as the "former Mellon National Bank building," "Citizens Bank" and "the building."

The former Mellon National Bank building is sited on the southwest side of Penn Avenue at the intersection of Centre Avenue. It is a two-story, double-height-interior banking hall and office building. The building measures seven bays wide (approximately 73 feet) by ten bays deep (approximately 147 feet). Historically the building served as the East Liberty Office of Mellon National Bank. Most recently it served as the East Liberty Branch of Citizens Bank. The building is of steel frame construction, clad in terrazzo panels, aluminum, stucco, and glazed brick. The glazed brick is a deep emerald green in color, laid in a common bond pattern.

The building is an innovative, small-scale commercial interpretation of functionalist modernism in Pittsburgh and maintains a high level of integrity.

Site and Setting

The former Mellon National Bank building is located in Pittsburgh (City), Allegheny County, Pennsylvania. It is sited in the city's East Liberty district. It is a zero lot-line building occupying **Tax Parcel ID: 0084-C-00051-0000-00**.

The building is sited within the commercial core of Pittsburgh's East Liberty. It exists immediately outside the boundary of the East Liberty Commercial Historic District, a National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) Historic District (PA SHPO Key 143269).¹

The building's setting is urban, bounded by Penn Avenue, Centre Avenue, and a small, landscaped plaza to the southeast. The triangular, city-owned, landscaped plaza features mature trees that complement and enhance the subject building's emerald green glazing, while providing a seamless interior/exterior connection. The resplendent green of the building's speckled mass and triangular landscape plaza provide a welcome anchor for one of the city's busiest intersections.

Over the past 70 years, the East Liberty neighborhood—and specifically the area immediately adjacent to the Penn-Centre intersection—has been in a near constant state of flux. Over the past ten years, the East Liberty commercial core has been subject to heavy development and speculative building. The former Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Office (in tandem with its plaza) serves as a visual anchor and landmark, denoting the eastern gateway to the neighborhood's commercial core.

Building Description

Northeast (Front) Façade - Penn Avenue

(Figure 1)

The northeast (front) facade measures seven bays in width. It is symmetrical. It presents a central entrance via a recessed five bay portico, flanked on either end by the solidity of two brick piers. A period-detail folded plane aluminum fascia marks the edge of the portico soffit, featuring recessed downlighting. Narrow-sight line original aluminum framed full-height glazing provides unfettered interior/exterior views from street to interior. The perforated metal mesh of the interior drop ceiling coffers is visible to pedestrians. A terrazzo-clad plinth provides anchoring stability to the building as it wraps all facades. Along Penn Avenue this plinth provides a bulwark to protect the fine vertical glazing window-walls while allowing for the placement of a wood and stainless steel railing, a detail that along with the aluminum fascia, provides a mediating tactile scale to the overall design. Of note is the quality displayed in the building's brick construction: showcased here are bricks of speckled green glazing, providing a further fine-scaled detail to soften the building's mass.

¹ At the time of the historic district's designation (2010), the former Mellon National Bank East Liberty Branch did not meet the 50-year NRHP age threshold for consideration. It has since achieved sufficient age for consideration and evaluation.

Southeast (Side) Façade - Centre/Penn Avenue, Plaza

(Figure 2-4)

The southeast (side) facade measures ten bays in width. It is asymmetrical. Reading the building from left to right (southwest to northeast), bays one through six comprise the southeast-facing step-back of the Centre Avenue facade. Bays seven through ten feature four full-height vertical glazed slits in the brick building wall. Bays eight and nine are fitted with pedestrian doors. An aluminum fascia unites the fenestration with the rest of the building by a continuation of the primary facade's modern-day architrave.

The southeast (side) façade speaks to previous historical iterations of the key civic intersection of Centre Avenue and Penn Avenue. Remarkably, a façade whose construction layout and design was governed by a since-altered street layout, responds successfully to its current setting: a public plaza/parklet. This plaza façade opens onto an existing exterior plaza via three full-height vertical glazed slits in the brick building wall.

Southwest (Rear) Façade - Centre Avenue

(Figure 5 and 8)

The southwest (rear) facade measures seven bays in width. Here, the building's brick massing deconstructs into a saw-toothed plan of sliding planes and seven emerging office bays, an ingenious solution for stepping back in rhythm with the busy street it parallels. This saw-toothed plan functions to shield interior offices from street noise while also maximizing natural light. The double-height glass glazing continues vertically over the back-of-house office windows, as does the leitmotif of the folded-plate aluminum fascia cladding. However, dark green spandrel panels have been introduced to provide opacity. Mirroring the spandrel plates in height, the grounding terrazzo panel cladding wraps deftly into these saw-tooth bays to provide a secondary rhythm. A rear entrance occupies the central bay.

Northwest (Side) Façade

(Figure 6)

The northwest (side) facade is clad in stucco panels with a green brick plinth. One defined bay featuring a window opening is present at the northeastern end of the facade. Historically, this facade abutted the Sheridan Square Theater and was not intended to be seen. As such, it lacks the refined detailing exhibited by the other facades.

Roof

A uniform brick parapet screens a synthetic membrane-clad flat roof and the building's existing HVAC systems.

Section 8: History

Contextual History of Pittsburgh's East Liberty

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, East Liberty had become the primary commercial and transportation node for Pittsburgh's East End, at the confluence of seven distinct East End neighborhoods: Shadyside, Highland Park, Garfield, Friendship, Point Breeze, Larimer, and Homewood-Brushton.. By the 1920s, East Liberty had assumed the title of Pittsburgh's "Second Downtown," exhibiting not only the commercial fortitude that comes with such a title, but also the first-rate architecture that is expected of such a center. By the late 1950s, the once bustling core of Pittsburgh's second downtown, for the first time in its history, began to witness a slow and seemingly uncontrollable decline as its clientele moved away and the businesses that served them followed. Business owners in East Liberty recognized the signs of imminent decline due to decades of complex changing demographics and changing circulation patterns. The nature of business within the American city was changing. To the larger businesses in East Liberty, the neighborhood had begun to manifest the symptoms of that change. Civic leaders sought assistance from city officials. At the time, the Lower Hill District and Civic Arena project was underway, and the Point Park and Gateway Center Project had been recently completed. Community leaders saw it only fitting that East Liberty should benefit from the renaissance that was sweeping the city.

With East Liberty as one of the most important commercial centers in the city, the Chamber of Commerce supporting the initiative, and federal programs willing to back nearly two-thirds of the total cost of a project, the city welcomed a proposal for renewal. Pittsburgh's Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) assumed the role of developer of the project. Two of the individuals working to develop the East Liberty Project from the URA were Robert Pease and Alan B. Jacobs. Jacobs described then-contemporary views on urban planning as "modernist" with no ideological sense for saving existing buildings. But a new concept was being implemented in East Liberty that had not been used in other renewal projects. Considering that the East Liberty business community had pushed for the revitalization efforts, there was an effort to enlist the help and input of those who would be affected by the project. "Throughout th[e] Project there was a portion of the business community that was deeply involved. Those businessmen were representatives of the large merchants and institutions: Hahn's, Mansmann's, Sears, Pittsburgh National Bank, Century Federal, and Friendship Federal. There were some small businessmen represented but generally, it was the large merchants, who were heavily invested in East Liberty that were really interested in renewal and pushed it."^{2,3} The general public was

² Sheinberg, 100.

