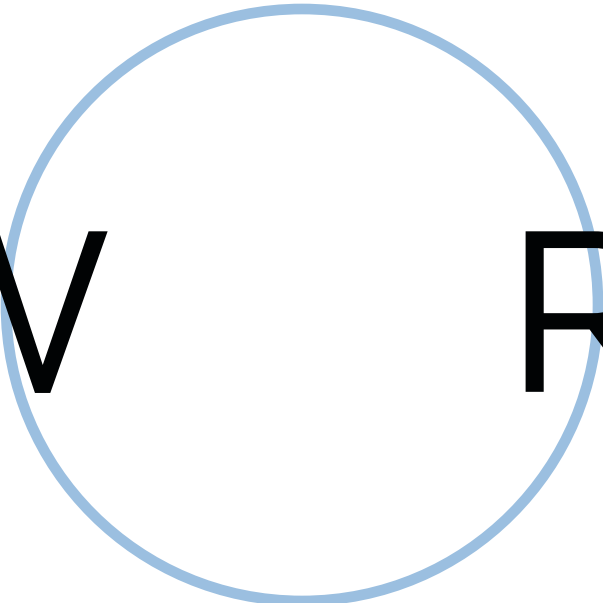


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THE GLOW—OR GLARE, DEPENDING ON YOUR PERSPECTIVE—OF INTERNATIONAL ATTENTION FROM THE G-20 SUMMIT HAS FADED IN PITTSBURGH, BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN THE EVENT HAS BEEN FORGOTTEN. NUMBERS-CRUNCHERS ACROSS THE REGION ARE TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHETHER THE MOST PROFIT FROM HOSTING THE SEPTEMBER CONFERENCE IS YET TO COME. BY JEFFERY FRASER

Although the primary stage for September's G-20 Summit was the David L. Lawrence Convention Center in Pittsburgh, the world was the audience for President Barack Obama and his guests from around the globe.



Pittsburgh venues assumed international grandeur for the summit, as was the case for the opening dinner at Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens where President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama welcomed guests such as French President Nicolas Sarkozy and his wife, Carla Bruni-Sarkozy.



Richard Piacentini had pitched Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens as a showcase of Pittsburgh progress two months earlier, hoping it might host one of the events planned for the heads of state coming to town for the G-20 Summit. Now, here they were: President Barack Obama, French President Nicolas Sarkozy, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and the leaders of other global economic powers, mingling over cocktails and taking their first meal together in the leafiness of one of the most energy-efficient, environmentally sustainable public gardens in the world.

When notified July 29 that Phipps was chosen as the venue for the Sept. 24 summit welcome, cocktail party and leaders' dinner, Piacentini's first thought was, "This is a dream come true.

"My second reaction was, 'Oh, no,'" says the executive director of the 106-year-old conservatory. "The city will be counting on us. If something goes wrong, Pittsburgh will look bad. That was the kind of pressure we worked under."

A project manager and subcontractors were hired, walls were painted, rooms renovated and sidewalks repaired. A dining table was built of century-old oak trees felled in North Park a year earlier. Security and other details were fine-tuned to the specifications of the Secret Service, State Department and Office of the First Lady. Nothing was left to chance, as suggested by the handwritten note on a staff copy of the dinner menu that read, "No beets for the prez," to remind servers of Obama's aversion to the reddish-purple vegetable.

Around 11 that evening, after the leaders of nations had left, the head of the White House advance team approached Piacentini. "The president is happy," he confided. "You hit a home run."

By most accounts, the same can be said of the region as a whole. "We did very well in terms of taking care of the delegations that came and the press covering the story of 'Why Pittsburgh?'" says Craig Davis, vice president of sales and marketing for VisitPittsburgh, the official tourist promotion agency of Allegheny County. "That was the first story reported. Fortunately, it's a great story, and I think it was an image changer."

"Why Pittsburgh?" was initially answered by Obama, who saw the G-20 Summit as an opportunity for officials from the "Group of 20" leading international economies — 19 countries and the European Union — to continue working toward solving the global economic crisis. He characterized the city as a "bold example of how to create jobs and industries while transitioning to a 21st-century economy.

