

**HONORS THESIS: PROGRAM PROPOSAL AND SITE ANALYSIS**

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

The 64000 SF August Wilson Center for African American Culture is currently under construction at a cost of approximately 23 million dollars. The project site is at the corner of Liberty Avenue and William Penn Place in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. A premise has been established that an additional 25 million dollars has become available to add to the currently designed building. The adjacent property at 411 Seventh Avenue, on which currently stands a 16 storey office building, will be considered available for use as the site of the addition. The goals for the addition are to provide additional and more varied facilities for the August Wilson Center and create a welcoming environment and outdoor space. A key will be to respond to the exiting design as well as the surroundings of downtown Pittsburgh.

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## DEFINITION

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### **Project Scope:**

The addition to the August Wilson Center will cover a ground level area of approximately 24,400 SF (182' x 134'). The existing building includes approximately 63,000 SF of designed space at a cost of approximately 23 million dollars. The site of the addition, on the corner of Seventh Avenue and Smithfield Street, is currently occupied by a 16 storey office building whose primary tenant is the Duquesne Light Company. A third building on the block will remain. This building is six storeys tall and currently houses the Western School of Health and Business Careers.

The project will involve the research, program development, analysis, design and presentation of the August Wilson Center Addition. The project will be designed based on the premise that an additional 25 million dollars was made available late in the design process. Therefore, the current design will not be modified more than necessary to create a transition to the new spaces. The addition will be designed to be structurally feasible but the structural system will not be designed. The architectural design will be completed to a typical schematic design level.

### **Finished Products:**

The final design will be presented as a PowerPoint presentation. It will include the following documents: plans for all designed floors and roof, elevations, building sections as applicable, typical wall section(s), and material selections/finish schedules. Models (physical and/or electronic) will be developed for massing as well as for the final design. Remaining deadlines are as follows:

*Monday December 17, 2007:* Final program and summary of research

*Friday January 25, 2008:* Schematic design completed

*Friday March 7, 2008:* Massing/site model completed, finalized design

*Friday April 4, 2008:* Final model and final design documents

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## PRE-DESIGN ANALYSIS

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### Site Existing Conditions:

The project site is located in downtown Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The currently designed building sits on the corner of Liberty Avenue and William Penn Place. The building has eliminated Ogle Way which previously ran through the site. The addition will occupy the corner of Seventh Avenue and Smithfield Street. The third corner of the triangular block is occupied by a six storey brick building which houses the Western School of Heath and Business Careers. The sites for both the currently designed building and the new addition were (are) previously occupied. A description of the property, currently owned by Grubb & Ellis, is provided as follows:

*411 Seventh Avenue (the Property) is located in the Central Business District (CBD) of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. This 16- story institutional quality high-rise office building totals 322,210 rentable square feet. Built in 1916 and renovated in 1993-94 the Property features state-of-the-art systems and infrastructures constructed of high quality materials that have been excellently maintained...*

*... The Property is located at the corner of Seventh Avenue and Smithfield Street, the apex of the growing Cultural District. It is conveniently situated on a primary public transportation route, provides easy access to several major roadway systems and is within three blocks of two major hotels, three department stores, the newly renovated and expanded David L. Lawrence Convention Center and a variety of restaurants and public shops. 411 Seventh Avenue offers many attractive features to occupants as well as to investors.*

*(<http://411seventhavenue.com/>)*

The key parts of this description are the location of the site. The site is in the heart of Pittsburgh's downtown and with the development of the August Wilson Center will become a cornerstone of the cultural center. Liberty is a main thoroughfare through the downtown area and has many bus lines. Parking is readily available in the nearby Smithfield Liberty Parking Facility. Just a couple blocks away and visible from the site is Pittsburgh's new convention center.

The vision for the new August Wilson Center is described as follows by Perkins + Will, the project architect:

*World class institutions are greatly enriched and sustained by the facilities which house them. In the case of the August Wilson Center for African American Culture the creation of a signature building at the corner of Liberty Avenue and William Penn Way in downtown Pittsburgh will serve to enhance the visitor's experience in a myriad of ways. Whether viewing extraordinary exhibitions exploring the remarkable history of one of the nation's seminal African American communities, enjoying a theatrical or musical performance in its state-of-the-art theater, taking*



*in a spoken word performance in the music café, or observing a dance rehearsal in the multi-purpose room, the facility will serve as a cultural magnet for visitors from the region and around the globe.*

*Allison Williams, Lead Designer for the architectural firm of Perkins+Will has designed this home for the August Wilson Center as a conceptually transparent, flexible container in which the accomplishments and artifacts, the activities and traditions of this culture can be proudly celebrated layered and displayed. The building opens itself to educating people about the important contribution of African Americans to Pittsburgh and beyond. It is timeless, flexible and powerful in its simplicity.*

