

Building Scene

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Marilyn Fitchett editor/953-2102

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WMU building
a campus jewelBy Dale Northup
special writer

The array of blank, banal modernist buildings on our college campuses are often the product of limited budgets and the lack of a uniform master plan.

This problem can sometimes be partially remedied with the construction of a uniquely designed building. Then the Promethean flame of learning is renewed by an architectural spark.

The Haworth College of Business, on the campus of Western Michigan University, is a case in point.

Designed by Carl Luckenbach of Luckenbach, Ziegelman & Partners in Birmingham, the Haworth building is a three-story, 170,000-square-foot facility that graces the northern perimeter of the campus.

The building is named after the Haworth Corp. of Holland, manufacturers of office systems furniture, which donated a combined corporate and family gift of \$5 million.

Constructed of red brick and limestone under a shallow hip roof, it is a U-shaped building that surrounds a central quadrangle, adding a sense of collegiality to the campus and yet establishing its own identity.

The building is located on a sloping site with two stories on one side, punctuated by an arcade that faces the campus. On the opposite side, three stories overlook a valley.

The building contains 33 classrooms, 200 office work stations for administration, faculty and office personnel, a computer laboratory and a 400-seat auditorium, all of which surround a central courtyard.

Three sides of the courtyard are defined by large windows on the middle and upper levels, allowing the interior space to open upon the exterior space enclosed by the building. And, in like manner, the third level has floor openings that visually link it with the middle classroom-

level below. Both the interior and exterior of the building have a spatial integration that plays a paramount role in the design.

On the upper level, continuous bands of windows, under the large projecting eaves of the roof, line the exterior walls of the building.

These windows project out in the middle to become bay windows, adding to the spatial projection of the conference rooms located behind them.

The middle level also has a band of windows that are framed by brick mullions and capped with horizontal limestone lintels. Windows and doors on the lower level, facing the valley, are framed by limestone walls and abutted by a terraced patio, both of which serve to anchor the building to its site.

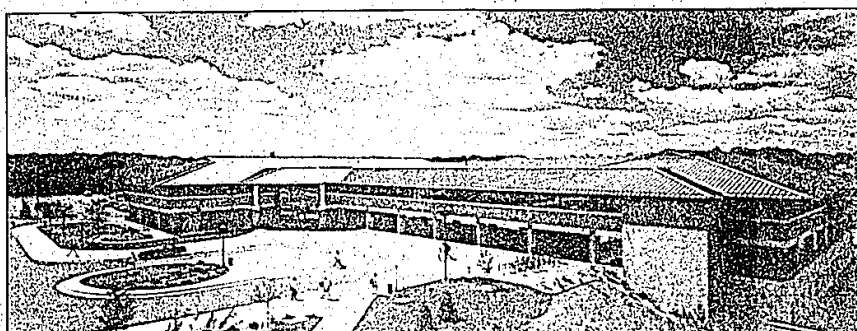
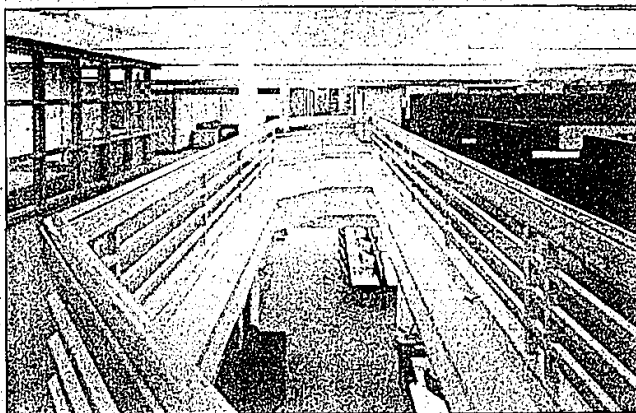
The overall style of the Haworth Building could be called Neo-Prairie School, a sort of current architectural revival in the Midwest.

According to Lake Forest, Ill., architect Tom Heintz, "The Neo-Prairie School movement is not all that different from the way it was done in Frank Lloyd Wright's time."

Its characteristics include simplicity, use of "earth tones," ornamentation that is integral to the overall architecture, a focus on the spaces rather than on decoration.

