

2009: Dickens of a Design Year

By Steve Wiser, AIA

2009 definitely was not the best of economic times for the architecture profession. Most firms experienced substantial decline in business due to the severe recession. This doesn't mean though that significant construction projects weren't built.

The local blog "BrokenSidewalk.com" conducted a year-end contest to determine the most noteworthy designs of 2009. Almost 400 people submitted their selections for this on-line survey. An intriguing result were two contradictory trends: a major healthcare shift to the outer northeast beltway; and, revitalization of the inner-city thru creative infill landmarks.

Looking at the healthcare trend first, Norton, Jewish, and Baptist East all opened signature facilities along the Snyder Freeway. Baptist East's Outpatient Center (*right*), in the East-pointe Business Center, has an eye-catching contemporary flair, while just south across the Snyder is a more traditional medical center by Jewish Hospital.



Norton's Brownsboro Hospital (*left*), at I-71 and the Snyder, is bold and dynamic. These three healthcare centers reflect the increased population growth over the past several decades in this northeast section of Jefferson County.

Countering this outward trend though is the re-energized movement back to the urban core. A number of exciting developments spotlighted this activity.

The University of Louisville's "Clinical and Translational Research Building" (*right*) is a high-tech shimmering structure. It accents the eastern perimeter of U of L's downtown medical campus, and strengthens the surrounding Phoenix Hill neighborhood.



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Park Hill is an industrial no-man's land of deteriorating massive infrastructure just southwest of downtown. But, it is slowly becoming one of the more sought after local real estate markets. Spurring this renewal are the just-completed U of L student communities called "The Bellamy" (*above left*) and "The Province" at Schipp and Seventh Streets, along with the Healing Place facility (*above right*) at Hill and Fifteenth Streets. This once decaying district is finally moving in a positive direction.



And, demonstrating how one distinctive building can re-invigorate a 171 year-old institution, the Arts and Athletic Center (*left*) at Presentation Academy has sparked new life at Fourth and Breckinridge Streets. This 'old-style' new design received the most votes in the www.BrokenSidewalk.com contest.



Other remarkable urban infill projects this past year include the new firehouses for Portland (*above left*) and Butchertown (*above center*); the superb innovative library in Newburg (*left*); and Westport Village (*above right*), at Lyndon Lane and Westport Road, which gives visual meaning to the phrase of 'turning a cow's ear into a silk purse'.

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Additional 2009 projects to be recognized include the magnificent Lincoln Memorial (*above left*) on the waterfront by Ed Hamilton, the YMCA in New Albany, the 'Disney-esque' Chamberlain Pointe (*above right*) retail center on Highway 22 near the Snyder, the Zir-Med Tower (*left*) now anchors the western edge of downtown, and in Norton Commons, the new St. Mary's School (*lower left*) and Worthington Fire Station (*lower right*).



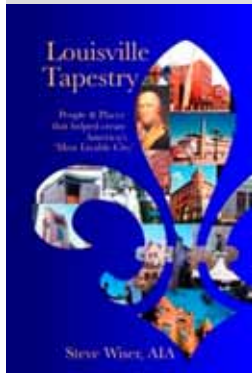
And, while the debate still rages over how to build new bridges over the Ohio River, at least the Corps of Engineers were able to build one (*left*) at the McAlpine Lock and Dam!

While 2009 was perhaps the lowest ebb in construction activity over the past 80 years, it did result in a number of noteworthy designs. Looking forward to 2010, Louisville will see the completion of the Arena, Big 4 spiral ramp, and the Norton Children's Hospital off Highway 22 and Chamberlain Lane. And, with apologies to Charles Dickens, 2010 hopefully will be an end to the 'worst of times', with a return to much better economic times!

Refer to next page for more Louisville architecture information!

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Interested in learning more about Louisville architecture and history? Then purchase one or all 3 of the following items prepared by Steve Wiser:



“Louisville Tapestry: People & Places who helped create America's Most Livable City”, 144 pages, over 100 b & w images, 2009.

Cost: \$15 (includes shipping and handling)

From the Olmsted Parks and landmark architecture, to fascinating tales on notable businesses and personalities, this book explains how the city evolved to its current state. Great for both native Louisvillians as well as new residents!



“Louisville Landmarks & Legends”, 25 minute DVD video, over 200 color images, 2008

Cost \$10 (includes shipping and handling)

This DVD features Louisville’s legendary business leaders and landmark businesses such as Col. Sanders, John Schnatter, J. Graham Brown, Al Schneider, and Tom Simons, along with landmark businesses like Humana, UPS, Hillerich & Bradsby, and Churchill Downs, among many others. In 25 minutes you learn many important aspects of Louisville!



“Louisville 2035”, 144 pages, over 100 b & w images, 2008

Cost: \$8 (includes shipping and handling)

What will look like in 25 years? This is Steve Wiser’s conjecture of how the city will evolve. It also contains many historical backgrounds on the city’s past developments and civic leaders. Several of these proposals have already started to happen! Find out more in this intriguing futuristic vision.

**To order, mail a check payable to “Steve Wiser”
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**Steve Wiser is a Louisville architect and historian.
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