

## ABSTRACT

Project Name: Children's Museum and Family District  
Address: 10 Children's Way, Pittsburgh, PA 15212

### 1. Give a brief overview of the project, including major project goals.

The Children's Museum of Pittsburgh utilized an innovative development process that leveraged collaborations to create a Children's Museum and Family District on the Northside of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. This values-focused development process resulted in a financially stable, Silver LEED certified, award-winning Children's Museum and Family District that is a model for how one organization can be a catalyst for urban development. The Children's Museum envisioned creating a new kind of "town square" for children and families. This concept drove the development of the new Museum from the creation of its new physical home, to collaborations with other child-focused organizations, to looking beyond the Museum to create a Family District for the City of Pittsburgh.

The Children's Museum is located in the center of Allegheny Square, the heart of the former Allegheny City in the 1800's. This area of Pittsburgh is typical of other "rust belt" cities in that it had empty or under-utilized historic buildings, an economically distressed population, and uneven pockets of gentrification and development. When designing its physical expansion, the Children's Museum of Pittsburgh linked the Museum's historic home (the National Registered Old Post Office Building, circa 1893) and the vacant Buhl Planetarium Building (circa 1939) next door with a new, three-story construction designed by Koning Eizenberg Architecture. The resulting facility is an astonishing combination of three centuries of architecture that attracted over 250,000 people in 2006 and created a thriving new urban core for the Northside.

The Children's Museum did not just build a larger new home. The Museum's concept of creating a new town square led to the dedication of 25% of its space to be used as incubator space for other child-focused organizations. The Museum is joined by Reading is FUNdamental (literacy), Child Watch (advocacy), Saturday Light Brigade (family educational radio program), Wos Productions (educational television), Pittsburgh Public Schools (two, on-site Head Start/Pre-K classes) and the University of Pittsburgh Center for Learning in Out-of-School Environments (UPCLOSE). The Museum and its partners share space, resources (ordering supplies, group health care rates, etc.), ideas and programs. The Museum's award-winning partnership with UPCLOSE has resulted in quality museum exhibits (UPCLOSE studied all prototypes during planning for the new Museum) and important research about family learning that is being disseminated to the field. The collaborations that have resulted from this concept have spurred the Family District development within and beyond the Museum.

Leveraging outside collaborations, the Museum worked with the Andy Warhol Museum, the City of Pittsburgh and the Northside Leadership Conference to rehabilitate and re-open the adjacent, historic Carnegie Music Hall (the first one commissioned by Andrew Carnegie) that used to be a thriving theater. The partners raised an additional \$2.4 million for the renovation of the 450-seat theater and helped create a new, independent 501(c)(3). The New Hazlett Theater opened in September of 2006 and is fully booked from January through June of 2007 by community arts groups.

### 2. Why does the project merit the Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence?

This project merits the Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence because the Museum is addressing a key development problem facing many former industrialized, "rust belt" cities (and, many cities in general) - how to attract and keep families in urban centers. This project is unique in that it shows how a cultural institution, through collaboration and vision, can act as a positive development catalyst for an urban neighborhood.

The Children's Museum and Family District project does this on many levels. First, it created a strong Children's Museum committed to its urban neighborhood. Second, it leveraged many community organizations and partnerships to create a new kind of "town square" for children and families. Third, it used the strength of this concept to build a new facility that incorporates abandoned and underused historic structures. Fourth, it leveraged new partners to revitalize a historic theater for the community. Finally, the project looks to creating a vibrant family district on the entire Northside by creating an urban redevelopment process based on the strengths and interests of cultural organizations. The unique approach and design quality of this project are shown in the many national awards the project has won (please see awards list in supplemental information section).