



**NORTH CHRISTIAN CHURCH**  
Columbus, Indiana

# **Conservation Management Plan**

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NORTH CHRISTIAN CHURCH CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN  
Columbus, Indiana

Prepared For

Landmark Columbus Foundation  
408 6th Street  
Columbus, Indiana 47201

Prepared By

Prudon & Partners LLP  
135 West 70th Street  
New York, NY 10023

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# Executive Summary

North Christian Church in Columbus, Indiana, was completed in 1964. It was one of the last buildings designed by Eero Saarinen, who died prematurely in 1961. Work was completed by notable architects who continued the work of the office. Among them were Kevin Roche and John Dinkeloo, who continued to work on the church after opening their own practice, until the mid-1990s. Also involved in the design were Dan Kiley, who developed the landscape design, and Alexander Girard who was responsible for many of the liturgical objects and textiles. The building and grounds have undergone some changes since completion, but most of the original fabric remains.

The building is significant in many ways. It is historically significant in Columbus as an important initiative of J. Irwin Miller and his wife Xenia Miller, business and religious leaders in the community, who through their efforts continued to contribute to Columbus' renown as a hub of modern architecture. The building is architecturally significant as an example of post WWII religious architecture in the United States, and of Saarinen's expressive, late modern designs. It is socially and culturally important, as it housed a progressive religious institution which had been committed to social equity and inclusion since its founding in 1955, and which has only recently ceased use of the building and transferred its ownership.

A Conservation Management Plan is primarily a planning document intended to guide the preservation of architecturally and/or culturally significant buildings and sites. It brings together a wide array of documents and records that shed

light on the design, construction and maintenance of building and site. The architectural history addresses not only the historic and stylistic development of the project but also the process of design and construction and how the building came about. Using the architectural history information and assessing the cultural context of a project allows for an understanding and appreciation of the significance of the building and its component parts.

After review of historic documentation, assessment of the condition of the site and landscape and of the building both outside and inside, a conservation management plan is put together which formulates policies, actions and priorities for the conservation of the significant elements of the building and site within the context of its use and occupancy. The outcome is a long-term planning document.

The conservation management plan for North Christian Church generally follows that trajectory with one additional consideration. In the early stages of the report, it became apparent that use of the building was likely to change and involve a secular owner and user. This affected the research and development of the plan in three ways. First, in the conservation recommendations, consideration was given to how removal of liturgical functions and specific features, while retaining significant architectural elements, would affect the physical fabric. Second, the new use, whatever it might be, would require adaptations. This necessitated a more nuanced and detailed identification and assessment of important exterior and interior architectural and design elements, worthy of

preservation. It was also apparent that this would necessitate significant changes and upgrades of the engineering and existing life safety systems, mostly dating from the original construction. Lastly, since the building was transferred to interim custody for an indefinite period, it was necessary to develop interim as well as long term conservation policies.

This Conservation Management Plan (CMP) was commissioned by Landmark Columbus Foundation, and was made possible through a generous grant and patient support from Getty.

The primary purpose of this CMP is to serve as a guide for development and adaptive reuse, highlighting the significant features in the historic, socio-cultural, and architectural landscape of the building and site. Any decisions regarding future work should be well researched and consider the recommendations within this plan.





*North Christian Church - Image by Hadley Fruits, 2019*

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# Introduction

## Background

In 2019 the Getty Foundation awarded Landmark Columbus Foundation a grant in the context of its Keeping It Modern program to develop a conservation management plan for North Christian Church. That program, in its tenth cycle that year, provided funding for such plans to buildings of international significance.

Conservation management plans are developed to assist in managing significant examples of heritage and providing guidance not only for the preservation and conservation of the significant architectural fabric or cultural artefact but also to guide its developments in the future. Change is inevitable and managing that change is critical. At the start of the preparation of the Conservation Management Plan (CMP), the congregation was continuing to face a dwindling of its membership and its financial resources. Action was urgently needed to safeguard the significant architectural heritage of the building and its landscape and maintain the significant role the building had played in the sociocultural context of Columbus.

What started out as a project to be completed in a year turned into an effort covering several years due to the COVID pandemic in 2020 and 2021, and to a change in ownership. The pandemic's impact was felt not only in the preparation of the report but it also affected the church congregation directly. The congregation left the building in early 2022 and ownership was transferred to the Columbus Capital Foundation on August 1, 2022. This ownership is envisioned as an interim solution until such time as a new owner and alternative use can be identified. These developments affected the project in two ways. The two-and-a-half-year interruption necessitated revisiting the site and re-assessing existing conditions in order to complete the CMP. In addition, the interim ownership, which intends to keep the building as is without any major interventions or repair work, required the formulation of interim conservation policies, suitable until such time as more permanent actions could be put in place.

# The Conservation Management Plan

## Concept and Methodology

This conservation management plan is structured as follows: after establishing the building's overall significance, based on research and understanding; a significance assessment of the various components, based on their contribution to the building's overall significance is provided; followed by establishing priorities and policies for the conservation of the building and site, and guidance for changes to be made to accommodate new or continued use. An assessment of existing conditions is necessary for the formulation of detailed conservation policies. These component parts are guided and augmented by a detailed social, cultural, and architectural history covering both building and landscape, plans, diagrams, and illustrations.

Because at the outset, continued use by the congregation was anticipated, this particular conservation includes an extensive sociocultural study that was conducted. This study at the time sought to explore opportunities for the building to play a greater role in the community as a social, cultural and community hub and to suggest a better and more efficient use of the facility, while enhancing revenue and generating funds for continued upkeep. The congregation's decision to leave the building, and the resulting change in ownership, means this study is no longer of direct relevance. However, it has been included because it is part of the historical record and because of its analysis of the social and cultural significance of the building, which may serve as a model for how such studies can be conducted. This study might also provide guidance for potential future usage.

Throughout the design of the building, particular attention was paid to furniture, textiles and fittings, which were designed by Eero Saarinen's office, Alexander Girard, and others. Most of these were designed for religious services and liturgy, and are therefore not included in this report.

Room descriptions in the report generally follow the notations on the original drawings. Note that the term "sanctuary", commonly used in protestant churches, is replaced here with the term "nave", the term used in the original drawings.

## Organization

The final plan was prepared under the guidance of Prudon & Partner LLP, as the lead consultant, and supported by Enrique Ramirez, who prepared the detailed chronology and extensive history of the building; Bryony Roberts of Bryony Roberts Studio, who compiled the sociocultural study; Chris Merritt, Terrie Brightman and Danica Liongson of Merritt Chase who prepared an analysis of the landscape; Ben Wever, of the Miller House and Garden; and Louis Joyner, the Columbus architect, who brought their intimate knowledge and experience of the landscape and building to review and comment on the text.



# Limitations

## Resources

North Christian Church was initially an Eero Saarinen and Associates project, with Alexander Girard designing objects. Because Saarinen passed during the design phase, the project was completed under the auspices of his office in a completely collaborative effort. Design development and construction documents were prepared by the Associates in the office, namely Kevin Roche, Paul Kennon, and Maurice B. Allen. Dan Kiley was brought in to design the landscape only after the building's completion in 1964, and produced the final design in 1974. When the firm Saarinen and Associates was dissolved, Kevin Roche and John Dinkeloo continued to work on minor alterations and modifications to the building at least through the mid 1990s. Other local designers, such as the Storrow Kinsella Partnership, Todd Williams, and Louis Joyner, have been involved in subsequent alterations and modifications, all minor in scope. As a result, documentation of these alterations is somewhat dispersed. Our access to documents was concentrated on those found at the church, and at the different public archives listed in the Historic Assessment. Because relatively few changes were made to the building and grounds since 1974, the historic narrative is quite comprehensive.

## Notes on citations:

- Reference is made throughout to documents captured photographically by Enrique Ramirez. These documents were reviewed and photographed by Enrique in the process of his research of the Eero Saarinen collection and of the Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo and Associates (KRJDA) Records, at the Manuscripts and Archives of Yale University Library.<sup>1</sup>
- Below is a list of abbreviations used in the footnotes:

CIAA – Columbus Indiana Architectural Archives, part of Bartholomew County Public Library (BCPL), in Columbus IN

KRJDA – Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo and Associates

NCC – North Christian Church

## Authors

We are grateful for the leadership and enthusiasm of Richard McCoy, the executive director of Landmark Columbus Foundation, Dorit Zemer of Prudon & Partners for her diligent survey and careful report preparation work, and for the excellent and insightful contributions of Bryony Roberts, Enrique Ramirez, Terrie Brightman, Chris Merritt, Danica Liongson, Ben Wever, and Louis Joyner. The project and the report preparation were directed by Theodore Prudon.

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://ead-pdfs.library.yale.edu/4418.pdf> for more information on the contents of the Eero Saarinen Collection, and <https://ead-pdfs.library.yale.edu/4020.pdf> on the contents of the KRJDA Records.

# Understanding the Building and Site

## The Building Within the Context of Columbus

<sup>2</sup>The unity of architecture and community has been historically regarded as one of the defining attributes of civic life in Columbus. It was born under the visionary leadership of the philanthropist and business executive J. Irwin Miller, whose career in architectural stewardship is marked by his deep personal and professional relationship with Eero Saarinen. It could be one of the most significant modern architect-client relationships in the history of architecture. Their collaboration resulted in buildings that are recognizable not just as high-water marks in mid-century modern architecture, but also for the ways in which they reflected their commitment to making buildings that were woven into the civic and spiritual life of Columbus, Indiana.

The relationship between Miller and Saarinen was only one part of a long-lasting period of intense architectural activity in Columbus. Written materials prepared for Exhibit Columbus in anticipation of the 2016-17 and 2018-19 J. Irwin and Xenia Miller Prize describe how buildings like Eliel Saarinen's Tabernacle Church of Christ (now First Christian Church) (1942), Eero Saarinen and Associates' Irwin Union Bank and Trust (1954), I. M. Pei's Cleo Rogers Memorial Library (1969), as well as Gunnar Birkerts' Lincoln Elementary School (1967) and St. Peter's Lutheran Church (1988) are linked to social and economic developments. This is also the case with another aspect of J. Irwin Miller's legacy — the establishment of the Cummins Foundation Architecture Program in

1957. The Foundation paid architects' fees to promote the design of innovative buildings for the city. This program began in earnest in 1957 with the completion of Harry Weese's Lilian C. Schmitt Elementary School<sup>3</sup>. As Will Miller, J. Irwin Miller's youngest son, has suggested, the Cummins Foundation "transformed the built environment of the community."<sup>4</sup> Although it is tempting to look at Columbus as a small city with dozens of signature modernist buildings, two facts stand out when considering how architecture and civic life were inseparable. First, Columbus is unique in its commitment to shepherding contemporary design as part of a civic agenda. Second, although it is a small city, Columbus has seven properties designated as National Historic Landmarks—a remarkable achievement for any community. The collection of modernist architectural masterpieces in Columbus is the result of a marked commitment to the betterment of community. They comprise a kind of civic infrastructure.

With its completion, North Christian Church demonstrated the extent to which architectural developments were important not only to the growth of Columbus but also to its spiritual existence.

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3 Will Miller, "Eero and Irwin: Praiseworthy Competition with One's Ancestors," in Eeva-Liisa Pelkonen and Donald Albrecht, eds., *Eero Saarinen: Shaping the Future* (New York and London: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 67. See also Ricky Berkey, "Timeline of Columbus History," Columbus Indiana Architectural Archives.

4 Will Miller, "Eero and Irwin: Praiseworthy Competition with One's Ancestors," p. 67.

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2 This section is taken from the introduction to the Historical Assessment written by Enrique Ramirez. See Attachment A for the full text.

## Building History - Introduction

<sup>5</sup>North Christian Church, completed in 1964, is a cipher in the short but illustrious career of Eero Saarinen (1910-1961). At the time of Saarinen's death, his office had been working on a group of projects that would cement his reputation as a brilliant, yet eclectic designer. And though North Christian Church is one of Saarinen's most beloved and well-known buildings, it has neither been held in as much critical esteem nor received its due in architectural histories and monographs.

A timeline and building description show that the history of North Christian Church begins with the purchase of a site on the northern edges of Columbus in the late 1950s. As with other Eero Saarinen and Associates' signature projects, construction began only after Eero Saarinen's death. The building was completed in 1964, and though modifications and improvements have been carried out since then, the design and structural integrity of the buildings has been maintained.

There are a number of archival resources that shed light on the design and construction of North Christian Church. Among them, the most significant are the holdings inside the Records Office at North Christian Church and the Eero Saarinen Collection at Yale University. The latter of these, donated by Kevin Roche in 2002, contains extensive documentation for North Christian Church. It is not complete, however. A combination of digital and physical materials at other institutions—including the Columbus Indiana Architecture Archives, the Archives of American Art at the Smithsonian Institution, as

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<sup>5</sup> This section is taken from the Executive Summary of the Historical Assessment written by Enrique Ramirez. See Attachment A for the full report.

well as the G.E. Kidder Smith Image Collection at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and the Library of Congress—are useful in assembling a more complete history of this building. At the time of this report, several archives were not consulted due to travel restrictions and university closings during the coronavirus pandemic: the Papers of Dan Kiley at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design and the Maurice B. Allen papers at Cranbrook Academy.

The history of North Christian Church is more than an account of a building designed by Eero Saarinen and Associates. It is the history of a physical site and a document of the involvement of the congregants and various committees woven into the daily life and operations of North Christian Church. It is also a history of the constellation of design and engineering practices that brought their talents and energy to this project. Henry Pfisterer and Van Zelm, Heywood & Shadford's work on engineering and electrical; Walter Holtkamp's organ design; Alexander Girard's interior; Kevin Roche and John Dinkeloo's site development work; Dan Kiley's landscape design; and improvements by the Storrow Kinsella Partnership, Louis Joyner, and others: all are evidence that North Christian Church was a collaborative project and continued to be so throughout its life.

The design and maintenance history of North Christian Church is a work in progress. Opportunities remain to use archives and other sources of documentation to help reevaluate and recover a historiographical significance for this building. Until then, North Christian Church's absence in professional, monographic, and critical assessments of modern architecture in the United

States is noted. Yet the work of Eero Saarinen and Associates began to receive more serious and critical attention in 2006 with the opening of the traveling exhibition *Eero Saarinen: Shaping the Future*. The catalogue for that exhibition delves momentarily into the history of North Christian Church as well as Eero Saarinen's relationship with Columbus, Indiana.

This report augments prior work on the history of Eero Saarinen and Associates with a statement of architectural significance based on six different themes. First, North Christian Church established the reputation of designers that would play a significant role in maintaining the architectural legacy of Columbus, Indiana. These include Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo and Associates, and Paul Kennon. Their work contributed to the second theme on the architectural significance of North Christian Church: it was a building that advanced architectural form. Its familiar, elongated hexagonal plan and spire was a bold design statement that veered away from contemporary trends in architectural modernism. Third, North Christian Church is an iconic late modernist building that has been often imitated. Its "lateness" is evidenced in the way in which it abandons International Style principles while anticipating some of the formal and historical eclecticism seen in postmodernist architecture. Fourth, North Christian Church proposed a new spatial solution for sacred gatherings. It is a centralized structure that folds all of North Christian Church's spiritual and programmatic requirements into a bold, sculptural, and contained form. Fifth, North Christian Church is part of the civic infrastructure of Columbus, Indiana. It is a building that shares

many of the civic and spiritual ambitions for architecture throughout the city. And lastly, North Christian Church is more than a building. It is a designed site.



## Timeline – Key Events

The following is an abbreviated timeline for the building’s design, construction, and maintenance.<sup>6</sup>

September 25, 1955	The Disciples of Christ establish North Christian Church and begin meeting
March 18, 1958	The Trustees of North Christian Church purchase the site for the future church
February 1959	North Christian Church commissions Eero Saarinen and Associates
April 23, 1959	Eero Saarinen and Associates’ first “Membership Survey and Program Questionnaire” is distributed to the Congregation in order to determine the programmatic needs for the new church
July 10 – 11, 1960	Eero Saarinen presents an “Architectural Progress Report” to J. Irwin Miller and the Architectural Committee
May 9, 1961	North Christian Church commissions Walter Holtkamp to design an organ for the Nave
September 1, 1961	Eero Saarinen dies during a surgical procedure for removing a brain tumor
December 7, 1961	Kevin Roche, John Dinkeloo, John Kinsella, Paul Kennon and Joe Jensen meet with the Architectural Committee and begin the working drawings. Henry Pfisterer is hired as the structural designer. Van Zelm, Heywood & Shadford are hired for mechanical and engineering services.
March 19, 1962	Walter Holtkamp presents his organ design to Eero Saarinen and Associates. A meeting is held to discuss the design of the interior furnishings.
June 15, 1962	Eero Saarinen and Associates produces plans and specifications for construction and interior furnishings bidding.
September 2, 1962	The groundbreaking ceremony for North Christian Church is held.
November 1, 1962	Eero Saarinen and Associates meet with North Christian Church to discuss the design of “General Furniture” and “Religious Objects.” Alexander Girard is put forward for the design of flatware, chalices, textiles and vestments needed for religious services.
December 3, 1962	North Christian Church hires Repp & Mundt for construction services.
March 1963	Construction of North Christian Church begins.
March 25, 1963	Paul Kennon and John Dinkeloo present models and drawings of the interiors and furnishings for North Christian Church.
March 1964	North Christian Church is completed.
March 8, 1964	The first service inside North Christian Church is held. Aline Saarinen, Kevin Roche, John Dinkeloo, Paul Kennon and Alexander Girard are in attendance.
April 25, 1964	The Holtkamp Organ is dedicated in a special service.
June 26, 1964	Dan Kiley’s office prepares its initial landscape design for North Christian Church.
December 18, 1971	Dan Kiley’s office prepares a modified plan that keeps Sycamore Drive in its current state and adds additional plantings and parking bays.
March 1974	Dan Kiley’s office prepares the final landscape design for North Christian Church.

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<sup>6</sup> A more detailed timeline can be found in the Historical Assessment — Attachment A, pages 15 – 18.



1984	Drawings issued for soundproofing of minister's office at initial location.
1984-1989	Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo and Associates help select: cushions for the Narthex and Nave, carpet for the upper level of the Nave, and new stainless steel screen for the Baptistry.
June 29, 1988	The Storrow Kinsella Partnership prepares drawings for improvement to the roof and framing details.
July 11, 1995	Columbus architect Todd Williams is commissioned to design a new Memorial Garden for North Christian Church.
1995	<p>Firm of Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo and Associates complete: Installation of two lifts, one from Narthex to lower level, and one from Narthex to upper level of Nave; installation and replacement of railings at stairwells in Nave; installation of aluminum Kawneer doors, replacing existing at the east entrance, and improving accessibility.</p> <p>In celebration of the fortieth anniversary of the congregation, a group of 43 Cherokee Princess dogwood trees are planted to commemorate the 43 charter members.</p> <p>Installation of accessible ramps and handrails at east and west entrances; update of exterior lighting.</p>
September 21, 1997	The new Memorial Garden is dedicated.
2000	North Christian Church is designated a National Historic Landmark.
2003	The metal cladding on the spire is replaced.
2008 – 2009	Columbus architect Louis Joyner designs improvements for the slate roof, roof fascia and the Memorial Garden.
2009	Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) expands US 31 on the north side of the property and destroys three magnolia trees on the property. This causes INDOT to complete a Section 106 mitigation agreement (see below).
2016	<p>Dan Kiley's drawings are studied and through the Section 106 review, consulting parties agree to rehabilitate the parking islands with 148 Inkberry Holly shrubs, 28 Brandywine Maples, 560 cubic yards of topsoil and 26 cubic yards of mulch. The plants are chosen for a variety of reasons including safety and ease of maintenance.</p> <p>The Church is admitted into "Sacred Places Indiana", a program of Indiana Landmarks, and receives a \$250,000 matching grant from the National Fund for Sacred Places.</p>
2018	Indiana Landmarks, a statewide non-profit preservation organization, designates the property as one of its 2018 "Top 10 Most Endangered" buildings in the state.
2018-2019	Replacement of parts of the HVAC system.
2019	Landmark Columbus awarded a Keeping It Modern grant by the Getty Foundation. Prudon & Partners, New York architectural firm is commissioned to prepare a Conservation management Plan.
July 16, 2022	Congregation holds last service at the church
August 1, 2022	Ownership of North Christian Church is transferred to the Columbus Capital Foundation

# The building:

## Key Elements:



*Aerial image looking southeast – image by Balthazar Korab, 1964 – courtesy Library of Congress*

## Building exterior:

From the surrounding roads, the building's spire and parts of its hexagonal pitched roof are visible above the trees. It sits on the northwest corner of an approximately rectangular, mostly cultivated, parcel of land, amid a suburban area in northern Columbus Indiana. The site also includes an access road and parking area to the east of the building. The ground immediately surrounding the building is raised, creating berms at the north and south, and ascending approaches at the east and west. Moats along the north and south, recessed between the berms and the building, allow light

into the former class rooms on the lower level. All components of the building are hierarchically arranged under the pitched roof, with the topmost level, the Nave or Sanctuary, being the most significant and dramatic.