³ The groundswell of support for the revitalization effort was spearheaded by two of the most well-established business owners of the area—the May-Stern Department Store and Hahn Furniture. The May-Stern Store, located at the intersection of Penn and Highland Avenue, was already in a prime location, but saw that need for the commercial district to improve. Hahn Furniture, however, had much to gain from playing the part of an instigator in an urban renewal plan. The Hahn Furniture Store had, before renewal, been located on Frankstown Avenue in a peripheral section of the commercial core. Whereas the area of East Liberty centering around Penn and Highland Avenues had significantly developed at the opening of the twentieth century, the section of the district along Frankstown Avenue was comprised (primarily) of one- and two-story wooden buildings. Hahn Furniture had been considering an expansion of their business prior to the redevelopment of the district. The proposal of such a project in East Liberty was the prime opportunity for Hahn Furniture to not only expand, but potentially be relocated to a more desirable location. As one of the most successful businesses still in East Liberty, the involvement of the owner of the Hahn Furniture Store was the major driving force behind the choice of a mall concept and ultimately the determining factor for whether or not such a plan would be implemented.

also engaged.

Due to the immensity of the redevelopment proposal “[i]n December of 1959 the renewal plan was divided into three phases...”⁴ Federal funding also proved insufficient to complete the entire project at once. “On June 16, 1960, a crowd formed in City Council chambers... Acting on the competitive fears of East Liberty's largest retailers, [the URA] proposed to redevelop an area three-fourths the size of Downtown. At 254 acres, it was the largest urban renewal project ever attempted in Pittsburgh.”⁵ July 6, 1960 signaled the true beginnings of the project with a 7-1 vote by the City Council to move forward. “A Federal cash grant of \$7.6 Million was allocated to the East Liberty renewal program in December, 1960 and shortly thereafter, the URA, through its contractual relocation agent, the Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh, established a field office in East Liberty.”⁶ In all, 1,017 parcels of land were to be acquired for the project. The process of acquisition began in March of 1961.

“The traditional character of East Liberty... was the basic factor in the development of an urban renewal plan. The prime objectives were:

- (1) To restore East Liberty to its previous stature as a residential neighborhood by conserving and upgrading existing housing in the area and by creating substantial amounts of new housing for families of lower, middle- and upper-income levels.
- (2) To restore the vitality of the business core by creating opportunities for new investment and large-scale commercial rehabilitation. Two of the main aims of the renewal plan were to relieve traffic congestion which had been strangling the area, and to provide the business community with ‘built-in markets’ through the development of new and rehabilitated housing.”⁷

At the center of the plan, in addition to housing, was an initiative to convert the commercial core of East Liberty into a pedestrian mall. The pedestrian mall served as the vehicle for implementing a new type of renewal procedure in Pittsburgh. “The East Liberty Project was the first major rehabilitation project in the Pittsburgh area. Rehabilitation, in contrast to total clearance, imposes constraints upon renewal. Roughly half the project area was to be conserved and improved... The process of rehabilitation was comparatively new in the Country and there was little in the way of experience to draw from. Considering the unfamiliarity of the process, the degree of success in East Liberty is respectable.”⁸ Whether or not urban renewal era planners understood the social benefit of preserving historic fabric as one does today is debatable, but the actions of the East Liberty Project planners helped to retain some sense of place identity while forging a new, redefined commercial district.

Penn Avenue, Highland Avenue, and Broad Street were selected to be closed in East Liberty. The Penn Mall extended from Beatty Street in the west to Penn Circle East in the East. The Highland Mall extended from Antler Way in the South to Penn Circle North in the north. The Broad Mall Extended from Whitfield Street in the west to Penn Circle East in the east.

⁴Sheinberg, 26.

⁵Fitzpatrick, D. “East Liberty Then: Initial makeover had dismal results.” Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. May 23, 2000.

⁶Sheinberg, 28.

⁷Sheinberg, 30.

⁸Rosner, M. H.. *The Pedestrian Mall: Financing and Performing Maintenance and Operation*. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 1966) p. 108.

The most respected Pittsburgh-based architecture and landscape architecture firms of the day were given the task of designing the major structures of the new commercial core. Among the firms selected were Tasso Katselas Associates, Simonds and Simonds, Howard, Burt & Hill, and Liff, Justh and Chetlin.

The mall was a physical incarnation of [project landscape architect] John Ormsbee Simonds's belief that cities should be "...conceived as three-dimensional civic art and in terms of meaningful patterns form and open space."⁹ He viewed American cities as being "...oriented to our traffic-glutted streets."¹⁰ With the precept of molding meaningful space out of a tired, congested urban street, Simonds and Simonds created a lush landscape for the East Liberty pedestrian mall. The plan employed fountains, grand public spaces, impromptu plazas, multi-level planting beds, trees, and pagoda-like shelters to make the place an urban destination. Simonds and Simonds collaborated with Peter Muller-Munk Associates (PMMA) on the aesthetic scheme for the mall.

The entire mall was paved in a geometric pattern using a uniform material of contrasting gray and white pebbled concrete, a trademark of the firm's mid-century work. The space functioned as more than mere park space and it recreated East Liberty as more than a commercial district. It made East Liberty a shopping experience. The Simonds and Simonds design of the East Liberty pedestrian mall is among the most important urban spaces to ever be destroyed in Pittsburgh.

Actual work did not commence until 1965 and was slow to proceed. Utility lines were placed underground and the water mains necessary to service the planned water features for the mall were laid. The 100-foot expanse of Penn Avenue was narrowed to a single lane for bus traffic and all remnants of the trolley infrastructure were removed. Over one million square feet of built fabric (nearly one-third of the overall commercial core) was demolished to increase density in the commercial core and achieve an area that was financially sustainable by the decreasing residential population. The majority of the buildings demolished for the project were those sited along Frankstown Avenue to the east of the new condensed commercial core.

The East Liberty Project enjoyed a moderate level of success early in its development. The pedestrian malls were popular as a gathering place for [the] elderly residents of East Liberty. Students from nearby Peabody High School would gather in the area after classes had been dismissed for the day. Initially, the investment in the area caused property values to remain steady and, in some instances, increase. But the early success was to be short lived. A prolonged construction schedule of nearly seven years put undue strain on the already over-stressed base of businesses. Not wishing to encounter ongoing construction, many consumers took their business elsewhere and even longtime anchors in the area found it difficult to compete. The proliferation of suburban retail centers gave Pittsburghers a convenient and attractive alternative to East Liberty.

For nearly a decade following the completion of the East Liberty Project, efforts were made to draw back the consumers and residents who had been deterred. The pedestrian malls were the first target of

⁹Simonds, J. O. *Landscape Architecture: A Manual of Site Planning and Design (4th Edition)*. (New York: McGraw-Hill Professional Publishing, 2006) p. 320.

¹⁰*Ibid.*

re-redevelopment. The bus lanes running through the mall had been open to vehicular traffic for several years in an attempt to attract business. To accommodate more cars and parking, the bus lane was widened, thus removing the mall. Broad Street and Highland Avenue were the first of the malls to be officially reopened to automobile traffic in the early 1980s. By the late 1990s, the commercial core had been reverted to a typical streetscape with some vestiges of the pedestrian malls remaining.

Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Office

Historically, the City Deposit Bank of 1899 occupied the site of the former Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Office. Mellon National Bank acquired the predecessor building in 1946 when the City Deposit Bank (then a subsidiary of the Union Trust Company of Pittsburgh) merged with Mellon National Bank.¹¹

By the early 1960s, Mellon's decision to modernize their existing East Liberty branch was directly influenced by the ongoing and extensive efforts planned by the Urban Redevelopment Authority for the area, as previously detailed, as well as by the company's own growth. A September 1961 press update revealed that Mellon anticipated the modernization of their branch, on par with plans for the neighborhood, but would hold on final decisions until the "overall plans for the neighborhood are known."¹² Within the branch they maintained a redevelopment map, tracking each time the URA acquired a property.¹³ "Inviting customers in and making it convenient for them to do business with us had a lot to do with the (Mellon's) 1960s building boom. We're putting Mellon Banks in established communities, in growing suburban areas, in industrial sections, in shopping centers, in any location offering potential for the future... so there will be a Mellon Bank right around the corner,"¹⁴ shared Edward L. Becker, assistant Vice President in charge of Buildings.

On September 8, 1968, Mellon National Bank announced that the former City Deposit Bank at Penn and Centre avenues in East Liberty would be demolished and replaced with a new banking facility. Per the competitive climate, a month later, on October 8, 1968, Pittsburgh National Bank announced that it would demolish the former East End Savings & Trust Bank Building (People's Building) at Penn and South Highland avenues for construction of a new banking facility.¹⁵ In late 1968, early 1969, the East Liberty Office of Mellon National Bank temporarily moved its operations across Centre Avenue, while preparations and groundbreaking ensued for the new branch design. This temporary building was later renovated by Black Modernist architect Walter Roberts as the Selma Burke Art Center, and later demolished.¹⁶

For the new East Liberty Branch, material choices and considerations of the site and surroundings were on par with how the Mellon Buildings Department approached other modern branches, shown throughout the historic photo log. Soaring windows capture natural light, swaths of eye-catching green-glazed brick wrap the building, and the Centre Avenue-facing staggered-plan setbacks maximize a

¹¹ Pittsburgh Press. "Mellon Plans New Office." Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. September 8, 1968. Section 4, p. 10.

¹² Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. "Bank to Renovate in East Liberty." Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. September 6, 1961. p. 23.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Edward Becker, Jane Koch, Editor, "Building Boom in 1963," *Mellon Bank News* Volume 17, No. 4 (December, 1963): p. 3.

¹⁵ Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. "PNB To Raze Bank Building in E. Liberty." Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. October 2, 1968. p. 17.

¹⁶ Selma Burke was the renowned educator and sculptor whose relief portrait of Franklin D. Roosevelt was the image used for the dime. She opened a school in New York City in 1946 and subsequently one in Pittsburgh from 1972-1981, and taught in Pittsburgh for 17 years.

triangular plot. A more classically symmetrical entrance facade opens along Penn Avenue. “We use a lot of glass to open up the banks, pay close attention to details such as lighting and landscaping...”¹⁷ Unique to the site, the existing triangular community “pocket park” to the building’s east, marks the ever-changing boundary of this busy intersection. This verdant triangle park, with mature trees, grows in opposition to the rapid replication of commercial architecture proliferating on either side of the monumental East Liberty branch.

The bank building was designed by the Pittsburgh-based firm Liff, Justh and Chetlin, who also designed the East Liberty Carnegie Library Branch a year earlier, in 1968, on nearby Whitfield Street. Consisting of a concrete and steel frame, with brick infill and a recessed ground floor enclosed in glass, it was renovated in 2010. In addition to their East Liberty branch design for Mellon Bank, the firm completed the East Pittsburgh Branch in 1971. Founded by Bernard Liff after receiving his degree in architecture from Carnegie Institute of Technology in 1935, Liff, Justh and Chetlin completed a range of Pittsburgh-area projects including community facilities, commercial establishments, schools, and synagogues. Their portfolio includes the original Squirrel Hill branch of the Carnegie Library (1972), several local synagogues (the Beth Hamedrash Hagodol-Beth Jacob Congregation located downtown, the Gemilas Chesed Synagogue in White Oak, the new wing of Temple Sinai in Squirrel Hill), and the Martin Luther King, Jr. Elementary School on the North Side opened in 1973.

East Liberty Bank employees eagerly awaited and observed the completion of the new structure from the windows of their temporary facility across the street, and a grand opening was held on November 16, 1970. As the Mellon workplace culture would have it, many employee and community events such as tours for school-children and holiday gatherings were held at the branch and documented throughout internal newsletters. The branch went on to serve Citizens Bank as an active banking center until its closure in 2020.

Mellon National Bank’s Architectural Heritage

By the time of their 2007 merger with The Bank of New York, Mellon National Bank had demonstrated via their built banking centers to date that architecture had not been merely a footnote to the institution, but a core business tenant. Rather than construct stale, derivative business outposts, architecture was prioritized. Each branch office design emphasized pride of place while re-imagining its role as both a public facing community service, and genial workplace for employees and executives.

In 1871, founder Judge Thomas Mellon erected the bank’s first headquarters on a prime downtown property across from Pittsburgh’s City Hall. A prominent stone statue of Benjamin Franklin, Judge Mellon’s chosen muse, stood sentry above the entrance to this four-story neoclassical building at 514 Smithfield Street until the building was torn down and replaced by Judge Mellon’s son, R.B. Mellon, with the construction of a more-spacious headquarters, of Doric sensibilities, in 1922. Of note is R.B.’s requirement to architects Trowbrige & Livingston that “The bank’s design must display sensibility without reservation, and quality without showmanship”.¹⁸ Vanguard of a new corporate architectural outreach, Mellon Bank strategically demonstrated a long term commitment to avant-garde architecture and historic preservation.

¹⁷ Edward Becker, Jane Koch, Editor, “Building Boom in 1963,” *Mellon Bank News* Volume 17, No. 4 (December, 1963): p. 3

¹⁸ Building Banks: Mellon’s Architectural Heritage (Pittsburgh: Mellon Bank, 1986), 6.

During the 1950s and 1960s Mellon developed a systematic approach to modern branch office building. Beginning with the downtown Pittsburgh core, moving outwards through the city's neighborhoods, and eventually, to the more suburban locales, the company successfully utilized architecture in its branch offices as a business outreach and marketing tool. The bank kept pace with contemporary design practices. In the Pittsburgh region, this resulted in an accumulation of above-average, often-delightful, branch banks; jewels ripe for preservation and re-use.

Mellon National Bank was not the only banking institution to adopt a campaign of modern branch bank building during the mid-twentieth century. With Pittsburgh National Bank and other competitors following suit, there was often a competitive air surrounding the construction of new branch offices. In 1962, Pittsburgh National Bank began construction of its Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill-designed Oakland Branch (extant), also located at Fifth Avenue and South Craig Street. Fortunately, this 1966 structure, a work by world-renowned architecture firm, and a rare example of visible structural concept as stylistic marker, still stands and is utilized by PNC bank as their Oakland branch office.

In 1961, across the street from PNC's SOM building, the Pittsburgh-based firm Hofmann, Loeffler, and Wolfe completed Mellon National Bank's University Office (Figure 28-30) . It was located at the busy, highly visible intersection of Craig Street and Fifth Avenue, in Pittsburgh's Oakland neighborhood. Demolished in 2004, the superlative design boasted a reinforced concrete shell roof and core, surrounded by a glass curtain wall and gneiss-clad drive-in teller services. But perhaps the most fascinating aspect of the structure was its hyperbolic paraboloid form, the umbrella-like canopy serving as the functional concrete core/roof and simultaneously resulting in a striking, breathtaking interior for customers who chose to park and bank. A feat of twentieth-century engineering, this design move reflects Mellon's awareness of architectural style.

