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Bruce Gerson: Hello, I'm Bruce Gerson, and welcome to this Carnegie Mellon University G-20 Podcast. In these interviews, you'll hear from several leading Carnegie Mellon faculty members about some of the issues relating to the G-20 Summit this September 24, 25 in Pittsburgh. With us today is Don Carter, Director of the Remaking Cities Institute in Carnegie Mellon's School of Architecture. The Institute is an urban design research center that aims to improve the quality of life in cities and towns through applied research and community redevelopment. Don, welcome!

Donald Carter: Thank you.

Bruce Gerson: Don, how did the Pittsburgh region transform itself from a heavy industrial economy to a technology, research, education and financial services economy? And what were the planning mechanisms?

Donald Carter: Well, it was a very difficult period in 1970s and '80s, when heavy industry shut down here. The steel industry, the aluminum industry. And many people fled Pittsburgh, because there were no jobs here. The corporations that remained, and the institutions and foundations that were here, regrouped around the strengths that we already had and that we inherited that were not heavy industry. Some of those were banking-- there were very large banks here. So the financial sector was strong and grew. But I think the main one was medical and technology. With the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, and the five hospitals they represented, and Carnegie Mellon University, and the high-technology computer science robotics institutes that were here, we could graft onto the economy, which was struggling at the time, new ideas, new companies, and new industries.

Bruce Gerson: What has been the role of Carnegie Mellon in other local universities?

Donald Carter: Well, getting back to my previous answer, they were essentially the engines of the new economy. Especially, the two institutions, the big institutions in Oakland: Carnegie Mellon University and University of Pittsburgh. Not only were they attracting faculty and students here who were studying the-- and producing research, they were also spinning off companies: medical research companies, computer companies and artificial intelligence companies, information technology companies. And they were growing hundreds and hundreds of jobs here around the institutions. Also

Carnegie Mellon and University of Pittsburgh have attracted hundreds of millions of dollars of basic research, from federal government and from foundations. Again, that's fueled the economy, it's brought high-technology workers here, knowledge workers, creative workers. It was really the catalyst of the new economy.

Bruce Gerson: What are the physical and social attributes of the Pittsburgh region that contributed to this transformation?

Donald Carter: Well, the social attributes, I'll start with those. Hard work. There's no question about it. There's a kind of work ethic here in Pittsburgh that goes back to the beginnings of the country, but especially in the industrial revolution in the late 19th Century, when immigrants came from all over the world, and from the South in the United States, to Pittsburgh to be in this workplace, where heavy industry, railroads, coal mining, steel, glassmaking, all that, was happening here. As the generations unfolded from that point on, that work ethic remained. And to this day, when we talk to employers who've come here to move their companies here, or who are planning to expand, when we ask them why, almost one of the first things they say is, "The work ethic. The kind of strength of the community that's here." And there are community organizations and churches and fraternal organizations that continue to be that glue that holds the community together. Physically, it's the rivers and the topography. People come here and they're just astounded how beautiful it is. The green hills, the valleys, the river valleys, the vistas that you see. The fact that we have houses on tops of hills, on the sides of hills, in the valleys. It's almost like a bit of Europe here. And many of my visitors who visit me internationally, say that Pittsburgh feels almost the most European of all cities in the United States.

Bruce Gerson: What impact has the quality of life had on the attraction and retention of young knowledge workers? The creative class, if you will?

Donald Carter: That's a very good question, and that's a question that's only been addressed in the last ten to fifteen years here. Because it became apparent, and with research that was done here at Carnegie Mellon by Richard Florida [ph?], who was a professor at the Heinz College, that there were certain characteristics about cities that attracted people to them, especially recent college graduates or researchers or artists-- what he calls the creative class-- in the book that he wrote called "The Rise of the Creative Class," which came out of research here at Carnegie Mellon University. And what he identified was that people who were interested in creative things, and making companies, and making art, or whatever it might be, tended to want to be around other people like that. So there became a sense of affinity about people who wanted to be near things. So they were looking at places that felt authentic. Places that were tolerant of diversity of lifestyles, and a whole series of things. And technology had to be there as