Whether Carl Luckenbach had the Prairie style in mind is not the question. What is important is the fact that the Haworth College of Business is a welcome addition to what could be politely termed Western Michigan University architecture. Perhaps with Haworth, and the design acumen of Luckenbach, the university is pointed in a meaningful direction involving a building that is integral with its site, the campus and its educational mission.

Dale Northup is a professor of architecture.



The Haworth building combines classrooms, labs and offices.

photos by CHRISTOPHER LARK

Subcontractors
band togetherBy R.J. King
special writer

Eyeling their work orders, shop floors and cash registers, several area subcontractors are giving a new spin to an old idea in hopes of sparking new sales in the ever-competitive construction industry.

Knowing that opening lines of communication is the fastest way to generate new business, a core group of 25 subcontractors has formed the trades council, a committee designed to appeal more effectively with fellow members of the Builders Association of Southeastern Michigan (BASM).

"The subcontractors were looking for a united voice within the association to get the word out about their particular talents," said Mary Ann Dalgleish, committee administrator of BASM, which has its headquarters in Farmington Hills.

"Before we just had builder members and associate members. But because our associate members are so diverse (from bankers to Realtors to carpenters), it's difficult to tell who does what from just a company name. The trades council will help highlight subcontractors and address concerns unique to their field."

Whether overlooked or undervalued, the trades council will, for the first time, pair carpenters with cleaners, not only as a way of drumming up new business, but also to sponsor seminars designed to help subcontractors, most of whom are small-business owners.

"We wanted to become a cohesive unit to better market our skills and services before the builders and our suppliers," said Jeff Houslander, co-chairman of the trades council and owner of The Houseway Co. in Livonia, which specializes in residential roofing and siding.

"We hope the council will increase business for all those who join, and certainly more opportunities will open up for everyone involved. If a builder is looking for a plumber or electrician, we want the trades council to be their first option."

APART FROM expanding networking opportunities, in the past, many subcontractors expressed regret over missing many BASM-sponsored meetings, seminars and guest

speakers, events that were scheduled during weekday working hours. To get around such time conflicts, the trades council will hold monthly administrative meetings and related events in the early evening.

"The evening hours will help a great deal because it's tough to leave the business during a workday," said Annette Lockard, one of the council's founding members and co-owner of Auburn Hills-based Compulsive Cleaners, which cleans construction sites.

"Right now we're looking to sponsor seminars in bookkeeping, how to hire new employees, how to approach builders and address insurance and worker's comp matters. We also plan on setting up a network for obtaining used equipment and other networking opportunities."

There is no cost to join the trades council, but membership in BASM is a prerequisite. At the end of May, the council will sponsor its first guest speaker, Steve Thomas, who is host of the public television show, "This Old House."

FOR FOUNDING members, the introduction of the trades council couldn't have come at a better time as the U.S. construction department reported housing starts in February were at a two-year high — 1.3 million units. Because housing starts often signal the start of actual construction, the February increase foretells better days for a host of related industries, including plumbing, electrical and insulation.

Vic Johnson, co-chairman of the Council and president of Johnson Insulation in Shelby Township, said he wanted to see the council address what builders require of subcontractors before they sign off on a work order.

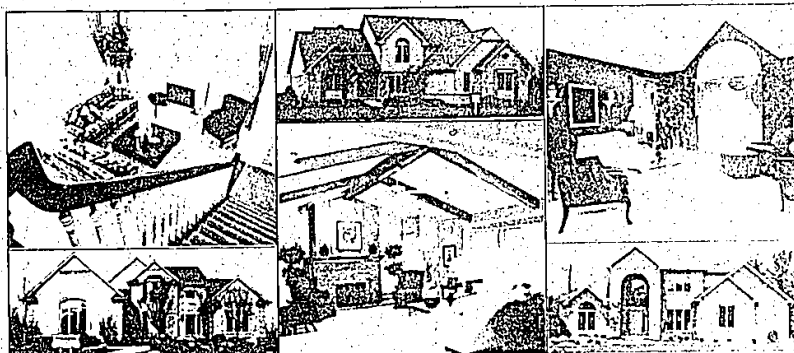
"We're competing with companies which don't have liability insurance, so we want to address what exactly the builders look for in hiring a plumber or carpenter. We also want to know how we can reduce our insurance costs."

For more information about the Trades Council, call BASM at (313) 737-4777.

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