## The Nave<sup>7</sup>:

The hexagonal bowl-shaped sanctuary is the uppermost level and is topped by the hexagonal pitched roof.

## Narthex level:

The narthex and intermediate level, is accessed via shallow steps or ramps descending from the top of the berms at the east and west. This level is mostly tucked in under the edges of the bowl of the Nave and includes a Narthex at its east entrance, a Chapel and Baptistry at its west entrance, offices and classrooms lining the north and south perimeters. Supporting functions are at its core.

## Lower level:

The Lower or Classroom level is a full floor below the Narthex level. It is accessible via four stairwells located in the corners respectively at the east and west ends of the Narthex level. It includes a multi-use auditorium at its center, a meeting area at the east end, a youth activity center at the west end, and classrooms aligning the north and south perimeters. A commercial kitchen is located under the access steps at the east entrance, and mechanical rooms have been placed under the west access steps.

<sup>7</sup> The main worship space of the church, referred to as "Sanctuary" in Protestant traditions, is here termed "Nave", since that is the term consistently used in all referenced archival material.

## The building exterior:



*Image by Balthazar Korab, 1964 – courtesy Library of Congress*

North Christian Church is located at 850 Tipton Lane. The site includes 13.5 acres of mostly developed landscape. To its north it is bordered by US 31, Home Avenue sits to its east, and Sycamore Drive to its west. Vehicle access is from Tipton Lane to its south, where a road leads through mature woods to parking and drop-off on the east of the building. A separate drop-off exists at the west entrance.

The landscaped site is surrounded by single-family homes mostly dating from 1950s to the 1970s.

The building dominates the mostly flat site with its most prominent features – a massive sloping

slate roof rising to a 192-foot-tall spire that is topped with a cross.

The geometry of the building, a hexagon elongated along its east-west axis, is a distinct design element repeated throughout the building plan. The elongated hexagonal shape makes the north and south elevations longer.

Holding up the roof and spire, and concealed within, is a steel structure that consists of six rigid frames connected at the top forming the skeleton of an oculus, and the base of the spire. The structure sits on an elongated hexagonal concrete base, depressed into the surrounding six-foot high berm, which places the floor of lowest level not too far below the actual grade of the site.

The six main steel framing members, which protrude above the roof plane, are clad in lead-coated copper and divide the roof into six distinct planes, which, in turn, are covered in blue-black slate shingles. The upturned fascia, which conceals the gutter, is also clad in lead coated copper. The six frames come together at the top to form a central oculus that illuminates the Nave below. Bells are suspended under the node. The spire rises from this node and has openings to the sides.

Below the roof fascia level, the six steel frames are visible at the six corners of the hexagon, where they taper down to meet the concrete base. Downspouts, which are partially concealed in the upturned eaves run down along these “buttresses” and spill into rectangular concrete basins forming drains in the concrete base.



In section, the structure is a one-story building with a lower-level nested into the berm, and moats, or light-wells, along the north and south sides of the hexagon. These moats or light-wells extend five to six feet away from the lower-level concrete walls. The interior slope of the light-wells is covered with planted ground cover. At the east and west, shallow steps descend from the top of the berms to the entrances at the Narthex level. At the top of the west entrance, a ventilation stack rises from the mechanical rooms beneath. Additional steps at the east and west corners lead down to the moats.

At the southeast light-well there is a small sunken Memorial Garden designed in 1995 by the local firm of Todd Williams, of which only the first phase was executed. The Memorial Garden consists of a concrete and wood bench and wooden commemorative plaques installed on the sloped concrete surface of the exterior wall of the building. The design included a slate wall and a sculpture which were not executed.

The exterior vision wall of the Narthex level, is set back twelve feet from the roof edge. It is a continuous band of single-glazed glass fixed windows with a system of wood mullions, arranged, to the north and south, at regular four-foot modules.

## The building interior:



*Image by Balthazar Korab, 1964 – courtesy Library of Congress*

## The Nave:

The Nave occupies the topmost space, and its plaster ceiling spatially reflects the roof structure.

The central layout of the nave reflects the liturgical practice of the Disciples of Christ with the centrality of the Communion table. The space is entered through the stairs that rise from the Narthex along the central axis. These stairs bisect the east-side seating, and afford a head-on view of the central Communion table, the chancel, choir and the sculptural organ across at the west end of the space.

The base of the Nave is a bowl-shaped elongated hexagon, with the Communion table at its center, and the ascending pews surrounding it. In addition

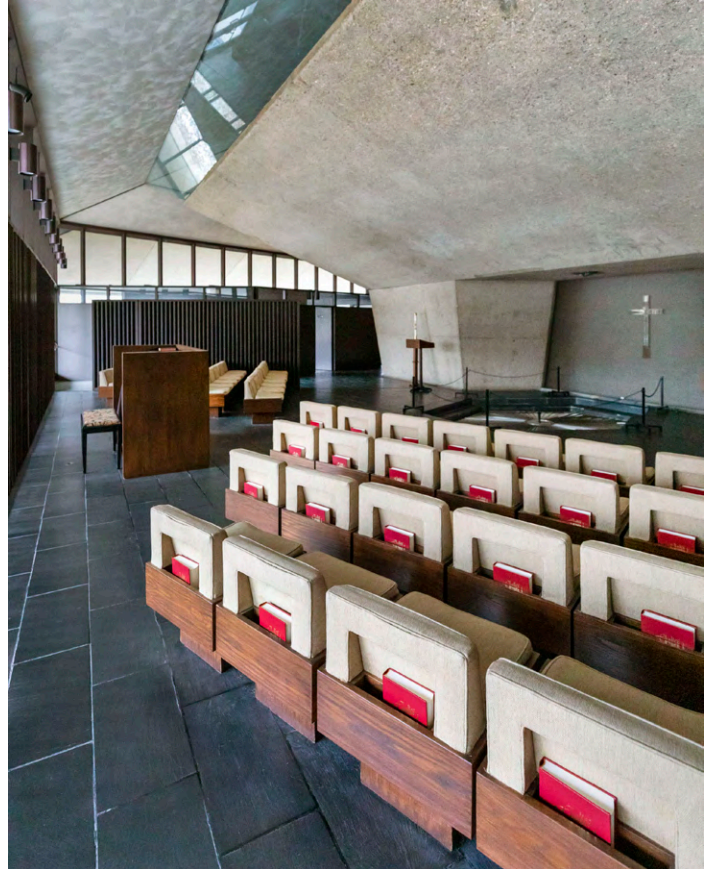
to the main entry stairs, a separate set of steps leads north up to the top pews. A symmetrical stairway, leading south, was replaced by a lift installed in 1995. The upper pews can also be reached via sets of steps separating various rows of pews.

At the west end, the choir occupies three levels, with the organ sitting a level above that.

A significant feature in the space is the dramatic use of light. Two sources of natural light, with support from artificial sources, are present in the space. A central, primary source is provided by the hexagonal oculus structure, which slopes down from the central meeting point of the ceiling panels. A secondary, softer light source comes from the peripheral glass window band just below the plaster ceiling and hidden behind the walls. This peripheral source provides a raking light along the rough ceiling surface and creates the illusion of a suspended, floating ceiling. The two-source lighting is an evocation of Saarinen's impression of a night in Sparta: "... *There was a bright moon light over head and then there was a soft, hushed secondary light around the horizon.*"<sup>8</sup> which inspired his design for the Chapel at MIT, and it seems for North Christian Church as well.

With Communion being a central element of worship within the Disciples' tradition, the Communion table was specifically designed for this space and is comprised of 12 smaller square tables arranged in two rows and a 13th taller table at the head, symbolizing Jesus Christ and his twelve disciples. The table sits on a movable hexagonal wood platform, which on occasion was moved west to extend the lectern area. The

floor and aisles are black slate with a cleft finish, except for the floor of top pew which is carpeted. The pews and other wood furnishings are of African mahogany hardwood in a dark stain. The upholstery is dark brown to match the wood.



View of chapel – image by Hadley Fruits, 2019

### Narthex (entry) level:

The Narthex level is arranged around a central concrete core, in a bush-hammered finish, supporting the bowl of the Nave above. A wide corridor surrounds the core, and offices and other functions line the perimeter at the north and south elevations. Following the slope of the roof, a sloped plaster ceiling caps the Nave and Narthex levels and extends outside twelve feet beyond the exterior curtain wall of the Narthex level.

<sup>8</sup> Saarinen, E. & Saarinen, A. B. *Eero saarinen on his work: A selection of buildings dating from 1947 to 1964 with statements by the architect.* (New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 1962), 36

The main entry into the Narthex, a large open space with two upholstered benches flanking the doors, is through four pairs of doors at the center of the east elevation. Across from the entrance are the main stairs leading up to the Nave. Double doors of wood and glass separate the Narthex space from the stairwell to the Nave.

A secondary entrance, from the west, leads to the Chapel/Baptistry. In contrast to the Narthex at the east end of the floor, the Chapel space is designed to accommodate smaller and more intimate events. Double doors at the north and south of the west elevation curtain wall lead into hallways with side doors providing access to the chapel. Sliding wood partitions enable enclosure of the chapel from the rest of the Narthex-level space. Further enclosure of the chapel is enabled by the vertical wooden louvres installed at the interior of the west curtain wall. A baptismal pool, repeating the elongated hexagon geometry of the floor plan, is at the center of the chapel. The pool is clad in white ceramic mosaic tiles and is covered with a sunburst-patterned stainless-steel safety grate designed for that purpose. Original drawings show a wooden platform that was also designed to cover the pool and make it usable for different ceremonies<sup>9</sup>. Fixed wooden pews with light-colored upholstery are arranged in four rows facing the baptismal pool and the bush-hammered concrete of the core wall. An opening in the core, behind the pool, giving access to a small dressing room space at either side, is obscured by a stainless-steel mesh screen. A large silver cross, the full height of the opening, hangs on the white mosaic-tile wall behind the mesh. This wall is lit with accent lights from above.

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<sup>9</sup> According to former church staff, The platform still exists and is stored somewhere within the building.

The floor of the Narthex, Chapel and corridors, is of black slate tiles, in cleft finish arranged in a running bond, parallel to the exterior walls.

The bush-hammered concrete walls of the central core angle outward, over the corridor, Narthex, and chapel, and are held back from meeting the sloped plaster ceiling. A horizontal strip of butt-jointed glass panels separates the core walls from the plaster ceiling and provides peripheral light under the Nave ceiling. The light originates from the outside curtain wall and shines through because of the void space over the perimeter spaces.

The perimeter spaces are different in material and design to the rest of the interior and are more reminiscent of Saarinen's corporate work, which is characterized by its rigorous grid. They are enclosed interior spaces built entirely of dark-stained millwork, following the strict four-foot module set by the window grid of the curtain wall. They reach only up to the height of the horizontal mullion, 8' 4 1/2" from the finished floor level. The curtain wall rises above the ceiling of the perimeter spaces and meets the sloping plaster ceiling providing exterior light to the corridor as noted above. Doors, wall subdivisions and paneling follow the same grid, as does the ceiling, and the wall and ceiling light fixtures.

The design, in section, of empty or void space left above the ceilings of the perimeter offices and program spaces, along with the glass strip between the concrete core and the plaster ceiling, are critical design elements, as they enable natural light to come through to the corridor, and allow for the peripheral light experienced in the Nave above.





*View of narthex corridor – image by Hadley Fruits, 2015*

The spaces along the perimeter of the north and south elevations include a library, various offices, and, at one point, daycare. The partitions along the corridors appear to be made of single sheets of plywood with an African Mahogany veneer in a dark stain. While faced on the interior side with plaster, plywood or millwork, the partitions do not seem to have additional sound insulation as some later renovation drawings seem to indicate. Cylindrical downlight fixtures located on the four-foot curtain wall module are mounted on the corridor side of the office partitions. The hollow-core doors from the corridor are flush with the partitions and have identical hardware. Inside the perimeter spaces, the walls and ceilings are veneered plywood with mahogany framing. The library and several other rooms contain original built-in millwork such as shelving and cabinets and, as of this writing, some original furnishings

and tapestries. Plaster partitions in wood framing, sit parallel or perpendicular to the exterior walls following the same the four-foot module. Most of the doors still have the original hardware, with doors in the childcare center split horizontally to allow supervision. Plywood ceiling panels are supported by plywood beams aligned with the height of the horizontal mullion, and on center with the curtain wall four-foot window module. The curtain wall has no operable windows and the ventilation, heating and cooling of the entire building, including the offices, is mechanical. In the offices system openings are concealed in the millwork along the curtain wall and are supplied through piping embedded and integral to the structural floor.<sup>10</sup> Rectangular or circular surface-mounted fluorescent fixtures are installed at approximately every two modules. Irregular “leftover” spaces within the hexagonal geometry, particularly at corners, are typically used for storage or wash closets. The reception area near the narthex stairs no longer presents the original configuration and was opened up in a remodeling around 2000.

Behind the bush-hammered concrete walls that surround the core of the plan are a sacristy, cloak rooms, toilets, and small dressing rooms and support functions for the baptistry. The latter, like the pool, are covered in ceramic white-tile mosaic. Otherwise, the floor behind the core wall is polished concrete, with porcelain tiles in the bathrooms. Partitions are painted concrete blocks. In vertical section void spaces under the base of the Nave bowl contain a plenum and duct work for the mechanical system.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> See Window Wall Plenum Detail in original mechanical drawing HAC-1, North Christian Church (NCC) Records, Columbus Indiana Architectural Archives (CIAA)

<sup>11</sup> See Sections A-A and C-C in original mechanical drawing HAC-2, NCC records, CIAA

Flanking each of the east and west entrances are two pairs of stairwells leading to the lower level. The stairwells in the narthex are open, while the stairs at the chapel are enclosed with veneered plywood panels. An enclosed lift, connecting to the lower level, was added in 1995 into one of the spaces beside the southeast stairs.

The walls of the stairwells are bush-hammered concrete on the east side, and plastered and painted on the west. The stair treads and risers are polished concrete. Handrails are simple square metal bars, a design detail consistently used throughout the complex. Because of their location the stairwells receive natural light through the curtain wall, and artificial light from cylindrical fixtures installed at the mullions. These fixtures are identical to the fixtures along the corridors.



*View showing lower level meeting area – image by P&P, 2020*

### Lower level:

The lower level sits within the hexagonal concrete base which supports the steel structure of the roof. Moats created through the use of the berms border the structure to the north and south and the clerestory windows giving daylight to the lower level classrooms look out onto these moats. In plan, a commercially sized and equipped kitchen is located on the east side and extends under the

east entrance steps. At the western end of the plan mechanical rooms are located and extend under the west entry steps. The mechanical rooms are vented through a chimney like feature centered on the west entry steps above. The center of the plan contains two other spaces, a multi-use auditorium space located under the Nave and an open meeting area located underneath the Narthex, between the kitchen and the auditorium entrance. A youth-activity center is located under the Chapel/baptistry at the western side. Two small toilet rooms, one for women one for men, are located to the west of the auditorium.

Classrooms and smaller meeting rooms are situated at the perimeter to the north and south. Natural light is provided through clerestory windows facing the moats. As in the narthex level, the windows are not operable. Ventilation is provided from the floor above through openings in the ceilings along the perimeter. In section the built in tubing openings are coordinated with, but separated from, openings providing ventilation to the floor above.<sup>12</sup> Wide hallways separate the classrooms from the central auditorium space.

Finishes are modest. Floors are mostly carpeted, with vinyl tiles in some of the classrooms and polished concrete in the kitchen. The supporting walls, primarily the perimeter walls and the corridor, are structural and concrete, while partitions are concrete block. The ceilings are mostly the exposed underside of the structural concrete slabs. All concrete surfaces are painted. Doors to classrooms and the transom panels above are dark-stained wood. The doors are original design, as is the built-in millwork present in some of the classrooms. As in the Narthex level, door hardware is also original. Lighting is by

<sup>12</sup> See Window Wall Plenum Detail and Section D-D in original mechanical drawing HAC-1, NCC records, CIAA

surface-mounted fluorescent fixtures. Windows, partitions, concrete and wood walls, are arranged along the same four-foot module grid as found in the Narthex level.



*Image of church during construction – Irwin-Sweeney-Miller collection, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, IN*

## The Structure:

This section is based on visual observation, the original structural documents, referenced below as drawings S-1 through S-13<sup>13</sup>, remaining construction photographs and contemporary meeting notes and correspondence.

The structure of North Christian Church was designed by Henry Pfisterer (1908-1972), a structural engineer based in New Haven, CT. The structural drawings, labeled S-1 through S-13, were issued June 15, 1962, revised in September 15, 1962, and marked coordinated October 3, 1962. All drawings bear the stamp of Pfisterer with his Indiana license number. Because the building

<sup>13</sup> Drawings are part of NCC records, Columbus Indiana Architectural Archives (CIAA)

has not seen any major renovations or alteration – except for the installation of two accessible lifts<sup>14</sup> and exterior envelope repairs – these drawings are assumed, to a large extent, to reflect the as built conditions, and present information useful in any future renovation or adaptation efforts.

Pfisterer pointedly described the structure at the time as a “steel hat sitting over a concrete bowl”.<sup>15</sup> This is an apt description of the structure and is clearly reflected in the drawings. Drawing S-1 through S-4 show the plans of the building and its concrete structure. Drawings S-9 through S-13 show the various sections and details for the concrete portion of the building’s base. Drawings S-5 through S-8 detail the steel superstructure including the spire, which is detailed in S-8.

The concrete drawings outline the plans of the various floors. Drawing S-1 shows the layout of the foundations and the mechanical room located at the west of the building and buried partially below the west entrance. S-2 and S-3 respectively show the classroom level and narthex and office floor. S-4 is the nave framing plan. Of interest here is that the drawings show various details for what is called in the drawings a tube slab. Hollow tubes ranging in diameter 8 or 10 inches are buried in the slab parallel to each other and in the case of North Christian Church radiate out from the center perpendicular to the outside walls. Rebars are located above and below the tubes and their concrete cover. It is unclear from the drawings how these tubes were formed. At the time the use of cardboard or sheet metal tubes that were left

<sup>14</sup> Chris Anastos, of the firm Tor, Swolen, Calini & Anastos, consulting engineers in New Haven, CT, signed the drawings for the installation of the two lifts in 1994. The installation required cutting openings in the concrete tube slabs. KRJDA records, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library

<sup>15</sup> “Saarinen’s Church”, *Architectural Record*, (September 1964), p. 188



in the slab was not uncommon.<sup>16</sup> In this instance they are important because they seem to have been utilized in a location providing ducts as part of the mechanical system.<sup>17</sup>

The subsequent drawings S-5 through S-8 detail the steel framing for the super structure. S-5, the roof framing plan, is noted as revised September 12, 1962. The main arches are noted as 'frames' and identified as A and B going diagonally east to west with the sides noted as 1 and 2 respectively. The north-south frame is named Y. Here, as in some of the structural steel details, reference is made to how the rain leaders are integrated into the structure. For instance, a note on the drawing states: '2"Ø rain leaders to be run under all girders except 36" WF for which see detail'. At the bottom of the sheet, it is noted that the roofing is to be slate on wood planks and refers to the architectural drawings for details. Drawing S-5R is the same drawing but marked as coordinated October 3, 1962, the same date as listed on the concrete drawings. Drawing S-6 illustrates the framing details around the oculus and skylight. Drawing S-7 is titled Arch Frames & Details and shows details of the large framing members that make up the primary bearing structure. In dotted lines the outline of the architectural envelope is noted. This drawing is also noted as coordinated October 3, 1962. A note at the top in the oculus states: "Provide supports for 6 bells.". Drawing S-8

shows a section through the spire and its various details. Reference is made to the skin and referred to the architectural drawings for attachments. No reference is made to the cross that tops the spire and how it is attached.

Drawings S-9 through S-13 show sections through various parts of the concrete base and include details with rebar sizes and locations. The drawings carry the same dates as the others above. S-13 also shows how the steel frame is attached to the concrete base.

While the drawings do not represent as-built conditions, they do reflect a fully coordinated set and are what was used during construction. Undoubtedly changes were made and would be reflected in subsequent sketches. One such sketch is SK-A-86 dated August 6, 1963. Here the gutter details and the sheet metal for the eaves at the frames A-A, B-B and Y-Y are clarified. The number SK-A-86 denotes that it concerns architectural work and indicates that at least 86 separate sketches were issued. Other sketches probably concerned the various other trades necessary as field conditions required further coordination.<sup>18</sup>

One aspect of the drawings is to be noted: Many of the connections, piping, or conduits are embedded in the structure as was a typical practice for midcentury architecture making them quite complex in their configuration and not easily accessible. Rain leaders or tubes embedded in the floor serving as mechanical ducts are a case in point as noted above.

