College of Architecture  
Graduate School of Architecture & Urban Design

May 31, 2019

We, the undersigned faculty members in Architecture at the Sam Fox School of Design and Visual Arts at Washington University in St. Louis, strongly oppose the demolition of the Shanley Building in Clayton.

The Shanley Building is St. Louis’ earliest tie to international movements for modernist architecture, and one of the few local buildings to ever win an international architecture medal. Designed by Harris Armstrong and completed in 1935, the Shanley Building received the Silver Medal at the 1937 Exposition Internationale des Artes et de Techniques in Paris. The Shanley Building also received recognition in Architectural Record (1936) and Architectural Review (1937), alongside the most progressive designs of the era.

The Shanley Building’s achievements occurred one decade before Eero Saarinen’s modern Gateway Arch won the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial design competition, and the Shanley Building’s design certainly broadened acceptance of modern design ahead of the competition that selected the city’s enduring icon. Harris Armstrong’s design also had a profound impact on commercial and residential design in the mid-century modern era locally, and its groundbreaking form is echoed in numerous subsequent works.

There is no reason why the redevelopment project proposed for the site could not incorporate this dramatic and significant building, whose design is among a handful of local internationally-lauded works from the twentieth century. The building, which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places, is eligible for use of historic tax credits to bring it forward into a new life.

Demolition unnecessarily would rob St. Louis of a renowned part of its architectural heritage.

Sincerely,

Michael Allen  
Senior Lecturer in Architecture, Landscape Architecture and Urban Design

Robert McCarter  
Ruth and Norman Moore Professor of Architecture

Eric Mumford  
Rebecca and John Voyles Professor of Architecture