CONTEXT

examining streets

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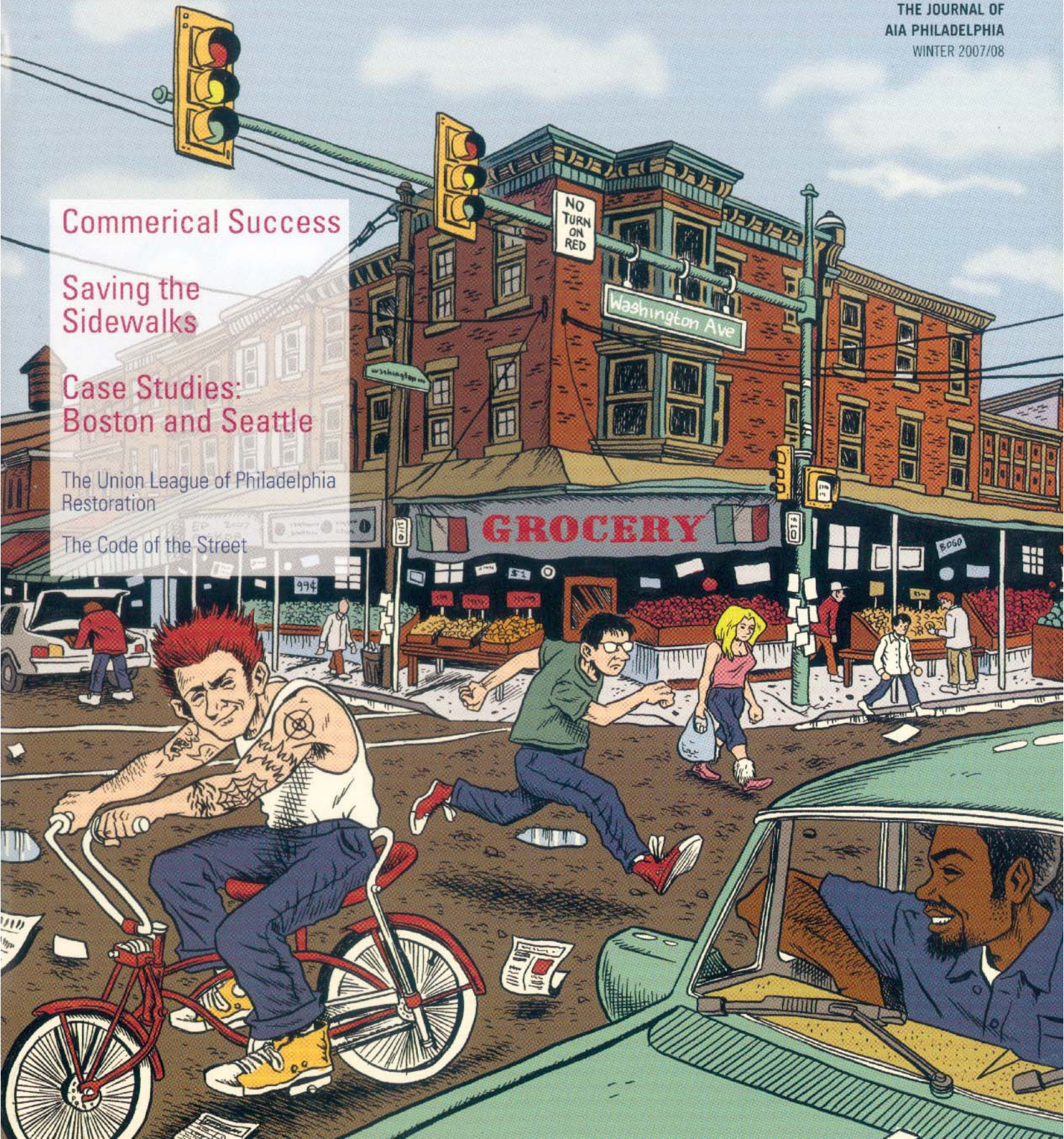


Commerical Success

Saving the Sidewalks

Case Studies: Boston and Seattle

The Union League of Philadelphia Restoration

The Code of the Street

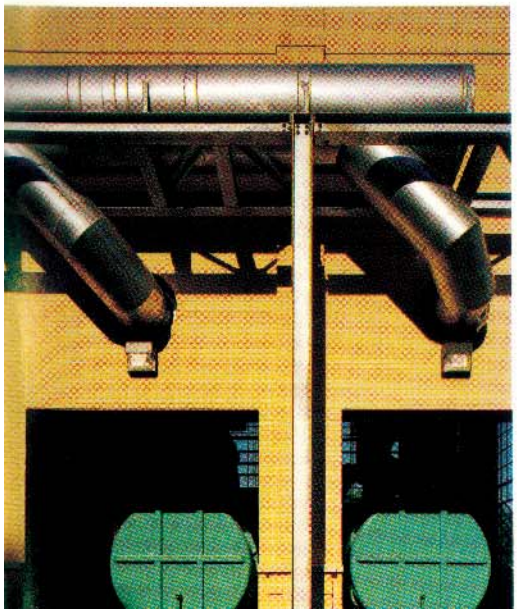
Swarthmore College Boiler House
Brawer + Hauptman, Architects