Starting in the mid-1960s Mellon National Bank maintained a 'Building Supervision' department, an in-house unit focused on "design, materials, colors and construction ... and interior planning,"¹⁹ largely led by assistant Vice President in charge of Buildings, Mr. Edward L. Becker, under whom innovations such as efficient prefabricated branch models were developed. "After our application has been approved by the Comptroller of the Currency and the Branch Location Committee determines the site and size of the new bank, Building Supervision goes to work on design, materials, colors and construction,"²⁰ explains Becker of the process. "Our goal is to produce a good-looking office that we can be proud of; yet each new bank must be treated as an individual project."²¹

Under this program, Mellon National Bank invested heavily in the design of its branch banks, expressed through a variety of designs throughout greater Pittsburgh, including, but not limited to locations in Squirrel Hill, Uptown, Lawrenceville, Millvale and East Liberty (the subject building of this nomination).

"In the wake of the Second World War...Glass, lighting, open interior spaces, warm colors, and well-maintained landscaping were incorporated into architectural plans. Mellon formulated a general philosophy for bank design, yet each office remained distinctive. Building codes, zoning

¹⁹ Edward Becker, Jane Koch, Editor, "Building Boom in 1963," *Mellon Bank News* Volume 17, No. 4 (December, 1963): p. 3.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

laws, traffic patterns, neighborhood architecture and the character of the community determined the style of a branch office.”²²

In early 1965, a modern Squirrel Hill branch, to replace an existing one across Murray Avenue, opened beneath a “concrete umbrella”, achieved through a 27-hour continuous pour of 204 cubic yards of concrete, to the fascination of onlookers²³. The resulting form features a scalloped roof line, and a series of small arches punctuated with round windows (Figure 22-24). The interior’s central feature is a 12’ wide skylight marble floors, and a curved staircase by Earle Reichard leading to a crescent-shaped mezzanine²⁴. The Squirrel Hill branch survives, remaining active as of February 2021 as a Citizen’s Bank branch. Still intact is its green-glazed brick exterior and terrazzo-panel base, clear material linkages between two neighboring green-glazed brick volumetric Mellon Bank branches in Uptown (Upper Fifth branch) and the subject building of this nomination, the East Liberty branch.

The Uptown branch (then referred to as Upper Fifth, for its location along Fifth Avenue, nearing Downtown Pittsburgh) was completed in 1966 and consists of a unique green-brick clad rotunda with windows housing the open-plan main lobby and tellers’ area, flanked by a three-story terrazzo-panel clad rectilinear solid section accommodating the vault, conference room and employee rest areas (Figure 19-21). Its curved portion invited customers to conveniently drive-in. “Glazed brick combined with several attractive precast buildings materials – all shades of green – was used in the exterior construction of this half round, half rectangular banking office,”²⁵ a schematic which allowed for an efficient use of available space in tandem with a design-forward structure. “We design all our banks to fit the site and to blend with the neighborhood,”²⁶ explained Becker. This structure is extant as of February 2021, and currently vacant awaiting a buyer.

The Lawrenceville branch, at an important corner location at Main and Butler Street, opened in December 1966 at 4112 Butler Street as a “modern brick structure ... with drive-in service and ample customer parking,”²⁷ and a sizable custom vault. As of February 2021 the structure is being transformed into a food/retail market for pop-up retail. Original architectural characteristics have been kept (Figure 25-26).

Mellon’s internal design department demonstrated design sensibilities of all styles and utilized architectural and material technologies of the time. Inclusive of Functionalist, Brutalist, Miesian, Modern, “Instant-office” prefabricated models, Colonial, or re-use of Neoclassical - the breadth is evident. Mellon Bank’s architectural heritage is a true architectural gift to the citizens of Pittsburgh, a veritable architectural lexicon and learning tool for the implementation of architectural style in daily lives. Citizens Bank has adopted many of the designs produced by Mellon’s Building Supervision Department, and utilizes them as active functioning banking centers. Yet, each day brings new branch closures. Many of Mellon branch structures lie in disrepair and neglect. The East Liberty branch, with its main structural and architectural elements intact, and its value as a neighborhood bulwark evident, is an important asset marking a dynamic period of Pittsburgh’s history.

²² *Building Banks: Mellon’s Architectural Heritage* (Pittsburgh: Mellon Bank, 1986), 30.

²³ Jane Koch, Editor, “A Concrete Umbrella,” *Mellon Bank News* (February, 1965): p. 8.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Jane Koch, Editor, “Upper Fifth Opens,” *Mellon Bank News* (May, 1966): p. 11.

²⁶ Edward Becker, Jane Koch, Editor, “Upper Fifth Opens,” *Mellon Bank News* (May, 1966): p. 11.

²⁷ Jane Koch, Editor, “Building Box Score,” *Mellon Bank News* (October, 1966): p. 7.

Section 9: Significance

Criterion 3: Its exemplification of an architectural type, style or design distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship.

This structure may meet this Criterion.

The former Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Office is an exemplar of the mid-twentieth century modern movement in Pittsburgh. Specifically, it represents a subset of modernism known as Functionalism. However, the building's rarity and innovation derive from its skillful marriage of modern, Functionalist principles with recognizable, traditional forms and spatial arrangement. In execution, the former Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Office was intentionally designed as "modernism for the everyman."

Functionalism in modern architecture dictates that superfluous ornamentation should be limited—that a building should necessarily convey the materials with which it is built. The former Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Office accomplishes this goal. No part of the building's exterior detailing is unnecessary. The building's double-height glazing illuminates the interior banking hall and offices, while also granting an unobstructed view of the building's interior function to the outside observer. The sawtooth configuration of the southwest (rear) façade harnesses the morning and mid-day sun, directing natural light into the executive offices. The aluminum-clad fascia on the front and side facades serves to repel water from the windows and pedestrian doors. The exterior cladding conveys to the observer that the structure of the building is (largely) masonry. The terrazzo-clad plinth at ground-level repels water and salt. The brick cladding, however, serves a dual purpose. In addition to conveying the building's materiality, the glazed, emerald green brick is a deliberate design choice. For the latter half of the twentieth century, this green hue was intrinsically linked with the public image of Mellon National Bank. The former Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Office was designed to be as much an advertisement for Mellon National Bank as any exterior signage.

Functionalism in modern architecture also dictates that a building's form and its overall aesthetic should be guided by its purpose and function—that the casual observer should be able to discern the intended use of a building based on its form. For instance: a residential building should look like a residential building; a school should look like a school; a bank should look like a bank. The Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Office is innovative in that it deftly accomplishes this modern, Functionalist goal through the implementation of traditional architectural vocabulary and ideology. In the 1986 publication, *Building Banks: Mellon's Architectural Heritage*, Mellon National Bank acknowledges that "[i]n the wake of the Second World War ... glass, lighting, open interior spaces, warm colors, and well-maintained landscaping were incorporated into architectural plans. [The bank] formulated a general philosophy for bank design, yet each office remained distinctive... For almost 200 years, the Mellon banks [grew] to encompass a diversity of architectural styles in unique communities. Mellon architecture reflect[ed] the dichotomies of traditional and modern design."²⁸

²⁸ *Building Banks: Mellon's Architectural Heritage* (Pittsburgh: Mellon Bank, 1986), p 12.

The former Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Office rises from a terrazzo-clad plinth, not unlike a classical temple. The northeast (front) façade is perfectly balanced and symmetric. The brick columns between the double-height glazing are bookended by massive brick piers. This recalls a classical colonnade—a common architectural feature of Pittsburgh’s historic banking halls. The interior double-height space recalls nineteenth and early twentieth century banking halls; it pays homage to the City Deposit Bank of 1899 that this building replaced. The overall visual *parti* is restrained, staid, and conservative, but distinctly modern. It is befitting of the long-standing, Pittsburgh-based financial institution that built it.

