

## A LANDMARK DIMINISHED

by John C. Guenther FAIA, LEED AP

On April 27, 2020, the City of St. Louis Cultural Resource Office and its Preservation Board, during an online meeting, recommended and voted to approve the partial demolition of the Harry Weese designed Forest Park Community College.

This action was taken in spite of the fact that the building has been recognized as High Merit and worthy of preservation by the Cultural Resource Office of St. Louis! <sup>1</sup>

This was the first review of this project by the Cultural Resource Office. Somehow this process was circumvented, without an initial design review, nor any suggested possible alternatives for considerations for the new to fit and work with the original architecture. The Cultural Resource Office Preservation Board even noted that voting for demolition would "set a very bad precedent" right before they went ahead and voted for demolition!

This regrettable decision allows the St. Louis Community College to demolish Towers A and B (now underway), the two easternmost buildings (28% of the academic wings) on



View of Towers A and B, the easternmost building sections of the St. Louis Community College – Forest Park, with interior demolition underway and new entry drive perpendicular to the original building, April 27, 2020  
photo by John C. Guenther, FAIA, LEED AP

the modern campus designed in 1964-1970 by acclaimed modernist architect Harry Weese, FAIA and Ben Weese, FAIA, in collaboration with landscape designer Dan Kiley – the “dean of American landscape architecture.” The buildings have been recognized as High Merit and worthy of preservation by the Cultural Resource Office of St. Louis.

Given that the hearing was to request demolition of Towers A and B, it was noted that demolition was in fact underway. Officials of St. Louis Community College responded that the demolition was related to asbestos removal. Of note, no “tenting” of the building nor encapsulation of the asbestos materials was visible at the site.

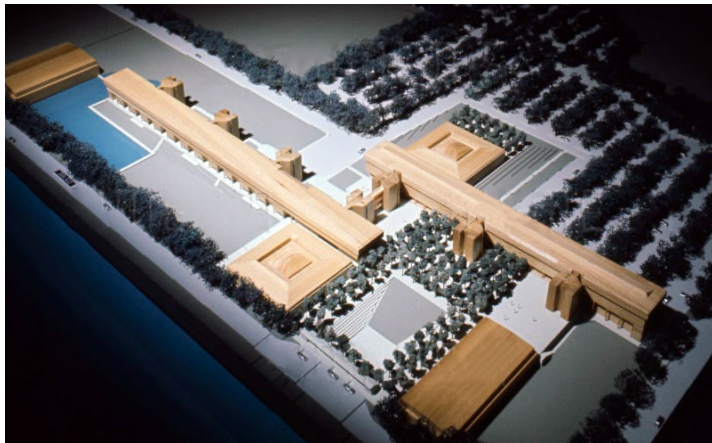


View of Towers A and B of the St. Louis Community College – Forest Park, with interior demolition materials on south lawn, April 27, 2020 photo by John C. Guenther, FAIA, LEED AP

As part of the presentation and justification for this request for demolition, officials of the St. Louis Community College – Forest Park stated that they wanted a new entry drive from Oakland Avenue, alongside the new Center for Nursing and Health Sciences building. This drive would lead to a new quadrangle and a second building, as well as access to the south parking lots.

Members of the Preservation Board asked if there would be additional requests for demolition of the original buildings. Officials of the St. Louis Community College said they would not make such a request and agreed to keep the balance of the original buildings. They cited that they had received funding to renovate and adapt some of those structures, and, in fact, the original classroom buildings had proven to be very accommodating of today’s needs.

It was then suggested that the remaining original buildings be designated City of St. Louis Landmarks, and that any future work on these buildings be reviewed and approved by the City of St. Louis Cultural Resource Office. With that understanding, the motion to allow demolition of towers A and B was granted and demolition approved.



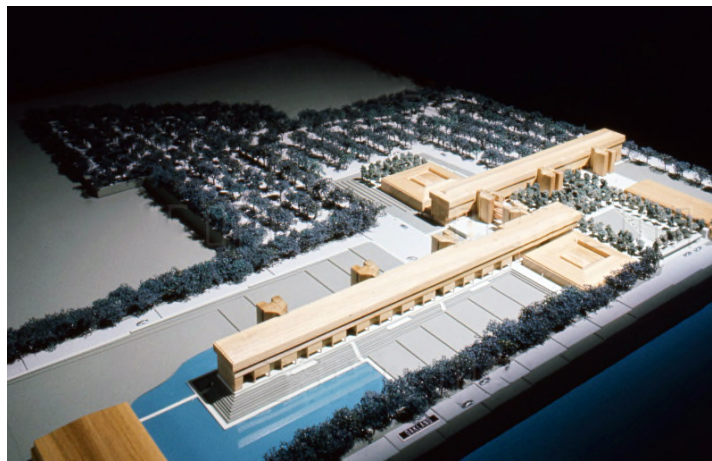
*View looking southeast of presentation model of the campus master plan for Forest Park Community College. Heidrich Blessing photo, collection of the Chicago History Museum*

While ensuring the remainder of the buildings will remain, the loss of such a significant part of the original design, with its carefully studied planning and massing is comparable to intentionally breaking off the arm of a magnificent piece of sculpture and then taking comfort that at least the rest of the body remains.

## **PART 1 PLEAS FOR PRESERVING THE FOREST PARK COMMUNITY COLLEGE INTACT**

Numerous letters and emails were sent to the City of St. Louis Cultural Resource Office to speak to the importance and significance of the Forest Park Community College, and the need to preserve the entire original building, maintain its design integrity and continued service to this and future generations of St. Louis citizens and students.

Cynthia Weese, FAIA, Weese Langley Weese, Dean Emerita, School of Architecture, Washington University and wife and partner of Ben Weese, FAIA, who with his brother Harry Weese, FAIA, designed the Forest Park Community College, wrote: “The powerful linear forms of the campus respond directly to the location on what (even in 1960) was a relatively fast freeway - further they respond both to the scale of the city and the brick construction so common to St. Louis. They have a humane quality which was a hallmark of Harry and Ben's work. The two were opposed to the rigid glassy modernism prevalent at the time - instead they looked for inspiration to Scandinavian countries with their mastery of scale and detail. The buildings were very well built and for many years beautifully maintained.



*View looking southwest of presentation model of the campus master plan for Forest Park Community College with a large lake at the east end of the sloping lawn and allée of trees along Oakland Avenue. Heidrich Blessing photo, collection of the Chicago History Museum*

“When I came to St. Louis as dean I was pleased to see that faculty and students and the architectural community all appreciated and valued the buildings. This continues even today; many generations of architects have learned from their timeless qualities.