16 The use of hollow tube floor systems evolved in the first half of the 20th century. See Arnold van Acker and Stef Maas, "Historical Development of Hollow Core Slabs", April 29, 2021 [www.hollowcore.org/historical-development/hollow-core-slabs/](http://www.hollowcore.org/historical-development/hollow-core-slabs/) Accessed August 23, 2022. This article describes mostly the European development. The prefabricated concrete plank is an outcome of this technology. Drawing S-9 Section 2-2 references concrete plank for one of the smaller secondary spans, NCC records, CIAA  
17 See for instance, HAC-1 Heating & Air Conditioning Classroom Level Plan, dated June 15, 1962. Detail section D-D and detail "Window Wall Plenum Detail" show the use of tubes or tube locations as part of the mechanical distribution. NCC records, CIAA

18 At this time these additional sketches have not been identified.

## Ventilation, heating and air conditioning:

As noted in the architectural descriptions, the building has no operable windows and relies entirely on the mechanical system for ventilation, heating and cooling. As was typical for the time, controls are limited and mostly system wide with little or no local controls. This section is based mostly on the information contained in original drawings labeled HAC-1 through HAC-4<sup>19</sup> and notes about subsequent repairs and equipment replacement and upgrades.

The building was designed to be only mechanically vented. The only operable elements of the exterior envelope are the doors. The clerestory windows of the lower level are high and fixed. Similarly, none of the glass inserts of the curtain wall at the Narthex level are operable. Heating and air-conditioning is through mechanical ducts in the ceiling of the lower level, through plenums at the base of the curtain wall in the Narthex level, and through the peripheral ducts in the Nave.

The heating and air conditioning system of the building is fundamentally unaltered since its engineering design and original installation. While some equipment was replaced, no changes were made to the system. Upgrades were made so the system could operate as originally intended.<sup>20</sup> As reflected in drawings HAC-1 through HAC-4, the system is typical for the period.<sup>21</sup> In a large two-

story mechanical room located underneath the western approach and entrance and abutting the space originally designated youth activities, are three air handling units (AHU), a return air fan and miscellaneous other equipment. Equipment is also located in a separate boiler room. See HAC-1 for a plan and HAC-4 for some sections. From this room, supply and return air ducts extend out into the triangular void spaces located between the sloping up concrete floor of the Nave and the sloped ceiling of the auditorium. In the architectural sections A-6 and A-7 these voids are identified as plenums. Sections through these spaces are shown in detail on drawing HAC-2 and in Section A-A and Section C-C of the same drawing.

Architecturally, the most remarkable part of the system is the air distribution from the above-described plenum ducts. In the words of Saarinen's office:

*The structure can be utilized economically to distribute air to all upper spaces. This is done by rising through a shaft at the west end of the nave, utilizing a plenum between the floor of the nave and ceiling slab of the auditorium and using a tube slab to distribute air.*<sup>22</sup>

The structural floor of the Narthex level, as noted in the structure narrative, is a hollow tube floor. Tubes with a diameter of 8 or 10 inches are embedded in the reinforced concrete floor and are closely spaced together. These tubes run perpendicular to the outside perimeter. A selected few of the tubes – approximately two per window – are designated for supply and return air. At the curtain/window wall these tubes are connected

<sup>19</sup> Drawings located at NCC records, CIAA

<sup>20</sup> In an email dated August 25, 2022, to Theo Prudon, Louis Joyner writes: "On the HVAC upgrades-the goal was to get the system back operating as it was designed, so yes, we replaced equipment and controls but made no systemic changes. From memory, the project included: 3 new compressors, new exhaust dampers (north side), new exhaust fans and dampers, repaired all the controls for the dampers within the air handlers, got the pneumatic control system working again and cleaned the heat exchangers. No work on the boiler or heating side of the system."

<sup>21</sup> Note that the word ventilation does not appear in the drawing designation – HAC versus HVAC or M –, nor does it appear anywhere on the drawings.

<sup>22</sup> Maurice Allen Conference Notes, 13 December 1961, Job No. 5902, North Christian Church, Columbus, IN, Box 561, Folder 1528, Conference Notes 1960-1965, MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.



to a respective plenum to provide and return air. In addition, some of the tubes in this floor serve the below classroom floor from the ceiling. (See Section D-D on drawing HAC-1.) The Window Wall Plenum Detail at the narthex level (see drawing HAC-1) shows the configuration of the supply of air through a ½" slot at the top of the wood face panel and return air plenum opening at the base. HAC-2 shows in plan the arrangement around the perimeter window wall. The classrooms in the lower floor are serviced from the ceiling in a similar manner, through tubes in the narthex floor, as depicted in Section D-D and the Window Wall Plenum Detail referenced above. Both ducts are noted to be insulated as are the plenum spaces at the window walls.<sup>23</sup> The Nave is serviced in a similar manner. Drawing HAC-3 depicts the heating and cooling for the Nave with supply and return air connected in a similar way, through the triangular void between the floor of the nave and ceiling of the auditorium, to tubes in the sloping floor leading out to the perimeter, as shown in Section H-H in drawing HAC-3. Drawing HAC-4 shows various larger sections and duct layouts. With the installation of the lifts in 1995, at least one duct was rerouted. Except for some issues in the very beginning, which is not unusual, the system seems to have serviced the building well.<sup>24</sup>

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23 On drawing A-2 Revised Aug. 31, 1990, a note states: "Open ends of supply air tubes to be filled with concrete. This is an original drawing marked up and repurposed to delineate the construction of an elevator. NCC records, CIAA

24 See, for instance, letter from M. T. Harrison, identified as manager, Plant Engineering at Cummins Engine and the owner's representative throughout construction, to John Dinkeloo on November 11, 1964. A number of spaces are identified as having inadequate cooling or heating. Letter was photographed by Enrique Ramirez during his research at Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library. Accessed August 25, 2022.

## Plumbing

The plumbing for the building is laid out in two drawings, respectively labeled P-1 and P-2<sup>25</sup>, and dated June 15, 1962, with a handwritten notation: *issued for bid 6-15-62*. The system is designed to address four conditions: baptistry, toilet facilities, kitchen and storm water. The number of toilets is limited to four locations: women's facilities on the north corridor, men's facilities on the south corridor next to the coat room, both on the Narthex floor. A single stall, located at the back of the women's facilities, on the north side, was always there and was at some point converted to an accessible unit<sup>26</sup>. On this floor, there is also a small private toilet next to the room designated as minister's office in the original plan. The baptistry has both hot and cold water, recirculation and drains. On the lower level, the classroom floor, there are boy's and girl's facilities to the west of the auditorium, under the baptistry pool, and a kitchen at the east end of the building. Two additional stalls located in the north corridor, shown on the original architectural drawing A-2 and in drawing P-1, were precluded from subsequent architectural revisions, and were never built.

Drawing P-1 is the most extensive in detailing the layout and connections from the mechanical room. The sanitary drains – under the slab – and the various lines and risers to toilets, kitchen and baptistry are shown. A section through the sewage ejector pit and sump pump pit are drawn. On drawing P-2, aside from the four original toilet locations, the rain leaders are shown as connecting to the gutters above and are, as noted on the architectural and structural drawings, concealed in the roof structure. Additionally, various hot and

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25 Drawings — NCC records, CIAA

26 This toilet is labeled *JR. Toilet* on the original A-3 drawing, NCC records, CIAA

cold water lines are incorporated in the triangular plenum space above the ceiling of the narthex floor and noted also in drawing HAC-2. On P-2 various vents are also shown going up through the roof structure.

The gutters concealed in the eaves are drained into the six corners of the hexagonal plan of the building. At those locations a leader runs exposed against the visible leg of the steel frame member and spills out into a concrete basin that tops the drain, which per drawing P-2, carries onwards into the ground via a 6-inch downspout drain in the pit. The small, concealed roof covering the oculus is drained through 2-inch diameter leaders incorporated into the roof structure and ending in the concealed gutter at the bottom edge of the structure as noted in drawing P-2. It appears that a heat trace was also installed.<sup>27</sup> The areas underneath the eaves, and at the bottom of the entry steps, in front of the east and west entrances outside the entrance doors, are drained through trenches and 3 inch diameter scuppers shown in the corners in drawing P-2.<sup>28</sup> Drawing P-1 shows 3 inch cast-iron storm drains leading away from these scuppers under the stairs and berms.

Two related drawings are U-1 Utilities Site Plan and U-2 Lawn Sprinkler Plan<sup>29</sup>. These drawings were issued by Eero Saarinen's office and are dated June 15, 1962, and noted issued for bid. While U-1 carries those dates, drawing U-2 is without a title block, and noted as drawn by Fred Dixon, dated February 9, 1965. Drawing U-1 depicts, as the title indicates, the various utilities entering the

building as well as the sewage and storm water connections and related manholes. The parking lot drainage is included but reflects the early scope and not the subsequent expansion and the more recent changes. Drawing U-2 is limited in scope and only shows sprinklers around the immediate perimeter. Given its early date, 1965, and the subsequent changes in the landscape design and Dan Kiley's involvement the conditions shown were most likely superseded.

## Electrical

Three drawings, E-1 through E-3<sup>30</sup>, show the original electrical plans for the classroom level, the Narthex/office level and the Nave, respectively. Aside from power and telephone riser diagrams and connections to equipment and circuit breakers, the majority of the information concerns the switching of the lights in the various spaces. The transformer vault and incoming power lines are shown on drawing U-1.

<sup>27</sup> As per partial drawing prepared by the Storrow Kinsella partnership dated 26 April 1988. Drawing is titled SK-1 and is marked "Progress Prints not for construction.", Records Office, North Christian Church

<sup>28</sup> These areas in front of the main entrance doors appear to be of concern with leaks reported. Water is able to run down the stairs and accumulate.

<sup>29</sup> Drawings — NCC records, CIAA

<sup>30</sup> Drawings — NCC records, CIAA





*Vehicle entrance to North Christian Church – image by Hadley Fruits, 2017*

## Understanding the Landscape:

As one of the first modernist churches in the United States, North Christian Church and its landscape is a long-standing, masterful example of how design excellence can elevate pride in a place. Dan Kiley was a landscape architect who made significant contributions to the art of Modern landscape design during the second half of the twentieth century. During this period he developed over forty projects in Columbus, Indiana, a small town with a remarkable legacy for Modern architecture and landscape design due to a culture of patronage, influenced by J. Irwin Miller. This environment attracted many distinguished designers to build in the community, and Kiley collaborated with several notable architects in Columbus, including

Eero Saarinen, Kevin Roche, and Harry Weese.<sup>31</sup>

The initial site, limited to the northwest portion of the existing property, was purchased in 1958. Saarinen's office located the building on this site, and was responsible for the initial landscape design. Dan Kiley was engaged to design the site only after the building was completed, in 1964 as noted in the history and the landscape reports. (See Attachment B.) In 1971 Tipton Lane was extended east to meet Home Avenue and the property expanded accordingly. With the exception of the parking, and its changes in size and planting, the existing landscape is essentially in keeping with Kiley's final design from 1974.

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<sup>31</sup> This section is copied from the the Executive Summary of Landscape Analysis prepared by Merritt Chase. See Attachment B for the complete report.

## Landscape significance

Dan Kiley's design at North Christian Church is a clear example of a landscape that visitors experience in a defined sequence, moving through ordered rooms formed by trees and hedges that control the views. The design is particularly sensitive to those arriving by car, and incorporates vehicle circulation in such a way that does not disturb the experience of a pastoral landscape. A maple allée enforces the perimeter of the property and filters views of the church as people arrive from Sycamore Street and travel down Tipton Lane. A curvilinear drive draws visitors into the site, winding through woodland and meadow. The drive ends in the parking lot where evergreen hedges define the edges as an outdoor room, as well as an axial approach to the building. The path from the parking lot emerges to bring visitors to the building entrance, traversing wide, flat steps over a slope that brings the ground plane closer to the church's low hanging roof. Magnolia groves surround the church to the north and south, extending out from the architecture. The building is not a stand-alone object surrounded by plantings, but rather it is an integrated feature of its surroundings. The landscape and building form a unified composition, from the church base rising from the ground to the top of the spire ascending towards the sky.

The landscape is significant for it is an exemplary manifestation of Dan Kiley's Modernist style. While the condition of different elements varies, overall the site has matured with integrity and maintains the essential vision of the landscape architect. Also noteworthy is the collaboration between these preeminent landscape architect and architects—Dan Kiley, Eero Saarinen, Kevin Roche, and John

Dinkeloo—in the city of Columbus. As part of the bodies of work of these distinguished designers, the landscape of North Christian Church is an important contribution to a collection of designed spaces in the city that influenced and advanced the discourse of Modernism.

### Defining Landscape Features:

The dynamic relationship between the structural elements of planting and the sequence of movement are defining landscape features of Kiley's work that appear throughout the North Christian Church Landscape:

#### Gridded Trees

- Kiley elements: allées, groves
- Tight tree spacing and experience of enclosure
- Perimeter planting frames the site as a whole

#### Patterned Vegetation

- Kiley elements: hedges, monoculture groundcover, patterned groundplanes
- Vertical height creates spatial "rooms"

#### Experiential Circulation

- Kiley elements: landscape features either frame or screen views of the church; the landscape is organized and arranged for visitors to move along a particular sequence
- A clear axial approach to the building from the parking lot

#### Infrastructure

- The building and site walls were built when Kiley joined the project, remaining a consistent condition to respond to throughout the design iterations<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Sections are copied from the Summary portion of the Landscape Analysis. See Attachment B for full report



# Assessment of Significance

## Introduction

North Christian Church has been recognized as an important example of post-WWII ecclesiastical design in America by a major American architect. It joins such evocative examples as Marcel Breuer's St. John's Abbey church for the Benedictine order in Collegeville, MN, Wallace Harrison's First Presbyterian Church in Stamford, CT or Philip Johnson's Crystal Cathedral to name only a few examples. This importance rests on a number of distinct factors ranging from the vision of the congregation, the design team involved in the creation of a unique architectural form, the religious symbolisms it embodies, and the role the building played in the Columbus community in the past and, will play in the future.

The significance of the building and site needs to be assessed through a number of different lenses. The most prominent one is reflected in the National Historic Landmark designation in 2000<sup>33</sup> supported by the thematic study of Modernism in Bartholomew County, Indiana, from 1942<sup>34</sup>. The selection for a Keeping It Modern grant from the Getty Foundation, which makes the preparation of this Conservation Management Plan (CMP) possible, is a less formal but equally important acknowledgement of the building and site significance.

In addition to the general assessment of significance provided below, the CMP contains

the determination of significance from different points of view as evidenced in the architectural history (Attachment A), the sociocultural analysis (Attachment C) and the landscape analysis (Attachment B).

However, the determination and statement of significance outlined below has an additional purpose. While it draws on those earlier efforts. It seeks to provide more detailed guidance for future decision making and for establishing the proper framework for the adjustments and modifications that are anticipated necessary to accommodate a different use and its related functional and code-compliance requirements. In that context a great deal of attention has been given to determining the significance of many of the interior and site features and details.

The most likely change from a religious to secular purpose presents particular challenges. Many of the interior furnishings fit-outs and fixtures are significant but related to the earlier, religious use. Their preservation is important but may not be possible in-situ or only with discreet interventions.

33 See the National Historic Landmark Nomination for North Christian Church, Designated May 16 2000, by the Secretary of the Interior, <https://npgallery.nps.gov/GetAsset/68cd3a7e-f740-452b-9877-95a66c6c59e8>

34 See theme study *Modernism in Bartholomew County, Indiana, From 1942*, Storrow-Kinsella for the National Parks Service, 2000, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalhistoriclandmarks/upload/Columbus-FINAL-FOR-PRINTING-508-Compliant.pdf>



## Current designations

- National Historic Landmark designation granted in 2000.

## Historic or Evidential Significance

Summarized below are four main historic arguments for North Christian Church's significance. For a more in-depth discussion of the historic and evidential significance of the church, see the historic assessment in Attachment A.

First, North Christian Church is part of a larger civic infrastructure comprised of a collection of modernist architectural masterpieces in Columbus, which are all marked by a commitment to the betterment of community. These include private and public institutions, some of which were built with funding from the Cummins Foundation, and others privately funded, but sharing the same civic-centered commitment.

Secondly, the design of the church and site was a collaborative undertaking, which enhanced or established the reputations of designers who continued to play a significant role in the architectural legacy of Columbus. In addition to Eero Saarinen, these included Kevin Roche, John Dinkeloo, Paul Kennon, Maurice Allen and John Kinsella, who began their career under Saarinen's tutelage. Dan Kiley, who designed the landscape, and Alexander Girard, who designed most of the ecclesiastical objects, were also involved in the design of other significant Columbus landmarks.

Thirds, the church was part of the Irwin-Sweeney-Miller family legacy of community leadership and religious institution-building in Columbus. North Christian Church is associated especially with

J. Irwin and Xenia Miller, who were among the founders of the church, and who were deeply involved in the selection of architect and in the design of the building. Correspondence between Xenia Miller and Kevin Roche regarding various maintenance concerns, highlights her continued commitment to the church after completion.<sup>35</sup>

Lastly, North Christian Church represents an optimistic outlook, more typical of mid-century design. The mindset which drove the soaring design of the church was a reflection of that specific congregation's beliefs in the power of architecture and community to bring about positive change.

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<sup>35</sup> Correspondence between Xenia Miller and Kevin Roche regarding different issues at the church, June 1983 and May 1984, MS 1884, box 706, folder 10, Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo and Associates Records, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

# Sociocultural Significance

## Introduction:

When the conservation management plan was commissioned, it was still the expectation that the congregation would continue to occupy the building. However, it was evident at the time that additional resources and revenues would be needed to support the endeavor. To explore the options for sustaining the use of the building by the congregation, Bryony Roberts conducted a survey and prepared a report – the full text is included in Attachment C. The report examined the sociocultural significance of the church in the context of Columbus, Indiana and sought to propose strategies for sustaining that significance into the future.<sup>36</sup> One of the pathways envisioned was making the building, which had ample secondary spaces, more of a community-focused hub with multiple social and cultural organizations utilizing its amenities. However, since the commission of the report, the congregation was dissolved and has left the building. Ownership of the building at this time has been transferred to the Columbus Capital foundation as an interim solution until such time as an alternative use and user has been identified. While the context of the report has changed, it nonetheless offers evidence for the past and present sociocultural value of the site and identifies local stakeholders and potential community partnerships that might help to sustain that value into the future.

North Christian Church was a unique institution, having emerged from the religious and political leadership of J. Irwin and Xenia S. Miller in the 1950s to become a center for progressive activism from its founding. Innovative modern

<sup>36</sup> The full text of the report has been included as Attachment C at the end of this report.

architecture by Eero Saarinen and landscape design by Dan Kiley supported and enabled the egalitarian mission of the church, creating a remarkable alignment between worship, community, and design. Despite the uniqueness of this institution and its history, the church was not able to overcome the challenges that now face many other religious institutions in the 21st century: declining membership and funds. These challenges prompted the congregation to consider alternative options for institutional organization and stewardship of the building. The Sociocultural Analysis articulated and documented the sociocultural importance of the site by examining its historical role as a social and cultural hub, identifying the strengths and opportunities of the site for future activation, and strategizing options to sustain the institution into the future. While the church was not able to successfully expand into a cultural hub, the methodology and approach of the report may offer some guidance and inspiration for future efforts.

In addressing the challenges, the report took a contextual approach: framing the specific conditions of the church in relation to the larger social, religious, and political changes of Columbus, Indiana. To address the past significance of the church, the analysis was informed by historical research on the institution and interviews with members of the congregation as well as research into the religious and political history of the town. This combination of institutional history and contextual research revealed the significance of the church as a unique religious institution and leader in political activism during the civil rights

era. To assess the significance and strengths of the site at the time, the report preparation was informed by interviews with church leadership, members, and stakeholders, as well as an analysis of the broader challenges facing religious institutions in this century.

A contextual approach was seen as particularly important in strategizing future options. As church leadership recognized, maintaining the vitality of the institution required being responsive to the changing sociocultural context. Columbus had experienced significant social and cultural transformations since the church's founding. In 1955, when J. Irwin and Xenia Miller and forty others left First Christian Church to found North Christian Church, Columbus was a primarily white, Christian town buoyed by postwar optimism and expansion. Columbus, unlike other small communities in the Midwest, has continued to grow economically because of the presence of large manufacturing companies. College graduates now tend to flock to larger cities and coastal regions and this, along with increasing globalization, has led employers in Columbus to recruit internationally, reflecting their global presence and operations. A much greater diversity of cultures, languages, and religions now animates Columbus than in previous decades, and population growth is being driven by communities of color. The future of any institution in Columbus must therefore respond to the changing cultural context and to the shifting priorities for community programming and relevance. To address those future possibilities for North Christian Church, the research and resulting report sought to assess the changing social, political, and religious context through data analysis, compilations of recent community-based studies, and extensive interviews with stakeholders. In addition, local

initiatives and institutions that were responding to this changing context were studied to see whether appropriate potential partnerships could be identified.

Overall, this "Sociocultural Analysis of North Christian Church" sought to deploy a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to address future possibilities. It aimed to articulate distinguishing characteristics of the institution and to contextualize its significance with the larger social, religious, and political contexts. While the primary goal was to develop methods for supporting the significance and survival of a particular institution and its legacy, the report, its research, methodologies and outcomes are a valuable tool which may serve as a context and starting point for a subsequent institution that intends to use the building for an alternative and secular use but is mindful and respectful of the building as a place that served as a connector across sectors and communities in Columbus, Indiana.