The former Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Office is a product of its time—reflective of the ideals that guided the mid-twentieth century renaissance of Pittsburgh and East Liberty: an acknowledgement of the past, a celebration of the present, and an uncompromising hope for the future.

***Criterion 5:* Its exemplification of important planning and urban design techniques distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness or overall quality of design or detail.**

This structure may meet this Criterion.

The former Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Office is—by design, siting, and period of construction—directly linked to the now-historic Pittsburgh Renaissance. Specifically, as built, it was an integral component of Pittsburgh’s East Liberty Project, the largest and most comprehensive urban renewal project ever undertaken in the City of Pittsburgh.

Today, the former Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Office stands as the last unaltered vestige of the Renaissance era in the historic East Liberty commercial core. As one of the last remaining major components of the East Liberty Project, it exists as a built record of the era’s successes and its failures.

Significance Within the Context of the Pittsburgh Renaissance & East Liberty Project

As a testament to Pittsburgh’s multifaceted Renaissance era, the building derives significance as a rare, surviving component of a large-scale urban renewal plan for Pittsburgh’s East Liberty district. As such, it is a built record of the futuristic optimism that drove Pittsburgh’s Renaissance while also embodying and documenting the exceptional change and upheaval experienced in East Liberty during the 1950s, 60s, and 70s.

The Pittsburgh Renaissance was an era characterized by unrivaled and unprecedented change in the city’s approach to urban planning and design. Beginning after World War II, the Renaissance is divided into two distinct phases: Renaissance I (1946 to 1973) and Renaissance II (1973 to the present). At its most basic level, the prevailing ideology driving the Renaissance was a belief that Pittsburgh necessarily had to modernize its buildings and infrastructure if it intended to remain competitive with other American cities. It was during the Renaissance that Pittsburgh undertook several massive urban renewal projects that included highway building, city beautification, pollution control, corporate office space construction, commercial district enhancement, property clearance, and the construction of large-scale housing.

Under the umbrella of the Pittsburgh Renaissance, the Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Office is specifically associated with the East Liberty Project. The East Liberty Project was the largest and most comprehensive urban renewal project ever undertaken in the City of Pittsburgh. Inspired by numerous urban renewal projects nationwide, and designed by some of the most esteemed names in mid-twentieth century urban planning and design, the East Liberty Project restructured East Liberty's commercial and residential districts, modernized traffic patterns, and at its core, implemented a pedestrian mall.²⁹

Located at the center of the East Liberty Project, the pedestrian mall was viewed (at the time) as the savior of the East Liberty commercial district. As suburban shopping centers with indoor shopping, air conditioning, and free parking drew consumers away from Pittsburgh's traditional commercial centers, the East Liberty Project was designed to compete. Penn Avenue, Highland Avenue, and Broad Street were redesigned with modern landscaping, fountains, sculpture, outdoor seating, and children's play areas.

The pedestrian mall served as the vehicle for implementing a new type of renewal procedure in Pittsburgh. "The East Liberty Project was the *first major rehabilitation project* in the Pittsburgh area. Rehabilitation, in contrast to total clearance, impose[d] constraints upon renewal. Roughly half the project area was to be conserved and improved..." Whether or not urban renewal era planners understood the benefit of preserving historic fabric as one does today is debatable, but the actions of the East Liberty Project planners helped to retain some sense of place identity while forging a new, redefined commercial district.³⁰

Whereas the building was privately-funded and built by a local financial institution, the design of the former Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Office adopted and responded to the precepts of the East Liberty Project. Because the planners of the East Liberty Project preserved historic buildings, retained human scale, and clearly defined the East Liberty commercial core, the designers of the former Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Office were able to respond with a building that fit seamlessly into the district.

The former Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Office exhibits three planning and urban design techniques that link it to the East Liberty Project and clearly define it as a rare, surviving vestige of its era.

The building is designed with deference to its neighbors. Unlike the wholesale clearance, *tabula rasa* approach to urban renewal undertaken in earlier Renaissance-era projects, the planners of the East Liberty Project actively sought to preserve and enhance place identity within the district's commercial core through the retention of existing, historic buildings. The designers of the former Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Office understood that their building would not be an isolated architectural entity in a sea of parking. It had necessarily to complement and enhance an existing, established commercial

²⁹ Greenwalt, J. P. (2010). Pittsburgh's East Liberty Project: Preserving the Artifacts of the Urban Renewal Era [Master's Thesis, Columbia University]. East Liberty Quarter Chamber of Commerce.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

street. As such, the building mimics its neighbors in height and massing. This includes its utilization of the full urban lot. Whereas other contemporary Mellon National Bank offices incorporated parking and drive-through teller windows, designers of the former Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Office understood that these sorts of spaces, within the context of the East Liberty commercial core, would have been inappropriate.

The building is intentionally designed to serve as a landmark--a visual transition for the East Liberty commercial core. The former Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Office does this first by maximizing its siting at the intersection of Penn and Centre avenues (formerly Penn Circle South and Penn Circle East). Three of its four facades have been thoughtfully programmed, featuring reflective emerald green glazed brick, bright aluminum, and dark terrazzo panels. When entering East Liberty from the southeast, this treatment draws the attention of the observer and establishes the building as the beginning of a larger district. Second, the building breaks the established street wall along Penn Avenue, projecting ten feet beyond its neighbors. When exiting East Liberty from the northwest, this subtle visual cue alerts the observer that this building marks the end of the commercial district.

Each facade of the building has been designed to function and respond to its respective environment. As previously discussed, at the time of the former Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Office's design and construction, Penn Avenue had been converted for use as a pedestrian mall. Aside from bus traffic, vehicles were prohibited from using Penn Avenue. As a result, the building's northeast (front) facade--facing onto Penn Avenue--is designed to be appreciated by the pedestrian observer. It is the most highly refined facade, featuring modern but classically inspired form and massing. The southeast (side) facade is designed to be viewed by the automobile observer. Its form and massing are less intricate than the northeast (front) facade, but are sufficiently handsome to catch the observer's attention as they wait for the traffic signal, or as they turn onto Centre Avenue (formerly Penn Circle East). The southwest (rear) facade, however, is entirely different. Here, the facade responds to Centre Avenue (formerly Penn Circle South) which, at the time of the building's design and completion, was a four-lane, uni-directional road. The facade is not intended to be viewed from a static position. Instead it mimics movement, while simultaneously shielding interior offices from traffic noise and illuminating the space with eastern sunlight.

The former Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Office is significant as an important and rare triumph of site-specific urban design. It responds to and enhances its urban environment, exemplifies intelligent, mid-twentieth century architectural and urban design, and embodies the spirit of its era.

Criterion 10: Its unique location and distinctive physical appearance or presence representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community, or the City of Pittsburgh.

This structure may meet this Criterion.

The former Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Office is a distinctive, established, and familiar visual feature within the East Liberty commercial core. For over 50 years, the building has anchored the eastern gateway of the district. It has also served to preserve the human scale, architectural character, and neighborhood identity of East Liberty during the district's recent surge in redevelopment.

Throughout its developmental history, East Liberty has been consistently defined by its rich architectural diversity. The former Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Office serves as a built record of the skill, originality, and distinctive design aesthetic that were hallmarks of Pittsburgh's mid-twentieth

century modern movement. The former Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Branch will soon be the last intact building on Penn Avenue dating to this era, representative of the mid-twentieth century spirit of Pittsburgh's renaissance in what was once the city's second largest commercial center.

