

>>For WXXI news it's 1370 Connection. [background music] I'm Bob Smith and you're gonna meet a man this hour whose work over the past 30 years has been aimed, at least in part, in turning public spaces, community spaces, into a work of art. Michael Singer believes that a community can be turned into a living sculpture and an inspiration to its residents. Tonight at 8:00 at RIT Carlson Auditorium, he's gonna talk about what he calls Regenerative Design in the Public Realm as part of this year's Caroline Warner Gannett's lecture series. He's joining me in the studio now. Michael, thank you very much.

>>Michael: Thank you for having me.

>>Bob: I got to ask about what Regenerative Design as a concept really is all about? I can conjure up imaginative images of it but what really is it in practice?

>>Michael: It's a great opportunity to say what it is, actually we take the idea of sustainability, now that's a word that's come into our culture very strongly and we hear people, sustainable this, sustainable that and it's gonna take me a moment to explain this but sustainable is a very important thing. It's what we realize we don't want to lose, however if we think of sustainable in a relationship, do you want to be in a bad relationship and say, I need to sustain it? So the word sustainability implies that we're gonna basically try to keep things the way they are and continue and make those things continue to work that we're used to having. Regenerative pushes that thinking a little bit further and if you think about initiating, taking an action that results in, in a change, in actually thinking about, what can we do that promotes change around us in a positive way, that regenerates, an action that will touch off some kind of evolving future. And you look at that from a holistic point of view so that what you do in one place and one action regenerates change and promotes healthy change throughout a whole system. So regenerative, I would hope, begins to go beyond our notion of sustainable and just sustaining things to taking a more active role in regenerating.

>>Bob: Of course there are ways of looking at sustainability and everything else, I'm thinking of that song by Sting when he had that line, when the world is spinning down keep the best of what's still around, which is kind of a pessimistic sense. I'm getting something a little more optimistic about this.

>>Michael: I hope so. [laughter] I think it really, it is where really not one person or one profession makes a move. This is the result, I mean to work in a regenerative way on systems is to involve many thinkers and many folks at the table to really understand the consequence of a move and its opportunity. So yes I would say that it is very optimistic

>>Bob: In a way is it a matter of making things better and making things better in a way that you know has a good chance to last?

>>Michael: Well you want to make things better so that things can evolve to a more healthy state. So for instance, in a project we're working on in the water in West Palm Beach, the Intracoastal Waterway, the grasses, the sea grasses, we understand those sea grasses are critical to the health of the water and the cleanliness of the water but also all of the life that is gonna live in that water. Now I'm not a biologist but I can tell you that there are many things

that you can do to promote the growth, future growth and continued growth and expanded growth of the sea grasses. So that would be the, the things that you would do to promote that growth that goes on, you know, evolves over time, is a regenerative practice. So if you can, for instance, collect the water, the storm water before it enters the system of the Intracoastal waterway and this is true with all waterways and you can do things to filter out the toxins that are in storm water runoff, then any method that you use to do that along the way begins to be regenerative method because it leads to the promotion of growth of these sea grasses.

>>Bob: That's, of course, one example but let's examine what you would do, take another community maybe not so close to a sensitive ecological environment, take a typical city [inaudible], here we are, what would be the application in a city like Rochester or Buffalo or Syracuse or anyone of a number of upstate New York communities?

>>Michael: Oh it's a great question and it's a wonderful challenge to look at things from a broader since of community, even if it's a smaller community and not an urban one. One of the first things I would be asking, comes to mind is where does the waste water go in this city? What are the sewage systems that are cleaning water? I ask that question because I feel a little chilly today coming up here from Florida [laughter] so I'm thinking about heat and I'm thinking about how much energy is used to heat all of the buildings that we're in and make us comfortable here. We also are aware that sewage water that's going right out of our houses has heat in it and the process of cleaning that water is actually a heat producing process. So if we could have our water treatment facilities close by rather than sending it, I don't know how far out of town, we change the way we think about our sewage. That's regenerative actually.