well. So based on the research that Rich had done, and subsequent work, a lot has been invested in quality of life here in Pittsburgh, including river front trails, biking trails, arts organizations, anything that can support what young people are looking for. Late night eateries, coffee shops, sports facilities that are for teams, and a growing arts community. It's incredible how many artists have now moved here from the East Coast in particular, because it's a quality of life that also includes a lower cost of living here. So you can have an artist loft in Lawrenceville, or Southside, or East Liberty, or Northside, or on Mount Washington for a fraction of the cost of something in Philadelphia, or especially New York City or Boston.

Bruce Gerson: What issues or problems still must be tackled in Pittsburgh?

Donald Carter: Well, I think one of the problems that we would have to tackle, and I think anyone has to tackle is the cost of housing. Even though our cost of housing is lower than other places, there still are a lot of people who are making working class level jobs, or entry level jobs who have a hard time finding a decent place to live. And what we don't want to do is isolate those people and put them in low-income housing communities, because then they feel separated from the rest of the community. So as an urban designer and planner who's worked around the country, my goal in Pittsburgh with this Remaking's Institute, particular, is to figure out ways to have mixed-income housing in diverse neighborhoods. I think that's very, very important. I think, also, we still have to work on the retention of our recent college graduates. And one way we do that is to continue developing amenities that they're appreciating. Introduce them to Pittsburgh in a much more positive way. Some students come to a campus, not just in Pittsburgh, but they could also do it in other cities, and barely leave that campus. So this outreach for students, get them involved in community projects, those are important. I think without new growth in terms of ideas and young people, a community eventually ages to the point where it doesn't have that rebirth.

Bruce Gerson: Don, what can other cities and regions learn from Pittsburgh?

Donald Carter: One thing, I think, that's important to understand is that the institutions that you have here are the ones you have to start with. Pittsburgh was very fortunate in that in the late 1940s when the ruling heads of corporations and the local political system agreed that something had to be done in Pittsburgh, because Pittsburgh was known as the smoky city. I can attest to it, because I grew up here then. At noon some days it felt like dusk, because of the smoke and the pollution, and your clothes would get dirty, your car would be dirty outside. Everything would happen. So they made a unified, collective effort between the corporations and the political structure to say, "We're going to clean up the rivers, the water, the air, and we're going to get rid of-- in Downtown Pittsburgh we

had warehouse and old manufacturing facilities, and railroad tracks-- and we're going to replace that with a new park, and a new Gateway Center." And they brought in new office buildings. And it was the first and largest scale redevelopment project after World War II in the country. They also put in place laws, Redevelopment Authority was the first one every created. And it was a public/private partnership. So what I think other cities can learn, is if you a unified vision, and you have the private, corporate world; and the public side, the elected officials agreeing on a future, and investing on both sides, public side in infrastructure and roads, and the private side in buildings, you'll achieve something. What some cities would look to Pittsburgh at, with envy though, are the wonderful private foundations we have here. They were founded by the Mellon Family, the Carnegie, two names from our university here; but also Hillman Foundation, the Heinz endowments, the Hunt Foundations. And you and you go on down the list. There are just dozens of them, very large foundations, McEwen Foundation is another one. They have continued to invest their grant money in Southwestern Pennsylvania primarily. And they have propped up many cultural institutions, neighborhood organizations. The whole idea of a cultural district in Downtown Pittsburgh is a foundation-based idea. And now we have four theaters, Mini Times Square in Downtown Pittsburgh. That did not exist in the 1970s and '80s. It began to happen in the 1990s. That was primarily a thrust of the foundations. The foundations also support the universities and research. So when you look at it in terms of lessons from Pittsburgh, it would be corporate and government cooperation. And if you're lucky, you have a foundation community that can support those activities.

Bruce Gerson: Don, thank you for your time, and your insights. This has been a Carnegie Mellon University G-20 Podcast. Learn more from our faculty experts at cmu.edu/G-20. Thank you for listening.

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