## Social and cultural significance of North Christian Church:

The history of North Christian Church reveals an institution with interconnected religious, social, and architectural significance. The Disciples of Christ denomination is already distinct from other faiths for its combination of non-hierarchical organization and attention to New Testament worship. Within the denomination, North Christian Church forged a particularly progressive position, combining faith with social justice activism to address the intersecting inequities of gender, race, and sexuality. From the 1960s to 1990s, this church, enabled by the ambitions of J. Irwin Miller, Rev. John Bean, and an active congregation, pursued this social agenda at a large scale - combining local, regional, and national action. While the size of the congregation and the scope of its activities have diminished in the 21st century, the core values of collaboration and inclusion remained intrinsic to the religious and social purpose of the church. The building designed by Eero Saarinen, and particularly the Nave, offer a constant reminder of those core values by staging a non-hierarchical gathering place. These core values offer guidance for maintaining its social and spiritual significance through future processes of change.

North Christian Church continued to pursue many of the core social and religious values that motivated its founding, but the institution occupied a diminished role in the larger community of Columbus and faced tensions between the needs of the congregation and the scale of its building and grounds. Internal challenges of decision-making also added to the difficulty of rethinking the institution and establishing sustainable models of stewardship.

The building and grounds of NCC, however, are significant spatial and cultural assets to the larger community of Columbus. The indoor and outdoor spaces consist of a range of types and sizes of venues, from small classrooms to large event spaces and expansive grounds, that could support dynamic new programming. Finding alignments between the spatial assets of NCC and the programmatic needs of surrounding communities could therefore offer possibilities for reviving the social role of NCC and supporting its built heritage.

The demographic conditions studied in the report reveal how Columbus and Bartholomew County are in a significant phase of transition. Due to shifting economic and cultural conditions, the population is becoming more diverse, international, and multilingual. While there are many initiatives to create an inclusive and supportive environment for diversity in Columbus, continuing the historic legacy of the Columbus Way, there are still persistent disparities in quality of life between communities of color and white populations. These inequities pose significant problems for Columbus' future. As many public, private, and nonprofit organizations in Columbus have identified, communities of color are the source of population growth and yet they face barriers to economic and social equity. If these issues are not addressed in profound and systemic ways, the city will not be able to continue attracting new residents or retain new employees. Columbus has a special legacy of leadership in building healthy communities through progressive, cross-sector collaborations. Given this ethos, Columbus

has the capacity to address these problems and become a model, a place to incubate innovative ideas, and highlight the potential of small cities in a shifting cultural landscape.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Text is taken from separate Conclusion sections referenced in Bryony Roberts' report, see Attachment C

# Aesthetic and Architectural Significance

## The Architects and the Design Team

Although North Christian Church is often depicted as one of the last projects in which Saarinen played a leading role, the Historical Analysis report, included in full in Attachment A, has shown that it was more of a collaborative project. The conference notes detailing progress on the project – many of which are available in the Eero Saarinen Collection at Yale University Library's Manuscripts and Archives – demonstrate that the main interlocutors for the project were Kevin Roche, John Dinkeloo, Paul Kennon, Maurice Allen, and John Kinsella. As mentioned in the report, the Saarinen office had been involved in several projects by the time Eero died. Involvement in many of these became the proving ground for a generation of architects. North Christian Church is different, however, as Roche, Dinkeloo, Kennon, and Kinsella would also have a significant role in maintaining the architectural legacy of Columbus, Indiana. Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo and Associates is especially important in this regard. Both were important in the early days of Saarinen's firm. Roche, for example, was an assistant on signature projects such as the National Expansion Memorial in St. Louis, Irwin Union Trust Bank, and Miller House and Gardens. Roche and Dinkeloo not only completed North Christian Church in 1964, but they also managed subsequent alterations to the site and structure from the 1970s until the 1990s. Their carefully-wrought list of specifications<sup>38</sup> provides the most extensive inventory of North Christian Church's material and structural aspects, and continues to guide future renovations.

Moreover, with the formation of Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo and Associates in 1966, the firm went on to design several important architectural works in Columbus. These include the Columbus Post Office (1970), the Cummins Midrange Engine Plant (1973), a glazed addition to Eero Saarinen and Associates' Irwin Union Bank (1973), the Cummins Engine Corporate Headquarters (1985), an expansion to the Columbus Visitors' Center (1985), and a further renovation of the Cummins Engine Plant (1998). Paul Kennon made his own architectural contributions to Columbus. His first Columbus project with Caudill, Rowlett, Scott (which became CRS-Sirrine or CRSS, and where Kennon became design principal) was the Fodera Community School (1973), followed by the Irwin Union Bank State Street Branch (1974), the Indiana Bell Telephone Company Switching Station (1978), and streetscape renovations to downtown Columbus (1990). John Kinsella was a frequent presence in client meetings throughout the history of North Christian Church. He began his career at Eero Saarinen and Associates, working as a draftsman on the National Expansion Memorial, Dulles Airport, and as a field engineer on the IBM Thomas J. Watson Research Laboratory. Kinsella remained with the Saarinen firm to complete work on North Christian Church and the Vivian Beaumont Theater and Plaza at the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in New York. Kinsella worked for Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo and Associates from 1981 until 1985, working primarily on projects for Cummins. With Meg Storrow, Kinsella formed the Kinsella Partnership in Columbus, specializing in the design of landscapes and public spaces in urban areas. They contributed to the Front Door

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<sup>38</sup> General Construction 1962, Renovations 1990, 1994, and Wood furnishings 1963. MS 593, Series IV, box 566, folders 1552, 1553 and 1555, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library



project (1993) – a combination of landscape and urban design elements meant to create an inviting entrance to Columbus— and in 1998, designed improvements to Dan Kiley’s Bicentennial willow corridor plantings along State Route 46 (1976). The firm became Storrow|Kinsella and relocated to Indianapolis in 1996. Alexander Girard, who designed the textiles, and other ecclesiastical objects for North Christian, was previously involved in the interior design at the Miller House, and developed a scheme for Washington Street. This brief section would not be complete without mentioning the work of another long-time collaborator of Eero Saarinen’s: Dan Kiley. Kiley’s office established its reputation alongside Saarinen’s, and worked together on Irwin Union Trust Bank, the Miller House and Gardens, and North Christian Church. Kiley also contributed designs to other projects in Columbus. These include: Lillian Schmitt Elementary School (Harry Weese, 1957), Columbus North High School (1961), the Hamilton Cosco Office Building (Harry Weese, 1962), Hamilton House and Garden (Maurice Thornton and Anna Campbell Bliss, 1963-1971), Newlin House (Harry Weese, 1964), Otter Creek Golf Course (Harry Weese, 1964), First Baptist Church (Harry Weese, 1965), the Taylorsville Branch of the Irwin Union Bank (1966), W.D. Richards Elementary School (Edward Larrabee Barnes, 1966), the Cummins Historic District (1968), and the Cummins Midrange Engine Plant (Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo Associates, 1973). Kiley’s contribution to the design of North Christian Church will be discussed in more detail in the Landscape Analysis section, in Attachment B.<sup>39</sup>

## Other architectural significance criteria

- North Christian Church is an iconic late modernist building, in that it utilizes an expressive form which communicates the beliefs and aspirations of its owners, members of the congregation. It is a visual departure from Saarinen’s previous rectilinear Columbus designs (First Christian Church, Irwin Union Bank, the Miller House), and is a decisively suburban structure, designed to be viewed also from a moving car.
- North Christian Church proposed a renewed, centralized, spatial solution for religious gatherings. It is a pristine volume, where all functions are located within a single envelope, and where their hierarchy, the Nave being primary, is figuratively expressed in section.
- With its singular, powerful gesture visible on the horizon, the design of North Christian Church suggests a new monumentality, and an expression of postwar, forward-looking American optimism.
- North Christian Church is a fully-designed site, where the design extends beyond the building, to the parking lot and the access roads. The site design, which underwent several iterations following the changing needs of the congregation, and the northward development of Columbus, resulted in a church building enveloped in nature.

<sup>39</sup> This section is adopted from the Historical Analysis section included in Attachment A, *Conclusion: Statement of Architectural Significance for North Christian Church*, p. 114.

## Summary Statement of Significance

**North Christian Church is a fully-designed site, incorporating the landscape, the building and its contents. It represents important evidence of the collaborative work of a remarkable team of designers who played a significant role in modern architecture in the US and in the architectural legacy of Columbus.**

**This iconic, late modernist structure is a manifestation of the optimistic spirit of its time, and an expression of a belief in the transformative power of form. Its pristine volume, with all functions centrally organized under one soaring roof and spire, eloquently embodies and communicates the faith and progressive aspirations of the congregation and its founders.**

**North Christian Church retains its architectural integrity with much of its original architectural fabric in place, and though the site is no longer a home for church members, it is a living reminder of the core values which have guided its operation since the very beginning. With its symbolic form, welcoming spaces, and rich history of social activism, it continues to offer community-building opportunities for the growing and diversifying population of Columbus.**

# Levels/Zones of Significance

## Definitions

Accompanying this section are several diagrams including a plan of the building surroundings, three floor plans and two sections. Each are marked in different colors indicating preservation zones, denoting different levels of significance and thus their relative need for preservation or permitted intervention. The definitions for the zones are as follows:

### Zone 1: High Significance – Preservation Required (Red)

This includes the areas of the greatest significance and integrity, which retain most if not all the original architectural fabric intact. It is here that it is expected that every effort be made to preserve, conserve and maintain all aspects of the building, its design and materiality. This includes not only retaining the shape and configuration of the various spaces but also their materials and finishes. This designation may include areas that contribute to a particular and very significant visual effect made possible by a particular design configuration, and not just its materiality. Specific reference is made here to the spaces above the ceilings of the perimeter offices on the narthex level that provide indirect daylight to the ambulatory corridor on this level, and also illuminate the surface of the Nave ceiling. While these spaces are not occupied and are visible from the outside, they are especially significant for the natural lighting effects they provide to both the Narthex level and the Nave.

### Zone 2: Medium significance – Limited Preservation Requirements (Yellow)

This level includes spaces where a substantial amount of original architectural fabric remains and the spaces retain a great deal of their original integrity. However, it is understood that some modifications are to be anticipated here to accommodate functional or technical needs without losing the character of the space. Acceptable alterations to Zone 2 spaces would not affect the reading of the overall site or building significance, as interpreted in the Assessment of Significance above. Included in this zone are spaces which volumetrically contribute to the building or site, but it is understood that updates or changes may be required to accommodate a different user. Minor changes to materiality and interior divisions as well as other updates, may be permitted in Zone 2 spaces. Acceptable alterations are specified for each Zone 2 space in the more detailed descriptions.

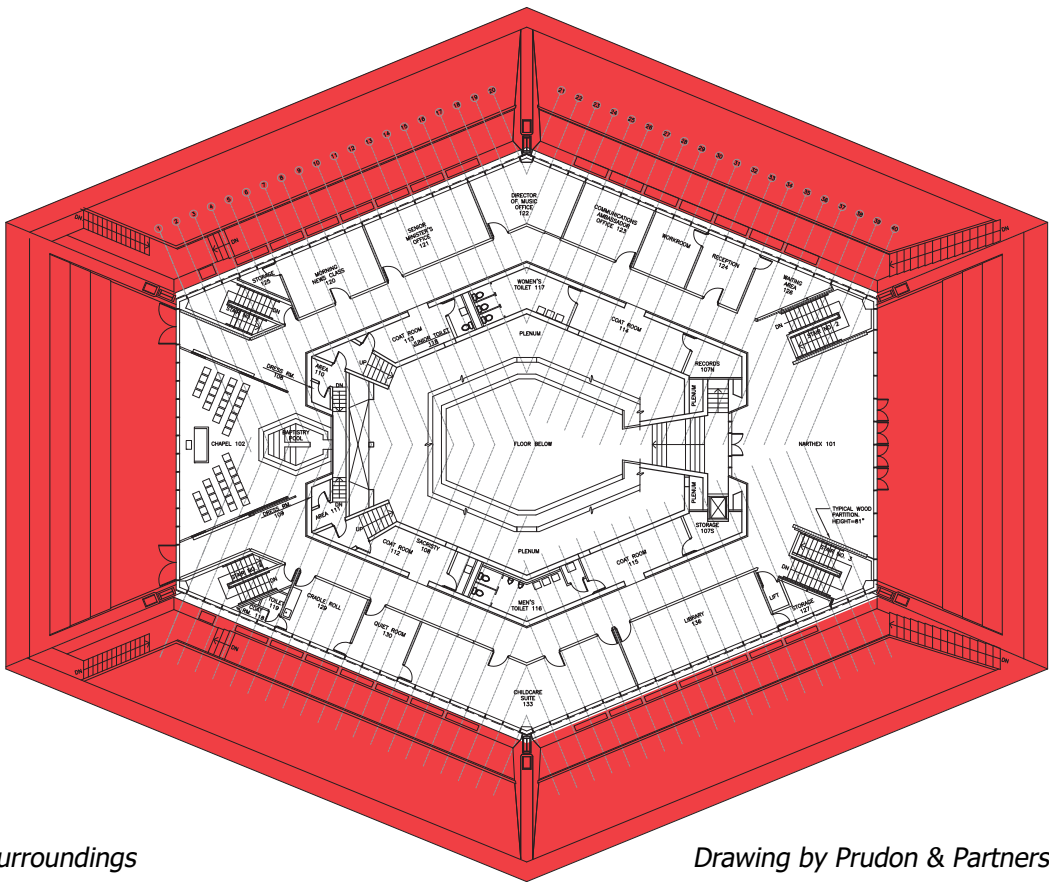
### Zone 3: Low Significance – Little or no preservation (Green)

This designation concerns mostly spaces or areas with little or no original fabric, or concealed or service areas, which do not contribute to the significance of the building, as outlined above. It is here that alterations can be made to improve the functionality without affecting the significance of the building fabric. Zone 3 spaces are not visible from the exterior, and their interior configuration and materiality do not contribute to the significance of the site, as detailed in the Assessment of Significance above.

Preservation Zoning Diagrams - Plans

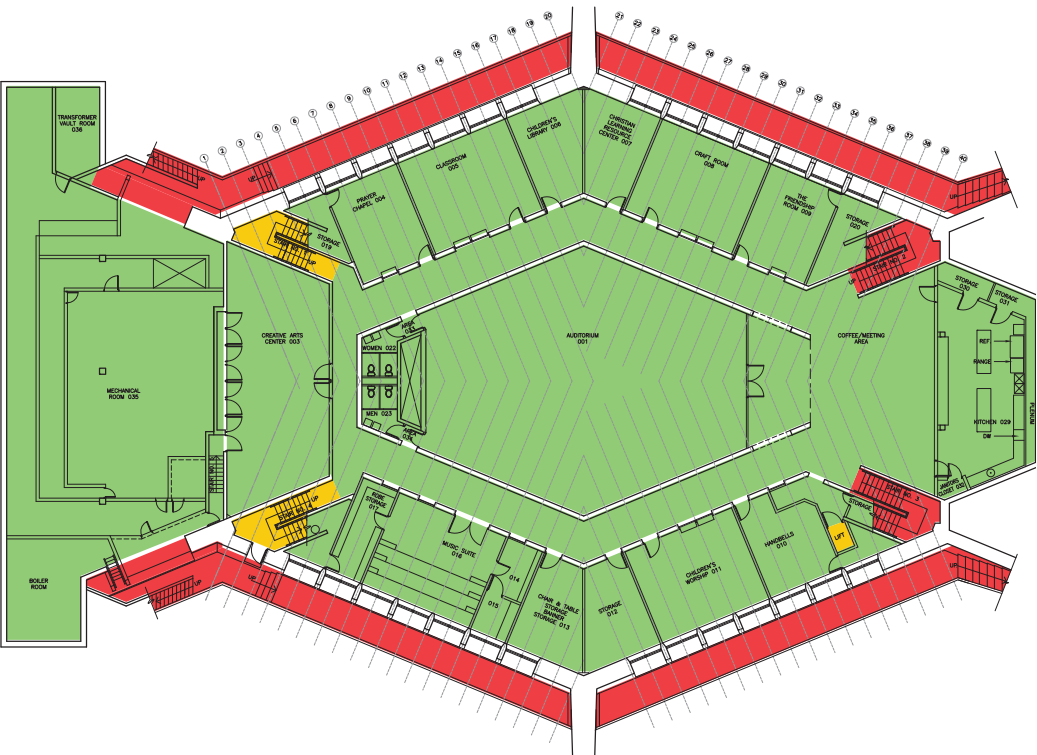
LEGEND

- ZONE 1
- ZONE 2
- ZONE 3



Zoning diagram - Building surroundings

Drawing by Prudon & Partners



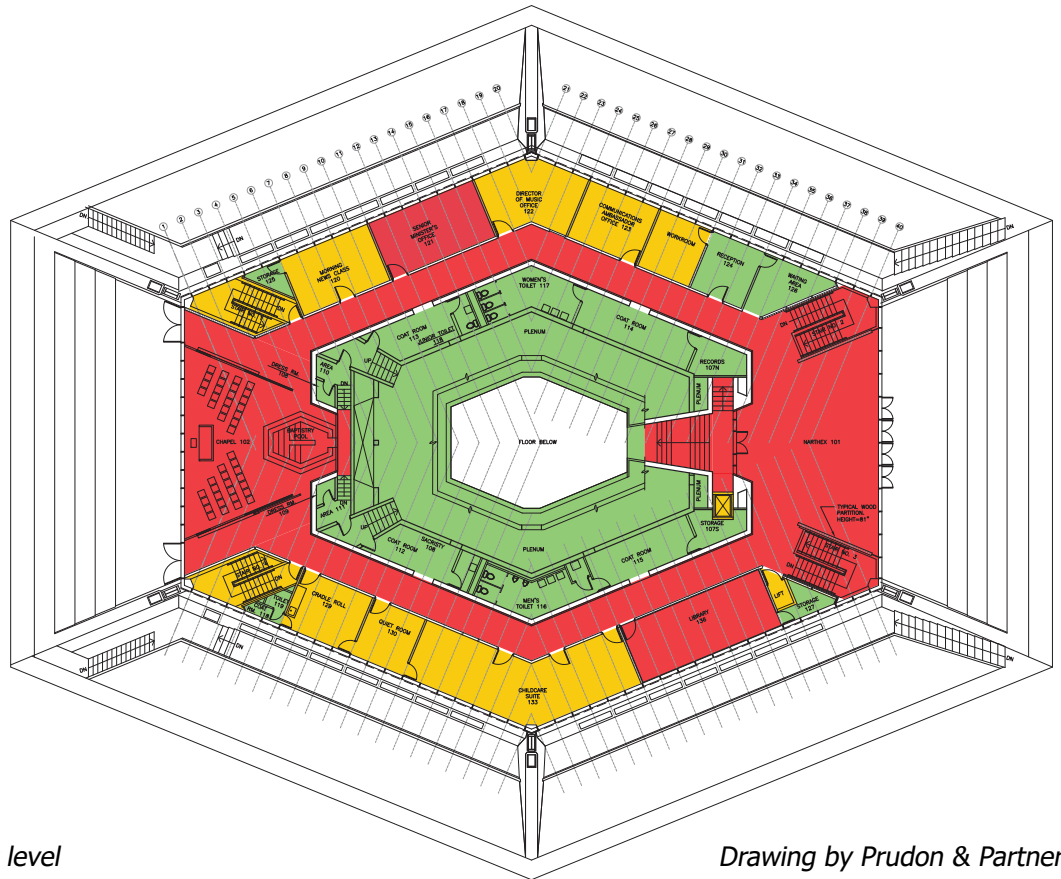
Zoning diagram - Classroom level

Drawing by Prudon & Partners



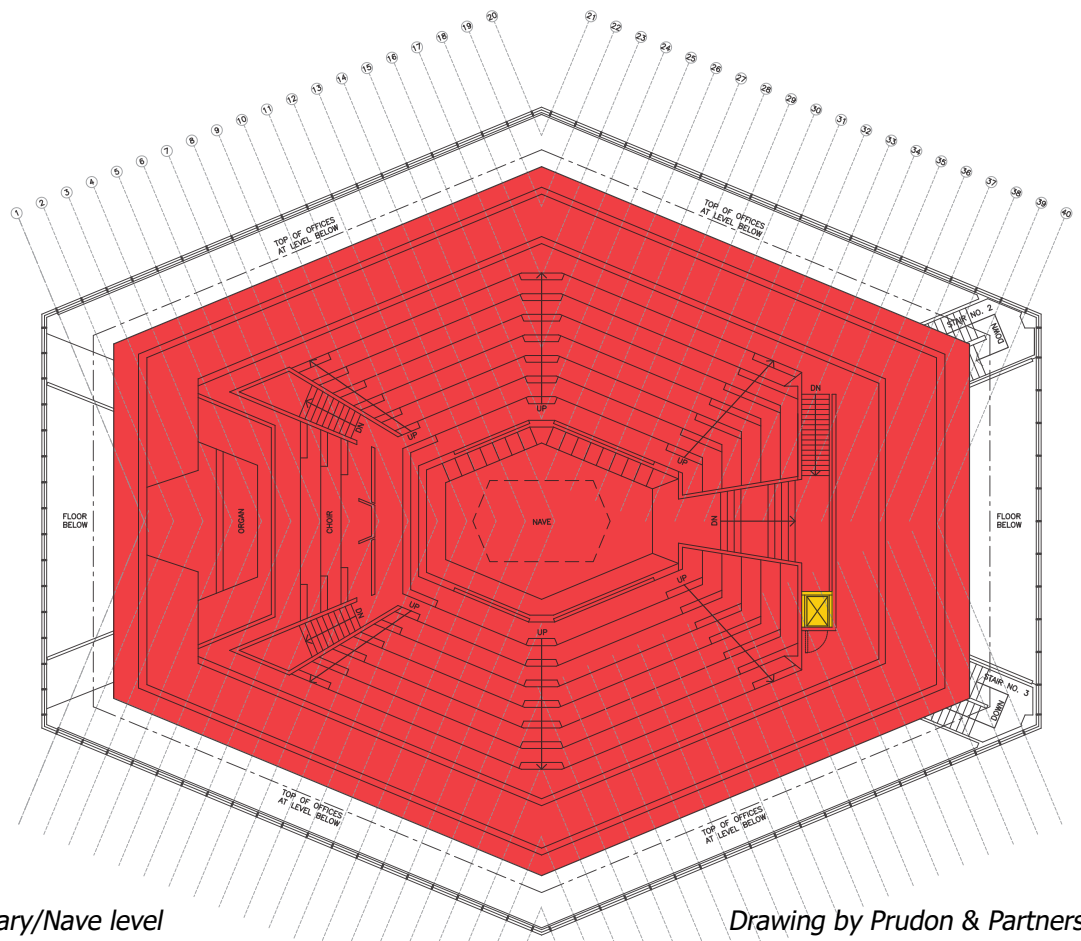
## LEGEND

- ZONE 1
- ZONE 2
- ZONE 3



*Zoning diagram - Narthex level*

*Drawing by Prudon & Partners*



*Zoning diagram - Sanctuary/Nave level*

*Drawing by Prudon & Partners*

## Levels of Significance – Key Elements



Image by Balthazar Korab, 1964, Library of Congress

### The Building Exterior significance:

#### Exterior Form, Surroundings and Lightwells

The building is significant as more than a project in the portfolio of a well-recognized architect and his design team or as another example of American postwar design of religious structures. The history of its design is a narrative of the deep involvement of members of the congregation and its leadership in working with the design team to find an expression of shared spirituality as well as a resolution to various practical needs. The centralized plan of the Nave – not entirely unknown to protestant tradition – and the capturing of all functions in one expressive form, are part of what makes the building evocative. The design fits into Eero's search for unusual but expressive forms as he did in other structures such as the Ingalls hockey rink at Yale, the Kresge auditorium at MIT, the TWA Terminal at JFK Airport and Dulles Airport. The capturing of all parts of the program in one