>>Bob: Now in this particular area for the most part, other communities on the periphery of the Rochester Metro area will do other things with it, but the immediate urban core of the Rochester metro area basically sends their wastewater through the treatment plants and then through pipes that extend a few miles out in Lake Ontario, after they've been treated and purified, it goes right out into the lake, which in turn flows down the St. Lawrence river and eventually out into the Atlantic Ocean and that's where it goes.

>>Michael: Right, right well it would be very interesting to talk to the wastewater folks in the city there. I'm sure they're thinking in progressive ways. I would hope they are. This is a progressive town. And talk about opportunities to actually not let that resource of heat, let's just keep it on that cause I started with that one and that's one of the resources in that water, and how that heat could be captured and actually start to heat our buildings and our homes and that's the result of our own wastewater. So that's a thinking process that you would take through and I would be asking those questions around a table with folks who are directly involved in the wastewater treatment facility. The other one is waste has been a topic that I've been working with for years but also just our solid waste, where does that go in your city? What happens to that?

>>Bob: Same place, if you're talking about trash, of course

>>Michael: Yeah

>>Bob: That's headed for a landfill out about 15 miles west of town off the 498 west expressway in the far suburban town of Riga, which is pretty much a rural area at this point and that's where that goes.

>>Michael: Right so that's not uncommon and again waste, if we think of waste, that solid waste, there's a resource, there's a lot of other possibilities that might cut down on the kind of transportation that has to take that out 15 miles, the amount of waste that goes into that landfill could be greatly reduced and actually turned to energy. Certainly compost and recycling, I'm sure your towns doing recycling

>>Bob: We certainly have some, of course most of the recycling is done in the area of things like paper or glass, which are easily recyclable and that is done, no question about it. But the other trash, that's not so easily recycled the way paper and glass are, that ends up in the landfill trucked about 15 miles out of town.

>>Michael: Well it would be fun to give some of these questions, I mean you've got incredible academic institutions here, it would really be very interesting to get together a group of different apartments and look at this again from a holistic perspective about water, waists, the opportunities to just create resource out of that and also the cultural opportunities that are around them. For example, you know the compost that could be formed or generated from a community like Rochester, a city like Rochester, I imagine you also have several lots in the city. Are there a lot of vacant lots in Rochester?

>>Bob: Too many for a lot of people's liking, unfortunately

>>Michael: Right, well there's again, I mean what an interesting cultural resource to think of our compost again as the fertilizer for a growing you know food for the community and within the community and for everyone. This isn't just about the underprivileged. This is about all of us having better quality of food and having it right at hand. So these are networks that extend way beyond you know just thinking I'm gonna take this water and dump it in the lake and I'm gonna take our trash and bring it 15 miles away, out of sight, out of mind. They both have extraordinary resources. Those are both, I think again, examples of regenerative thinking, holistic thinking, systems thinking. It goes beyond, again I don't mean to make it sound negative but I think it goes beyond that since of sustaining. We need to look at what we're sustaining and actually push into creating systems that evolve into more healthy forms for us and our communities.

>>Bob: 263 WXXI, 263-9994, rethinking a lot of the way we design our lives and our community, what we're talking about this hour with Michael Singer who is going to be speaking as part of the Gannett lecture series at RIT this evening, speaking with us now on 1370 Connection. You're invited to speak with us as well. Lines are open at 263 WXXI, 263-9994 and of course email open stalk@wxxi.org, either way we'd love to have you join us in the conversation and be a part of it all. When we're talking about all of this we're talking so far about the way we use basic resources and the way we conduct sort of the basic processes of keeping a community going, keeping it operating and do we need to begin essentially with just the nuts and bolts of operation of keeping a town in operation and keep it from strangling at its own junk?

>>Michael: Yes, short answer. That's how I would want to think. It's interesting, I brought to our studio and I personally have been brought to tables where the discussion is, where the challenges are looked at, as bigger, well I don't know, I'm not saying they're bigger but as more cool design problems perhaps but always one of my first questions is, you know, what are the assets in that place? And I actually view the assets of waste as being very, very important to understand and critical to the operation of communities, it's how we deal with these things, how we produce our energy, what we do with our waste on all levels, really is what sustains our communities, keeps us going, keeps us alive so it's an interesting -- people, you know I think we actually started the conversation the same way, it's I want to know those basics and those basics reveal some very interesting opportunities.