“At this moment in time, when the earth's resources are strained, it is wasteful to demolish significant buildings without great thought - there is a much embodied energy in these structures.

“It is also important that there be a public meeting to discuss this - with input from all concerned. Indeed to have an online meeting during a pandemic when people are preoccupied with personal health and family issues and working remotely could easily be perceived quite negatively.”<sup>2</sup>



*Forest Park Community College north wing and library beyond*

Robert Bruegmann, Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Art History, Architecture, Urban Planning, University of Illinois at Chicago wrote: “As an architectural historian and author of *The Architecture of Harry Weese*, published by W. W. Norton in 2010, I just wanted to add my voice to those

expressing consternation at the prospect of a hasty demolition of a substantial piece of one of the largest and most conspicuous commissions of Harry Weese & Associates and one of the most intact and powerful architectural complexes of the postwar era in America. It is, for example, one of the few building complexes in the country to be the subject of an entire book, *The Architecture of Forest Park Community College* by Ronald E. Schmitt, published in 2009.”

“I think that this complex, with architecture by the Weese firm and landscape by famed landscape designer Dan Kiley, is in that awkward period where it is no longer new but not yet old enough to be seen as historic by much of the public. I have no doubt that already by 2025 this demolition proposal would never have been made because already by then the building’s place in history would have been secured. If, on the other hand, the demolition goes ahead, it will be regretted by every succeeding generation. This is the moment when the complex is at its most vulnerable and it requires the most careful attention and stewardship.

“Certainly a call for demolition should be undertaken only after the most careful consideration and full public notice.”<sup>3</sup>



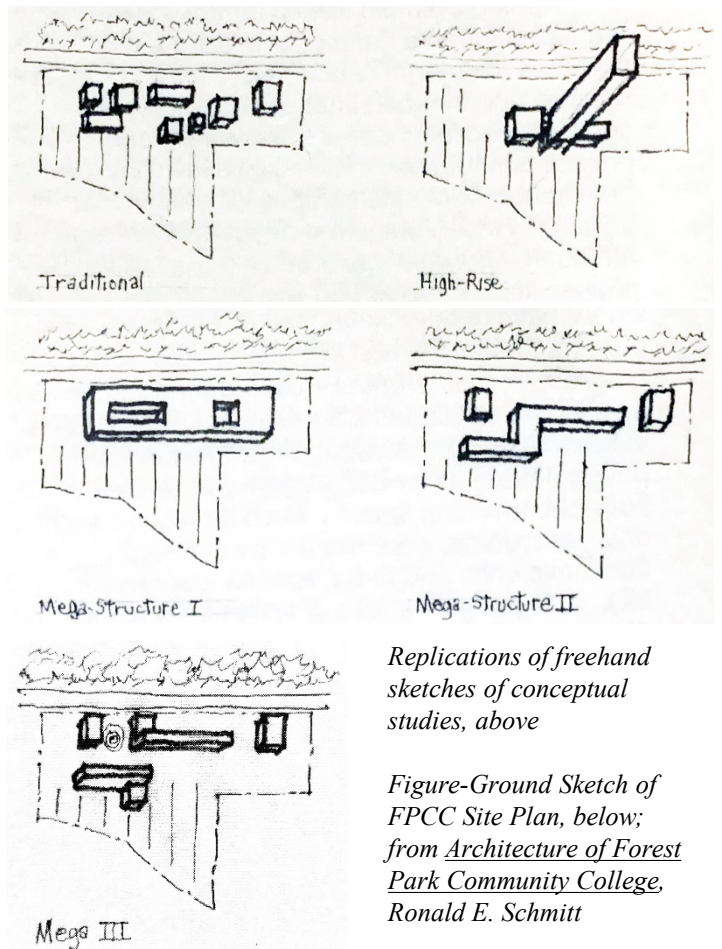
Views of presentation model of the campus master plan for Forest Park Community College. Heidrich Blessing photo, collection of the Chicago History Museum

Ronald E. Schmitt, Architect and Professor Emeritus, School of Architecture, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign expressed his opinions based on his participation as an architect on the initial two-person design team (along with Howard Pederson) under the direction of Harry Weese, FAIA (1915-1998), design associate Ben Weese, FAIA, and Jack Hartray, FAIA, project manager of the widely acclaimed firm of Harry Weese & Associates, Architects.

“The cost of removing existing facilities to make room for an edifice seems to be contradictory to founding objectives of the Forest Park campus (originally called Forest Park Community College/FPCC). Unlike most institutions of higher learning, where each academic unit craves its own building for identity and prestige, Forest Park Community College (FPCC) was progressively different. FPCC was organized by function for maximum efficiency of space utilization and discouraged organization of physical facilities by department. Wherever possible, teaching spaces, such as lecture halls and classrooms, were shared by different

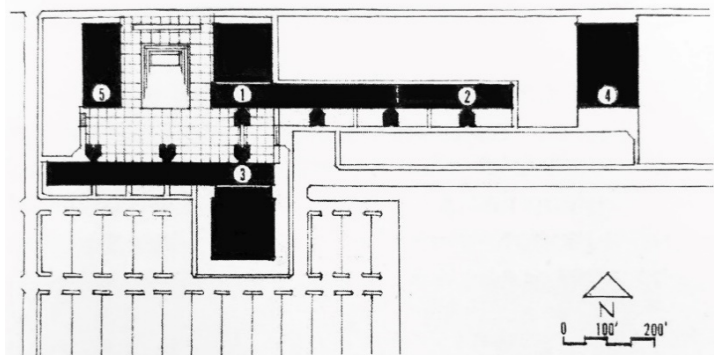
academic units and these spaces were never idle. In fact, efficient use of space and maximum utilization were determined by computer program before the advent of the computer age by using one of the few computers then available in St. Louis, which was at the McDonnell Aircraft plant. The result was that FPCC had a smaller physical plant and better space utilization than other colleges with similar enrollments.

“The traditional campus of separated individual buildings for department status and ego was considered costly, inefficient and too suburban for the Forest Park campus. FPCC was conceived as a humanized mega-structure, which was compact and vertically stratified to minimize student travel time and distance within the unified urban campus.