dominant form is particularly striking when seen against the traditional design of postwar churches where secondary functions such as administration, community activities or schools were housed in separate wings or detached buildings.

The exterior form that strives upward and culminates in the cross on the spire of the building finds its response also in the plan with its almost processional progress. The hierarchy expressed in movement from the center axis of the parking lot up towards the steps to the Narthex and through the Narthex up the main staircase to emerge upwards into the dramatic volume of the Nave with its central seating rising from the middle, central communion table, and sculptural organ, lit from above by its oculus, and from its circumference by a softer peripheral light.

The immediate surroundings of the building – as opposed to the larger site and landscape – are an integral part of the building's design. The surrounding berms, into which the building is recessed, practically hide the building elevations from the vantage point of a moving car, or when viewed from a distance, and reveal only the large sloping roof and spire. Creating the berms also "buried" the lower-level classroom level, even though the floor of the classroom level is not much lower than the actual grade. Moats or lightwells were carved out at the north and south elevations to enable natural light to enter through clerestory windows into the classroom level without distracting from the overall architectural impact. These moats are accessed at the four east and west corners by concrete stairs. On the southeast corner is the memorial garden with its commemorative plaques mounted against the

wall, and seating which was added later. In the soil of the berm across from the plaques, cremated remains of congregation members are interred<sup>40</sup>. The moats also provide access to the mechanical room and ventilation for the exhaust grilles at the base of the building to the west. Given the architectural significance of these so-called moats, or lightwells, in the architectural design concept, and given that they, along with the clerestory windows, provide natural light to the lower-level spaces, the berm-moat-window configuration is designated Zone 1.

While the moat areas to the north and south provide light to the lower level, the entrances to the building are at the west and east. The entrance features on the two sides are designated Zone 1. They are an integral part of the architecture, approach and entry into the building and have seen few modifications over time. The modifications made on the west and east entries were done to improve accessibility and are anticipated to remain.

### Building Envelope

All exterior elevations have been designated Zone 1 and no substantial changes are to be considered, maybe with the exception of the removal of the cross on top of the spire.<sup>41</sup> The three-dimensional appearance of the building was and is critical to the design as conceived and executed and is to be preserved faithfully. This applies to the overall appearance as well as to the details involving such features as windows or downspouts. Changes to be made to improve functions or operations are to be discreet and not visible.

<sup>40</sup> See *Memorial Garden drawing* in Appendix F for burial locations. NCC records, Courtesy Columbus Indiana Architectural Archives (CIAA).

<sup>41</sup> See *Donation Agreement* for actions to be taken in the event of removal of the cross. NCC records, CIAA

### The Building Interior significance

The architecture of the interior is a masterful combination of evocative spatial development and the dimensional rigor of a modernist commercial practice. As the spatial organization expresses the hierarchy of the different functions, there is a consistency in the material choices and detailing, which serves to further amplify this hierarchy. Where the focus has been on the nave, the spiritual core, and its form and detailing, the corridor and spaces around the 'bowl' of the Nave, the secular shell, show the rigor of the interior detailing and millwork. This detailing is not unlike the corporate architecture of the period and is emblematic of that other part of Saarinen's impressive portfolio. Walls, ceilings, doors and millwork details are carefully gridded and dimensionally coordinated with the window curtain walls around the perimeter. Maintaining and capturing that order when making alterations for new use, while important for preservation purposes, poses a challenge. In recognition of this challenge, the corridor is designated Zone 1, while the peripheral office spaces are mostly designated Zone 2, with some exceptions for the more important spaces as detailed below.

The subjugation of practical needs to an idea or concept, whether large or small, is also reflected in the engineering as well as the detailing of the building. Structurally, the ribs (or arches), making up the predominant structure and form, are expressed and easily 'read'. But mechanical and plumbing ducts and pipes are well concealed. Examples of detailing are roof drainage, buried in the structure, running along the steel arches, and draining into openings in the concrete base, or light switches carefully placed in door jambs and barely noticeable.

## Classroom Level

The classroom level is designated as Zone 3 (green and low significance) in its entirety. No significant interior spaces exist on the lower level and the architectural detailing is limited, with walls which are mostly painted poured in place concrete or concrete block. The flooring throughout is carpeting, vinyl tile or concrete. Ceilings are mostly the underside of the Narthex level floor slab. The auditorium, centrally located directly under the nave, has retained portions of its ceiling and lighting design in its layout but these are only minor features. The classrooms at the periphery have little or no architectural detail. The corridors follow the same plan as the floor above, the Narthex and Office Level. Efforts may be made to retain some of the original dark veneer wood doors, casings and panels, which are articulated consistently and define the bays. Kitchen, mechanical room and other service spaces do not have any significance and are expected to be altered significantly.

## Narthex and offices level

The zoning of the Narthex and office level is the most complicated. Areas designated Zone 1 are the Narthex, corridor areas and the chapel/baptistry. In all instances, this applies to floors, walls and ceiling as well as such features as hardware, fittings or light fixtures. In addition, the library and the minister's office have been included in Zone 1. In the case of the more recently remodeled reception area, it is recommended the recently made openings be eliminated, in order to reestablish the corridor wall, return it to its original appearance, and restore the overall perambulatory character of the corridor. The back-end spaces of the baptistry have been mostly

designated a Zone 3, as were the coatrooms, restrooms and various service spaces behind the bush-hammered concrete wall of the corridor. The back wall of the baptistry, as visible from the chapel space through the stainless-steel screen, is to be preserved.

With the exception of the library and the minister's office, the spaces under the office ceilings, between the corridor walls and exterior curtain walls, have been marked Zone 2 (medium significance). The designation was decided with the understanding that the so-called design grid and module, which in the original design determined layouts of windows, doors, and reflected ceiling plans, be recognized and maintained as part of the 'logic' and DNA of the building design. The spaces above the ceilings of the peripheral spaces, while not occupied, are designated Zone 1, as they are visible from the exterior and are a significant part of the architectural concept and provide natural light to the corridor and peripheral light to the nave.





*Image of the Narthex captured by Enrique Ramirez during research of the Eero Saarinen collection at Yale University Library, Manuscripts and Archives*

## The Narthex

The Narthex is the main entrance to the building from the east and the parking lot. Across the four sets of entry doors are wood and glass double doors leading to the nave. To the north and south, free-standing wood panels screen off open stairwells leading to the classroom/lower level and its community spaces. It is an open and well-lit space, with the full-height curtain wall to the east. The ceiling has two distinctive planes. One

is the bush-hammered underside of the concrete 'bowl' rising from the core that forms the Nave, and the other is the underside of the suspended plaster ceiling of the roof structure. The rising planes are separated by the glazed band that provides peripheral lighting to the nave ceiling. The only original furnishings in the space are fixed upholstered benches flanking the entry doors.





*Image of Chapel captured by Enrique Ramirez during research of the Eero Saarinen Collection, Yale Manuscripts and Archives*

### Chapel and Baptistry

The second most important space in the building, after the nave, is the chapel and baptistry, which was designed to be accessible throughout the day.<sup>42</sup> Its location on the west end of the building, and being directly accessible from that secondary entrance, was intentional. Compared to the Narthex, the symmetrical main entrance to the east, the chapel has a more closed and intimate character. The chapel itself can be separated from the corridors, and the natural light can be controlled. The entry doors are located at the north and south of the west elevation, and open onto corridors between fixed louvered wood

partitions with sliding sections. The space, on the one hand, was intended for separate use but on the other hand, is an integral part of the building circulation and was intended to be fully accessible when not in use as a chapel.

The chapel's design was the subject of a great deal of discussion and study between the design team and members of the congregation, and many detailed layouts and photographs of original model studies exist.<sup>43</sup> The chapel space can be

<sup>43</sup> See Ramirez Figure 3.33 for a drawing illustrating the use of the chapel for a wedding. Detail models showing how the space could be used for weddings or services survive. The design and furnishings were the subject of discussion at various meetings. The different versions of these drawings are undated and appear in Eero Saarinen and Associates, Baptistry Plan, n.d., Records Office, North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana. See, for instance, Conference Notes dated July 8, 1963, Baptistry-Chapel. MS 593, Series IV, b. 561, f. 1528, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscript and Archives, Yale University Library.

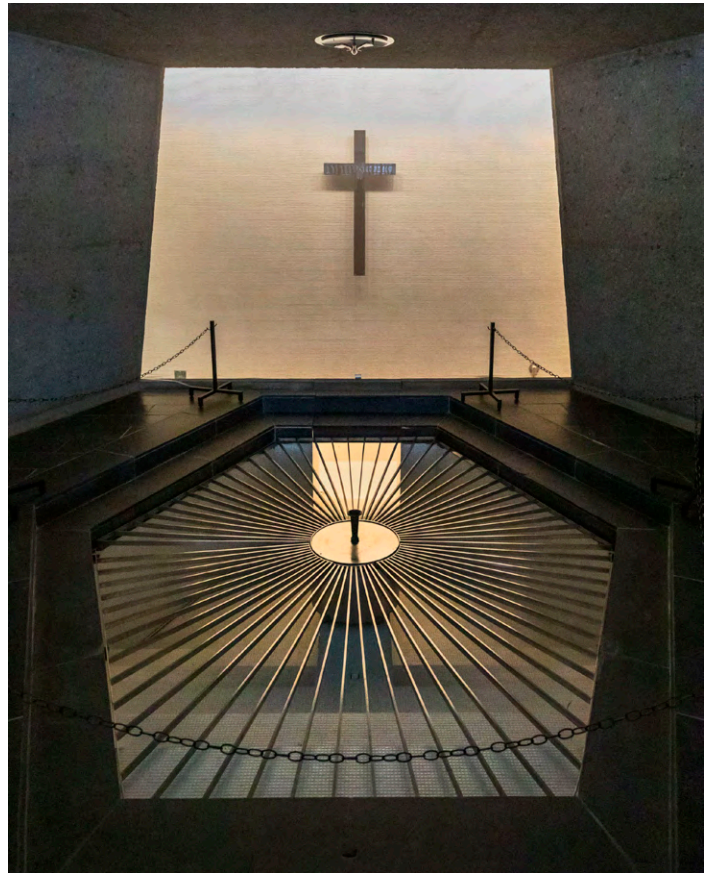
<sup>42</sup> Jim Stoner's Comments on the Design of North Christian Church, in M.T. Harrison letter to Maurice B. Allen, Jr., 20 February 1961, Job No. 5902, North Christian Church, Columbus, IN, MS 593 Series IV, Box 562, Folder 2, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library. See also Ramirez (Attachment A), p. 87.

separated from the corridor through louvered walls with similarly louvered wood screens. In the back of the chapel space against the window wall, a similar screen with vertical wooden blinds (“fins” as noted in Saarinen drawing A-16) exists, providing options for privacy, with or without blocking the light. The walls and screens are only partial height. The wood for the screens was specified as Philippine mahogany and has the same dark stain as found on the doors and walls of this floor.<sup>44</sup> The same stain color is found throughout the building on doors, walls and furnishings. With fixed seating arranged facing east, the space was to be used regularly as a chapel for small services and ceremonies like weddings, funerals, and baptisms. Tucked partially into a space cut out from the concrete bowl supporting the Nave, the chapel incorporates a baptismal pool that allowed for baptism by immersion.

The chapel and its baptistry survive almost entirely intact with only few changes since its completion. The space has retained its original finishes for floors, walls and ceiling. However, while designated Zone 1, it presents a considerable challenge. It has several significant original design features that, while difficult to adapt, warrant preservation because of the importance of the space and the original function in the design concept of the building.

The baptismal pool is integral to the design of the chapel space. In the back, hidden from view, it is flanked by small dressing rooms, reached by stairs up from the bottom of the pool. The back

<sup>44</sup> Alternate Proposal Contract Form, Subject: Wood Furnishings for North Christian Church, page F-2. The blank form is dated August 30, 1963 and stipulates for the work to be fully installed by December 15, 1963. However, it requests pricing for different wood species: African mahogany, Honduran mahogany, red oak and American walnut. Specifications for Wood Furnishings, Aug./14/1963, MS 593 Series IV, b. 566, f. 1555, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library



*View of baptismal pool and back wall – Hadley Fruits, 2019*

wall and interior pool surfaces are covered with white ceramic mosaic tiles. A fine stainless-steel mesh screen separates the back space from the chapel when not in use for baptism. The full-height stainless steel cross hanging on the back wall remains visible through the screen. An array of directional lights illuminate the back wall and the cross.<sup>45</sup> A horizontal decorative stainless-steel pool cover was designed and fabricated. Its design consists of a simple pattern radiating out from the center. To enable services such as weddings a raised wooden platform (one of three designed by Saarinen for North Christian) was proposed to fit over the pool.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Shown in drawing E-2, Records Office, NCC records at Columbus Indiana Architectural Archives (CIAA)

<sup>46</sup> Saarinen Furniture drawing F9 includes drawings for three platforms (baptistry, nave, auditorium). Handwritten notations red-lined around the auditorium platform, and the baptistry rolling and curtain wall screens, notes NIC, suggesting these were excluded from the contract. However, church sources say all platforms exist on the premises, and the baptistry screens are on site as well. NCC Records at the CIAA, Columbus, Indiana



The original fixed seating facing east towards the baptistry pool, designed by Saarinen's office, remains in place, with its upholstery intact. Behind the seating and in front of the vertical louvered window wall is the console for a small reed organ screened by wood panels. This installation is in place of a small Holtkamp organ which was discussed during the design phase. While preliminary designs were prepared, it seems it was never commissioned or installed.<sup>47</sup> It is not clear whether the existing organ screen is the original as designed by Saarinen's office.<sup>48</sup> While smaller in scale than the nave, the chapel has an architectural presence that is significant in the design of the church. Therefore, it deserves to be maintained, recognizing the potential future secular use, and the changes required for that use. Removal of the cross, and covering the baptistry pool following Saarinen's original platform design would create a suitable event space. The chapel/baptistry is designated a Zone 1 space.



*Nave interior – image by Hadley Fruits, 2017*

## The Nave

The Nave is the most important space in the building and is designated, in almost its entirety, Zone 1. Minor changes to improve the functionality of the space or improve its accessibility may be expected. Removal and appropriate storage of some of the furniture and furnishings or other freestanding items such as the Communion table or chancel platform extension are also anticipated. Other modifications necessitated by a new use may be made if they are minor or can easily be reversed to restore the original configuration.

During the design process the sculptural quality of the building and the centrality of the plan, as exemplified in the nave, were major design objectives. Relatively little has been altered in the space and the architecture retains almost all of its

<sup>47</sup> Holtkamp presented the designs for this organ on November 8, 1962. Ramirez 95 and footnote 112 refers to Holtkamp, Preparation Drawing, Baptistry Organ, 8 November 1962, North Christian Church Records, CIAA.

<sup>48</sup> Furniture drawing F8 includes a design for the Baptistry-Chapel Organ Screen. North Christian Church Records, CIAA, Columbus, Indiana.



original features, materials and finishes. During the design, every detail was carefully studied, meticulously executed and has been scrupulously maintained. Given the Nave's primary significance, all aspects deserve careful and comprehensive preservation.

The main entrance into the nave is from the east up the main stair from the Narthex. Additional secondary stairs exist on the east and west end of the space. One of the stairways to the east, south of the main entrance, leading to the upper pew levels, was replaced by an accessible lift. No lift provides access to the main level of the nave. The stairs to the west, at either side of the Chancel and organ loft, are accessed from the coatrooms on the narthex level. These stairs provide secondary access and egress. From the center space with its removable Saarinen-designed Communion table, rows of pews are stepped up. This theater style raking of the floor gives all seating excellent visibility of the Communion table and the Chancel. The pew seating is intersected at the corners of the hexagonal plan by intermediate steps which give access to the different pew levels, an arrangement very common in theaters. At the very top, the concrete 'bowl' of the Nave is held back from the ceiling of the roof to create an opening which receives natural light from the window wall above the ceilings of the office spaces in the narthex. This is apparent in the architectural section drawings A-6, East – West Longitudinal Section X–X, and A-7, North – South Transverse Section Y–Y, both dated June 15, 1962<sup>49</sup>. The effect is that the roof seems to be floating above the nave. This effect is enhanced by the light fixtures concealed at the edge of the

exterior curtain wall, and which according to a note on drawing E–3, are to be mounted on top of the classroom (office) ceilings. The fixtures are identified as Type B in the note but no schedule of fixtures appears on the electrical drawings. An additional bank of lights are installed in the cove at the periphery of the Nave "bowl", where the horizontal band of glass separates the "bowl" from the slope ceiling.

At the center of the space is the Communion table, designed by Saarinen's office. Consisting of 13 separate elements, 12 of equal height and one taller, representing Jesus Christ and the twelve disciples. The table is placed on a platform raised three steps above the nave floor.<sup>50</sup> The entire assembly is removable. While significant in the context of the nave's original use, it is anticipated that these elements will be removed when a new use is established. However, they are very significant and should be appropriately stored and preserved.

At the west end, the Chancel and the organ rise from the center. The chancel consists of a series of stepped platforms that accommodated the minister and various celebrants as well as the choir. Aside from the obvious religious symbols or furnishings the overall arrangement is significant and worthy of preservation in toto.

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<sup>49</sup> Drawings from North Christian Church records, CIAA, Columbus, Indiana

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<sup>50</sup> Ramirez 95 and 100 and Figures 3.32 and 3.35.



*Holtkamp organ in the sanctuary – image by Hadley Fruits, 2015*

## The Organ

Another important feature in the nave is the Holtkamp organ. This instrument is significant in several ways. Architecturally, from inside the space, it occupies a purposefully prominent place. It is the visual culmination of the processional approach from the parking lot through the Narthex and up the stairs of the nave. The actual design of the organ front and its prominence in the space was very intentional and is the signature work of the well-known organ builder Walter Holtkamp Sr., out of Cleveland. The organ is also significant in the role it played in the services of

the congregation and is an example of the long-term involvement of the Miller family with sacred music.