>>Bob: Of course you don't find a lot of those basics until let's say trash removal people go on strike, which happened in Toronto over the summer. They finally figured it out and settled that and finally cleaned up the mess and Toronto became a sort of clean, well washed, well scrubbed city that everybody knows whenever they go there but for a while it got pretty funky and I guess that's when it tells you just how much you depend on things to go just right.

>>Michael: That's right and of course I mean if we think of an energy outage we immediately realize, then we become aware of the energy facility that's producing the energy. What I think is very important for us to think about, even in a community that's already been built, is how can we bring those facilities closer to us and closer to our everyday lives? And also how can we make them part of the educational programs for kids and for adults to understand how critical living in a community is, to connecting to these kinds of facilities and that changes the way they're engineered, the way they're designed, the way they're conceived.

>>Bob: Of course when you're looking at anything from a recycling facility to a landfill to a power plant, anything like that, the first thing that people say is, oh my God, not in my backyard. No thank you. I'd rather be as far away from that as I can. Put it 15 miles down the road in a rural place where I'm not gonna see it unless I happen to be driving to Buffalo.

>>Michael: And you're absolutely right. I mean that's the nimby, not in my backyard and it shouldn't be in your backyard if it's going to be conceived of the way it has in the past. And I think there are a lot of issues here regarding the stimulus package in fact where infrastructure facilities are that were ground ready or are you know ready, willing to go. And raising some questions about the next generation of our infrastructure. And actually any community should reject an infrastructure facility if it's built with that kind of thinking. And when I say that kind of thinking I mean specifically as functioning only one way. So that if the power plant is only meant to produce power, then the engineers who are designing it and the people who are programming it, have only one thing in mind, we produce power. It doesn't matter what else it does. It doesn't matter what else it might be able to do. We're given that charge. Now if you change the question and say how can we make a power plant that actually works in a communion with its surroundings? How can it become an asset in its community and provide way more than just the power that comes into our house and how does it do it in a safe and clean way? It becomes very clear that facilities like this can be and need to be and actually have to be, built in the future as part of the community, not 15 miles away.

>>Bob: That gets to a question, as we're talking about power plants, concerning the wisdom of something that's happening right now about a block and a half over to the east of us and to the northeast of us actually, right on one of the neighboring streets. It's an old Rochester Gas and Electric plant. Used to be a coal fired plant serving the downtown region in the central city. It's been decommissioned, taken out of service some years ago and they're trying to figure out now how to clean up the site, which obviously is gonna have some pollution problems there, it's a brownfield right now, to clean it up, get rid of the whole power plant facility and repurpose the land for something else, presumably either commercial development, residential development or mixed use. Should we do that or should we find a way instead to recommission the plant to produce power in a way that's not gonna be as dirty, environmentally, as the way they used to?

>>Michael: Fabulous, well [laughter] I haven't seen the facility and I'd love to see it and I'm glad there's something really local that can be addressed and maybe some folks in your audience will call in and help us understand a little more about it but just from what you say, I would look at that facility as becoming a major advantage to its neighborhood if it was recommissioned and recommissioned basically in a very, very different perspective. You've already said that they're traveling waste 15 miles away to a landfill. There is an opportunity to make energy out of that waste and if we were in the European community we wouldn't even be thinking twice about it. We would be locating a waste energy facility right in the community. People are gonna hear that and go, Oh my God, I thought you were about the environment? Waste energy, you know, that's awful. Well in fact it isn't awful. There's extraordinary pollution controls. There are actually air standards that have to be met today, thank God, in this country so that waste energy is really a, and waste energy by the way is considered -- I don't know about New York state but in many states in the country and by environmental organizations throughout the world, as renewable energy source. So the rethinking of that facility as a local site to actually produce energy, take the heat in the production of that energy and heat all of the area around it for nothing because it's just a waste product. In fact let's even think of the walls of that facility. We could transfer that heat to the walls of that facility, put up greenhouses around it and if there are vacant lots nearby, even build those lots as greenhouses for hydroponic growth and actually heat those greenhouses off the waste heat. Steam comes off of this. You could have all kinds of opportunities with the steam, aside from district heating, I mean I could go on and on but basically what a fantastic opportunity right in the middle of the town to use a facility and reuse it and readapt it and create all kinds of reverberations around it. You know drop the pebble in the pond and what comes from it can be an extraordinary stream of valuable, very valuable resource and asset.