Replications of freehand sketches of conceptual studies, above

Figure-Ground Sketch of FPCC Site Plan, below; from *Architecture of Forest Park Community College*, Ronald E. Schmitt



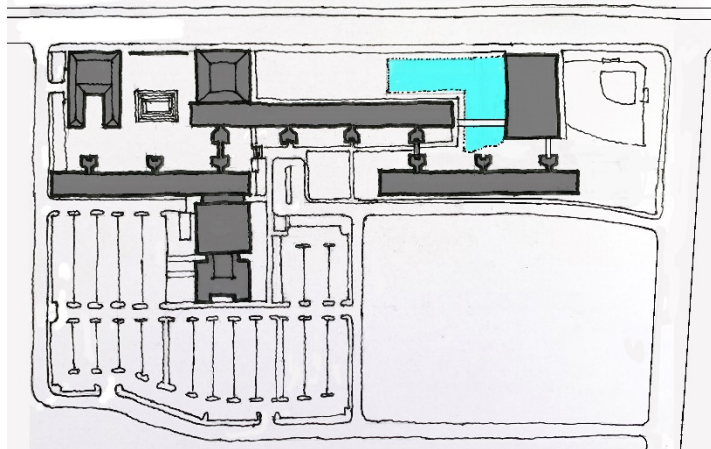
“Free-standing and aesthetically incompatible buildings seem contradictory to the Forest Park campus. The expansion to the south of the original student services “building” was respectful, compatible and an asset to the original architecture. New construction would best be well conceived to fit the site and complement the existing context, not eradicate it.



*View of the original Tower A (left) and the new \$41 million, 96,000 square feet, Center for Nursing and Health Sciences (right), April 27, 2020, photo by John C. Guenther, FAIA, LEED AP*

“The original master plan for FPCC suggested another future wing south and east of Tower A and its education wing.

“This leg would extend east and was intended to be able to have a connection to the athletic facility. The original idea was to have a linear building with towers like the other two built educational legs. A tower would be opposite Tower A and a vista with a rhythm of towers would then have been extended. A later parking deck was sited in a similar east-west position further east near the athletic facility; but, a new linear building could still fit this site.



*Sketch of FPCC Site with planned expansion, as described by Ronald E. Schmitt; sketch by John C. Guenther, FAIA, LEED AP*

“Although the new building nearing completion does mar the dramatic forms and rhythm of the north façade of the education leg facing Oakland Avenue and the expressway, Weese's landmark architecture is still intact and should be preserved.

“I hope that all of the Harry Weese architecture at St. Louis Community College-Forest Park is preserved and creatively adapted as necessary. It has proven to be a significant academic environment with its timeless architecture. It looks more modern and creative than ever. With its masonry masses and play of forms, it is a St. Louis landmark and is deserving to be retained.”<sup>4</sup>

Harry Weese’s projects of note include the Arena Stage Theater (1962), Washington, D.C., the Seventeenth Church of Christ Scientist (1966-1969), Chicago, Illinois, the Time-Life Building (1966-1969), Chicago, Illinois, and Weese’s largest and perhaps most important commission, the Washington D.C. Metro (1965-1977).<sup>5</sup>

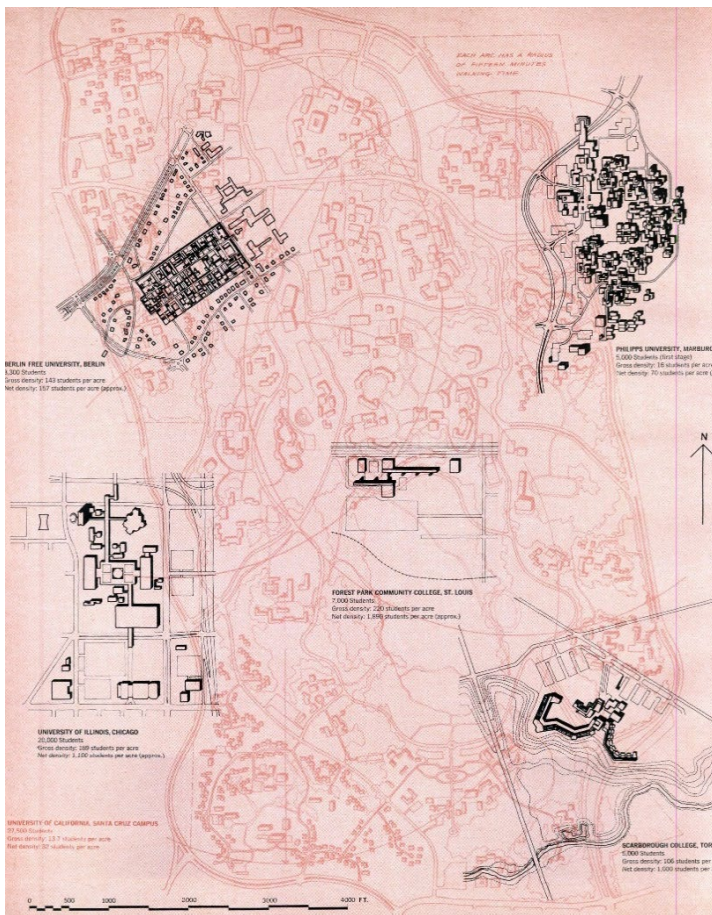
Harry Weese Associates, in a joint venture with BNIM of Kansas City, Missouri, won a national design competition sponsored by the General Services Administration to renovate (1978-1982) the St. Louis Old Post Office and Custom House (Alfred B. Mullet, 1872-1884).

The Society of Architectural Historians St. Louis and Missouri Valley Chapters also wrote a letter to the St. Louis Cultural Resource Office. This letter may be viewed on our website <http://www.stlouisarchitecture.org/Home.html> In addition to reinforcing the importance and quality of the design of the Forest Park Community College, we noted that “Harry Weese’s legacy is one of great modern architecture across our nation. He is also known for his preservation efforts and advocacy to preserve our built history. We should do no less in advocating for the preservation of this most important design for higher education in our own community.”<sup>6</sup>

## PART 2 AN APPRECIATION OF THE DESIGN OF FOREST PARK COMMUNITY COLLEGE

There is much to admire about the planning and design of the Forest Park Community College. As Ronald E. Schmitt has written, “Forest Park Community College is a high density campus although it does not seem overcrowded or architecturally overbearing. Given its design population of 7,000 students, its gross density was 220 students per acre for the entire site (including parking areas) while the net density was 1,890 students per acre. These were among the highest densities that could be found anywhere for a college campus. Yet the campus isn’t cramped or overwhelming despite its density and urban characteristics.