"As a city that has transformed itself from the City of Steel to a center for high-tech innovation — including green technology, education, and research and development — Pittsburgh will provide both a beautiful backdrop and a powerful example for our work," the president remarked two weeks before the Sept. 24–25 summit.

Downplayed were other explanations of how Pittsburgh won the hosting honor. Some local news reports and the Wall Street Journal briefly mentioned that having the summit in or near New York City had been considered. But with the United Nations General Assembly scheduled there for the same week, adding the summit was determined to be too much and visiting foreign officials not invited might have been insulted. However, local Pittsburgh leaders insisted comments were untrue that a number of other cities turned down hosting the event before Pittsburgh was approached.

Regardless, once Pittsburgh emerged as the site choice, many agreed that it was an exciting, if stress-inducing, opportunity: hosting the world's most crucial economic forum before an



international audience and having the president of the United States validate the region's transformation and strengths.

Now that the summit is over, local leaders of all stripes—government, business, civic and community—are trying to determine whether Pittsburgh enjoyed only a transitory moment in the sun or if enough good impressions were made to yield lasting benefits, especially economic ones.

"I think a lot of economic growth and development is about positive psychology," says Christina Gabriel, director of The Heinz Endowments' Innovation Economy Program, which targets its support at advancing innovation and economic growth, expanding opportunities to a diverse population and creating a more viable economic climate. "If Pittsburgh is seen as a place that learned to turn itself around, that puts us in a position where people are more likely to invest here."

A city fact-finding commission is reviewing policies, decisions and other issues related to the summit. The G-20 budget totaled about \$16 million, with \$10 million promised by the federal government, \$4 million by the state, and less than \$2 million set aside by the city and Allegheny County. Seattle, by comparison, had budgeted \$3 million to host the 1999 World Trade Organization conference, but ended up spending nearly \$9 million. Pittsburgh City Councilman Patrick Dowd, who called for the fact-finding commission and received support for the idea from a majority of his council colleagues, says its purpose is to learn from the G-20 experience and improve the city's capacity to host other major events. A cost-benefit analysis is expected to be part of the commission's review. And early indications suggest the summit's impact was largely favorable and substantial.

The most immediate and obvious effect was the upsurge in attention the city received from around the globe. News coverage of the summit and Pittsburgh was intense and far-reaching. As of October, VisitPittsburgh had counted 6,975 stories about Pittsburgh written or broadcast by U.S. news organizations during the summit and the months leading up to it. Foreign press accounts had not been tallied, but anecdotal examples were plentiful. Many stories, particularly those done prior to the summit, painted an image of the region similar to the one offered by the White House, detailing its transition to a diversified economy, environmental progress, and the richness of its arts and culture.

Those strengths were underscored by the venues selected for major G-20 events.

The summit sessions were held at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center, the first convention center in the world to earn LEED Gold Certification by the U.S. Green Building Council for leadership in energy and environmental design. The Welcome Center at Phipps was the first LEED-certified building in a public garden. Its Tropical Forest Conservatory is considered the world's most energy-efficient conservatory, and Phipps is designing its new Center for Sustainable Landscapes as a "living building" with a self-contained energy and water supply. Phipps was seen as a symbol of the city's transformation, having been opened as a terribly energy-inefficient glass house during Pittsburgh's industrial revolution—a time, Piacentini says, "when people thought we were going to conquer nature, and there was no limit to the amount of resources we could use or pollution we could release."



Top, UPI Photo/Roger Wollenberg; Bottom left, White House photo; Bottom right, Copyright © Pittsburgh Post-Gazette 2009, all rights reserved. Reprinted with permission.

“WHEN YOU THINK THAT THE G-20 COVERAGE CAME JUST A YEAR AFTER THE COVERAGE OF PITTSBURGH 250... IT HAS REALLY BEEN A ONE-TWO PUNCH IN RESHAPING THE IMAGE OF PITTSBURGH AND BRANDING THE REGION AS ‘CHANGE MAKER TO THE WORLD.’”