>>Bob: In this particular case, of course, if you look out the back and look north you can see the big smokestacks. You can't miss it. It's a landmark in the downtown area.

>>Michael: Wow, when was it built?

>>Bob: That's a good question. It's been there far longer than I've been alive so my guess is probably well before World War II.

>>Michael: Yeah well the other thing about that is facilities like that, water facilities, waste facilities that were built prior to World War II, there was a

civic pride in the building of them and maybe this was not considered in town, now it is a part of in town, maybe it was in town then, I'm not sure where the boundaries of the town were at that point but the point is these buildings have become actually architectural gems so in the notion of reuse they are also, we can give you examples, the Cambridge Waterworks, which was built in the you know 1910's to 15, I think, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, you know where Harvard is. You know if you want to put down \$600,000 you can now buy a condominium in that building. There's Barnes and Noble has located a major facility in the Baltimore Harbor, which was part of the old power plant and the regeneration or the renewal of a Harbor development, is really the old power plant. I would say, those were done years ago but I would say today, looking at the opportunity of waste to energy and the safety of it, in terms of emission and the benefit of it, the resource and the energy coming right from the community as a renewable energy source, I would love to look at that facility as a renewable energy possibility.

>>Bob: 263 WXXI, we have Andrew on the line. Hi Andrew, you're on the air.

>>Good afternoon, gentlemen, my idea is to bring back the water powered manufacturing to that area, Bob.

>>Bob: Hmm, so are we making a mistake do you think in seeing that area, the so called High Falls district that we're in, evolve itself into basically a combination residential and office mixed use area?

>>You can have some residential I guess but I think we're looking at a huge opportunity as this environment changes to everything has to be clean, otherwise we're not gonna do it, to bring back Nathaniel Rochester's idea. [laughter] Bring back Rochesterville. [assumed spelling] It's quite a, it's not my idea. It's Rochester's idea and the [inaudible]

>>Bob: Hmm

>>The city was built on water power. We could bring back races and we could have, my vision is 100 small factories down on the river barge.

>>Bob: Hmm

>>Michael: Okay can I jump in on that?

>>Bob: Sure can

>>Michael: I think your point of view, Andrew, is a really good one. It's very exciting to think about water power and also that there are, I'm assuming that there are also buildings that are there?

>>There's three old buildings. Who am I speaking with?

>>Michael: This is Michael Singer. I'm Bob's guest.

>>Hi Michael.

>>Michael: So one of the things that would raise a question there as factories, well what are they gonna produce and what could we really do? Well what we're looking at in other communities and there is water power and there are these old

industrial buildings, is actually indoor hydroponic plant growing agriculture. So I'm saying then in a series of words that may be a little mixed up but it's interior agriculture done through hydroponics. So you will be able to heat the facility with the water power and not take anything off the grid. You'll be able to water the plants and all of the hydroponics, which by the way are a very productive way, a very, that's not the right word, an efficient way of producing plant material and fill those buildings with the agriculture that feeds the community and I think you would find folks who would be very interested in the economic opportunities connected to that.

>>That sounds like a great idea.

>>Bob: Okay what

>>There's all kinds of stuff you can do. We need all kinds, we need to bring back manufacturing to the United States anyway. People are really souring on Chinese made goods but that would be a great thing to have done there.

>>Michael: The community needs the goods that could be produced right in the community.