Eero Saarinen wrote to J. Irwin Miller on March 22, 1961 "...we must have an organ builder, who understands the visual potential of his instrument...". Saarinen probably suggested Walter Holtkamp Sr. with whom he had worked earlier on organs in the design of MIT's Kresge Auditorium and Chapel, which were completed respectively in 1953 and 1955. Miller apparently accepted Saarinen's recommendation. He contacted the Holtkamp Company on May 4 of

1961 and by May 9 an initial design agreement had been signed.<sup>51</sup> Work on the organ was supposed to begin November of 1961 and be completed by May of 1963.<sup>52</sup> However, the organ project was delayed and the first designs for the organ were not presented to Eero Saarinen and Associates till March 19, 1962 and August 1, 1962.<sup>53</sup> It was not until April 25, 1964 that the organ was dedicated in a special service.<sup>54</sup> It appears that the organ at North Christian Church was a gift.<sup>55</sup>

Walter Holtkamp Sr., the president of the Holtkamp Company was a remarkable organ builder and one of America's most influential of his profession. He gained the reputation of being "...the originator of a revival of the classic style of organ building..." In his designs "...the pipes are placed in the same room as the listeners" giving the pipes a sculptural presence, as demonstrated in North Christian, and reviving a Baroque tradition.<sup>56</sup> He was even referred to as "an architect of sound".<sup>57</sup> Holtkamp, who joined the company in 1936, designed and built many celebrated organs across the country including the one in the Bartell Chapel at Yale University and St. John's Abbey Church in Collegeville, Minnesota, a church designed by Marcel Breuer.<sup>58</sup> While Holtkamp Sr. does not seem to be specifically mentioned – he passed away in

51 Appendix A, Ramirez page 88.

52 *Ibid.*

53 Ramirez p. 94. Figure 3.31 shows the design presented on 1 August 1962.

54 Ramirez p. 102

55 According to an email from Mila Lipinski dated August 8, 2022, to Theodore Prudon, the organ was a gift from Elsie Sweeney and Dr. and Mrs. Robert S. Tangeman. According to the website of the Yale Institute for Sacred Music: "They were both leaders (Dr. and Mrs. Tangeman) in the Disciples of Christ Church having supported seminary and music education in the denomination for years." Accessed August 30, 2022. For a biography, see Irwin-Sweeney-Miller Collection in the Columbus Indiana Architectural Archives.

56 Obituary "Walter Holtkamp, Pipe Organ Builder". New York Times, February 14, 1962

57 Ryan Mueller, "Walter Holtkamp Sr., Remembered 1894 - 1962", The Tracker, Richmond, 63, n. 4 (October 2019): 26.

58 Pippings, April 2022, 36.

early 1962 just when construction began – North Christian Church must have been one of his last major works.<sup>59</sup> His son, Walter Holtkamp Jr., had joined the company and as president continued the work.<sup>60</sup>

The dominant position of the organ in the Nave space, with its exposed arrangement of ranks of pipes progressively increasing in size, is reflected in its architecture, and is evidenced in the early sketches.<sup>61</sup> It speaks to the significance of the organ visually but also expresses the importance of the organ and music within the context of the liturgy of the denomination. The racks of pipes are placed three dimensionally against the rising backdrop of the plaster ceiling, and in elevation they are arranged almost symmetrically, increasing in size as they move away from the center. In section the instrument is built up behind the pulpit on the chancel. The result is a three-dimensional sculpture where "the pipes are placed in the same room as the listeners."<sup>62</sup> Conference notes from that time acknowledge that statement:

*The arrangement of pipes and massing of the component parts has been achieved in cooperation with the architects.*<sup>63</sup>

59 See John Ferguson, Walter Holtkamp, American Organ Builder (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1979) for more detail.

60 "Walter H. Holtkamp Jr. Obituary", The Plain Dealer, September 5 – 9, 2018. He died at age 89. He had joined the company in 1956.

61 Attachment A Ramirez 94-95, and note 111. He notes that the organ is actually an assemblage of several component instruments arranged for architectural effect.

62 *Op. cit.* Holtkamp obituary, New York Times.

63 Conference notes, 19 March 1962 as quoted in Ramirez 93.

## Three-dimensional Zoning

The zoning indicated in the plans has important implications vertically and is clarified with the aid of the sections, as seen in the diagrams below.

### North-south Section

In the north-south section, through the office spaces, the area above the ceiling of the classrooms and office spaces of the narthex level is of particular interest. This void, that is seen from the outside through the upper row of the exterior window walls, above the first rail, allows daylight to enter, which in turn illuminates the corridor and, more significantly, the lower portion of the ceiling of the nave, and gives the nave ceiling its ethereal effect.

The interior of the narthex office level corridors and their elevations are expected to remain largely unaltered, though changes to some of the interior rooms are anticipated. These interior rooms are designated Zone 2, which requires the overall form of the space be maintained, while realizing minor interventions may be necessary to accommodate new use and function.

The plenums, visible in the referenced cross section between the auditorium ceiling and the base of the bowl of the Nave, are not subject to any zoning restrictions.

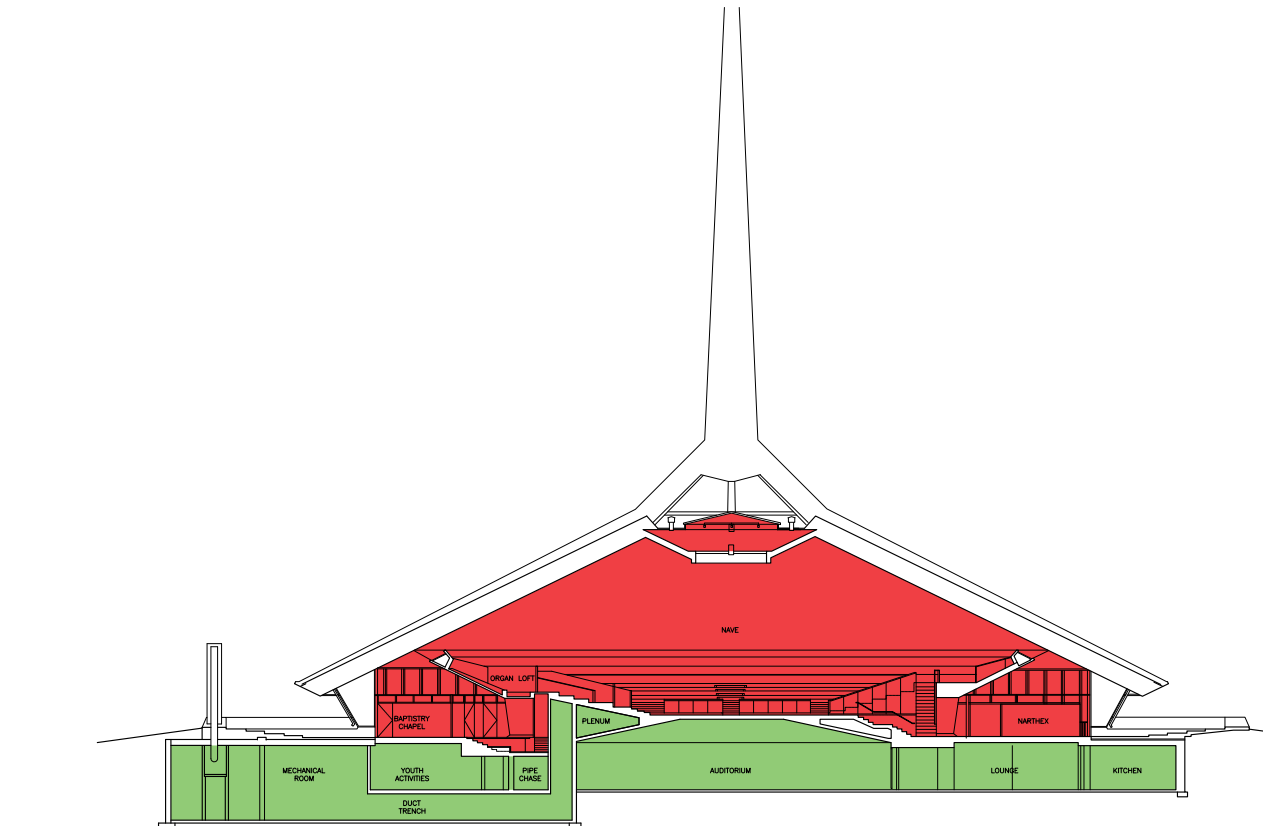
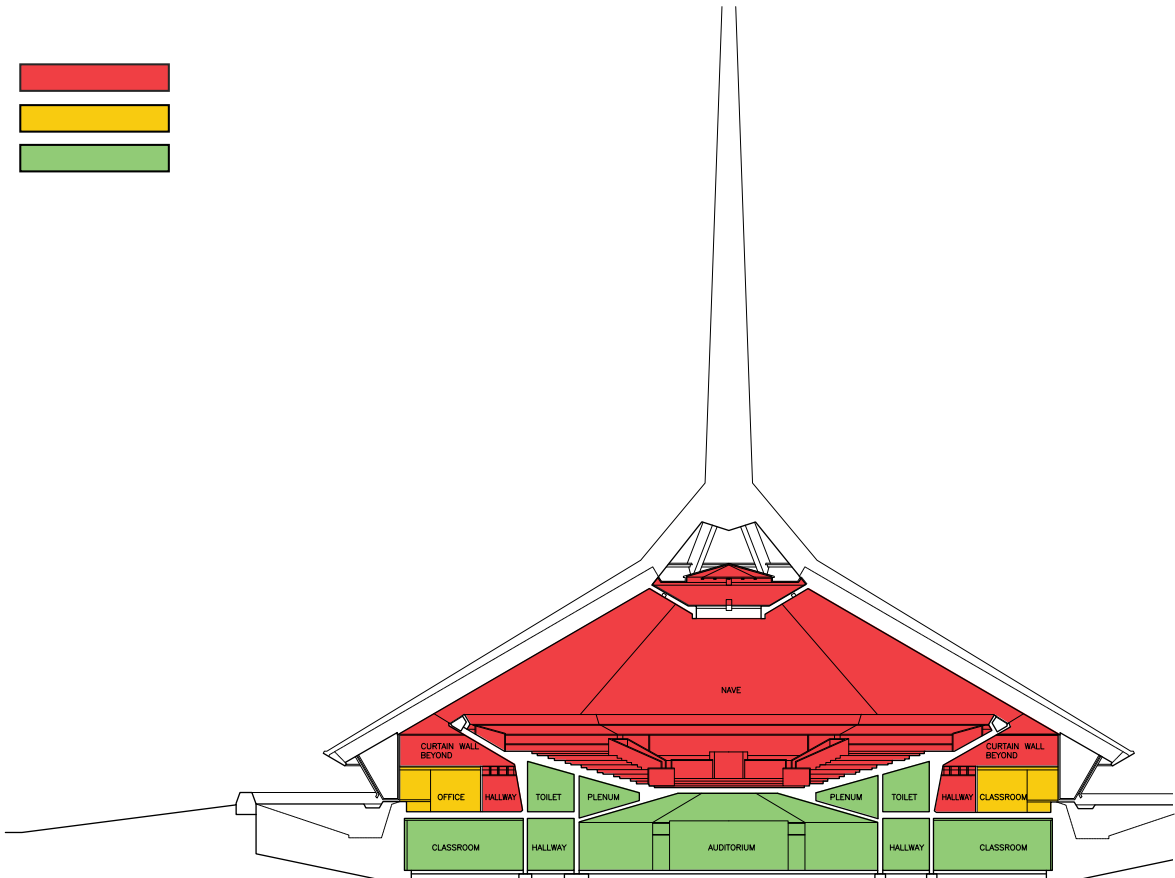
### East-west section

In the east-west section, through the Narthex and Chapel, very few changes are anticipated above the lower classroom level, and these changes are very minor at most. The later changes to the exterior steps, which created more accessible entrances, will likely remain. Alterations to the plenums and voids around the nave, as also noted above, are expected as part of a systems upgrade. The same applies to the mechanical and boiler rooms on the west end, and to the kitchen at the east. While the Narthex, chapel and baptistry (discussed in more detail under the narthex level zoning) are to remain largely intact as Zone 1, some changes to the secondary spaces are to be expected.

Preservation Zoning Diagrams - Sections

LEGEND

- ZONE 1 [Red Box]
- ZONE 2 [Yellow Box]
- ZONE 3 [Green Box]





## Collections

The building is the repository of several kinds of collections of mid-century furniture and furnishings as well as documents, most of which deserve preservation and conservation in appropriate locations in the building.

Two other collections warrant attention: the drawings and building construction and

maintenance-related papers which formed an important source of information for this conservation management plan. This information will be of importance to others in the future. The records of the congregation and its activities over the decades as a community deserve equal attention. Both collections should be housed in appropriate archives and be available for future reference.

# Detailed Designations, Existing Conditions and Recommendations

## Introduction

The following section is a more detailed exploration of the different elements which make up the building and their existing conditions. Based on the assessment of significance and the zones of significance specified in the previous section, this section will also make recommendations to further guide future interventions in more detail. As the building transitions from a religious institution under the congregation's ownership, to a more secular and as yet unknown owner and use, this section offers guidelines on what can be changed and how, in order to accommodate that new use and user, while retaining the building's significance.

## Introduction to building conditions

The information in this section was developed during a visual survey of the building, and was aided, where appropriate, by photography and the use of binoculars. No other tests were performed, or other investigative techniques used.

The survey was also aided by the history of the design and construction of the building attached to this report (Attachment A), as well as by direct review of original documentation, which was mostly available at the church's archives. In addition, conversations with long time users and occupants of the building, as well as with those who had worked on architectural drawings or projects in the building, proved to be very helpful.

In general, the building is in good condition except where noted below. Repair and maintenance have been adequate to prevent major deterioration. In recent decades the roofing and spire cladding have been replaced and parts of the mechanical system have also been replaced or upgraded. In the interior minor alterations have been executed over time. These were limited to the installation of two elevators and other installations to improve accessibility, as well as the removal of some interior partitions to accommodate new offices, and some minor office upgrades.

The following assessments are based on surveys conducted over two days in early March of 2020. They are based mostly, as mentioned above, on observation and were aided by conversations with Tonja Gerardy, the church minister at the time.<sup>64</sup>

A similar discussion of conservation recommendations for the landscape is summarized later in this chapter, and detailed in Attachment B.

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<sup>64</sup> The text of the report was also reviewed by Louis Joyner, who as architect has been responsible for some of the later alterations.

## Details related to the building complex

### General building conditions

The building and its immediate surroundings appear to be in good condition and retain almost all the original design features with a high degree of authenticity. While the building has seen several repair campaigns since its construction, some damage is visible mostly on the exterior.

The interior has seen some limited changes, specifically, the remodeling of the reception area on the narthex level; the installation of two elevators to improve access to the classroom level below and the upper reaches of the pews in the nave; and the removal of some interior partitions to accommodate the childcare program. Other condition issues are mostly the result of wear and tear, such as with many original wood surfaces which require treatment and maintenance.

Generally, building systems and amenities like lighting, bathrooms and equipment are inadequate in today's terms or require updating. Additional systems may need to be installed depending on the new use. The same applies to compliance with current codes and other regulatory requirements that will need to be adhered to. None of this has been addressed here because compliance is dependent on the alternative use which will be implemented.

### Exterior

The exterior on all six sides has seen little or no changes and represents the building as designed and built. Using the designations of significance and levels of intervention introduced in the previous section, the exteriors have to be considered a Zone 1 or worthy of preservation with only minimal changes. The building generally is in

fair to good condition. The conditions observed and noted below have not been segregated by elevation because they are typical and material and/or detail related and found on all elevations.

### Concrete retaining walls and stairs:

A few sections of the concrete wall between the berms and the moats have shifted. These walls appear to be independent from the structure of the building and serve as minor retaining walls. Cracks, spalls, and breakage also exist at these walls. Cracks and spalls were also observed in the concrete "wing" walls at the east and west entrances, at the concrete bases supporting the steel buttresses, and at the exterior concrete steps and pathways. The stairs on the northwest corner in particular show serious deterioration caused by the corrosion of the stanchions of the railings.

Some spalling was observed at the north and south exterior envelope of the lower level, although these walls are generally in much better condition than the surrounding exterior concrete elements. Exterior concrete elements also exhibited bio growth.

Spalled and broken concrete is to be repaired and patched as required. The displaced retaining wall on the southwest corner is to be shifted back to its original location and secured.

### Metals:

The lower sections of the steel frames that form the main supports for the superstructure are exposed. They are presenting corrosion and are in need of protective painting.

Corrosion was also observed at the exterior guardrails, handrails, the vent stack from the mechanical room at the west entrance stairs, and at the mechanical grates.

The metal fascia, which conceals the gutter at the base of the roof, and which was stabilized in recent years, is severely streaked, probably due to water leaks and runoff. Recent work also included reconfiguration of the concealed gutters and stabilization of the plywood underlayment. Proper screening and continued maintenance of the gutters is critical.

### Wood:

All the exterior wood elements, which are mostly original, are weathered and require maintenance and in some instances repair. This includes windows of the lower classroom level, the window/curtain walls of the Narthex level and above, the curtain walls of the east and west entrances, including the exterior doors. The size and location of the windows make them vulnerable. The narrow bottom rail of the curtain walls at the east and west entrances is weathered and vulnerable because of its location on grade. The windows of the north and south require maintenance or repair, including the wood windows at the classroom and Narthex levels. All door and window openings likely need re-caulking. The wood bench and plaques of the memorial garden require treatment.

### Drainage issues:

In several locations both inside and outside there is evidence of water infiltration or drainage issues. On the grounds water was observed pooling in the memorial garden and in the paving of the parking.<sup>65</sup> There are indications of water penetration and staining in the lower classroom level. The locations generally correlate with areas underneath the exterior building entrances. Penetration at the kitchen ceiling and at the game/youth-activity room appear to be at the location of the curtain wall above. The concrete surfaces in front of the entrances have trench drains, located

at the bottom of the entry steps in front of the west and east glass entrance walls and doors. The trenches drain into three-inch scuppers drilled into the concrete at either side of the trench drains, at both west and east. The scuppers originally lead to internal drain pipes below and away from the building, which may be either inadequate or blocked.<sup>66</sup> The drains, scuppers and pipes should be cleared, and the joint between the curtain wall and paving sealed.

Additional water damage was observed in the ceiling of room 014 in the music suite, and in several places in the ceiling of the mechanical room. The latter is partially located under the west entry steps.

### Exterior moats or lightwells:

As mentioned, the moats, or lightwells, and the exterior walls and clerestory windows of the classrooms on the lower level are designated Zone 1. These areas are to be preserved as much as possible and work is to be limited to maintenance or minimal interventions. Aside from the shifting of the concrete retaining walls, particularly on the southwest corner, there is no structural damage to the moat areas. Some ponding of water, repair and maintenance of the memorial garden plaques and seating are the primary concerns. Metal stair rails, especially at the northwest corner, and metal grills need repair due to corrosion. Conditions of the clerestory windows of the classrooms are noted above and also discussed below.

In the memorial garden, across from the memorial plaques, buried within the soil of the opposite berm, are cremated remains of congregation members. The locations are noted in church drawings, but not marked on site.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>66</sup> See original plumbing drawings, P1 and P2, and original Utilities Site Plan U1. NCC Records, CIAA, Columbus, Indiana

<sup>67</sup> See burial records and memorial garden policy documents, NCC Records, CIAA, Columbus, IN. Also see Appendix F for plan.

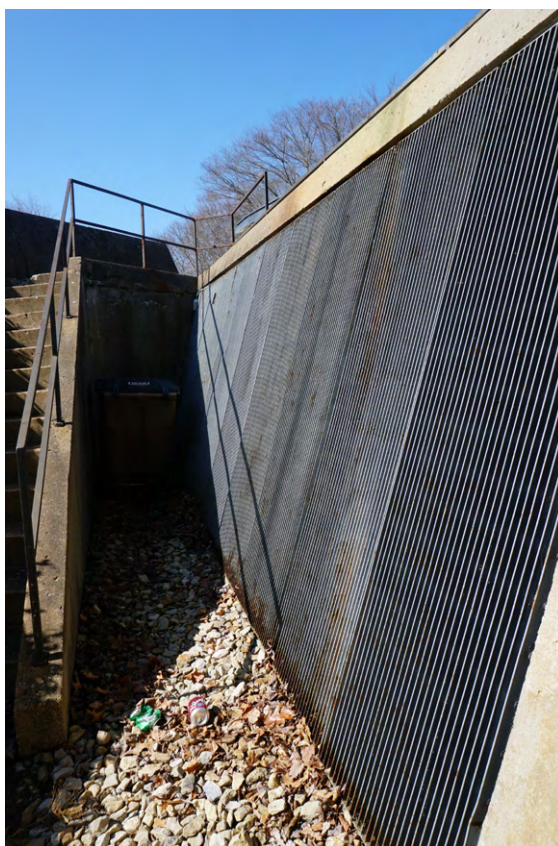
<sup>65</sup> See Appendix B for further discussion of site drainage



## Exterior conditions – images



*Corrosion at vent stack - image by P&P*



*Corrosion at mechanical grates - image by P&P*



*Corrosion at exterior rails - image by P&P*



*Streaking at metal roof fascia - image by P&P*





*Shifting moat "retaining walls" - image by P&P*



*Cracks at concrete; metal corrosion at support - image by P&P*



*Deterioration at stairs- image by P&P*



*Spalling at exterior envelope - image by P&P*



*Biogrowth- image by P&P*





Water pooling at memorial garden - image by P&P



Water damage at youth activity room ceiling - image by P&P



Water damage at kitchen ceiling - image by P&P

## Exterior conditions and recommendations - Summary:

Element	Materials	Conditions & Recommendations
Railings	Metal	Sand and scrape rust; rust-treat and paint
Stairs	Concrete	Repair cracks and spalls
Paving	Concrete	Repair cracks and spalls
Retaining walls	Concrete	Repair shifting walls
Drainage	Trench drains, scuppers and pipes clear entrances. Downspouts and grates clear roof	Clean and clear drains, scuppers and pipes; reseal joints between paving and curtain wall.
Memorial garden	Wood bench; wood plaques; cremated remains of church members buried in soil of berm behind the bench	Short term – wood to be treated; garden shall remain undisturbed and treated with consideration. Long term – an appropriate organization shall be consulted to determine a respectful course of action.