*The signature character of the building comes as a result of its content, in response to the program and is in continuous transformation as a result of the changing exhibits and activities within. It is through the design element at the corner of Liberty Avenue and William Penn Way that the architects position the building as a distinct icon, and abstraction of this culture and a new landmark for Pittsburgh. This is where the August Wilson Center finds its voice, its identity, its energy and its distinct signature quality.*

See Appendix A for Maps and Images of the August Wilson Center site. Additional views and a walk-through of the city can be found at [maps.google.com](https://maps.google.com).

### **Site Analysis:**

#### *Vehicular Traffic and Access:*

The site lies very near to major interstate access to the downtown area. Liberty Avenue is one of the main streets providing access to the core of downtown Pittsburgh. Seventh Avenue links to interstate 576 just two blocks from the site. The Smithfield Liberty Parking Garage has 616 spaces and is located just a block from the site. Many bus routes run past the site and some stop directly in front. An outdoor gathering area may create a welcome environment for those waiting for a bus. This area could also serve as a pre-function gathering space on days with temperate weather conditions.

The existing design for the August Wilson Center provides vehicular access (loading docks) along William Penn Place. With the new addition having street frontage on more pedestrian oriented streets, providing a second point of vehicular access to the building is unlikely. Therefore, it will be necessary to accommodate delivery needs through the existing building design.

As a signature building, it is important for the August Wilson Center to have a distinct and eye-catching outward appearance. The currently designed building focuses on the Liberty Avenue Façade and especially the corner of Liberty Avenue and William Penn Place with the

sail feature. Image Five of Appendix A shows the opposite corner of the Liberty Avenue Façade. Moving North (East) along Liberty Avenue, this corner projects prominently to the street. I feel it is important to make an architectural statement with this corner.

*Pedestrian Traffic and Access:*

With a urban site, pedestrian traffic will always flow on all sides of a building. The existing design focuses on Liberty Avenue as a pedestrian route. William Penn Place has limited pedestrian usage with no street level pedestrian entrances on either side of the street. The tall buildings without street-level activity make William Penn seem uninviting.

The existing design focuses pedestrian access to one point mid-block along Liberty Avenue. With parking and a subway station to the South (West) along Liberty Avenue and Smithfield Street, the majority of pedestrians will likely arrive from this direction. Therefore, the new addition to the Center will likely also be a major point of entrance.

*Solar Considerations:*

The two street-facing facades of the new addition will face northwest and southwest. Due to tall neighboring buildings across Seventh Avenue (See Appendix A, Image Seven), even the southwestern facing façade will likely receive little daylight year-round.

*Neighboring Buildings:*

The building of most relevance to the design will certainly be the one remaining building on the block. This six storey building is unassuming amongst the multiple skyscrapers that neighbor the site. However, once the building at 411 Seventh Avenue is gone, it will be the tallest building on the block. Therefore, it will be important to create a vertical transition with the new addition.

*Currently Designed Building:*

The current building design is long and horizontal running the length of Liberty Avenue. At the end where the new addition will connect, the first floor is a kitchen and café, while the second floor is the conference room and multi-purpose room. These spaces will need to be reconfigured in order to provide a proper transition between the addition and the previously design building. Special consideration will also need to be focused on access issues to the loading dock area. From the exterior, the addition must not detract from the existing architecture. The Liberty Avenue façade has a distinct look with the sail acting as the pivotal exterior element.

**Proposed Program:**

<b>PROGRAM: AUGUST WILSON CENTER ADDITION</b>			
<b>Available Ground Area: 24,400 SF</b>			
<b>Space</b>	<b>Occupants</b>	<b>Space/Person</b>	<b>Square Feet</b>
Black Box Theatre	250	10	2500
Black Box Theatre Stage	-	-	1500
Theatre Service Spaces	-	-	1000
Theatre Workshop	-	-	2000
Theatre Storage	-	-	1000
Rehearsal Theatre	-	-	2000
Film Theatre	200	10	2000
Artist Incubation Center	-	-	10000
Gallery Space	-	-	10000
Pre-Function	-	-	4000
Box Office	-	-	300
Administrative	10	150	1500
Library Stacks (books)	15000	1/15	1000
Library - Study	60	50	3000
Youth Center	50	20	1000
Classrooms (8)	200	30	6000
Art Studios (2)	40	100	4000
Redesigned Café	-	-	EXISTING
Redesigned Kitchen	-	-	EXISTING
Redesigned Conference Room	-	-	EXISTING
Redesigned Multipurpose	-	-	EXISTING
Circulation		~15%	8000
Restrooms		~10%	5000
Electrical/Communication Service	-	-	2000
Mechanica Service	-	-	ROOF
Transportation Hub	NA	NA	2000
Outdoor Space	NA	NA	6000
			<b>75800</b>