With proper redesign and re-use concepts, the building has the potential to become an illustrative example of Pittsburgh's innovative integration of important historic styles and structures within living, contemporary, urban fabric. The building's unique siting, styling, and juxtaposition to both an urban pocket-park and busy intersection creates the opportunity for place-making and for the reinforcement of the unique character and feeling of East Liberty.

Section 10: Integrity

The former Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Office retains integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.

The building remains in its original location in Pittsburgh's East Liberty neighborhood, bound by Penn and Centre Avenues.

With the exception of changes to exterior signage, the original exterior envelope and structural design of the building remains completely intact, including all of its original materials: glazed brick, glass, aluminum and terrazzo panels. The building demonstrates quality workmanship and an appreciably high level of care and maintenance.

Since the building's completion, its commercial-corridor setting has been in an ongoing state of flux, continuing to present-day. The building was constructed during the implementation of the East Liberty Urban Renewal Project, and designed in consideration of that project's components including a master-planned, architect-designed pedestrian mall. The Penn Mall has since been largely removed and returned to its historic use as a multi-modal thoroughfare.

Nonetheless, the former Mellon Bank building retains integrity of feeling and association. From its completion in 1970 until February 2020, the building was consistently utilized as a banking hall: first as Mellon Bank, then as Citizens Bank. As such, the building retains its historic association as a Mellon Bank and centrally located banking service amongst East End residents. The structure is a distinctive, established, and familiar visual feature within the East Liberty neighborhood, anchoring the eastern gateway of the commercial district for over 50 years. It continues to contribute an overall feeling of human scale, architectural character, and distinct identity of East Liberty, a neighborhood historically and consistently defined by its rich architectural diversity.

Section 11: Notification of Property Owner

During Summer 2020 the Pittsburgh Modern Committee of Preservation Pittsburgh became aware that the former Mellon National Bank in East Liberty (now Citizens Bank) was being considered for demolition so that Citizens Bank could build a smaller bank branch on site with parking. We placed a call to Citizens' local office and we were directed to their Rhode Island headquarters. A letter was sent to Citizens' Rhode Island headquarters stating concern on August 14, 2020. On September 15, 2020 a letter from Citizens was received that stated there were some plan revisions due to community feedback and zoning. On February 16, 2021 a letter was sent to the property owner via Certified Mail as well as by FedEx stating our intention to nominate the building for historic designation.

See enclosed correspondence and proof of delivery of the notification.

Section 12:

Location Map, Site Plan, Photo Log

Former Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Office

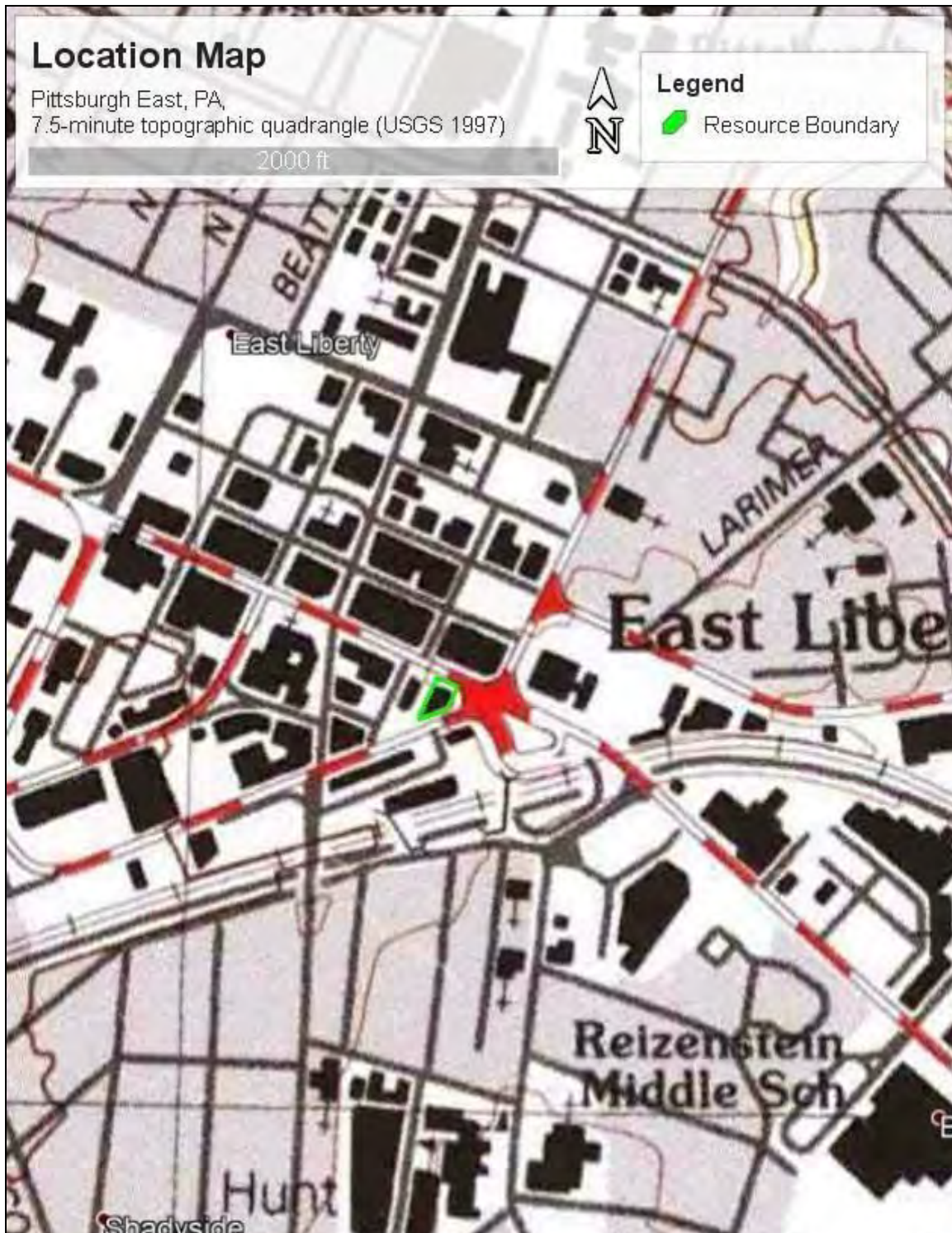






Figure 1: Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Office, showing northeast (front) facade, facing southwest (Mary Barendsfeld).



Figure 2: Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Office, showing southeast (side) facade, facing southwest (Mary Barendsfeld).



Figure 3: Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Office, showing southeast (side) facade, facing northwest (Mary Barenfeld).

*Former Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Office
Pittsburgh, PA*



Figure 4: Detail view, Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Office, showing southeast (side) façade from adjacent plaza, facing northwest (Amy Fisher).



Figure 5: Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Office, showing southwest (rear) facade, facing northeast (Amy Fisher).

*Former Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Office
Pittsburgh, PA*



Figure 6: Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Office, showing northwest (side) facade, facing south (Mary Barenfeld).



Figure 7: Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Office, showing oblique view of northeast (front) and northwest (side) facades, facing southeast (Mary Barenfeld).

*Former Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Office
Pittsburgh, PA*



Figure 8: Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Office, detail view showing glazed brick and terrazzo cladding, facing southwest (Amy Fisher).



Figure 9: Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Office, detail view showing glazed brick and terrazzo cladding, facing southwest (Brittany Reilly).



Figure 10: Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Office, detail view showing wall and glazing juncture on southwest (rear) facade, facing northwest (Brittany Reilly).



Figure 11: Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Office, detail view showing wall, glazing, and aluminum fascia on northwest (side) facade, facing southeast (Brittany Reilly).