By Amanda Gibney Weko

At first glance, the Swarthmore College Boiler House looks as if it has long been a part of campus. The early 20th Century industrial aesthetic includes buff-colored brick, limestone trim, and steel windows. Yet the 1,000-square-foot addition that wraps the original boiler house was constructed in 2004. Designed by Brawer + Hauptman, Architects, using a compatible historic architectural vocabulary, the new Boiler House features three contemporary boilers and electrical equipment to upgrade campus capacity. When lit from within, the new building also serves as a glowing gateway to define Swarthmore's south campus entrance.

The original scope of work involved design and construction of a new boiler house and conversion of the existing building into a conference center. The scope changed dramatically when the college reevaluated its need for the conference center. Instead of a new building, the existing facility was renovated and expanded to meet growing mechanical demand. "An addition was the most economical choice," described Brawer + Hauptman Principal in Charge Michael Hauptman, AIA.

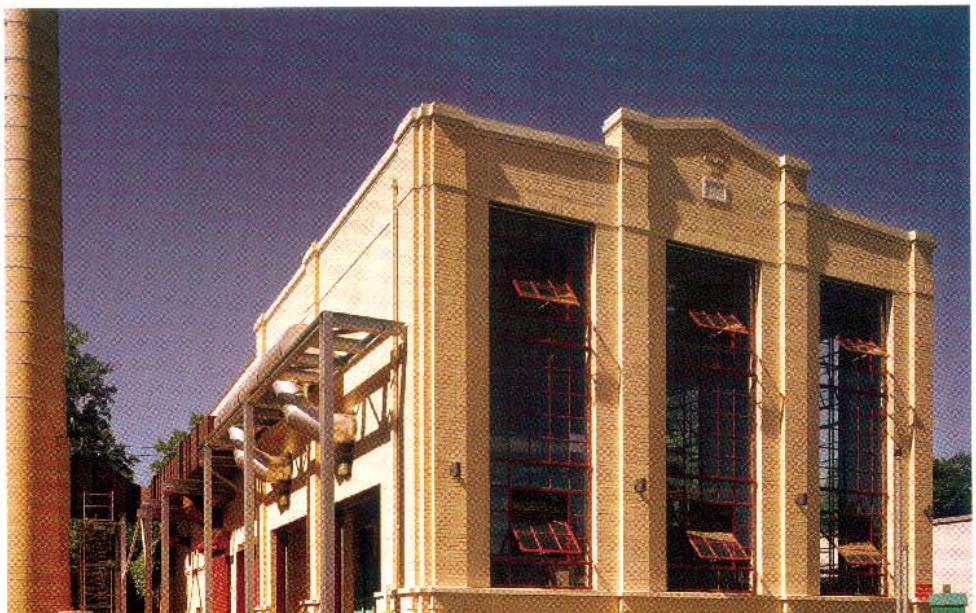
Working with prime consultants AKF Engineers, Brawer + Hauptman generated an elegantly utilitarian home for the sophisticated new system of high-efficiency, dual-fuel boilers. Hauptman and Project Architect Ellen Pannell indicated several design elements used to contribute to the building's identity. The steel windows recall those on the original building, yet have a modern red color. "It was our attempt to play with modern aspects of the building," Hauptman added. Mechanized awnings lend another modern convenience, allowing the windows to open easily for improved ventilation.



A color-coding system identifies the myriad of pipes that traverse the 26-foot-high space to service the entire campus. The use of color presents a vibrant image when viewed from the building's large windows; it also avoids the complexity of labels that might be hidden by valves or other equipment.

Challenges of the project ranged from the operational need to maintain continuous heat service to the campus, to the complexity of transporting the enormous boilers – including finding an alternate route to avoid a nearby bridge that could not support the weight. Phasing allowed the new boilers to be installed and placed on-line without disruption or downtime in service. The team adhered to rigorous DEP and EPA standards, documenting the new system's ability to reduce pollutants and be more fuel-efficient than its predecessor.

The new Swarthmore College Boiler House is expected to serve the campus' heating needs for many years.



Location: Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, PA
Size: 1,000 square feet

Architecture: Brawer + Hauptman, Architects; Michael Hauptman, AIA, Principal; Ellen Pannell, RA, Project Architect
Construction: W.S. Cumby & Son
Engineering AKF Engineers
Structural Engineering: CVM Structural Engineers

Photography: Barry Halkin