>>Yeah

>>Bob: Well thank you very much, Andrew, for offering that. I appreciate the call. We have to take a break but we'll get to more, more calls, more comments, more insights from our guest of the hour, Michael Singer. His speech tonight at RIT is on Regenerative Design in the Public Realm. We'll find out just what that can mean to a community like Rochester as we continue in just a moment with more of 1370 Connection. I'm Bob Smith on WXXI a.m. 1370 and FM HD2.

[Music]

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>>1370 connection continuing on WXXI am 1370 and fm HD2. I'm Bob Smith, across the table from me, Michael Singer who is going to be speaking this evening at RIT Carlson Auditorium on Regenerative Design in the Public Realm as part of this year's Caroline Warner Gannett lecture series. He's here with us right now. You can be with us in the conversation by dialing 263 WXXI, 263-9994. We have Ken on the line. Hi Ken, you're on the air with us.

>>Hi, how you doing?

>>Bob: Doing well, thanks.

>>I have a comment about the waste energy issue that came up recently. I served on a committee many years ago that looked at this and when we were talking to the company that was proposing to put in a waste energy thing, they were only interested in meeting current EPA guidelines for air pollution. And if you read articles, in countries like Germany, they do continuous monitoring of the [inaudible] air and this company said oh you can't do that. They're whole

attitude was, oh we're not going to do anything like that. We only need to meet EPA requirements, which is a licensing thing that happens, I guess, typically once a year.

>>Michael: Well you were smart to reject them. And those have changed. What the really good news is here, we're actually designing and working on a renewable waste energy facility for Palm Beach county and you can go online and look at that at that, solid waste authority, swa@palmbeachcounty, is going to be building the first one in this country in 15 years. It's a very expensive facility and unfortunately Palm Beach County produces more waste than any county in this country. So it also, you know, makes a lot of sense, in terms of what it produces in energy and you certainly don't want to be land filling all of that. So the guidelines today have changed. They're very strong. I can't give you the specifics, I don't have that expertise but folks in my studio could. So if it's something you want to get more information on michaelsinger.com and you can reach us through that and we can get you what those current guidelines are. But they meet and match the European community today and they go beyond it in certain areas and this is particular matter that comes out. And again, I'm sorry I can't give you the exact technical answers to that. But you were right to reject it when you did and today is a different story.

>>Okay, thank you.

>>Bob: Thanks very much for calling in at 263 WXXI, 263-9994. Of course when we think about design we also think about what we see and what we experience on a day to day basis as we're coming and going. And when you talk about public design and public art, there are some communities that seem like they're communities as monuments, Washington D.C. comes to mind immediately, at least in its public buildings and the places where the work gets done of governments. But obviously most communities aren't like that. They have a tendency to sort of grow unplanned and then you try to figure out and sort it out afterwards and clean up some of the mistakes or at least some of the worst mistakes. Is there a way that you can take a longstanding community that's been around for a long time and go in and maybe not just fix a few of the most egregious mistakes but impose some kind of logic to it?

>>Michael: Well I'm gonna stay with the public art realm question, within that question there's many levels of what public realm of a community is on a design level but it's interesting you brought up public art, I don't know if Rochester has a public arts commission, does it have a percent for art for public buildings? I don't know that but if it doesn't it's something you might want to consider. But even before that you might, because a lot of people of course in terms of budgets, will shrug their shoulders and say well that's okay. If we were a very wealthy city, we just can't put that kind of money into it. Before that, let's give a reason to do it. Most public art, the way people view it is the term is plop, p-l-o-p art. It's just you see this thing painted usually red or blue or some primary color that's placed in a public area and there it is and they've met some standard of public art. Public art today has a much broader sense and if we look at this very amazing communities history and its past, how do we understand the past through our everyday lives today? That's a great challenge for public art. How can public art express the aspirations of a community today in its wishes for environmental justice, understanding its cultural background, understanding who is arriving, who's new, those are things that artists today are addressing in the public realm. So to do a public art master plan for a city that raises those possibilities will result, I believe,

in actually a vision that will sell very powerfully within your city commission, city council, whatever it is, your political bodies, to say yes, this is as important as you know the street lights. And in fact it can become part of the street lights or it can be part of the power plant or it can be part of whatever building or infrastructure we're doing. But having a plan that defines the possibilities of these stories of the past, of the present, of ways of questioning values that we have in our culture as well, very, very valuable for artists to be looking at and artists would love to have that opportunity given to them.

