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GENERAL CONTRACTORS BUILDING SUCCESS

More Bang for the Buck

by Maura Guttman, AIA, President



To the best of my knowledge, no one

has ever accused architects of brilliant business acumen. For most of us, our passions are fueled by decidedly un-financial matters. We do, however, tend to be respectful of budgets—our clients' and our own. The careful consideration we give to spending our hard-earned dollars leads me to believe that the AIA dues increase which showed up in December's invoice has not gone unnoticed.

The decision to raise local dues was not made lightly. The Chapter is making, and will continue to make, every effort to finance our activities with non-dues dollars. For example, the profit from our document sales has increased from \$5,000 in 1991 to over \$20,000 in 1995. In recent years we were spending several thousand dollars a year to provide membership meetings and events. In 1995 we provided eight membership meetings which, through generous corporate sponsorship and other funding, cost the chapter \$0.

Encouraging as that sounds, AIA Pittsburgh has also developed increased expenses over the past several years. In fact, since 1993 the Chapter's budget has grown an astounding 81%, exceeding a quarter million dollars for fiscal year 1995. If you've had your ears to the ground (or at least your eyes on this journal), you know that some of the causes for this growth include our relocation to office space in the Cultural District, a 100% increase in the size of the Chapter's staff, greater production control of *Columns*, and a steady rise in the quality of participation in the Design Awards program.

Despite this record expansion, your dues paid to AIA Pittsburgh have remained unchanged since 1991. Surprisingly, revenue from local dues accounts for only 40% of the total budget. Document sales, chapter events, seminars, health insurance sales and the Resource Center are other income generators. Further, we have charged every committee with independent funding responsibilities for any events produced. While we will continue to seek alternate revenue sources to underwrite our activities, the Board believes we must rely solely on the predictable income from dues to cover our operating expenses (staff salaries and benefits, rent, utilities, etc.). It is for this reason that the Board has elected to raise dues in 1996 by a modest 5%, to help close the gap between dues income and increased operating expenses.

The expansion of our financial responsibility means an increased ability to serve members and promote the profession. Each of the factors contributing to our growth serves to enhance the visibility of architects practicing architecture in our city. The Board of Directors envisions that in the year 2000, AIA Pittsburgh will be a strong and influential force in Pittsburgh, recognized for its significant role in shaping the City, and for bringing value and success to its members. There are a lot of terrific volunteers making this vision a reality. Whether you are one of them or not, deliberately parting with your money for AIA membership is a brilliant business tactic called investment. 🏠

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Summer Cottage, Cape Cod. Glance & Associates, Inc.