“FPCC was a mega-structure in concept but it had a variety of forms and scales. There was an overall civic scale as well as references for intimate human scale. The design concept was predicated on establishing an urban image and presence.

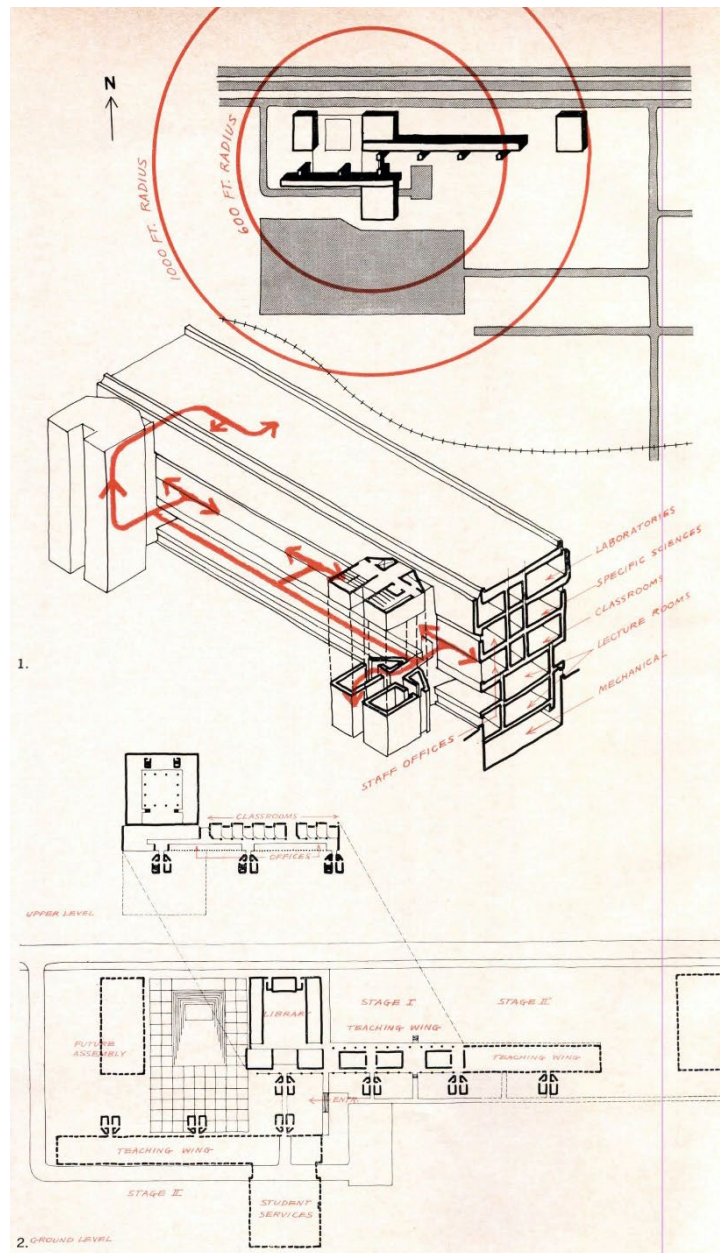


Oscar Newman, "The New Campus," *Architectural Forum*, May 1966, page 42; Berlin Free University, Berlin, Germany (upper left), Philipps University, Marburg, Germany (upper right), Scarborough College, University of Toronto, Ontario, Canada (lower right), University of Illinois at Chicago, Illinois (lower left), and Forest Park Community College, St. Louis, Missouri (center), all overlaid on the University of California, Santa Cruz campus

"Circulation was a major generator of building organization and forms. Expression of structure was evident but not blatant and was a secondary consideration. Responding to movement and circulation, of different speeds and scales, was a prime consideration. Now over forty years since its construction, FPCC seems to have "aged" well. The design of the buildings does not seem dated; instead, the buildings and campus still seem contemporary and relevant."<sup>7</sup>

Oscar Newman, Associate Professor of Architecture, Washington University in St. Louis, researched and wrote about five new college campuses for the May 1966 issue of *Architectural Forum* and how "the topic of the New Campus has come to occupy the dominant position in current architecture."<sup>8</sup>

Newman, with students in the Masters Program in Urban Design at Washington University in St. Louis, compared five college campuses (see scale comparison above), showing Forest Park Community College was the most efficient.



Oscar Newman, "The New Campus," *Architectural Forum*, May 1966, page 46

Oscar Newman noted the unprecedented opportunities of designing campuses to serve thousands of students in a single stroke, while addressing definitive programs, construction budgets and schedules. These campus designs were unique to their times, addressing the needs of these sophisticated and most relevant institutions.<sup>9</sup>

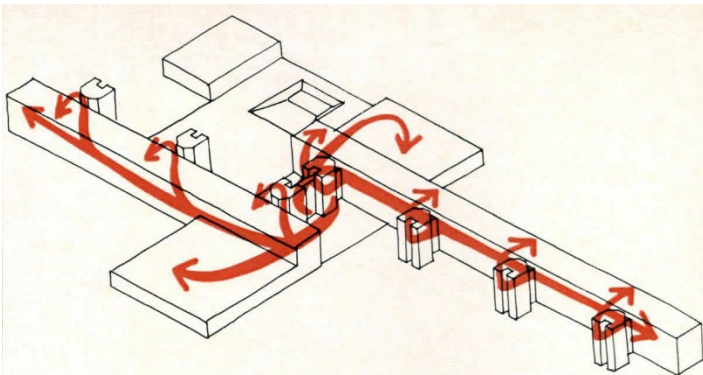
The New Campus cited the five campuses for their urban forms and settings, mass scale, and their complete reorganization and restructuring of space allocations, while counteracting the loss of spatial identity, addressing flexibility and suitability, and organizing the campuses with hierarchies of activity and circulation.

The efficient planning of the FPCC campus extended into the efficient functional layout and circulation of the

education wings, with classrooms and laboratories on one side of wide corridor – a “pedestrian street” – and the faculty offices and support spaces on the other side. The five levels of each academic wing “was stratified by use and frequency of student access to encourage “walk-up” rather than elevator usage.”<sup>10</sup>

Lecture halls and classrooms were located on the lower levels to facilitate frequent, high student turnover, while laboratories and studios, with low student turnover and longer class durations were located on the upper levels. “Lecture halls were to be entered at the back from the ground/plaza level while students already in the lecture space exited at the front to a corridor on the lower level to speed turn-over between classes.”<sup>11</sup>

Given that this was a commuter campus, ease of way finding was important, as were places for students to study and lounge between classes, with niches along the hallways and student lounges with window walls affording views of Forest Park while allowing natural light into the hallways.



