



THE STRIP CENTER

Reinvigorating a Pittsburgh Tradition

by Christopher Cussat

The Strip District means more than just a Saturday morning outing at a local shopping mecca. City and suburban residents have grown up loving and converging here while reliving childhood memories and creating new remembrances for future generations. For them, The Strip stands as one of the most enduring, Pittsburgh traditions.

Human nature resists change, especially when it concerns tradition, but sometimes certain changes can make traditions stronger and richer. One such change is the concept of The Strip Center, a modern, retail development that may be constructed at the former warehouse sites of the Ayoob-Acme Banana Co., Nordic Fisheries, and the Benkovitz Seafood market.

Rugby Realty Co., Inc. (RRC) is considering replacing some or all of these properties that lie between 21st and 23rd Streets with a **45,000-square-foot shopping center** composed of up to three buildings.

"The Strip Center may contain other types of businesses like a bank, a pharmacy, and a coffee shop that generate high foot traffic in this area of the Strip. And that can only improve business in the area," said Larry Walsh, Senior Vice President of RRC.



Jason Cannon

Strada Architecture's design of the Strip Center complements and assimilates the feel of the Strip District. The center would be an

urban mall with a brick façade, broad sidewalks, and nearly 100 new parking spaces.

"The Strip Center will have an industrial look to fit into the Strip District. And the retail store fronts will resemble loading doors or docks from a warehouse, but on the ground level, not up high. The architecture will be in keeping with the fabric of the Strip District," said Walsh. (See artist's conceptual rendering of one possible design style for The Strip Center.)

Jason Cannon, Vice President of Retail Bro-



Bus arrival

kerage Services at CB Richard Ellis Group, Inc., notes that the project is currently in the exploration stage, but he maintains high expectations for The Strip Center, which could house up to 15 new stores.

“I believe the site for the development is a central, large tract of land that is in a great location within the city. Plus, the Strip District is a good place to invest in right now. The Strip Center will naturally connect with the Strip’s business district, and will

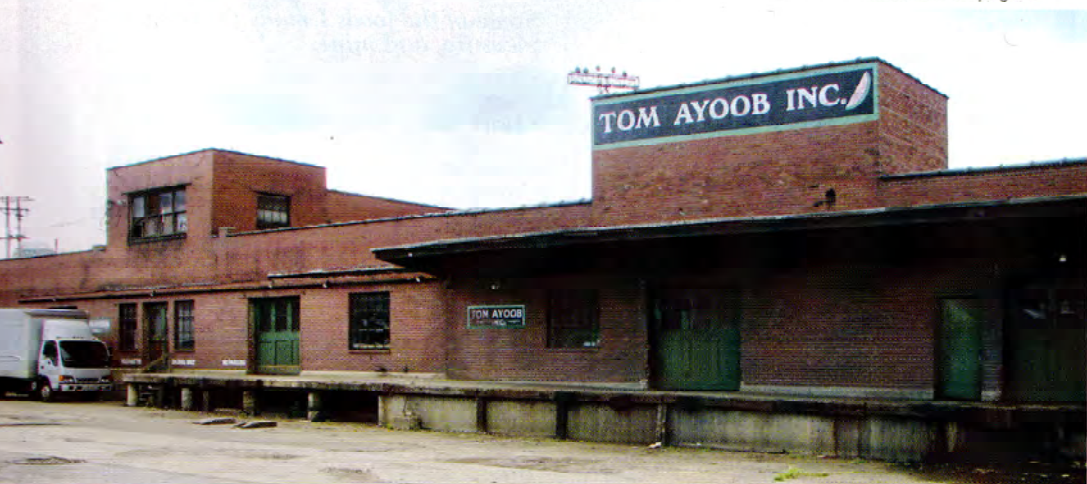
make its location a promising spot for retail development,” said Cannon.

“At this point, we’re evaluating the project’s feasibility in terms of a business plan. We’re trying to determine the viability of a potential development there. We’ll probably know more in the next month or two,” said Walsh.

Cannon also believes that The Strip Center will be a perfect fit for the Strip District.

“Historically, The Strip has been an area

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The Strip Center current site



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The Strip Center continued

with dozens of specialty food stores, retail shops, wholesale markets, street vendors, and different restaurants that operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The addition of a new, retail development just seems to fit in well there," he said.

Tom Listwak, President of Benkovitz Seafoods, couldn't agree more.

"The Strip Center will add to an ever-changing Strip District. A rebirth of sorts has taken place, with new residential developments and new retail possibilities such as The Strip Center," he said. "Many things have changed here in the last five or ten years, and they'll probably change even more in the future. All of which is good for the Strip!"

It's no surprise that the development site would be located next to The Cork Factory, a 297-unit apartment redevelopment of the old industrial property. The Cork Factory houses approximately 500 tenants who

would benefit from, and patronize, The Strip Center once it is completed. "That project next door is certainly a bonus to us, as well as to the developer. I think The Strip Center will be a great amenity to The Cork Factory and vice versa," said Listwak.

Walsh agrees "We'd like to clean up and develop our site because we want it to be an extension of what The Cork Factory is now."

Listwak also acknowledges the mutually beneficial connection between the residential and retail developments. "The Strip Center, combined with the conversion of the Wholey cold storage space into condominiums, the existing apartments at The Cork Factory, and other planned residential developments in the Strip are all positive steps for the Strip District and the City of Pittsburgh," he said.

Whatever calculus inspired The Strip Center development idea, Cannon concludes that sometimes business decisions are also affected by a desire to do something good for a beloved community like the Strip District.

"The Strip is a great neighborhood, and we look forward to building something that will help generate more traffic and create even more positive activity there." !



Tom Listwak