Michele Fabrizi, president and CEO of MARC USA



International visitors to Pittsburgh included a phalanx of journalists, shown at left during Obama's post-summit news conference. Spouses of world leaders, below left, received special attention that included a dinner hosted by First Lady Michelle Obama at Rosemont Farm, the suburban Pittsburgh home of Endowments Chairman Teresa Heinz, third from the right at the table. The spouses also were treated during the summit to a performance at the Pittsburgh Creative and Performing Arts High School by world-famous cellist Yo-Yo Ma and CAPA junior Jason Yoder, a percussionist.

Both the convention center and Phipps have received support from local foundations, as have three other institutions that were chosen as G-20 venues: First Lady Michelle Obama hosted a luncheon for world leaders at the Andy Warhol Museum, the largest single-artist museum in the country and an institution known for its thought-provoking exhibits. The first lady also led a tour of the city school district's Pittsburgh Creative and Performing Arts High School, a state-of-the-art facility in the downtown Cultural District. Sarah Brown, wife of British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, was hosted by Endowments Chairman Teresa Heinz at Magee-Womens Hospital of UPMC, where she toured its research institute to learn more about the pregnancy and neonatal research done there.

Together, all five venues represent an investment of about \$17.7 million in Endowments grant making alone in two decades. In addition, while world leaders were working over dinner at Phipps on the opening evening of the summit, their spouses dined at Rosemont Farm, Mrs. Heinz's Fox Chapel home.

The White House chose the locations from some 300 that had applied to be considered. Also as part of the preparations, local public officials, agencies and private organizations collaborated on short notice to iron out other details, ranging from tidying up downtown to stationing volunteer interpreters at hotels hosting foreign dignitaries and staff. Foundations joined corporations in funding efforts to help visitors learn more about Pittsburgh and its transformation.

"The foundations' role in the turnaround—which led President Barack Obama to choose Pittsburgh to host the Group of 20 global economic summit in September—may be one of the area's best-kept secrets," wrote Associated Press reporter Ramit Plushnick-Masti.

Mrs. Heinz echoed those sentiments during an interview with the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette: "There's a bond like family, inasmuch as these foundations represent peoples' interests in the community."

Perhaps the best example of teamwork for the summit was the crafting of a media strategy to focus news coverage on selected regional strengths. Planning began nearly three months prior to the summit and involved a broad public-private consortium led by the Allegheny Conference on Community Development. A set of talking points was developed to define the region, and community leaders considered likely to be interviewed were asked to fold them into their remarks. Journalists were provided background and contacts through a Pittsburgh G-20 Partnership

Web site. The result was a uniform message emphasizing such things as how the region has invested in research and entrepreneurship; how it has built on its historic strengths, such as advanced manufacturing and financial services; and how quality of life has improved through investment in the arts and environment, including green technologies.

The media strategy had its limits. It could not, for example, avert attention from the protests that took place during the summit and the controversy arising from efforts to contain them. By the numbers, there initially appeared little cause for concern. More than 100 demonstrators were arrested, most on minor charges such as failure to disperse, and no major injuries or deaths were reported. A similar number of arrests were made in April during the G-20 meeting in London. But there, a news vendor returning home from work died of an apparent heart attack after being struck with a baton by police. The Pittsburgh G-20 protests also paled in comparison to those seen during the 1999 meeting of the World Trade Organization in Seattle, where more than 500 demonstrators were arrested, and property damage and loss of sales to businesses reached an estimated \$20 million.

However, some efforts to control those who took to the streets of Pittsburgh have been criticized as heavy-handed attempts to stifle public dissent. Downtown, the city's 900 police officers, National Guard troops and some 3,000 additional local and out-of-town police and state troopers contained most of the protestors. The demonstrations that did occur were largely nonviolent, with the exception of sporadic acts of vandalism—mostly window breaking—in neighborhoods outside of the city's central core. Crowd-control tactics included the use of tear gas and "long-range acoustic devices," truck-mounted public-address systems capable of broadcasting loud messages or ear-piercing signals. Some 75 complaints related to police methods were filed with the city's Citizen's Police Review Board.

