

Point of View

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE

Denver!

by John D. Anderson, FAIA



You may well choose to dismiss all of what I'm about to say on the grounds of obvious bias. So be it! But in my humblest opinion, you're going to enjoy Denver when you come to our convention in May. More about that later.

Convention!

It's that time to do all the obvious convention stuff, like meeting old friends, comparing experiences, listening to remarkable leaders of our culture and our profession, having our minds and imaginations stretched by visionary thinkers. You knew that. But it's so much more.

The national convention is where the AIA as an organization becomes visible and most accessible to each of us as individual members. It is where we get that "New England town meeting" opportunity to listen to our colleagues and to have our own voices heard in debate over architectural education, diversity, the direction of the profession, governance, and other concerns that interest us passionately and shape our lives, both professional *and* personal.

The convention is also about synergy. It's about comparing opinions, finding common ground, listening to the candidates for AIA national office who would lead us, and making up our minds about where we want to be led.

It's about participation

And it's about the excitement of learning—not just picking up credits to further our own ends, but learning to serve our communities. As a profession, architects have been rightly accused of being nonplayers

in the decision-making processes that shape our communities. When you're packing your luggage for Denver, don't bring along indifference. This year passivity is *out*; participation, *in*.

Speaking of participation, be sure to spend lots of time at Expo2001. I am constantly amazed at all of the products, materials, and services that are new each year. If it's been a few years since you were last at convention, spend even more time cruising down the aisles and scoping out the exhibits.

And, yes—Denver!

Learning, debating, synergy, networking—those are givens at any AIA convention. What is totally new each year is the venue, which is your cue that I am turning the page to a topic I dearly love to talk about—Denver. My wife, Flodie, and I have lived here since 1952, having come out from New England to a place to which we had never been. For the first 30 years we watched the community grow. It was (and is) a wonderful place to raise a family, but it was never quite in the same league as older major cities. Beginning in the 1980s, the city turned a corner. Blessed with real leadership in the mayor's office, we have grown up to be a vibrant urban center of over two million.

It began with Federico Peña, a true visionary whose slogan was, "Imagine a Great City!" Among those visions were a new convention center, a new airport, and revitalization of the core city. That was just the beginning. In the past 10 years under Mayor Wellington Webb, the vision of a great city took full flight, ably abetted by Jennifer Moulton, FAIA, the best director of planning and urban de-



velopment the city has ever had.

In Wellington and Jennifer (yes, we generally go by first names out here) we have much to be thankful for: the promised convention center where we'll be meeting; a world-class airport, which most of you will encounter and enjoy; an aquarium (on the mighty Platte River, which is an inch deep and a few yards wide); a bustling urban center infill project where the old railroad yards used to be; LoDo, our exemplary, revitalized historic district; and two enormous new mixed-used communities where Lowry Air Force Base and our old airport once stood. We are told the airport project is the largest planned community ever attempted, and it's going well.

A working model

The point is that here in Denver we have a working model of what goes right when enlightened political leadership is paired with the experience and insights of our profession. The example can and should be replicated in communities across the nation. That's why we built this convention around the theme "Leaders and Partners in Creating Community." It's not a slogan: it's the way Denver works and why it works so well.

Come on out, up, down, over—wherever you're from. Enjoy our working urban laboratory/playground. And learn. ■