

POP City

FRIDAY, MARCH 14, 2008

Pop Star: Dan Rothschild

By Abby Mendelson
Photos by Brian Cohen



It may not look like much now, but just you wait. At 7,000 square feet, the former bus garage at 29th & Penn, in the Strip District, is a mere 5,000 square-foot increase over Dan Rothschild's current Regent Square space, which he's rented for some 19 years.

It's space he's had to expand four times since he opened in 1988. Now the Rothschild Doyno Architects worker bees are packed cheek-to-jowl overlooking Braddock Ave. When they move to the Strip, they'll have plenty of room to spread out, plenty of space for collaboration. "That's one of our guiding principles," Rothschild says. "We're committed to a collaborative process with our clients."

Getting from a one-man shop to a robust 14 - person team with partner Ken Doyno and clients fanning out from Pittsburgh into Ohio, West

Virginia, and New Jersey, took two enormous leaps of faith.

The first brought Rothschild here. The second got him his own signature firm.

A native of White Plains, New York, after graduating with architecture degrees from Miami of Ohio and NC State, Rothschild looked at Places Rated Almanac for somewhere to land. Visiting the top four cities, he chose Pittsburgh. "My wife and I were struck by the beauty of Pittsburgh," he recalls. "The rest," he says, "is history."

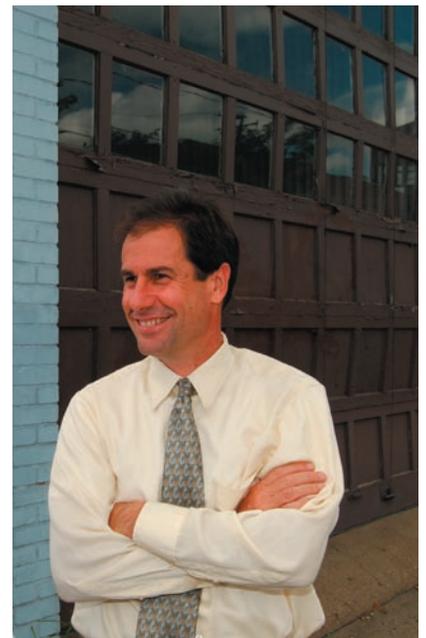
Not quite. Hooking on with a large firm, he switched to a small creative one, then struck out on his own - no clients, no employees, just a lot of energy.

Things started slowly, the Mt. Lebanon resident admits. Certainly, hard work and networking helped, but the key to his success was his Design Sketchbook. "That's who

we are. That's our brand."

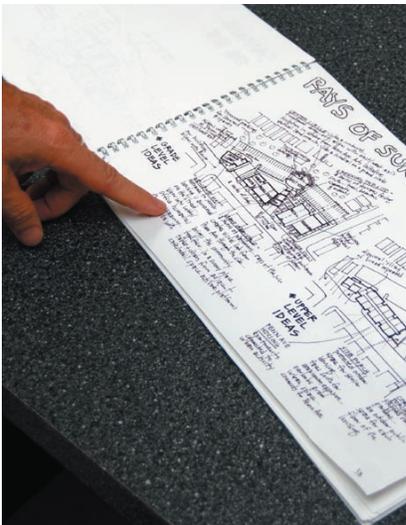
An 8-1/2-by-14-inch spiral-bound notebook accompanies Rothschild and his staff when they work on a project. Walking, thinking, taking notes, everything gets written down, everything becomes part of the thought process, the permanent record. "Our clients have responded wonderfully to it," Rothschild says. "The Sketchbook becomes a tool for consensus."

That history now includes many outposts around town - and five American Institute of Architects awards, 2004-2006. In the Penn Avenue Arts Corridor Rothschild Doyno's Fairmont Apartments, 60 units of senior citizen housing, sits on the seam of two disparate neighborhoods, Friendship and Gardfield. Picking up design elements



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of both storefronts, row houses, colors, heights, the result was a building that bridges two communities. "This has been such a home run," Rothschild beams.

As has his Hill District senior high-rise, Louis Mason Apartments. Some 108 units fronting Wylie Avenue, the building celebrates Pittsburgh's jazz history. With the facade resembling music staves, carved in stone are the names of native-born jazz greats, Art Blakely to Ahmad Jamal to Mary Lou Williams. "We're giving people a whole community," Rothschild says. "We're changing lives."

There's much more to the Rothschild Doyno oeuvre, including

Pitt's Honors College, Oakland's Jewish University Center, a new neighborhood on a re-used Oakmont industrial site.

"This is a firm that's embedded not in a style but in a process," he says. "We think broadly. Our growth has been qualitative. That's an absolute pleasure."