"It seems to me that ever since Seattle, the mindset has been that we're not going to let that kind of property damage happen again," says Witold Walczak, legal director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Pennsylvania. "During the G-20, it appeared to us that the intent was to suppress demonstrators and demonstrations in order to minimize property damage.

"The police treated demonstrators as if they were suspected terrorists. They systematically abused and mistreated these people. Most of these demonstrators were young. The message, as I see it, was if you're a young person, don't bother coming to Pittsburgh."

Behind the official scenes of the G-20 Summit were a range of less glamorous activities. Above, workers boarded up and painted the windows of vacant buildings. The imposing presence of police from around the country kept many downtown streets orderly—and empty. Below, some protests that did occur, such as the “People’s March to the G-20,” were spirited but led only to a total of about 100 arrests, most on minor charges. Other rallies took a calmer approach, like the “Gathering of One” pre-summit prayer for peace and unity, which took place at a site overlooking Pittsburgh’s downtown.

Concern over the possibility of protest-related damage and restricted access to downtown also led to many merchants shuttering their businesses during the summit. “In some ways,” says Michael Edwards, president and CEO of the Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership, “it was very much a ghost town.”

Ken Zeff closed eight of his 11 downtown Crazy Mocha coffee shops, several because the office buildings housing them were in lockdown. And the three stores that stayed open did about half of their typical weekday business. Although sales at a few stores in other city neighborhoods were up a bit, Zeff says, “overall, it was a lousy three days of business.”

But Edwards believes that, in general, the G-20 had a positive impact on Pittsburgh’s downtown, even though it posed challenges for a number of street-level merchants. From a business perspective, there were clear winners, including local hotels, taxi and limousine services and some restaurants, particularly those in downtown hotels. On a peak day, local hotels have the capacity to book about 8,000 room-nights. During the two-day summit, they booked nearly 14,000 room-nights. “That’s a large part of our inventory,” says VisitPittsburgh’s Davis.

The steady drumming of Pittsburgh’s image as a shining example of rebirth after devastating industrial decline also offered a powerful alternative view of the city to counter, if not prevent, any less-than-positive publicity. That story was widely communicated around the world by the nearly 4,000 journalists on hand to cover the G-20 Summit. “Slowly, Pittsburgh’s transformation has captured the attention of other communities now confronted with economic crises of their own,” a Financial Times of London reporter wrote. “This week’s Group of 20 Summit will only highlight the city’s progress, signaling to cities such as Detroit and Cleveland that they can once again become vibrant.”

Writing in *Forbes*, Raquel Laneri described Pittsburgh as “the new symbol of modernity and progress,” rich with foundations devoted to the city and home to “a staggering number of green technology entrepreneurs.”

“If Angela Merkel, Silvio Berlusconi, Gordon Brown, or any of the other hundreds of foreign government officials are looking for inspiration on how to revive their economies,” *The Atlantic* reported, “they could do worse than to walk through Pittsburgh’s neighborhoods, which brim with reminders that just about everything old can be new again.”

The praise was eagerly welcomed by local leaders. “If we had hired a public relations firm, I don’t think it would’ve been

possible to achieve this,” says Bill Flanagan, vice president of corporate communications at the Allegheny Conference. “It worked because collectively we were able to get a framework that everyone was willing to support and because of the nature of this community. There were so many leaders of civic organizations, corporations and foundations who were willing to help. I’m not sure you could exercise that strategy in too many other places.”

An analysis that could put a dollar value on the publicity the region received has not been completed. But from what she observed, Michele Fabrizi believes the impact was significant and the advertising value of the media exposure could be as much as \$20 million. “When you think that the G-20 coverage came just a year after the coverage of Pittsburgh 250—which generated major coverage in the *New York Times*, *USA Today*, the *Wall Street Journal*, etc.—it has really been a one-two punch in reshaping the image of Pittsburgh and branding the region as ‘change maker to the world,’” says Fabrizi, president and chief executive officer of MARC USA, a Pittsburgh-based advertising, marketing and communications agency.