Circulation and campus form: Forest Park

Oscar Newman, “The New Campus,” *Architectural Forum*, May 1966, page 49

In a book on the careers of Ben and Cynthia Weese now in production, Kevin Harrington, Professor Emeritus of Architectural History, Illinois Institute of Technology, has written sections on their work on academic buildings. With his permission and that of the Weeses, the following is Kevin Harrington’s excerpt on *Forest Park Community College 1972, St Louis, Missouri, Harry Weese Associates*:<sup>12</sup>

“The site plan for the recently founded, 1967, Forest Park Community College is organized by two linear buildings, nearly a quarter mile in total length, marked by a series of vertical circulation towers, with an extensive upper and smaller lower plaza where the two linear buildings meet. The two linear elements are extended by four roughly square volumes of varying height. The library and student center are opposite one another, on the outside of where the east and west buildings join. The gymnasium and theater are at the east and west ends of the campus. Early plans called for these two to be switched in location.

In addition, at the east end, where there is a slight downward slope, a large pool was proposed but never achieved. The surface parking to the south was to be heavily planted with trees, making it more a forest with cars rather than a parking lot with some trees. As at RIT, Dan Kiley’s office was the landscape architect.

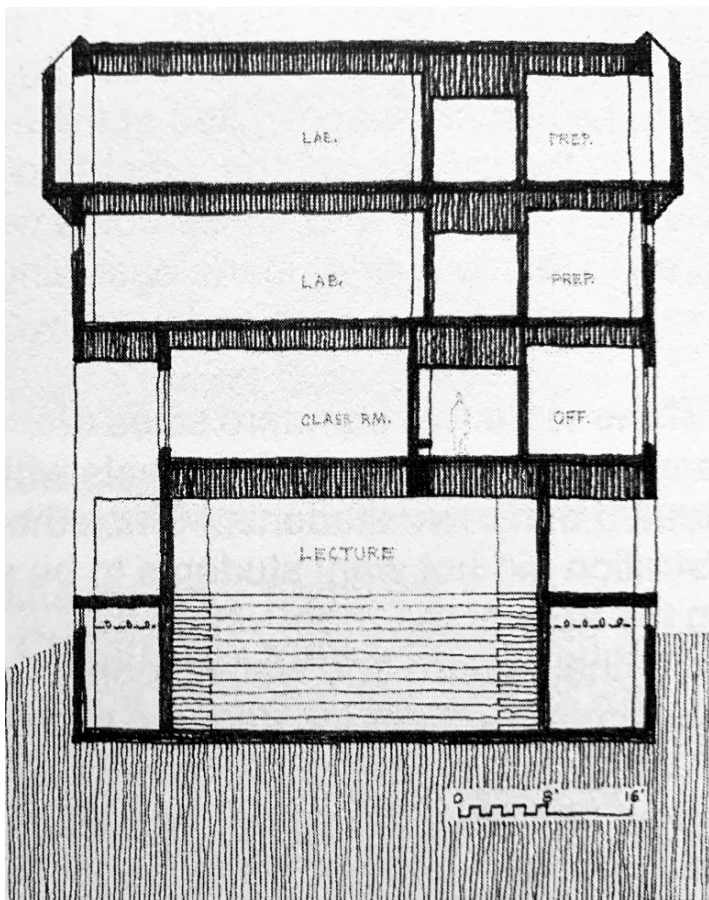


View looking north of presentation model of the campus master plan for Forest Park Community College with park-like forested parking lots. Heidrich Blessing photo, collection of the Chicago History Museum

The east and west buildings are linked by paired inward facing stair towers at the center of the site. The open courts created by these towers create intimate, landscaped spaces, with open views to the south, for the east building, and across the upper plaza and multi-lane highway to Forest Park for the west building. The circulation towers of the west building face and create larger, more heavily paved and more formal landscaped spaces than the greener east building. The library and theater buildings, placed along the highway, define an entry court leading from the public transit stop to the courtyards of both linear buildings. Once inside either of the linear buildings it is possible to access any space in them without having to go outside. The abundant windows in the vertical circulation towers provide visual connection to the surroundings. At grade each building has a circulation corridor, covered but not enclosed, facing the interior spaces.

Above, the east building has double loaded corridors, and the west building has single loaded corridors. All corridors are continuous for the entire length of the building. As Weese prefers, the buildings have standing seam metal roofs. Throughout, the brick is presented as planar with variation in the manner of the placement of the windows on each level. No window projects forward of the wall plane.

In section, the linear buildings are marked by a top floor in a regular octagon, with sides of differing length, projecting slightly over the rectilinear floors below. Their elevations are distinct on each above grade level, and the fenestration is different for each level. On the facades that face inward, the fourth floor is lit from above; the third floor is lit by horizontal strip windows placed just below the ceiling on both the office and classroom sides of the



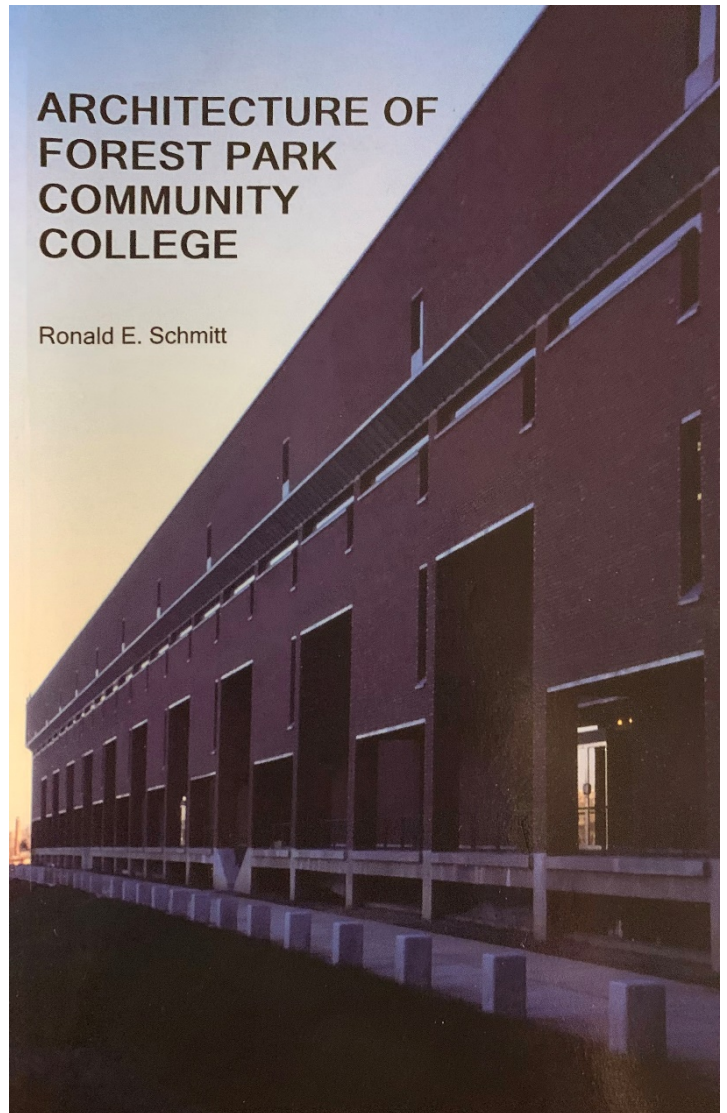
*Replica sketch of conceptual cross section through east wing (towers not shown); from Architecture of Forest Park Community College, Ronald E. Schmitt*

