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AIA OF PENNSYLVANIA RECOGNIZES MARKET SQUARE PLACE AS MODEL FOR 21ST CENTURY URBAN DESIGN

PITTSBURGH, PA – A milestone in the long crusade to revive Pittsburgh’s downtown, the adaptive reuse of Market Square Place has received an Honor Award from the Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) in the category of Regional and Urban Design. The jury noted that the project “makes a compelling case for adapting historic urban fabric for 21st century city life.”

Market Square Place is a collection of seven buildings in an urban core that was previously plagued by neglect. Strada and developer Millcraft Industries led the project team and the process for restoring these structures, which take up nearly two-thirds of a city block. The mixed-use complex now includes 46 workforce residences, a range of retail businesses, and a YMCA, all behind facades that have been restored to reflect their 1930s appearance.

In Pittsburgh, as in many cities, there is a growing awareness that restoring and reusing historic “background” buildings is just as important as the preservation of iconic historic landmarks, particularly where maintaining these background buildings reinforces the cultural richness of a larger neighborhood. This re-focusing on existing urban fabric dovetails with census data revealing that the overall growth in America’s outer suburbs has been slowing down. Offering affirmation that this trend is here to stay, The Atlantic Cities reported this week on studies suggesting that current twentysomethings are less drawn to car travel than were previous generations.

Strada’s next urban redevelopment project, Bakery Square 2.0 Master Plan, is taking shape in East Liberty, another rebounding transit-oriented retail center in Pittsburgh. Working with Walnut Capital, Strada has developed a master plan for this area that would build on the success of tech office development and retail activity in and around an old Nabisco factory. The plan extends the current development into a complete mixed-use neighborhood with houses that would draw on the character of both the Nabisco building and nearby traditional residences.

At the core of Strada’s philosophy is the idea that in creating places, we must respect historical contexts and contribute to the sustainability of communities. It is heartening to receive a state-level AIA Award for our work toward this end, and it is encouraging that these goals are making more and more economic sense to our clients.

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