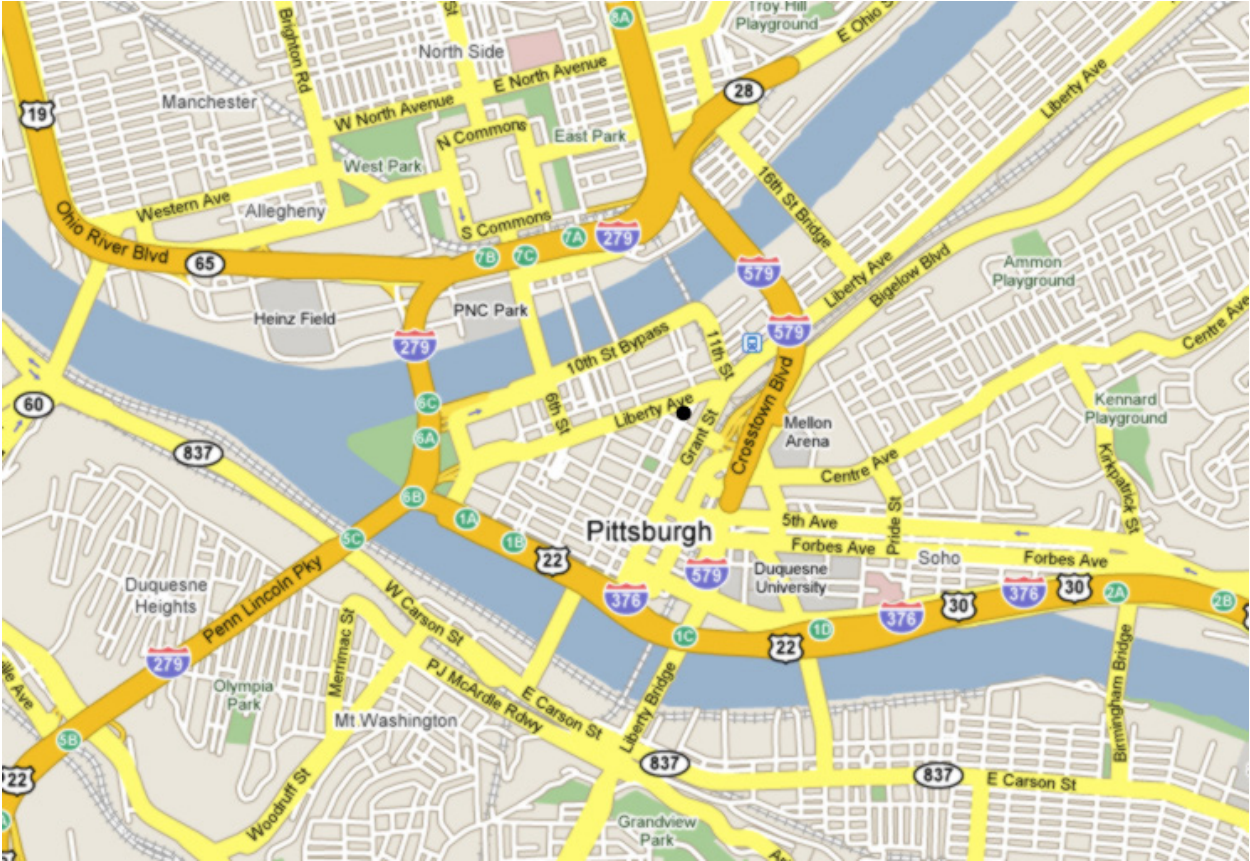
Space/Person values from: Stitt, Fred A. *Architect's Room Design Data Handbook*, 1992.