Historic Images and Resources - 6112 Penn Avenue



Figure 12: City Deposit Bank (built 1899), Corner of Centre Avenue and Penn Avenue. Source: Heinz History Center Archives, Mellon Bank Records 1815-1994. Glass plate negative, undated.



Figure 13: Rooftop View of East Liberty. (Penn Ave @ Centre Ave, 6112 Penn Ave. at lower right) Historic Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh City Photographer Collection. Photographer: Pittsburgh City Photographer, May 2 1928.



Figure 14: Aerial view of East Liberty. Detail view showing 1899 structure. Historic Pittsburgh, Allegheny Conference on Community Development Photographs. Photographer: Lou Farris, 1955.



Figure 15: Penn and Centre Avenues During Renewal. Historic Pittsburgh, Melvin Seidenberg Photographs.
Photographer: Coughanour, Harry, Jr, Urban Redevelopment Authority. Date: March 12, 1967.



Figure 16: East Liberty Aerial View (2). Detail showing current structure. Historic Pittsburgh, Melvin Seidenberg Photographs. Photographer: Coughanour, Harry, Jr, Urban Redevelopment Authority. Date: ca. June 1971.



Figure 17: East Liberty Aerial View (5). Detail. Historic Pittsburgh, Melvin Seidenberg Photographs. Photographer: Coughanour, Harry, Jr, Urban Redevelopment Authority. Date: ca. June 1971.

*Former Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Office
Pittsburgh, PA*

34



Figure 18: 6112 Penn Avenue. Allegheny County Real Estate Portal.
Photographer and date unknown (post 1971).

Historic Images and Resources - Mellon Bank Branch Structures

Upper Fifth Mellon Bank branch (former)



Figure 19: "Upper Fifth Opens". Branch Location: 1425 Fifth Avenue branch opening. Mellon Bank News, May 1966.



Figure 20: Upper Fifth branch. Location: 1425 Fifth Avenue, Pittsburgh PA 15219. Current Use: Vacant. Source: Brittany Reilly, August 2020.

*Former Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Office
Pittsburgh, PA*



Figure 21: Upper Fifth branch. Material and details match 6112 Penn Ave. Location: 1425 Fifth Avenue, Pittsburgh PA 15219. Current Use: Vacant. Source: Brittany Reilly, August 2020.

Squirrel Hill Mellon Bank branch (former)

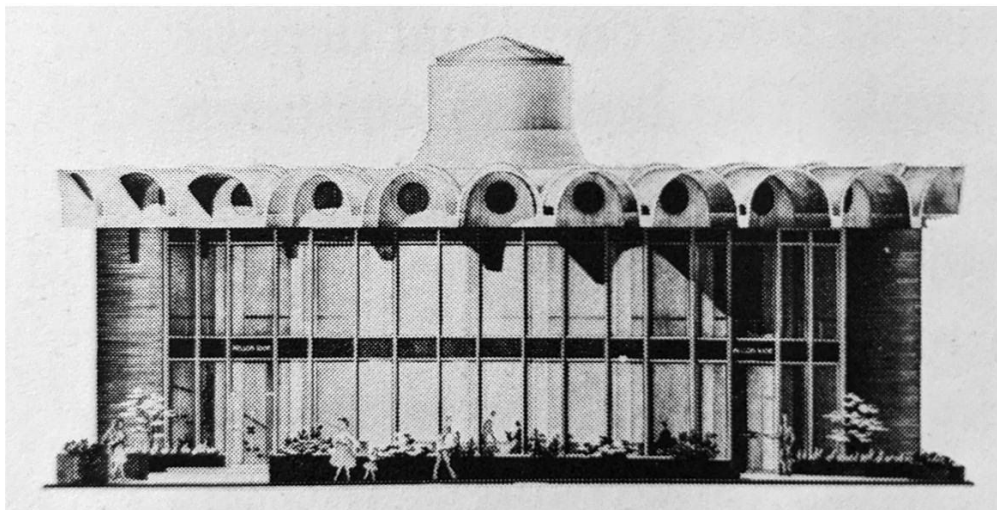


Figure 22: "A Concrete Umbrella". Squirrel Hill branch construction update. Mellon Bank News, Feb 1966. Branch location: 1801 Murray Avenue, Pittsburgh PA 15217.



Figure 23: Squirrel Hill branch, location: 1801 Murray Avenue, Pittsburgh PA 15217. Current Use: Citizens Bank.
Source: Brittany Reilly, August 2020.



Figure 24: Squirrel Hill branch. Materials and I details match 6112 Penn Avenue. Location: 1801 Murray Avenue,
Pittsburgh PA 15217. Current Use: Citizens Bank. Source: Brittany Reilly, August 2020.

Former Mellon National Bank, East Liberty Office
Pittsburgh, PA

Lawrenceville Mellon Bank branch (former)



Lawrenceville Office—this year.

Figure 25: "Building Box Score". Branch construction updates. Mellon Bank News, Nov 1966. Branch Location: 4112 Butler Street, Pittsburgh PA 15201.



Figure 26: Lawrenceville Branch. Location: 4112 Butler Street, Pittsburgh PA 15201. Current Use: restaurant / food hall. Source: Mary Barendsfeld

University Mellon Bank branch (demolished 2004)



Figure 28/29: University Office under construction showing Top: erection of thin-shell concrete form. Bot: rebar layout. July 1961. Heinz History Center, Mellon Bank Records. Demolished 2004.



Figure 30: University Office. July 1961. Heinz History Center, Mellon Bank Records. Demolished 2004.

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Pittsburgh

Payment Receipt

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Melissa McSwigan

Effective Date

2/19/2021 8:34 AM Eastern Standard Time

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Transaction Fee: \$2.25

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Melissa McSwigan - \$100.00

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Brittany Reilly <breilly@preservationpgh.org>

Fwd: VEREIT owned property: 6112 Penn Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15206

1 message

Melissa McSwigan <mmcswigan@preservationpgh.org>
To: Brittany Reilly <breilly@preservationpgh.org>

Fri, Feb 19, 2021 at 11:02 AM

I received email receipt from Lauren Goldberg, Legal Counsel

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Lauren Goldberg** <LGoldberg@vereit.com>

Date: Fri, Feb 19, 2021 at 10:55 AM

Subject: RE: VEREIT owned property: 6112 Penn Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15206

To: Melissa McSwigan <mmcswigan@preservationpgh.org>

Confirming receipt.

Lauren Goldberg

From: Melissa McSwigan <mmcswigan@preservationpgh.org>

Sent: Friday, February 19, 2021 10:49 AM

To: Lauren Goldberg <LGoldberg@vereit.com>

Subject: VEREIT owned property: 6112 Penn Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15206

*****CAUTION - This email originated externally, please use caution before opening any attachments or clicking any links.*****

Dear Ms. Goldberg,

Please find attached letter of February 16 regarding 6112 Penn Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15206. It is my understanding that this is a VEREIT owned property, with Citizens Bank as the tenant. This letter has been sent via US postal mail as well as by FedEx. Given weather delays across the country affecting mail delivery, I am sending you an electronic copy. Please confirm receipt at your earliest convenience.

Thank you.

Regards,

Melissa McSwigan

--

Preservation Pittsburgh

[1501 Reedsdale St., Suite 5003](#)

[Pittsburgh, PA 15233](#)

www.preservationpgh.org

<https://www.instagram.com/realpreservationpgh/?hl=en>

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Preservation Pittsburgh

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412.256.8755
1501 Reedsdale St. Suite 5003
Pittsburgh, PA 15233
www.preservationpgh.org

February 16, 2021

ARC CBPBGPA010 LLC
2325 E Camelback Road, FL 9
Phoenix, AZ 85016-9080

RE: 6112 Penn Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15206

Dear Sir or Madam,

This letter is to inform you that we plan to submit a nomination for historic designation of the building located at 6112 Penn Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15206. It will be submitted to the City of Pittsburgh's Historic Review Commission.