## Building Envelope

Because the exterior form and envelope represent an important expression by the architect, and a manifestation of ideas about the building, and the congregation, and because they have undergone little or no change, all exterior elevations have been designated Zone 1. No substantial changes are to be considered in the adaptation to a new use with the exception of the removal of the cross on top of the spire.<sup>68</sup> The significance of the three-dimensional appearance of the building is critical

<sup>68</sup> See *Donation Agreement*, NCC records, CIAA, Columbus IN

to the design as conceived and executed and deserves careful preservation. This applies not only to the overall appearance but also to many of the detail design features such as window walls, or leaders and downspouts. Primarily maintenance work is expected to be carried out on the building envelope. Any changes made to improve access, functionality or operations are to be discreet and not visible.

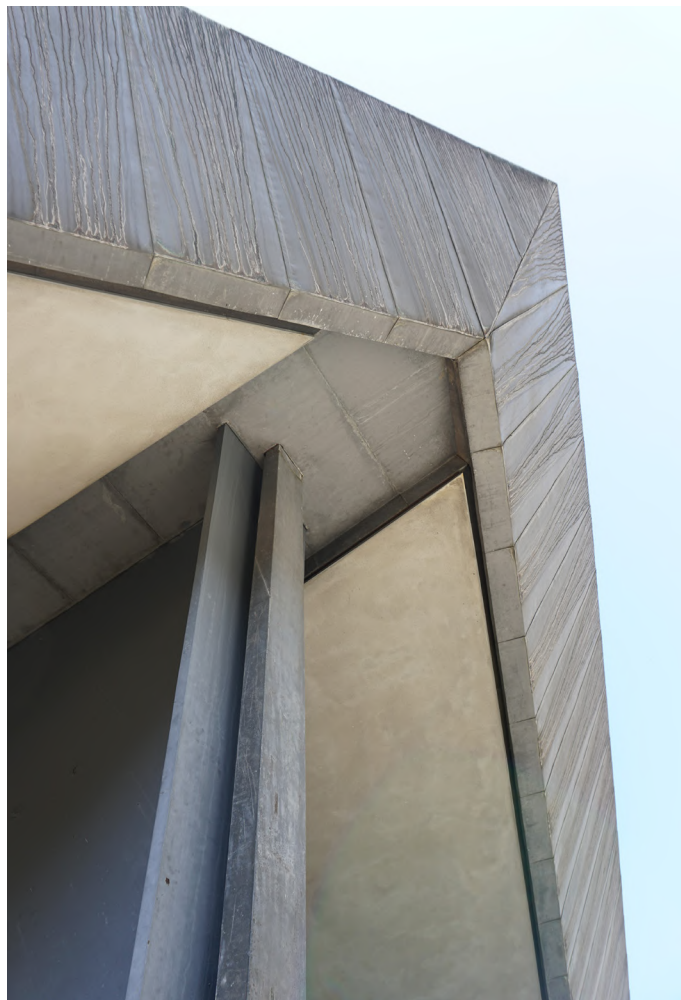
## Building envelope conditions – images



Interior image showing 1990s aluminum entry doors - by P&P



View showing roofing materials, entry level curtain wall, lower level concrete wall, and shallow entry steps - image by Hadley Fruits, 2018



Closeup image showing lead-coated copper cladding over fascia, plaster ceiling, structural arch, and adjacent downspout - image by P&P





*Weathered wood curtain walls - image by P&P*



*Weathered wood plaques and bench - image by P&P*

Building envelope conditions and recommendations - Summary:

Element	Materials	Conditions & Recommendations
Vertical enclosures	Wood and glass curtain wall at entry level; concrete walls at lower level	Good condition. Treat and paint weathered wood; reseal curtain wall
Roof	Blue-black slate; lead-coated copper cladding over fascia, structural arches and spire; plaster underside	Good condition. Repairs conducted 2008-2009
East & west entryways	Shallow concrete steps	Repair cracks and spalls; rust-treat handrails
Downspouts	Gutters concealed in metal fascia; downspouts run along arches	Inspect and clean gutters; provide screens

## Building interior - general

The interior of the building is in good repair and largely retains its original configuration and materials. Most of the issues noted – with the exception of the earlier identified leaks or water damage – are minor, cosmetic in nature or the result of normal wear and tear. Flooring, walls and ceiling are generally in good condition. Toilets and other facilities are in working order but need updating.

### Interior – Lower/classroom level

The classroom or lower level to some degree mirrors the floor above. A central space is ringed by a corridor that connects larger spaces at either end. At the center is the auditorium, which is situated under the nave. At the east end, under the Narthex, is the coffee/meeting space, while the youth activities room is located under the chapel and baptistry at the west end. The kitchen is located under the east entry, and the mechanical room is located under the west entry and driveway. The outer ring, to the north and south, contains a series of classrooms and other program spaces.

The plan is organized along the same grid that is evident on the Narthex level. This grid originates from the window wall of the floor above (see drawing A-2). This dimensional grid is carried through the clerestory windows, the interior partitions, and the architectural treatment and articulation of the outer corridor wall with its door openings and recessed plywood paneling.

The floor appears to be a concrete slab on grade, the outer walls and corridor walls are poured in place concrete and most of the demising

walls between the rooms are concrete block as evidenced in structural drawing S-2. The ceiling is the underside of the hollow tube floor slab, as identified in the structural drawings. As a result, finishes are masonry finishes ranging from rubbed-finish concrete as identified in drawing A-10 for the auditorium and corridor walls as well as the ceiling (as per drawing A-15)<sup>69</sup>, and plaster finish for the partitions. Aside from the floors of the kitchen and the mechanical rooms, which are polished concrete, the floors mostly have the original carpeting with some vinyl. Baseboards are slate.

As all spaces in the lower level are designated Zone 3, changes are permitted as long as they do not affect the building envelope or any spaces of higher significance in the floors above or on the exterior.

### Lower level – general conditions:

The classroom or lower floor level is probably the most minimal in its finishes. Carpeting needs replacement and some of the slate baseboards are loose.

Original wood surfaces, found mostly in doors and recessed full height wall panels, require treatment and maintenance. Damage is mostly the result of wear and tear. Additionally, water damage was observed at the wood paneling and the door to the mechanical room, in the youth activity room.

Walls and ceilings are masonry or plaster finishes and are in good condition. Some water damage exists in the youth activities room, in the kitchen, and in room 014, as noted elsewhere.

Some of the ceiling A/C grilles, specifically in the kitchen, are loose.

<sup>69</sup> Refer to architectural drawings, NCC records, CIAA Columbus, IN



## Auditorium

The auditorium is the central space in the classroom level and in its plan reflects the overall hexagonal geometry of the building and the nave above. In section it has a ceiling of which the edges rise towards the center creating the plenum used in the mechanical system. This is most clearly apparent in the north south section shown in drawing A-7 or in the Zoning Diagram (North-south section). Where there is concrete construction of wall and ceiling, finishes are identified as rubbed concrete as specified elsewhere on this floor.

Drawing A-16 identifies an auditorium platform and provides detailing for this construction. Framed in wood and with wood planking, the entire platform was intended to be movable and is placed on casters as shown in drawing A-16, Detail 15 and Detail Section a.<sup>70</sup> That platform was to be located in the center. The reflected ceiling plan in drawing E-1 shows a light gauge Unistrut system suspended from the ceiling with light fixtures that in the center align with the platform.<sup>71</sup> Curtain tracks are also mounted on the suspended system, suggesting textiles had subdivided the space.

Designated Zone 3.

## Coffee/meeting space

The coffee/meeting space wedged between the entrance to the auditorium and the kitchen has few if any architectural features and its finishes are similar to those found elsewhere on this floor.

Designated Zone 3.

## Youth activities room

The youth activities room at the west end of the lower level does not have any particularly distinguishing details except for a wall of shallow built-in closets, which are aligned along the west wall that separates the youth room from the mechanical room. The southernmost door, while ostensibly part of the closets, is actually a door to the mechanical room that lies directly behind and extends underneath the west entrance and beyond under the driveway. This room has no other features.

Designated Zone 3

## Music Suite

The current music suite, which consists of rooms 014 through 017, has at its center room 016, referred to as the Choir Room in the original drawing A-2. While rooms 014, 015 and 017 serve storage and support functions, room 016 has tiered platforms along the south wall recalling the choir platforms found in the nave. This feature is original and is referred to as "WD Choir rehears. platform" on the original drawing A-2. The other spaces do not have any particular significant features.

Designated Zone 3

## Classrooms and other north/south spaces arranged along the periphery

The peripheral spaces at the north and south, the majority of which are classrooms and other meeting spaces, are all similar in design and materials. All have clerestory windows, following the 4-foot grid established in the window wall above, which open onto the exterior moats or lightwells. Most rooms have recessed wood panels on the corridor

<sup>70</sup> Drawing A-16 details the platform for the auditorium and refers to Bulletin No. 1 Item No. 15 issued August 9, 1963. NCC Records, CIAA, Columbus, IN

<sup>71</sup> Drawing A-2 Classroom Level notes: "For ceiling grid plan and details see A-15". NCC Records, CIAA, Columbus, IN

side, which together with the doors, articulate the walls. Walls are paint-finished rubbed concrete or plastered concrete blocks, and floors are generally carpeted. The arrangement of the exterior walls with the clerestory windows are covered in the Zone 1 designation of the exterior envelope and are to be preserved. The rest of the peripheral spaces are not considered significant.

Designated Zone 3

### Kitchen and mechanical rooms

Both spaces have undergone several changes and equipment updates. Other than the stack rising from the mechanical room through to the west entrance, the spaces have no exterior expression. They are not considered significant.

Designated Zone 3

### Corridor

While the inner walls of the corridor framing the auditorium are unarticulated, poured in place concrete with a rubbed-concrete finish, as noted (see drawing A-10), the opposite wall with its doors into the classrooms is architecturally more segmented. The design grid established by the windows is carried through and reflected in the location and size of the door openings. In addition, the corridor walls are further articulated by recessed wood panels in the same dark stained veneer. The panels are either one or two grid modules wide, while the concrete is only one grid module wide, with the exception of the shallow corners on the north and south walls. The west end of the corridor walls is concrete with doors opening to the youth activities space. At the east, the corridor walls open up to create the coffee/meeting space. All wood has the same dark staining found throughout the building.

While somewhat interesting, as a design feature, the corridor's significance is limited.

Designated Zone 3.

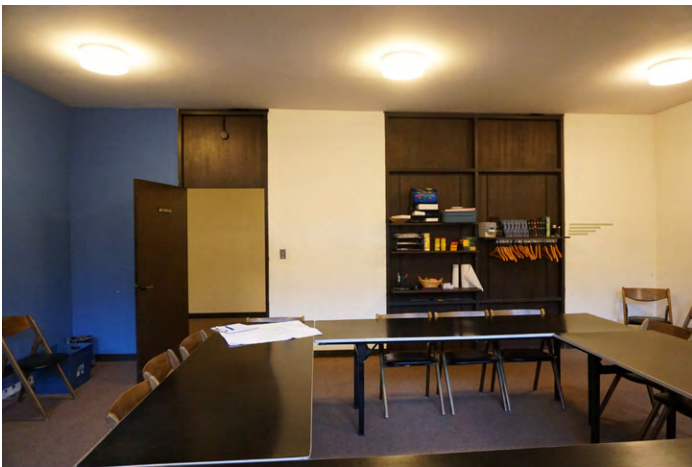
## Lower level conditions – images



*Interior of auditorium showing plenum-forming ceiling, and Unistrut lighting system - image by P&P*



*Closet wall in youth activities room. Access to the mechanical room is through the leftmost door- image by P&P*



*Corridor-facing wall in classroom showing wall articulation - image by P&P*



*Image shows meeting space at east end, and entrance to auditorium, as well as typical light fixtures - image by P&P*



*Typical exterior wall at classroom, showing windows arranged on grid-module - image by P&P*



*Image shows tiered platform in room 016 of Music Suite - image by P&P*

### Lower level conditions and recommendations - Summary:

With the exception of the outer walls and moats, the elements making up the lower level do not contribute to the architectural significance of the church building, and may be altered if necessary.

Element	Materials	Conditions & Recommendations
Exterior walls	Poured-in-place concrete, concrete-rubbed finish with clerestory wood windows	In good condition. to be preserved
Corridor walls	Poured-in-place concrete, concrete-rubbed finish, articulated along grid module with dark-stained wood panels and doors	
Demising walls	Painted concrete blocks with or without plaster finish	
Doors	Original wood doors and transoms in typical dark stain with original hardware	
Closet wall	Original wood doors and vents; also provide entry to mechanical room	
Floors	Mostly carpets in classes; some vinyl/PVC; polished concrete in kitchen and mechanical room	
Ceilings	Concrete-rubbed hollow-tube concrete slab; suspended ceiling in kitchen	



## Stairs 2 and 3

Stairs 2 and 3, at the east end of the building, connect the public spaces from the Narthex and office level with the community and classroom spaces on the lower level. Because of their public function, the stairs are only partially enclosed in free-standing veneered panels. The treads are exposed and polished concrete and the walls have the bush-hammered concrete finish also seen in the Narthex core. Because of the open character of the stairs and their direct visual and material relationship to the Narthex, these stairs are deemed significant and are to be preserved and maintained as they are.

Designated Zone 1

## Stairs 1 and 4

Stairs 1 and 4 are located at the west end of the floor and connect to the chapel and baptistry directly above. Except for the stairwell walls, which have a painted smooth concrete finish, the materials are similar to stairs 2 and 3. However, these stairwells are fully enclosed with veneered panels, transom, and ceiling. Though not as directly visible as stairs 2 and 3, their architecture is similar, and the materials denote their importance. Therefore, they deserve a degree of preservation. The stairway enclosures – walls, transoms, door and ceiling - are to remain as they are.

Designated Zone 2

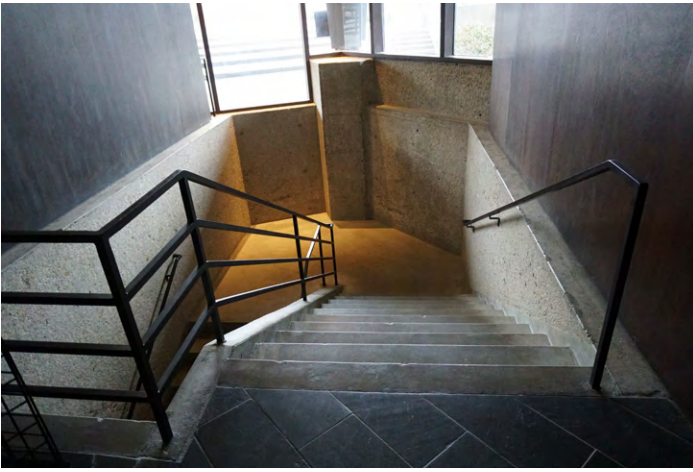
## Elevator

In the mid 1990s enclosed lifts were added to the building in two separate locations. For the one connecting the Narthex level with the lower classroom level, space was carved out of room 010 and elevator machinery was tucked underneath stair 3. Depending on the use identified in the future, this elevator may be maintained as is or altered to meet the new use or upgraded to meet code requirements.<sup>72</sup> Its location and configuration is to be maintained.

Designated Zone 3

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<sup>72</sup> See drawing A-2 revised August 31, 1990 for details, NCC Records, CIAA, Columbus IN



*Stair 3 showing bush-hammered walls, polished-concrete stairs, typical square bar railing - image by P&P*



*Stair 2 showing natural lighting through the curtain wall corner, the free-standing veneered panels, and typical light fixtures - image by P&P*



*Stair 1 showing rubbed-concrete finished walls - image by P&P*



*Stair 4 showing the paneled ceiling and the enclosing veneered panels and transom - image by P&P*



*Image showing lift at Narthex level - image by P&P*

## Stairs and lift conditions and recommendations - Summary:

All stairways, and their enclosures are in good condition. Lift could not be accessed as part of survey. Stairs 2 and 3 should be preserved and maintained as they are. Enclosures of stairs 1 and 4 should be preserved and maintained as they are.

Element	Materials	Conditions & Recommendations
Stairway walls	Bush-hammered concrete; rubbed-concrete; curtain wall	Good condition
Stairway partitions	Dark-stained veneered partitions, free standing (2,3) and full height (1,4)	Wood veneer to be treated appropriately to renew and match existing finish
Steps	Polished concrete	Good condition
Ceilings	Sloped plaster ceiling over Narthex and nave (2,3); veneered panel ceiling (1,4)	Stairs 1 and 4: treat wood veneer panel appropriately to renew and match existing finish
Doors (stairs 1,4)	Original wood doors and hardware	Treat wood veneer to match existing
Handrails	Square metal bars, typical to interior and exterior of the building	Rust-proof and paint as necessary
Light fixtures	Typical cylindrical fixtures mounted on curtain wall (2,3); typical surface-mounted round fixtures (ceiling at stair 1,4)	Cylindrical fixtures to be preserved or replaced to match existing

## Office and Narthex level

### Narthex level interior conditions in general:

The overall condition of the interior and its finishes is good and the interior has been well maintained. Minor renovations have taken place to upgrade or adapt the building to more recent functions. The slate floor throughout seems to be in good condition. In what was the daycare center there are loose vinyl tiles. Wood surfaces are scuffed and will require some repair, treatment and maintenance. Interior of wood mullions at the curtain walls is also weathered. Veneer surfaces seem to be separating in places. The sliding partitions and wood blinds in the chapel may no longer be operable.

Rust stains were observed on the mosaic tiles in the back spaces of the Baptistry.

### Narthex

The narthex space is a generously proportioned entry hall that is well lit by the east facing entrance curtain wall. Upon entry one gets a sense of the whole structure, with a view of the sloped plaster ceiling, which is the underside of the nave structure, the bush-hammered concrete wall of the core, and the glass strip in between. Across from the entry, the wood and glass doors leading to the nave are visible, and the distinctive dark slate floor continues into the wide corridors to the north and south.

The narthex, designated room 101, has seen little or no change except for the entry to the enclosed lift, installed in the 1990s for improved access to the lower level. The floor, as in other parts of the corridor is of black slate tiles in a cleft finish, arranged in a running bond, parallel to the exterior walls and reflecting the geometry of the building

plan. The interior walls of the core and ceiling have the original bush-hammered concrete finish. The east facing glass entry wall retains its original configuration and wood members. The four pairs of wood doors were replaced by aluminum ones manufactured by Kawneer under the stewardship of Kevin Roche and John Dinkeloo. The southern pair was made accessible.<sup>73</sup>

The two fixed upholstered wood benches flanking the four pairs of entry doors are part of the original design and are the only furnishings in the otherwise large empty space. It appears that the upholstery for these was replaced in the mid 1980s.<sup>74</sup> Because the benches are original to the space, they are to be preserved and maintained in their existing configuration and location.

At the west end of the Narthex are double wood and glass access doors leading to the Nave and, behind the doors, are a series of steps leading up to that level. While nominally at the level of the Narthex, these are inside the nave and are being considered as part of the Nave.

Because of its location, primary function, its material integrity, and its access to the Nave. This space is determined highly significant and should be maintained as is. The overall sense of a generous open space is to be maintained. Furnishings and furniture were always minimal and should be left sparse. The color palette of the space, which appears to have been muted, is to be maintained.

### Designated Zone 1.

<sup>73</sup> Wes Kavanaugh from KRJDA, Field Observation Notes and images, 4 August 1995 (and other documents), MS 1884, box 631, Yale University Library Manuscript Collection, New Haven, CT

<sup>74</sup> *ibid*



## Narthex conditions – images



*Curtain wall, aluminum doors, typical light fixtures, and benches at Narthex - image by P&P*



*Upholstered benches, and typical cylindrical down-lights - image by P&P*



*Wood and glass doors leading to the nave - image by P&P*



*Weathered wood at curtain wall - image by P&P*

### Narthex conditions and recommendations - Summary:

All materials in good condition. Wood surfaces are weathered and should be treated to match existing. (See appendix E for original 1963 and other specifications).

