The Society of Architectural Historians
St. Louis and Missouri Valley Chapters

Post Office Box 23110, St. Louis, Missouri 63108

February 25, 2019

Statement regarding the potential demolition of the nationally and internationally recognized Shanley Building (1935) designed by Harris Armstrong, FAIA (1899-1973)

We, the Board of Directors of the Society of Architectural Historians St. Louis and Missouri Valley Chapters, wish to express our grave concern regarding the potential demolition of the nationally and internationally recognized Shanley Building (1935), designed by the noted St. Louis architect Harris Armstrong, FAIA (1899-1973), due to the proposed development of a condominium tower and a high-rise hotel on the half block bounded by Maryland Avenue to the north, North Bemiston Avenue to the east, North Central Avenue to the west and the mid-block alley to the south.

The Shanley Building, built in 1935, was the first International Style building in St. Louis and the central Midwest. Its design is of the highest quality and widely recognized. Commissioned by orthodontist Leo M. Shanley, Harris Armstrong designed a state-of-the-art dental office building which incorporated functional requirements in a progressive, modern facility with bright, healthy interiors realized in a “clean” aesthetic.

The Shanley Building, now listed on the National Register of Historic Places, received numerous national and international accolades upon its completion. The building was featured in the national publication *Architectural Record* (1936) with an eleven page article and in the English journal *Architectural Review* (1937). It was awarded the silver medal at the *Exposition Internationale des Artes et des Techniques* in Paris in 1937, where drawings and photographs of the Shanley Building were exhibited. It was also featured in the *Gold Medal Exhibition of the New York Architectural League* in 1938.

The Shanley Building is a masterwork of a great, accomplished architect, from its bold massing of white stucco walls to its studied and modulated circulation patterns through its entry courtyard to the reception and waiting room to the dental offices, to its incorporation of new materials such as glass block and the technical invention of the south facing, custom designed insulated glass wall illuminating the waiting room.

Armstrong designed a total work of architecture which extended to his designs for the interior fittings such as light fixtures, door knobs, furniture, the fireplace grate and accessories, and the large map mural and decorative ceiling of the waiting room. His interior finishes were both modern and warm, inviting and comforting.

We ask that the developer, Fred Kummer, and his architects, Steve Smith and the Lawrence Group, consider ways to preserve the Shanley Building. Given its corner location at Maryland Avenue and North Bemiston Avenue, surely there is the possibility of allowing the Shanley Building to remain, and indeed, even to become an asset and focal point, with a complimentary use. Imagine the design potential of retaining this landmark building, restored and preserved, coupled with a respect for and acknowledgement of the architectural legacy this building is to Clayton’s history and its citizens – both now and for future generations.

Respectfully submitted,

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President, Board of Directors
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