

OPEN KEYS

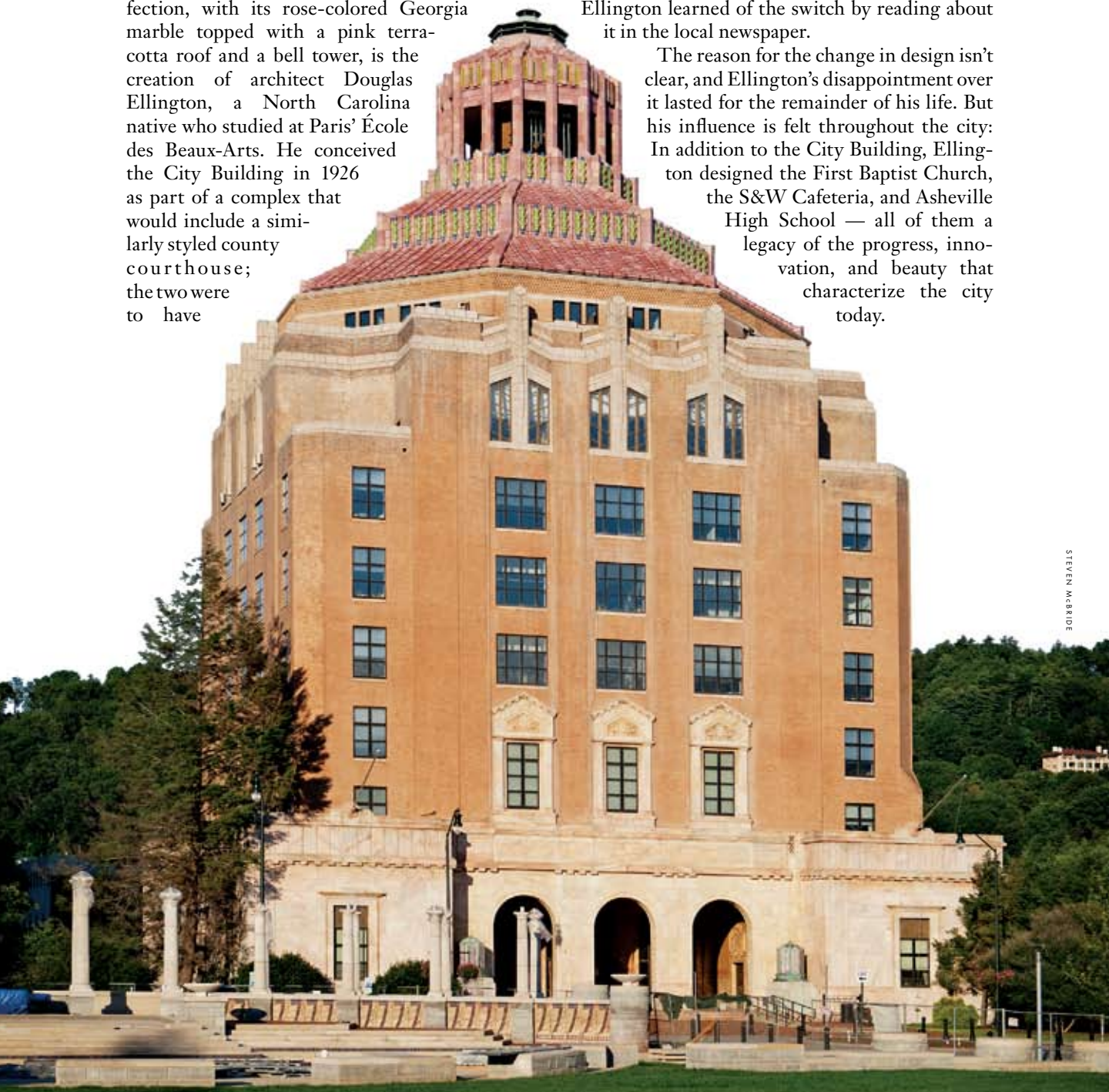
BY NANCY OAKLEY

Art-Deco Grandeur

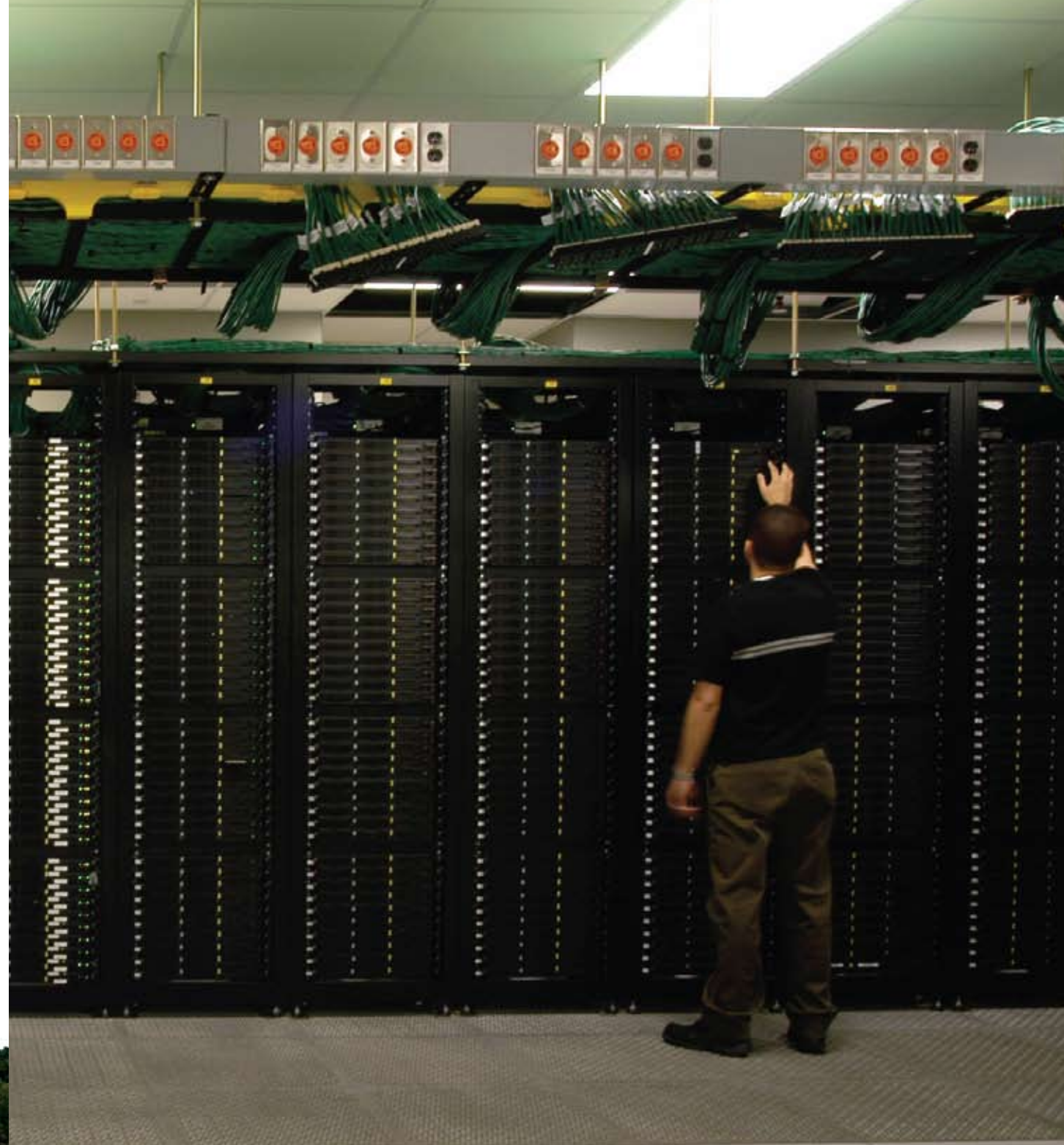
Among the most distinctive buildings that form Asheville's skyline, the one that first catches the eye is the Asheville City Building (70 Court Plaza). The Art Deco confection, with its rose-colored Georgia marble topped with a pink terracotta roof and a bell tower, is the creation of architect Douglas Ellington, a North Carolina native who studied at Paris' École des Beaux-Arts. He conceived the City Building in 1926 as part of a complex that would include a similarly styled county courthouse; the two were to have

been connected by a promenade, but his complete vision was not to be. While the City Building was under construction, Asheville's city fathers opted for a more traditional design for the courthouse, submitted by a Washington, D.C., design firm. Ellington learned of the switch by reading about it in the local newspaper.

The reason for the change in design isn't clear, and Ellington's disappointment over it lasted for the remainder of his life. But his influence is felt throughout the city: In addition to the City Building, Ellington designed the First Baptist Church, the S&W Cafeteria, and Asheville High School — all of them a legacy of the progress, innovation, and beauty that characterize the city today.



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