

Press Release – For Immediate Release

Serving the Client's Client

McGill Smith Punshon celebrates 151 years with diversification mandate, 15 years after bankruptcy threatened survival of deep-rooted architect/engineering firm

Turnkey firm offers services for every step of development path.

[SHARONVILLE, Ohio ~ March 28, 2007] McGill Smith Punshon Inc., one of the largest architectural and engineering firms in the Tri-State, has spent the last few months celebrating a major corporate milestone, the kind of accomplishment that few other firms in the entire country can claim, no matter their SIC code.

McGill Smith Punshon (MSP) has spent the last 151 years charting plans and land, designing buildings and engineering projects and systems that define the fabric of the Greater Cincinnati community, from professional sports stadiums and elegant HOMEARAMA subdivisions to prestigious institutions of higher education. The firm is most proud of its work at the Art Academy of Cincinnati's urban campus in Over-the-Rhine, the campus design of Xavier University in Evanston, and the breathtaking landscaping designs, site design and site engineering at the historic Spring Grove Cemetery and Arboretum, a facility that recently achieved National Historical Landmark status.

"Our goal has always been to 'serve the client's client,' to provide advice beyond the scope of a project," is how MSP President J. Craig Rambo describes MSP. "We have to look at our clients' mission plan. We're not just architects and engineers. We're creative thinkers whose goal is to advise, recommend, and create the best solution for our clients to be successful."

Rambo's tenure, and that of many others at the firm founded in 1856 – including one employee, Roger Hettseheimer, who's been there 53 years – mirrors the continuity of talent and legacy of professionalism established at MSP. The firm is renowned as a one-stop shop for developers, construction companies and owners who rely on MSP to provide a turnkey real estate design solution, coordinating a project from initial planning and zoning stages through design, site development, architectural design, construction and long-term maintenance.

Since a 1992 bankruptcy jolted the firm into a diversification mandate, MSP has steadily rebuilt its multi-discipline practice of architecture, engineering, landscape architecture, planning, surveying and facilities planning into a \$6.5 million company in 2006, up 10 percent over 2005 and 25 percent ahead of 2004 revenues of \$4.9 million. The firm expects 2007 to at least repeat its performance in 2006.

The landscape design at XU, conceived by MSP, recently claimed the Grand Award in the prestigious Green Star Awards competition of the Professional Grounds Management Society (PGMS¹). It's the second national award at Xavier, following a similar honor bestowed in American Institute of Architects (AIA) competition.

Projects to be unveiled in 1Q of '07 reflect keen eye for design

With its clients, the company that has literally shaped the local landscape is poised to unveil a string of high-profile local assignments throughout the first quarter of 2007. The projects showcase McGill Smith Punshon's keen eye for aesthetics and design, as well as its old-school engineering and surveying expertise. Currently MSP experts are putting the final touches on:

- Planning, designing, creating and maintaining the beauty and serenity of **Spring Grove Cemetery**, an MSP client since the Civil War was raging (1864). MSP has worked extensively at Spring Grove and is continuing a series of Meditation Gardens at the 733-acre facility;

- Designing **West Chester's soon-to-be unveiled downtown district**, which includes master planning for a downtown park and a new office facility, part of a three-building complex that will anchor one of the region's fastest-growing communities;
- Designing a 1,000-seat business and convention center, also in West Chester, called the **Savannah Center at Chappell Crossing**. This cutting-edge facility will provide a larger venue for meetings, conventions and social and entertainment events than any other facility between Dayton and Greater Cincinnati.

"We are fortunate to have a diversity of clients, for whom we offer a diversity of disciplines. Our calling card isn't architecture, surveying, engineering, landscape architecture or land planning, it's being able to offer all of them at the level we do," said Mr. Steve Roat, MSP's senior vice president of surveying and a 32-year employee. "We literally help people from the very beginning of their process, helping them acquire property all the way up through planning, development, construction and layout. That gives us a wider range of services to offer potential clients."

The Beauty of Balance

"We have a lot of expertise from the raw-ground stage to the finished design of a building, and all the services needed in-between," continued Mr. Rambo, an 18-year MSP veteran. "One of the things we have learned in this business is that balance is extremely important. Over a 150-year period we've been through some recessions, and what you realize is if all your work is in the hands of one industry, you are vulnerable to its cycles. And every industry has cycles. But cycles change.