Measuring the full impact of hosting the summit in dollars and cents will be a challenge. Dowd received e-mails before, during and after the summit from friends across the nation and overseas who were struck by the images of Pittsburgh as a modern, vital American city. One friend from New Orleans was surprised to learn of the region’s green economy, robust medical and life sciences industries, and educational opportunities. “She’s never been here, and she’s already heard that story and knows it,” says the city councilman. “I don’t know how you quantify that. But I know that’s what is going to change people’s perceptions and get them to recognize Pittsburgh as a place that is successful and moving into the future.”

GlobalPittsburgh, which works to connect the region and its companies and organizations with other nations, is already reporting a sharp increase in foreign delegations interested in visiting the area, including groups from 15 nations during October alone. Those visitors included green technology policy-makers from European Union nations, European journalists reporting on green technology issues and Japanese municipal officials. A few days before the summit, a delegation of Canadian government officials arrived to observe the city’s preparations. In June, Canada will host the G-20 Summit in Toronto; smaller, more secluded Canadian towns will be the sites for the G-8 and G-7 economic meetings in the coming months.



Compared with that of several other mid-sized cities, the number of international visitors to Pittsburgh has been about average, based on statistics from the National Council on International Visitors, GlobalPittsburgh's national affiliate. Staff members at the local organization now expect the annual number of foreign visitors they will host to jump from 600 to 700 this fiscal year, and they believe it is possible to reach 2,000 annual international visitors within three to five years. "Many of these delegations visit two, three, maybe four cities in the United States," says Roger Cranville, GlobalPittsburgh's president. "They often come here with low expectations, but leave with a heightened sense of how progressive this region is. They then become ambassadors for the region and help build that Pittsburgh knowledge base around the world and spread the word about how visionary our region is."

The G-20 Summit also demonstrated the region's capacity to meet the challenges of hosting a major world event. The job of preparing the David L. Lawrence Convention Center, for instance, included installing building-wide Wi-Fi; 1,800 wired Internet drops; connectivity to allow simultaneous translation of 13 languages—and disposing of 21 tons of trash, 15 of which were recycled or reclaimed. "The fact that the president chose us, and that we worked with the White House to meet all of their requirements, should give others confidence that we can meet the needs of their events as well," says Mary Conturo, executive director of the Sports & Exhibition Authority.

The extensive media coverage of the G-20 also could raise awareness among local residents of the value of the region's amenities, such as its arts and culture.

"I don't think it was lost on our civic leadership that the president and first lady decided that our cultural venues were among the things they wanted to show the world," says Janet Sarbaugh, senior director of the Endowments' Arts & Culture Program. "Hopefully, that will resonate with the community so everyone will understand that our cultural sector is a treasure."

The focus on the region's environmental progress and status as a leading center for green building kept Holly Childs on the road for three weeks following the summit, giving presentations on green building to groups ranging from the National Association of Office Properties to the Greensburg Civic and Garden Club. "There is definitely new interest in this because it has been such a big part of why the city was selected for the G-20," says Childs, executive director of Green Building Alliance, a Pittsburgh-based nonprofit. "People are calling to ask what they need to do to get more green building in their area, what are the best practices and what can they learn from Pittsburgh."

Two weeks after the G-20 Summit, the United Nations named Pittsburgh as the North American host of World Environment Day next year, once again casting the spotlight on the region's achievements and, say some, challenging the region to push the envelope of progress.

"It's up to us to keep that story going," says Caren Glotfelty, director of the Endowments' Environment Program. "We have to look in the mirror and admit that, while we love this green image, if you dig deep enough, we aren't as green as we could be. Our air quality is among the worst in the nation. There are legacy industrial issues we haven't solved. Let's use this moment to commit to making progress on those issues so we can say in 2010 that we've moved the needle." *h*