This building was initially built as Mellon National Bank's East Liberty Office prior to it becoming a Citizens Bank. Mellon Bank built a number of unique bank branches in many Pittsburgh neighborhoods that reflected the modern architecture aesthetic of the time. One of the more architecturally elegant structures of these former Mellon Banks that still exists today is located at 6112 Penn Avenue.

These buildings are part of Pittsburgh's commercial building history, which is part of our shared memory and provides an important sense of place since many actively used these branches (bank branches are more accessible and open to the public than most corporate offices). When Citizens entered the Pittsburgh market, many of the Mellon Bank branches became Citizens Bank branches. So, this has provided some continuity to our main street commercial districts.

We believe that the building meets several criteria for historic designation and that due to its history and architecture, it should be added to the City's list of Designated Historic Structures.

Sincerely,

Melissa McSwigan
Director Emeritus

Cc: Sarah Quinn, Historic Preservation Planner

Citizens Bank:

Brendan Coughlin, Head of Consumer Banking
Amanda Marshall
Joshua M. Sheely
James K. Wright
Tannous, Youseff
Mr. Bruce Van Saun, Chairman and CEO via Natalie Guzman, Office of the Chairman



FedEx Office

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PHOENIX, AZ 85016-9080
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August 13, 2020

Mr. Bruce Van Saun
Chairman and CEO
Citizens Financial Group, Inc.
One Citizens Plaza
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Dear Mr. Van Saun,

I am contacting you regarding the recent closure of the Citizens Bank branch in the East Liberty neighborhood of Pittsburgh. I understand that the branch closed in March with plans to demolish the building and rebuild another Citizens branch on site. I only just learned of these plans and I have seen the plans for the new structure. I hope that you might be willing to reconsider and have outlined my concerns below.

In the 1950s and 60s, Mellon Bank built a number of bank branches in many Pittsburgh neighborhoods that reflected the modern architecture aesthetic of the time. Rather than doing something cookie cutter, they embarked on building unique and quirky buildings – many of which still exist today. No two buildings are alike. These are part of Pittsburgh’s commercial building history which is part of our shared memory since many of us actively used these branches (bank branches are more accessible and open to the public than most corporate offices). When Citizens came to Pittsburgh, what was formerly Mellon Bank branches have now become Citizens Bank branches. One of the more architecturally elegant structures is the branch located in Pittsburgh’s East Liberty neighborhood at 6112 Penn Mall, Pittsburgh, PA 15206. The building exterior features a beautiful dark green glazed brick. It gracefully uses the triangular shaped lot and can be seen from the Centre Avenue vantage point (with its wonderful “stepped” side exterior) as well as facing Penn Avenue, both of which are major streets.

While architecture from the mid-Twentieth century isn’t fully embraced by the general public, as time goes by it is being increasingly appreciated and sought after due in part to pop culture references and current developments in contemporary design aesthetics. Television shows like “Mad Men” and the growing popularity of mid-century modern architecture and design have helped to popularize this aesthetic. I also see some of today’s buildings being built with the timeless and practical principles of modern architecture, at once reflecting a past era but also contemporary and forward thinking.

Citizens Bank is firmly part of the Pittsburgh community and what you tear down and what you build also reflects your community values. If the East Liberty branch is too large, I’m sure there is an internal renovation that could be done that would be less costly than tearing down and rebuilding. I know that Citizens values workforce development and small business support – why not utilize parts of the space to incubate emerging businesses, particularly for women and minority owned businesses? I believe that this would be particularly welcomed and successful

in this rapidly gentrifying neighborhood. We really need this in Pittsburgh especially given that various new construction is often too expensive for local businesses to rent. This would generate much support and good will and genuinely make you part of the community.

I am assuming that some of the impetus to tear down the existing building is to have a small parking lot behind the building. Small parking lots can be fender benders just waiting to happen! Plus, the bank could likely make an arrangement with the nearby East Side Bond parking lot that allows for free one hour parking for the Choola restaurant tenant (and maybe others). Additionally, maybe a nearby street loading zone?

If aesthetics, history, and contributing to the community isn't enough, I also want to call your attention to the environmental aspects of tearing down buildings. Studies show that it can take between 10-80 years for a new, energy efficient building to overcome the negative environmental impacts created through the construction/demolition process (thereby cancelling the green good deeds). Also, today's new buildings may only have a lifespan of up to 45 years vs. buildings from the past that could, with some renovation and upkeep, last 100-500+ years. The East Liberty branch building appears to be built with quality materials – please don't add it to our landfill when it could easily be repurposed!

https://living-future.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/The_Greenest_Building.pdf

[LEED From Behind: Why We Should Focus on Greening Existing Buildings | TIME.com](#)

The amount of air pollution, dust, noise, construction vehicles, and climate change gasses emitted to tear down and rebuild what is already there doesn't make sense environmentally.

An exciting opportunity exists to celebrate a unique modern building that could enhance the East Liberty Commercial Historic District, which is a National Register Historic District, especially were you to offer resources to area small businesses through incubator space. So often when a change is needed, people resort to the extreme--with negative financial and environmental consequences--when it really just needed some creative solutions and partnerships with others. Perhaps a collaboration with some local history and architecture groups could yield a newspaper article and social media coverage that would highlight these unique former Mellon Bank buildings. There are a number of fans out there already who appreciate these buildings and have received both scholarly as well as popular treatment through blogs and online sites, such as

<https://www.roadarch.com/modarch/pabank.html>

<https://www.midcenturybanks.com/spa-wellness>

I understand there was a community presentation regarding the demolition and bank closure, but I wonder how many people were there, who was notified of the meeting, and whether various groups, including those involved with architecture and history, were invited. Pittsburgh has three historic preservation groups--Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation, Young

Preservationists Association, and Preservation Pittsburgh--in addition to community development groups and historical societies such as the East Liberty Valley Historical Society.

It's not too late to revamp plans, bring in the community, and do something that's good for people, the environment and our community history!

Thank you for your consideration.

Regards,

Melissa McSwigan

Cc:

Mayor William Peduto
East Liberty Development Inc.
East Liberty Valley Historical Society
Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation
Preservation Pittsburgh
Young Preservationist Association

Citizens Bank:

James K. Wright
Tannous, Youseff
Joshua M. Sheely
Amanda Marshall
Brendan Coughlin, Head of Consumer Banking

September 15, 2020

Melissa McSwigan

RE: Branch Feedback
East Liberty Branch

Dear Ms. McSwigan,

I am writing to respond to the complaint our office received regarding the above referenced account. I understand you expressed concern with proposed changes being made to a local branch and requested the bank review your concerns.

We recently presented our planned design to community members and received feedback regarding the design during our community meetings. As a result of the feedback received and recommendations received by both community members and the zoning board we are in the process of reviewing and making changes to intended design of the branch. We hope the intended improvements we are making will better align with the community's vision and thank you for taking the time to bring your concerns to our attention.

I hope this letter has helped to remedy any concern you may have had regarding this matter. Should you have any further inquiries, please contact me directly at 401-464-3359 during my office hours of Monday through Friday from 9:00 A.M. until 4:30 P.M. Eastern Standard Time (EST).

Respectfully,

Natalie Guzman

Natalie Guzman
Office of the Chairman