>>Bob: Now at the same time if you're looking at it in the broader sense, as a community is built or rebuilt, we've got some rebuilding going on right now in which what was our main downtown shopping mall is being torn out, ultimately after about 25 years of initial success, ended up descending into failure. It's being taken out right now and replaced with, in part, a reconstruction of the office tower into a mixed use residential and commercial facility and then in front there's going to be a corporate headquarters for another company, an emerging company that's doing very well and wants to establish itself downtown and the rest, kind of open right now. It's up for grabs as to what the rest of that partial is going to be. And I guess the question is we're looking at what to do with that partial, how to figure out what to do with the other half of the property, a big downtown city block. How should we go about thinking about what it ought to become?

>>Michael: Well, are there buildings on it?

>>Bob: There are, there is one building that's going to be left. Most of the buildings are gonna be taken out on the block, replaced in part with a corporate headquarters that's going to be built on part of the site and the rest of it, the one tall 18 story building, it's about 47, 48 years old now, is gonna be rebuilt, reskinned and repurposed as a mostly residential building with a couple of boutique, commercial and floors at the bottom, at street level and the rest of the plot, which is built over right now, is gonna be turned into open space and kind of up for grabs.

>>Michael: Alright well I'll ask a lot of questions here, is this already designed? How far are we on this?

>>Bob: Not fully, no. Even a corporate headquarters hasn't been finally designed yet. We just know it's going to be built and the rough idea of how big it's going to be.

>>Michael: Well one thing of course in rehabbing the 18 story building, if I got that right, that's 42 years old is there's some very interesting precedents of rehabs of buildings like that, that have really gone in and done it in a way that they are at the zenith of environmental standards, in terms of energy and conservation and health and material. So right off we want to create guidelines for this shopping mall that address the opportunities for conservation.

>>Bob: They're gonna have the chance because they're literally stripping it down to the skeleton.

>>Michael: Great

>>Bob: And building it out from the core. It's a brand new building.

>>Michael: Who is, is they a private developer?

>>Bob: It is a private developer which is taking on a property that is now owned by the city and being transferred to the private developer.

>>Michael: Right well the city obviously has opportunities to work with that developer on standards for what gets done there and I would hope that environmental standards are at the forefront of their considerations and their discussions. The shopping mall as a whole, I mean there's so many questions that can be asked. I mean if it's one block in this city, you know that one block has the capacity to collect an enormous amount of water. I assume you have a lot of snow here, you have a lot of rain. Do you know how many inches a year?

>>Bob: Probably about 30 or 40 inches of rain and 70, 80 inches of snow

>>Michael: Right so where is that going on the mall? How can we redesign this mall to actually treat its own water, to collect its own storm water, to reuse that storm water on the site, how can it be used in the residential realm and also for the corporate headquarters? There's many opportunities. The other is of course program, who are the lessees gonna be in the shopping mall and if it was city property, what is the city requiring for public feedback, feedback meaning public gain from the developer. I mean is a certain amount of this space going to for affordable housing, for below market rate housing, is a part of this space going to be for cultural institutions that may need to exist with lower rent than might normally be expected and how does it work with the developers needs as well. Of course it all has to be a balance.

>>Bob: The towers gonna be mostly upscale market rate. What's gonna happen is the lower cup of the floors of it will be turned over, I guess, to boutique retail and maybe some restaurants. Most of the mall around it is being torn down, gone, replaced with open space and then at the front the corporate headquarters building, about maybe 12 to 15 stories tall. And we'll only occupy a portion of the remaining space. So a lot of that ground is up for grabs.

>>Michael: Okay well you know that's, so if that ground is not, is landscape and is really going to be open spaced, what does open space mean in an urban area and what is urban ecology? That is now a very important understanding that we didn't have a few years ago

>>Bob: Very good question

>>Michael: There is no nature in the city, people used to say. Well guess what, there always was and there always will be and how can we create a regenerative landscape for that shopping mall that actually produces a tremendous amount for the corporate headquarters, the residential community and the community around it?