"That's why we have established a balance between developers and clients from the institutional, municipal and collegiate fields. All of their business cycles are different. We have made a conscientious decision to expand into those business markets," Rambo said. "Maintaining a balance of work is an intentional goal of the company. It helps us ride out the ups and downs of the economy."

McGill Smith Punshon is owned by three senior partners and four junior partners, and employs about 60. Residential land development remains one of MSP's calling cards, as evidenced by the 22 HOMEARAMA sites it has laid out over the event's 44-year history. This year will be No. 23.

The company's roots stretch back to 1856 with the formation of J. Earnshaw, Surveyor, and Civil Engineer, which evolved into the Thomas B. Punshon Engineering Co., one of the region's original urban land planners. That company merged with McGill & Smith in 1984 to form the current firm. Assignments range from \$100,000 to \$20 million projects. Other clients are Procter & Gamble Co., for whom the firm designed its Olestra plant; Drees Homes, Fischer Homes, Miller-Valentine Group, West Chester Township, Butler Tech and Wright State University.

"We have worked for practically every major development client in the area, such as Great Traditions, Zicka Walker Homes and Robert C. Rhein Interests," said Mr. James H. Watson, vice president of engineering and an employee for 20+ years. "Historically we have stuck to the four major counties, Hamilton, Butler, Clermont and Warren, but we have also dabbled in Dayton, and every now and then we do something in Kentucky. We try to keep things close to home to keep them under control."

Most of the firm's land development assignments have occurred in Greater Cincinnati, but MSP has provided architectural design work in Lexington, Indianapolis and Columbus.

Future expansion outside of Greater Cincinnati market

MSP is considering a strategy to expand outside of Greater Cincinnati in the future with land planning and architectural design, at first on a regional basis, while keeping an eye out for national opportunities.

"The world is changing. We have some very strong capabilities. We are developing a strategy that would get us more involved outside of the Cincinnati metropolitan area, with land planning providing our biggest



regional expansion potential. Services such as site engineering and surveying are very locally-based. They're tied to the dirt," Mr. Rambo added.

Another new wrinkle that MSP has recently rolled out to clients is its Designed 2 Impress service, which helps the educational market develop facilities to make the best possible first impression during prospective student visits. The company's main menu of services also includes facilities information management support, a web-based facilities information system that provides decision-makers with accurate and timely data on assets with space planning and management tools.

Xavier University, for whom MSP has been working since 1909, has more than 2 million square feet on the firm's facilities information management system.

"McGill Smith Punshon has contributed significantly to the physical changes on our campus that have created a new and exciting image for Xavier," said Mr. Richard Hirte, vice president of finance at Xavier University. "We are pleased with the work the firm has done, and the fact that we can count on their diverse services in meeting each of our needs."

"Nearly half of our employees have been here at least 10 years or longer, and there's a reason for that. This is simply a great place to work that offers flexibility, and where we share a common goal of quality and making the client satisfied, no matter what it takes," said Ms. Stephanie L. Kirschner, vice president of finance and administration at MSP. "Everybody says that, but here, we walk the talk."

"It really has been an amazing evolution," Mr. Rambo added. "We have relied on our long-term clients, and they're the ones who have kept us in business. A lot of people will talk about service, but what it really is, is getting to know your client's business. Most companies have a tough time coming out of bankruptcy because they don't have any assets. We have always had long-term clients who have stuck with us, regardless of our financial condition."

Headed into the 21st Century, McGill Smith Punshon looks forward to maintaining the same pace of steady growth that has provided the firm with a front seat to the literal development of Greater Cincinnati. The company's legacy has played a significant role in the design of so many of the region's historic projects; its diversification mandate will guarantee a spot at the table for many years to come.

"Our strength is in our people. If we keep our people, and continue to do what we do best, which is serve our client, and our client's client, we maintain our strength," Mr. Rambo concluded.

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¹ Established in 1911, the Professional Grounds Management Society (PGMS) was formed for the individual with the purpose of educational and professional advancement. The majority of PGMS members are institutional grounds managers who work for cemeteries, colleges and universities, municipalities, park and recreation facilities, office parks, apartment complexes, hotels, motels and theme parks, etc. For more information, please visit the official website at www.PGMS.org.