corridor; the second floor has narrow vertical windows on both walls, providing obvious daylight on the interior and direct visual access to the out of doors to the north or south. On the first floor the corridor is open to the outside, and where there are enclosed gathering spaces between classrooms above, these equivalent first floor spaces are outside. Weese placed durable benches of Anamosa limestone here, where the rippling pattern of the layers that formed the stone is visible.

The lower level, below grade except at the east end of the east building and on the south side of the west building, contains linear corridors as above as well as various support functions, power and distribution elements, and some teaching spaces such as the automobile repair facilities, and loading docks. The facades of the outer long sides of each linear building differ significantly from the inward facing façade, and slightly from one another. In all cases they are carefully detailed and clearly members of the same design sensibility.

The tower elements are octagonal in plan, with red brick panels defining elevators and stairs and glass planes providing visual access through the buildings and to the landscape. On the interior of the east building the corridors

are double loaded and continuous for the length of the building. On the top, fourth floor interiors, offices on the thinner side, laboratories and classrooms on the thicker side, are top lit, providing ample natural light. The few windows serve more public lobby or service spaces. As he does throughout his career Weese provides ample seating on blonde, wooden built-in benches, which remain in use by students seeking privacy in some cases and conversation or study opportunities in others.



*Cover, Architecture of Forest Park Community College Ronald E. Schmitt*

The strength of the organization of the buildings is that they become easily comprehended and used, a benefit for a community college where many students are not full-time. For some this is a drawback, as they see the corridors as monotonous, and the use of brick suggests a lower status than the individual stone buildings at the upper campus of nearby Washington University. For others, the large upper plaza, with its pool, trees and benches is a handsome and inviting entrance to the school for students arriving on public transportation. Further the plaza serves as an ideal place to chat during intermissions at the theater, or

when the pressure of studying in the library requires some fresh air.

During and after its construction, Forest Park Community College was seen as a model of its type and was visited hundreds of times by representatives of other community colleges around the country. In recognition of its success as a significant design which functioned beautifully, the St Louis Chapter of the American Institute of Architects gave the college its first ever 25-year award in 1994 for buildings that have “withstood the test of time.”<sup>12</sup>



*St. Louis Community College, Forest Park  
photo by John C. Guenther, FAIA, LEED AP*

The importance of FPCC was highlighted by Greg Johnson, who wrote “By 1970, William Moore could note in *Against the Odds* that 307 other community colleges already had sent representatives to Forest Park Community College to observe and learn. Forest Park was designed to be a leader that other colleges follow.”<sup>13</sup>

Johnson went on to write, “Thirty years after its construction, an article in *Inland Architect* extolled the design.

*The student union, library, classroom and theatre buildings are models of how well buildings can be designed. Really virtuoso performances of structural/architectural spatial configurations, superb natural lighting and well-appointed materials, and the brick cladding is beautifully detailed.”<sup>14</sup>*



*View of theatre, photo by John C. Guenther, FAIA, LEED AP*

## PART 3 LESSONS LEARNED

Even as the Forest Park Community College, a building of High Merit designed by Harry Weese and Associates, is being demolished by the St. Louis Community College as of this writing, it is important to take note of lessons learned for this and future generations, with the hope that such a travesty might be avoided in the future.



*Towers A and B under demolition. July 3, 2020  
photo by John C. Guenther, FAIA, LEED AP*

### 1. Don't Assume Anything

Our community needs to rely on our governmental institutions and their stated purpose and procedures. The Cultural Resources Office and Preservation Board need to defend St. Louis' cultural resources, especially when the building under review is one of High Merit. Regrettably, the Cultural Resource Office did not review the initial design concept for the new Center for Nursing and Health Sciences building as required. Had this meeting occurred, alternative locations of the then-proposed design could have been discussed to explore how the FPCC could be saved intact while accommodating the new building. At a minimum, the Cultural Resources Office, as the preservation agency of the City of St. Louis, should not recommend the demolition of buildings of High Merit, and the CRO Preservation Board should work to ensure these buildings are protected and preserved. As the saying goes, “You either stand for something, or you stand for nothing.”



*St. Louis Community College, Forest Park; Thematic Survey of Modern Movement Non-Residential Architecture, 1945-1975, in Saint Louis City, City of Saint Louis Cultural Resources Office, City of Saint Louis, Missouri, July 31, 2013*



## 2. Follow Established Procedures

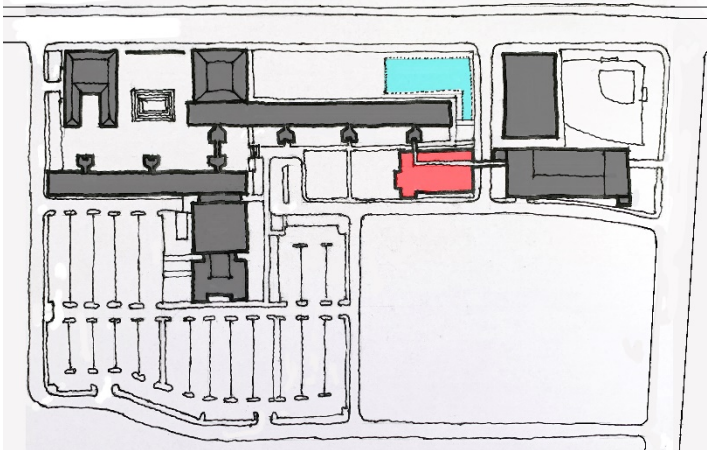
Demolition should not be granted until the proper procedures are followed. Despite being informed that demolition of FPCC was already underway before their review, the Cultural Resource Office Preservation Board granted demolition on April 27, 2020. Rewarding such actions undermines the authority and procedures of the City of St. Louis.