>>Bob: 263 WXXI, Carlene is on the line as we continue our conversation with Michael Singer, talking about Regenerative Design during this hour of 1370 Connection and hi, Carlene, you're on the air.

>>Yes, hi, Michael, one of the exciting things about that location is it already has some wonderful aspects in terms of parking for 1800 cars right there and adjacent another maybe 2,000 so

>>Bob: Got an underground garage

>>Right so theatres and other things have been considered but one of the things I never hear anyone talk about is geothermal heating.

>>Michael: Great

>>And considering that this is eight and a half acres in the heart of the city, high rise or not, I think that that is one of the conditions that the city should make because not only will it pay for itself in a few years, it will have, as you say an ecological effect. Has any other communities insisted that new construction be green in that way?

>>Michael: Well yes but maybe not so specifically because each site has its own opportunities but you create guidelines for renewable energy and at a certain amount of the energy that's going to be consumed in these buildings, needs to address those guidelines. Geothermal, I'm glad you mentioned it. I would imagine its capacity and the ability to do geothermal in Rochester is probably very good. It takes space, however there's a lot of ways of doing it. Certainly the developer who is going to be involved in this and the people who are going to be using the facility would want to see their rates as low as possible so there's an economic advantage. But you know on top of all that is the environmental advantage. We're doing work with geothermal in the northeast. It's very, very feasible. We need to, you need to look at the site and do test wells and determine its capacity. And certainly whatever the capacity is a certain amount of it can be done, and since it's a public property as well, one of the other guidelines could be demonstration. To even if it can't do the whole building, even if it can only do a small part of the development, it's a good place for the public to experience and see it and see how it works and how it's done. So that's a very good point you make, Carlene.

>>Bob: And thanks very much for calling in. I appreciate the call at 263 WXXI, 263-9994. I'm Bob Smith, Michael Singer, expert on development, design and more, sharing his insights with us here on 1370 connection. Let's go to the phones again. We're going to hear this time from Pat. Hi, Pat, you're on the air.

>>Yes, Bob, good afternoon, Mr. Singer. Welcome to Rochester

>>Michael: Thank you

>>And I do plan to attend your presentation tonight but specifically several of the callers have mentioned this but in talking about renewable energy, one of the things that was not mentioned earlier when we were talking about the abandoned power station just behind WXXI, is the fact that there is a 90 foot waterfall there

>>Michael: Oh my gosh [laughter]

>>Yeah and talking about energy

>>Michael: How exciting

>>Is there, and hopefully before you make your lecture tonight you'll be able to visit some of these sites, the other thing I might add is the mall they're

talking about downtown was a Victor Gruen mall, which was the first indoor shopping mall in the country, as I understand it. But I wondered, waterfalls themselves, is there still an opportunity using new technology to generate power and are there benefits out of waterfalls, especially large ones as we have here in the middle of Rochester?

>>Michael: Absolutely and hydropower is being explored all over the northeast and wherever there're old facilities. I'm really surprised this hasn't come up. I'm heading right over to that site after this interview. [laughter] Thanks for bringing it up. It sounds spectacular as an aesthetic as well. But yeah, I definitely there's, I mean we're working with engineers in Maine who are studying almost every facility that has a water power in its past that is not being used, to reconnect because of the value of the energy today. That makes absolute sense.

>>Thank you very much.

>>Bob: Thanks very much for checking in at 263 WXXI, 263-9994. Time to hear next from David. Hi, David, you're on the air.

>>Hi, good morning, Bob. I'm the director of Public Relations for Black [inaudible] theatre and Bob, you may know that we moved recently into a new theatre out on main street.

>>Bob: Right

>>And we took an existing structure that was originally a Blue Bird wash and garage and oil change facility and a bunch of other incarnations and converted it into a 126 feet theatre

>>Bob: That was a very interesting repurposing of a building that you never would have thought of a theatre, I've gotta admit that.