**Design Goals:**

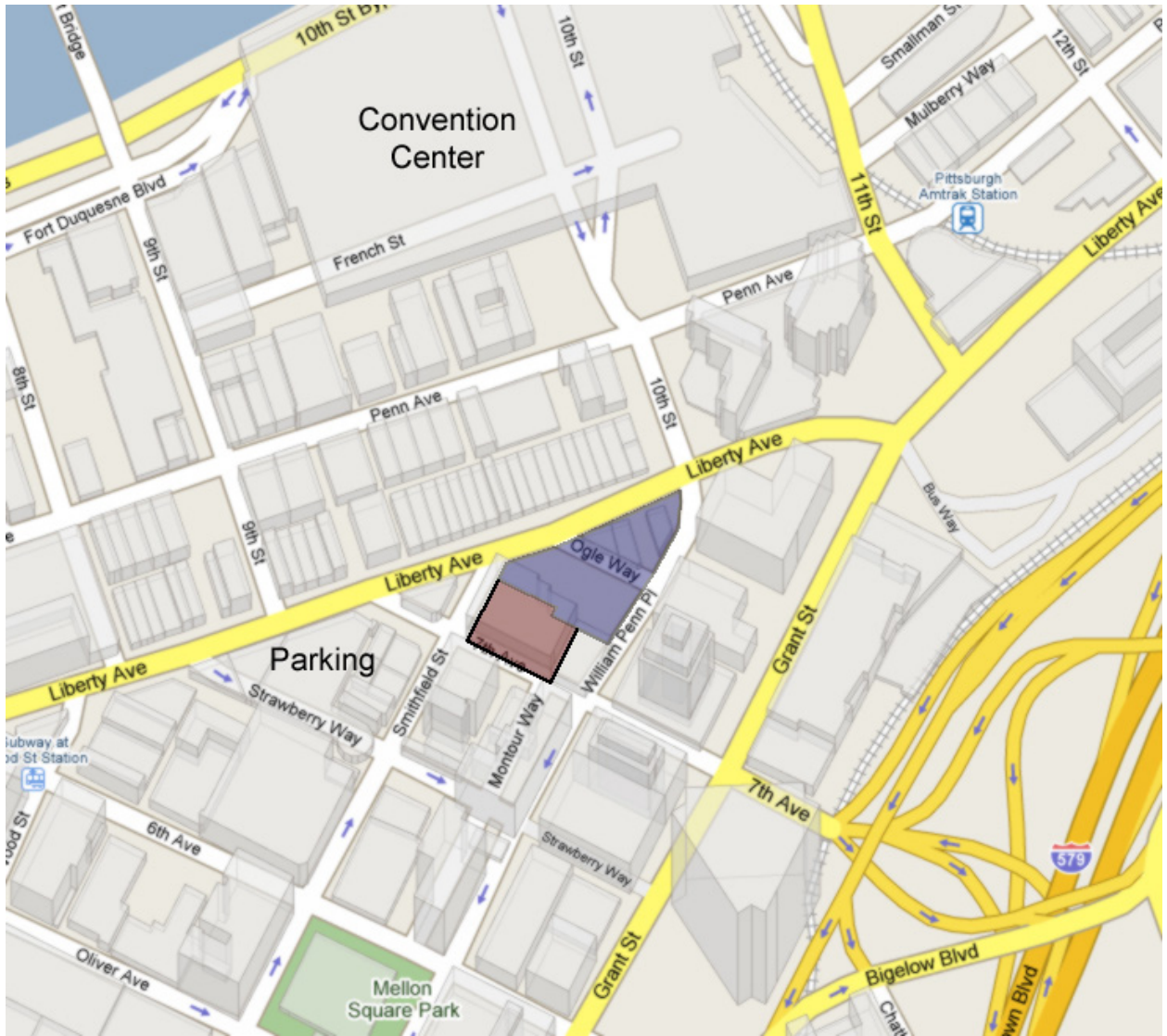
Based on site analysis and program development, the following goals have been developed:

- Size:
- Cost: 25 Million Dollars
- Create new functional space that adds to the existing capabilities of the center
- Enhance and compliment the existing architecture
- Create a transition from taller buildings and especially the remaining building on the block
- Emphasis the corner of Smithfield Street and Liberty Avenue
- Create a pedestrian friendly outdoor space that provides a transition to the interior environment.

APPENDIX A: MAPS AND IMAGES



Map 1: Downtown Pittsburgh. Black dot shows site.



Map 2: Project Area. Blue shows existing site. Red shows addition.





Image One: 411 Seventh Avenue behind the existing August Wilson Center site.





Image Two: Corner of Smithfield Street (Left to Right) and Liberty Avenue. The corner of 411 Seventh Avenue is visible on the right side of the photo.





Image Three: The view towards the new David L. Lawrence Convention Center from the corner of Liberty Avenue and William Penn Place.



Image Four: The Liberty Avenue streetscape looking south from the corner of Liberty Avenue and William Penn Place.





Image Five: The prominent corner of the 411 Seventh Avenue Building (with Duquesne Light sign at top) as seen from Liberty Avenue.





Image Six: View down Smithfield Street from Liberty Avenue. 411 Seventh Avenue on the left.





Image Seven: Seventh Avenue Across from the proposed addition site.