*A periodical table of elements sign is one of the few educational items left amid debris in room A-110, a science lecture hall being prepared for demolition. (Photo by Markell Tompkins) The Scene, March 6, 2020<sup>15</sup>*

## 3. Understand Planning Principles of the Original Campus

Campuses grow and evolve to meet the needs of the college over time. It is critical that architects, planners and landscape architects understand and respect the design and planning principles of the original campus and buildings along with its logical growth patterns when considering new buildings and their siting. With this knowledge and appreciation, the campus can grow logically and the new buildings can be respectful of, and work with, the original buildings.



*Sketch of FPCC Site with alternative location for the new Center for Nursing and Health Sciences to south of Tower A, sketch by John C. Guenther, FAIA, LEED AP*

FPCC, in fact, had a plan for growth which anticipated a new building south and east of Tower A. What if the new building was located there? A new, impressive campus entry drive from Oakland Avenue could have passed between a lake proposed by Dan Kiley, unrealized but documented, and the original gym to the east. Kiley's landscape could have been re-established, with the proposed lake retaining storm water on site as well as being a beautiful feature. This new entry could have created an impressive arrival for the FPCC campus and the new Center for Nursing and Health Sciences building – a stated goal of the administration.

Circulation, a key determinant of the design of FPCC, could have grown naturally and logically, with the new building connecting to Tower A to the north and the parking garage to the east, thus accommodating students and visitors in inclement weather.

## 4. Plan for Flexibility

Change is one thing you can count on.

Having additional “surge” space on campus allows for the temporary accommodation of various programs in one part of the campus while modifications and improvements are made in another building to ultimately provide a permanent home for those temporarily relocated programs.

Of current concern is how the COVID-19 pandemic will affect the design and spatial requirements of the classroom of the future.<sup>16</sup> With social distancing, classrooms will accommodate fewer students. The University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana has recently stated each of their classrooms will accommodate one half of the typical number of students for the Fall 2020 semester.

Students are also evaluating their choices of attending a local college and living at home instead of attending an out-of-town college and living in a residence hall. Perhaps the St. Louis Community College system will have a record level of students in the Fall of 2020. Having additional classroom space would be a valuable asset.

Given these uncertain times and the need for flexibility, why then would the administration of the St. Louis Community College go forward with the demolition of nearly 30% of the original academic wings based upon planning made during pre-pandemic times?<sup>17</sup> Why discard such valuable space when it might be needed sooner than later?

## 5. Conserve Resources – Physical and Financial

In our world of limited resources, conservation is something we need to embrace and lead by example.

“To throw away something – with all the money they put into it – is not a good idea,” Kevin Harrington said in an interview with Joshua Phelps for The Scene, June 29, 2018.<sup>18</sup>

“It’s kind of silly to throw away the energy that’s embedded in those buildings and pollute the atmosphere and destroy the climate when instead, you keep the buildings and continue to use them for the purpose for which they were built.”<sup>19</sup>

To appreciate the embodied energy of FPCC, one should consider the concrete, steel, brick, glass and other materials that went into the construction of FPCC.



*Forest Park Community College under construction. January 1967. The college opened later that year. Photo by Lloyd Spainhower of the Post-Dispatch*

Consider the energy and raw materials required to produce these materials. Consider the energy needed to transport these materials from their place of origin and manufacturing to the construction site. Consider the energy and the craftsmanship it took to place these materials into a true work of architecture thoughtfully designed by the leading architects of their day.

Then consider the energy to demolish these well designed, structurally sound, reinforced concrete frame, brick clad structures. The wanton destruction of these buildings of High Merit is tantamount to pouring out oil (and its equivalent energy) onto the grounds of the campus.



*View of demolition of Towers A and B, July 3, 2020 photo by John C. Guenther, FAIA, LEED AP*

And what of the financial resources invested to demolish nearly 30% of the original academic wings of FPCC?



*View of demolition of Towers A and B, July 7, 2020 photo by John C. Guenther, FAIA, LEED AP*

Imagine the improvements which could have been made to the original campus buildings if the financial expenditure used for demolition was instead applied to enhancements of the academic classroom wings to better serve the students.

What of the financial resources originally invested in the construction of FPCC, a state-of-the-art community college?

As Andrew Weil, Executive Director, Landmarks Association of St. Louis wrote “At the end of the day, the buildings proposed for demolition were paid for by public money. The demolition will be paid for by public money. The St. Louis Mid Century Modern survey that identified these buildings as important components of our architectural heritage worthy of preservation, was paid for by public money.”<sup>20</sup>

Greg Johnson wrote, “The Junior College District of St. Louis and St. Louis County planned for a college on the site of the Highlands. It was one of three colleges backed by a \$47 million bond issue, which at the time made it the most ambitious building program in the history of public higher education in the United States. According to the District minutes, the 35-acre Forest Park site was intended to house 7,000 full-time day students.”<sup>21</sup>

In writing of the passage of the bond referendum on November 16, 1965, Ronald E. Schmitt wrote, “This bond issue was for \$47 million with \$23,620,000 allocated for FPCC, while the Meramec and Florissant Valley campuses were to receive \$16,660,000 each. Dr. Joseph P. Cosand was the president of the Junior College District and was instrumental in securing funding and developing the three new JCD campuses, including FPCC.”<sup>22</sup>

Dr. Joseph P. Cosand left a tremendous legacy. Regrettably, it appears that his efforts in the 1960s in securing funding and developing FPCC are not valued in 2020 as evidenced by the demolition of Towers A and B.

With the demolition of Towers A and B, approximately 18% of the original campus buildings were relegated to a landfill, along with a construction value of over \$19 million in today's costs. What would Dr. Joseph P. Cosand think of such actions after he worked to secure a bond issue to provide \$23,620,000 to construct a "state-of-the-art" community college to serve the citizens of St. Louis?