>>Well neither did we. [laughter] When John Hal Dufas, [assumed spelling] our artistic director, first told us about it we kind of all, all of us on the board of directors, kind of looked at each other kind of skewed. But we realize he had the right vision and idea. And we took this building that was, again, a commercial and industrial facility and converted it into a theatre and for your guest's edification, we opened up the theatre in September and we tried to use our electrician that we brought in to reconfigure the electrical design, used as much green lighting technology as possible.

>>Michael: Great

>>And using, for instance, the lobby lighting is all LED's. The exterior signage is all LED's. The actual theatrical lighting is kind of limited. We have some pieces that are using LED lighting but as our lighting designer tells us, in the theatre world that's only just starting to really make that transformation to use those types of lighting equipment but it is happening and hopefully in the future eventually as we replace equipment, we can replace it with more green lighting technology. We have to go with standard heating and cooling because like most of things, we don't own the building. We do lease it but we tried to be as environmentally conscious as we could have been. And the result is a fantastic place to work and to put on shows and also it's, we know our presence there, it was great for us as a physical presence. It has given us a lot of

exposure and also has created something of a theatre row along main street there.

>>Michael: That's great. Bravo, bravo

>>So there we are and thanks for taking my call.

>>Bob: Okay Dave, thanks very much for sharing that with us. I appreciate the news on that. One thing that that raises is the question of whether or not and to what degree you can repurpose buildings that are intended, designed, constructed, planned out, laid out for one purpose and shift it into something else. Is it something that can be done in all cases, what do you do to determine whether or not a building you're looking at can be repurposed that way or whether you have to clear it out, make a green field and start anew?

>>Michael: Well, yeah, I mean the questions a great one and the terminology is adaptive reuse and David brings a very good example of adaptive reuse. We want to look at every building in the urban core and anywhere really for its opportunity to be adaptively reused because the amount of energy embodied in the materials of that building to rebuild it is, I mean there's no, it doesn't equate. So to be able to adaptively reuse a building is probably at the top of the list of environmental responsibility and conservation. You also, you know the uses, you have to understand, I mean David's, I'm sure the building the theatre had to have certain conditions within it structurally that could allow it to be adapted to the reuse of a theatre. So we have to match programs with buildings and that's a much better method and less expensive method too and certainly environmentally, then going out and starting over again.

>>Bob: Is it always cost effective?

>>Michael: No because I mean you really have to assess the building and have an engineer come in and really understand the structural soundness of a building and what needs to be done. In some cases you have historic buildings where you really need to, there just would be a community outcry if the building was lost so the expense of working with a damaged structure is worth it because of its meaning to the community. But in other cases where the structure is clearly not of use, you can certainly also look at what's recyclable within the building if you take it down and what can be used and reused and there are many creative ways of doing that.

>>Bob: There are going to be, in the course of repurposing the midtown block, which is basically the southeast block of the corner of main street and Clinton Avenue in the center of downtown Rochester, not only a lot of bricks, gonna be a lot of maybe old ironwork in that that's gonna have to be recycled somehow. What do we do with that? I've heard at times people buying up used brick to create facades for their houses.

>>Michael: Well there's that and there's paving, which is great, old brick paving. You know where I am down in south Florida people are doing that and probably importing them from Rochester if they could cause there aren't any but certainly using the brick as sidewalk paving is very doable, having it in your own you know, your own house is quite beautiful, reusing it structurally, I'm not sure. I mean I would have to understand a little more about that. I don't have that expertise.

>>Bob: It sounds like we've got some exciting options

>>Michael: Absolutely

>>Bob: It will be interesting to see what we do with the opportunity we've got. Our thanks to Michael Singer, who's gonna be speaking this evening on Regenerative Design in the public Realm at Carlson Auditorium at RIT. It's at 8:00 this evening. It's part of a Caroline Warner Gannett lecture series at the Rochester Institute of Technology. Our thanks to all of you for taking part of the discussion as well. This hour, 1370 Connection here on WXXI am and fm HD2, Rochester. For Dave Campo our technical director, I'm Bob Smith.

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