## 6. Education Continues Outside the Classroom Walls

Learning does not stop when students leave the classroom. A casual encounter in the hallway, study area, or outside in a plaza, with another student or a faculty member after class, often results in a memorable, life-long lesson.

What lessons might the students, as well as the citizens of St. Louis, learn outside the classroom walls of FPCC?

- We live in a throw away society.
- We don't need to conserve our resources – physical or financial, cultural or environmental.
- We don't value our institutional history.
- We don't appreciate our architectural history.
- Our built environment communicates on multiple levels.
- We need to be more vigilant and proactive to preserve buildings of High Merit and architectural significance.

Hopefully we can all learn from these lessons and be better stewards of our built environment and limited resources for this and future generations.

## NOTES

1. Peter Meijer, Architect, for the City of St. Louis Cultural Resource Office, *Thematic Survey of Modern Movement Non-Residential Architecture, 1945-1975 in St. Louis City* (St. Louis, July 31, 2013). Meijer, an architect from Portland, Oregon, was financed in part by a grant from the Historic Preservation Program, Division of State Parks, Missouri Department of Natural Resources and by the National Park Service of the U.S. Department of the Interior, with support of the City of St. Louis Planning & Urban Design Agency, the Historic Preservation Board, and the Missouri State Historic Preservation Office.
2. Cynthia Weese, FAIA, Principal, Weese Langley Weese, Dean Emerita, School of Architecture, Washington University, email letter to Dan Krasnoff, Director, City of St. Louis Cultural Resources Office, April 25, 2020.
3. Robert Bruegmann, Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Art History, Architecture, Urban Planning, University of Illinois at Chicago, email letter to Dan Krasnoff, April 25, 2020.

4. Ronald E. Schmitt, Professor Emeritus, School of Architecture, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, email letter to Dan Krasnoff, April 27, 2020.
5. Ronald E. Schmitt, *Architecture of Forest Park Community College* (Urbana, Illinois, 2009), p. 5.
6. John C. Guenther, FAIA, LEED AP, President, Society of Architectural Historians, St. Louis and Missouri Valley Chapters, email position letter to Dan Krasnoff, April 24, 2020.
7. Schmitt, op cit, p. 75.
8. Oscar Newman, "The New Campus," *Architectural Forum*, May 1966, pages 30-55. Oscar Newman was at that time associate professor of architecture at Washington University in St. Louis. He ran the Masters Program of Urban Design and the Urban Renewal Center under director Roger Montgomery.  
<https://usmodernist.org/AF/AF-1966-05.pdf>.
9. Ibid, page 34.
10. Schmitt, pages 32-33.
11. Ibid, page 34.
12. Kevin Harrington, Professor Emeritus of Architectural History, Illinois Institute of Technology, email letter to Cynthia Weese, FAIA and John C Guenther, FAIA, April 24, 2020.
13. Greg Johnson, "Weese & Kiley's Mid-Century Forest Park Campus Threatened," *NextSTL*, April 14, 2017, <https://nextstl.com/2017/04/weese-kileys-mid-century-forest-park-campus-threatened/>.
14. Ibid.
15. Ethan Tutor, "Towers to be demolished soon," *The Scene*, St. Louis Community College at Forest Park, March 6, 2020.
16. John C. Guenther, email letter to Dr. Jeff Pittman, Chancellor, St. Louis Community College; cc: Julie Fickas, Interim Campus President-Forest Park; David Christensen, Manager Facilities-Forest Park, May 8, 2020.
17. Ibid.
18. Joshua Phelps, "Plans to demolish A and B towers stir controversy," *The Scene*, June 29, 2018.
19. Ibid.
20. Andrew Weil, Executive Director, Landmarks Association of St. Louis, email letter to Landmarks members, April 23, 2020.
21. Greg Johnson, op cit.
22. Schmitt, p. 77.

## REMAINING 2020 FALL LECTURE SERIES

Please note that due to the pandemic, the remaining 2020 Society of Architectural Historians St. Louis Chapter St. Louis Public Library – Central Library Lecture Series will be virtual presentations given via Zoom. We will email our membership when we have further details regarding signing up for these talks. Please see page 12 for a list of our speakers, topics, dates and time of lectures.

**2020 Society of Architectural Historians St. Louis Chapter St. Louis Public Library – Central Library Lecture Series**

St. Louis Public Library – Central Library  
1301 Olive St, St. Louis, MO 63103  
Training Room  
fourth Tuesday of the month (except November 19, 2019)  
6:30 pm – 8:00 pm

**2020 Spring**

Thomas C. Grady  
A Clear Record – The Lost St. Louis Riverfront 1930-1943  
February 25, 2020  
Author, former Landmarks Commissioner  
retired Circuit Judge

Esley Hamilton (postponed)  
Christopher Wren's St. Mary Aldermanbury: A Masterwork of English Baroque in Fulton, Missouri  
March 24, 2020  
Past Preservation Historian, St. Louis County Parks

Aaron Frei (postponed)  
The Art and History of Stain Glass  
April 28, 2020  
Craftsman, Emil Frei & Associates

**2020 Fall**

Bill Hart  
(virtual presentation via Zoom – details to follow)  
Places in Peril – 2020  
September 22, 2020  
Executive Director, Missouri Preservation

Esley Hamilton  
(virtual presentation via Zoom – details to follow)  
Christopher Wren's St. Mary Aldermanbury: A Masterwork of English Baroque in Fulton, Missouri  
March 24, 2020  
Past Preservation Historian, St. Louis County Parks  
October 27, 2020

John C. Guenther, FAIA, LEED AP  
(virtual presentation via Zoom – details to follow)  
St. Louis Gold: AIA Gold Medalists Who Have Designed Buildings in St. Louis  
November 17, 2020  
Principal, John C. Guenther Architect LLC

© 2020 **News Letter**  
The Society of Architectural Historians  
St. Louis and Missouri Valley Chapters

**NewsLetter** is published quarterly by the St. Louis and Missouri Valley Chapters of the Society of Architectural Historians. Please mail editorial correspondence and submissions for publication to: Esley Hamilton, Editor, 7346 Balson Avenue, University City, Missouri 63130 or contact him by telephone (314) 615-0357 or by email [ehamilton@stlouisco.com](mailto:ehamilton@stlouisco.com). Deadlines for submissions of material for publication in **NewsLetter** are as follows:

- Spring Issue 15 February
- Summer Issue 15 May
- Fall Issue 15 August
- Winter Issue 15 November

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