Element	Materials	Conditions & Recommendations
Walls	Bush-hammered concrete core; Curtain walls of glass and wood mullions	Treat and repair weathered wood mullions.
Partitions	African mahogany-veneered-plywood in dark stain	Weathered wood surfaces. Repair as required. Refinish to match existing
Floor	Black slate, 1/4" thick, cleft finish, in running bond parallel to exterior walls	In good condition. Repair as required. Grout to match existing.
Doors	Aluminum entry doors by Kawneer, southern pair is accessible; wood and glass entry doors to nave; other doors – flush veneer hollow doors; mostly original hardware	Weathered wood surfaces. Repair as required. Finish to match existing. Maintain original hardware or replace to match existing
Ceilings	Bush-hammered concrete core; plaster ceiling	Good condition
Fixed furniture	Two fixed, upholstered solid wood benches	Good condition. Weathered wood. Repair as required to match existing
Light fixtures	Typical cylindrical down lights	Maintain fixtures as possible

## Chapel and baptistry

Whereas the Narthex is the primary space at the east end of the building, at the west end it is the chapel and baptistry. While the significance of the space is without question, how to actually preserve it presents interesting challenges. As it currently exists, the space has retained almost all, if not all, of its original features, plan, furniture and finishes. The floor finish, dark slate, is the same as in the corridor and Narthex and emphasizes the connection between these three spaces. Partitions, whether fixed or sliding, are of the same dark stained wood and plywood found in the corridor partitions. The fixed furniture is of solid African mahogany. The curtain wall screens of vertical lattice work, and the rolling screens are probably solid Philippine mahogany<sup>75</sup>, stained the same dark finish. The ceiling and interior wall is the rough bush-hammered concrete finish, which is consistent with the exterior finish of the nave bowl.

The space is defined by the fixed and rolling partitions, detailed on drawing A-16, as a separate space.<sup>76</sup> These partitions are to be maintained as space defining features. The curtain wall screen, which in detailing seems similar to the rolling screens, has louvres that are adjustable allowing the screen to be closed for privacy or daylight closure purposes.<sup>77</sup> The space is furnished with original upholstered fixed seating and has a small organ screened off at the rear center. Both the seating and the organ, while important to the

function of the space originally, may be subject to change.

The preservation dilemma exists in the baptistry pool and its features. Given the significance of the space in the function of the church and thus in its plan, the pool needs to be preserved. The mosaic tile finish of the pool and the back wall is intact and in good condition. Even when the large stainless-steel cross is removed, the screen and back wall, with its prominent original accent lighting, is to be maintained as backdrop to the space. The pool can continue to be covered with the existing grill or a design capturing the intent of the platform build-up as envisioned in some of Saarinen's original drawings can be considered.<sup>78</sup>

Above the pool, recessed in the ceiling of the niche carved out of the concrete bowl, is a symbolic silver dove. The dove was likely designed by Alexander Girard and manufactured by Paul Enko, a New York silversmith. In meetings with the church, it was suggested that the congregation contribute metal objects to be incorporated in the fabrication of the dove<sup>79</sup>. A symbol of peace, the dove should remain and be maintained.

The adjacent support spaces, accessed from both the pool and the corridor, from which, a separate set of steps provides access to the chancel area of the Nave, can be remodeled.

Overall space Zone 1. Seating and organ Zone 2 criteria. Back of baptistry support spaces Zone 3 criteria.

<sup>75</sup> Eero Saarinen and Associates, "Specifications for Wood Furnishings", August 14, 1963, MS 593, Series IV, Box: 566, Folder: 1555, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, Eero Saarinen Collection.

<sup>76</sup> On the drawing the details refer to Bulletin No. 1, Item no. 4. This indicates that subsequent to the issuance of the drawings and specifications additional instructions were issued. NCC Records, CIAA, Columbus IN

<sup>77</sup> Both screens are detailed on drawing A-16 respectively 13 and 14, and in drawing F9. NCC Records, CIAA, Columbus IN

<sup>78</sup> NORTH CHRISTIAN CHURCH CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

<sup>78</sup> According to church staff, the original platform exists on the premises. See also – auditorium platform design in drawing A-16, NCC Records, CIAA, and images of chapel models, captured by Enrique Ramirez during his research of the Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library

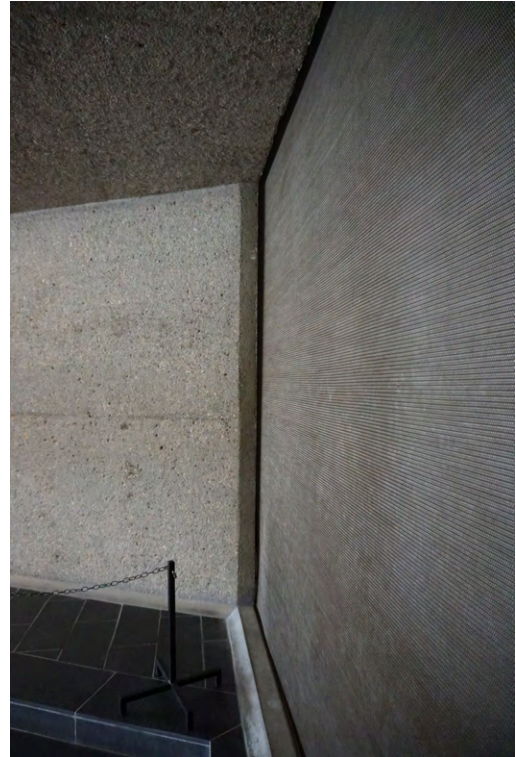
<sup>79</sup> Architectural committee for North Christian Church, "Approved Special Items", November 14th, 1963, Item #13. Also - Item #1.c., Conference Notes, 8 July, 1963, NCC Records, CIAA, Columbus IN



## Chapel conditions – images



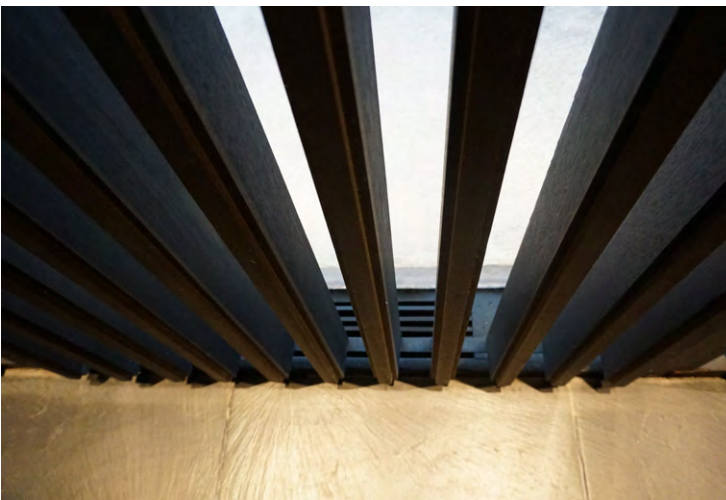
*Image shows bush-hammered interior wall & ceiling, baptistry pool, and back wall – image by P&P*



*Close-up of stainless steel baptistry screen – image by P&P*



*Image shows upholstered fixed pews, and lattice screen – image by P&P*



*Adjustable louvers at curtain wall screen – image by P&P*



*Close-up of fixed and rolling screens – image by P&P*



## Chapel and Baptistry conditions and recommendations – Summary:

Materials in fair to good condition. Wood surfaces are weathered and should be treated to match existing. (See appendix E for original 1963 and other specifications).

Element	Materials	Conditions & Recommendations
Walls	Bush-hammered concrete core; curtain wall screen of wood louvres	Good condition; operability of wood louvres is not known
Partitions	African mahogany-veneered plywood in dark stain; solid Philippine mahogany fixed and rolling lattice partitions	Weathered wood surfaces. Repair as required. Refinish to match existing. Operability of rolling screen not known.
Floor	Black slate, 1/4" thick, cleft finish, in running bond parallel to exterior walls	In good condition. Repair as required. Grout to match existing.
Doors	Original wood and glass entry doors; other doors – flush veneer hollow-core doors	Weathered wood surfaces. Repair as required. Finish to match existing.
Ceilings	Bush-hammered concrete core; plaster ceiling	Good condition
Fixed furniture	Fixed, upholstered solid wood pews of African mahogany	Good condition. Upholstery to be replaced to match existing
Light fixtures	Typical cylindrical down lights installed at curtain wall	Maintain fixtures or replace to match existing
Baptismal pool	White ceramic mosaic cladding; stainless steel grille cover surrounding central pump	In good condition. Repair ceramic mosaic as required to match existing. Preserve as possible
Baptistry back wall	White ceramic mosaic cladding; stainless steel chain-mail screen; concealed lighting	In good condition. Repair mosaic as required. Preserve screen and backlighting
Symbolic dove	Steel and silver embedded into the ceiling above the pool	In good condition. Maintain and preserve

## Corridor

The corridor almost entirely retains its original configuration and is an important plan-defining feature. It connects the Narthex on the east with the chapel and baptistry on the west end, and all spaces at the Narthex level. On the south and north sides, it provides access to the perimeter offices and classrooms, as well as to the support spaces behind the core wall, such as coat rooms and toilets.

As in the instance of the Narthex, the corridor retains its original finishes. The floor is the black slate that continues from the Narthex and carries through the chapel, visually emphasizing the significance of the corridor. The office and classroom walls consist of the original dark-stained wood and veneered plywood partitions with all the original flush doors and transoms

intact. The interior side of the corridor and the ceiling represents the bush-hammered rough concrete finish noted in the Narthex. Lighting fixtures are original and mounted on the office partitions at regular intervals following the overall grid established in the architecture. The transoms above the plywood ceilings provide some daylight and illuminate the otherwise quite dark and austere corridor spaces. Doors are flush and appear in all instances to retain the original hardware.

Given the architectural significance of the corridor in the plan, as a connection between the Narthex and baptistry, and in retaining almost all of its original finishes, the corridor should be preserved as is except where noted below in relation to rooms 124 and 126.

Designated Zone 1

## Narthex level corridor conditions – images

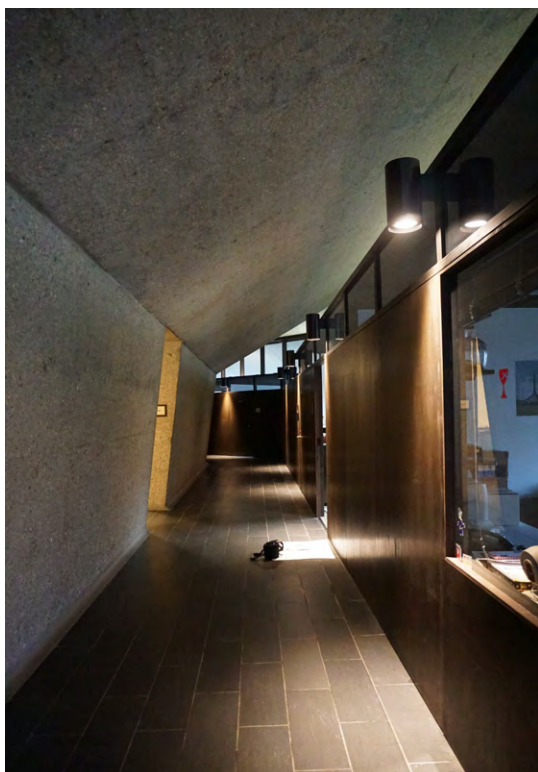


Image shows interior bush-hammered wall and ceiling, plywood partitions and transoms, and black slate floor – image by P&P

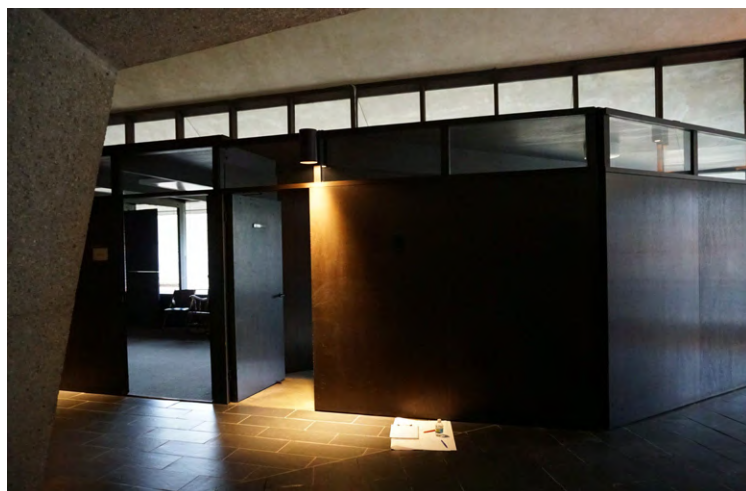


Image shows plywood partitions and transoms, typical lighting installed at grid, and hollow-core flush doors – image by P&P

## Narthex corridor conditions and recommendations – Summary:

Materials in good condition. Wood surfaces are weathered and should be treated to match existing. (See appendix E for original 1963 and other specifications).

Element	Materials	Conditions & Recommendations
Walls	Bush-hammered concrete core	Good condition
Partitions	African mahogany veneered plywood in dark stain with transom above	Weathered wood surfaces. Repair as required. Refinish to match existing.
Floor	Black slate, 1/4" thick, cleft finish, in running bond parallel to exterior walls	In good condition. Repair as required. Grout to match existing.
Doors	Flush veneer hollow-core doors; original hardware	Weathered wood surfaces. Repair as required. Finish to match existing. Retain original hardware as possible.
Ceilings	Bush-hammered concrete core	Good condition
Light fixtures	Typical cylindrical down lights installed on grid at partitions	Maintain fixtures as possible

Four stairways lead from the Narthex level to the lower-level classrooms and communal rooms.

### Stairs 2 and 3

Located at the east end of the Narthex, stairs 2 and 3 serve an important function by connecting the Narthex directly with the community spaces below, the auditorium and the coffee/meeting area. The stairs are open and fully visible from the outside and the Narthex, with only free-standing dark-stained veneered plywood partitions separating them from the Narthex space. The stairway walls are bush-hammered concrete, referring back to the concrete bowl supporting the nave at the core, and the treads are polished concrete. The square steel bar handrails are original and are of a typical design used repeatedly throughout the building. Because of the open connection, their importance in the functioning of the original plan, and the existence of the original finishes further relating the stairs to other significant spaces, these stairs are to be preserved as they are, with only minimal adjustments to accommodate code.

#### Designated Zone 1

### Stairs 1 and 4

The corresponding stairs at the west end of the floor plan adjacent to the west entrance and the chapel were treated differently. While similar in location, plan and construction, they are screened off from view by the veneered plywood partitions, wood ceiling panels, and doors. Material treatment of steps and risers are similar to stairs 2 and 3 but wall treatments are simpler (painted smooth concrete) in keeping with their secondary nature. Changes to these stairs, if necessary, are acceptable as long as the enclosures remain as is.

#### Designated Zone 2

See also above in the section for the lower level "Stairs and lift conditions and recommendations - Summary:" for guidance.

### Offices and Classrooms

The rooms 120 – 126 along the north side and 129 – 133 on the south side, located around the perimeter of the floor, were originally dedicated to offices and classrooms. While over time these spaces have been assigned different functions, much of their original architectural detailing and finishes remain intact. These spaces were carefully designed, and they sit as independent 'boxes' in the void between the perimeter curtain wall and the upward-sloping floor of the nave. The design follows the grid noted above and is articulated by the exposed wooden ceiling joists which in turn are aligned with exposed studs forming the corridor wall. Partial reflected ceiling plans for the perimeter offices are shown on drawing A-15.<sup>80</sup> These alignments in turn correspond with the four-foot window spacing along the exterior wall. The corridor partition consists of sills that are mounted onto the floor, to which the vertical studs are attached. On the corridor side veneered plywood panels have been nailed providing a flush appearance, while the room side exposes the studs. This assembly provides little or no sound insulation. (See Drawing A-9 Detail 8 for a typical wall section).<sup>81</sup> The interior partitions, parallel to the window wall, are of plaster with wood framing.

On the window side, the spacing of the wood mullions follows the design grid. Along the bottom of the curtain wall are plywood panels that

<sup>80</sup> This is somewhat confusing because the drawing shows the full reflected ceiling plan for the lower level class room floor and to the sides partial reflected ceiling plans for the offices. The details are identified as "entry level". NCC Records, CIAA Columbus, IN

<sup>81</sup> Refer to architectural drawings, NCC records, CIAA Columbus



mask the supply and return plenums at regular intervals, as shown in Window Wall Plenum Detail on drawing HAC-1.<sup>82</sup>

Rooms 124 and 126, the reception and waiting area, were remodeled more recently.<sup>83</sup> The remodeling was intended to open the waiting area to the corridor. Reestablishing the corridor wall and restoring the overall visual integrity of the corridor is to be considered.

Rooms 129 through 133 have been adapted and remodeled to some degree to make them suitable for childcare services. Rooms 129 and 130, identified as cradle roll and quiet room, retain their original configuration but room 133 is one large room that has been created by removing some of the intermediary partitions. The window wall and corridor partitions retain much of their original detail. Room 129 was previously used as the minister's office. Changes were made to room 129, primarily adding sound insulation to the corridor wall and the partitions to the adjoining rooms, probably to create better acoustic privacy.<sup>84</sup>

Room 120 through 123 – Zone 2 (including workroom adjacent to room 123) – retaining the enclosures should be considered.

Room 124 and room 126 – Zone 3 – consider returning rooms to original configuration to retain the integrity of the corridor.

Rooms 129 – 133 – Zone 2 – retaining enclosures should be considered.

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<sup>82</sup> Refer to mechanical drawings, NCC records, CIAA Columbus, IN

<sup>83</sup> Date of latest remodeling not known, but drawings by local architect Todd Williams, from 4/3/2000, show the rooms still in their original configuration. In these drawings, the rooms in the southwest are converted to serve as daycare, but the proposal does not entirely reflect existing conditions. Source - NCC Records, CIAA Columbus, IN

<sup>84</sup> See drawing SK-F10, issued October 22, 1984, captured by Enrique Ramirez during his research of the Eero Saarinen Collection at Yale University Library, Manuscripts and Archives

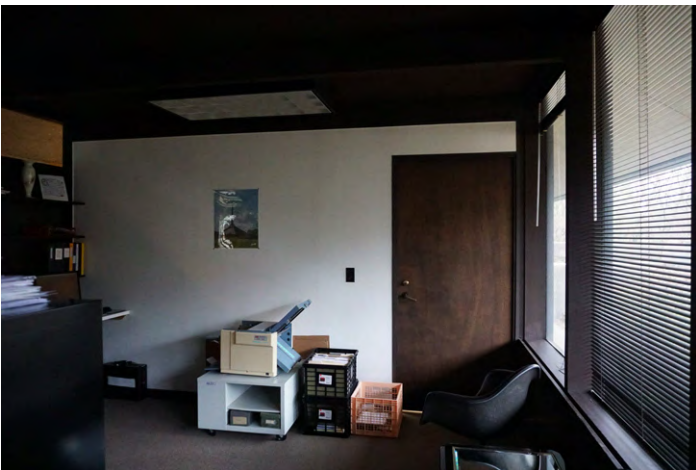
## Narthex level offices conditions – images



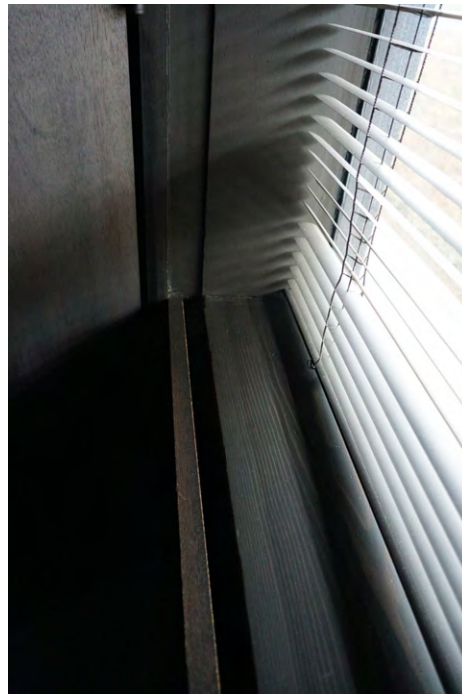
*Image shows interior of office/classroom partitions and transoms, original built-in furniture, ceiling joists & studs following curtain-wall module, and lifting vinyl floor tiles – image by P&P*



*Image shows interior of corridor plywood panels and exposed studs, ceiling panel and joists – image by P&P*



*Image shows plaster dividing panels, and original hollow-core doors with original hardware – image by P&P*



*Image shows millwork to conceal plenum at base of curtain wall – image by P&P*

## Narthex offices and classrooms – conditions and recommendations – Summary:

Materials mostly in good condition. Wood surfaces are weathered and should be treated to match existing. (See appendix E for original 1963 and other specifications).

Element	Materials	Conditions & Recommendations
Walls	Veneered plywood panels in dark finish; exterior curtain wall	Weathered wood surfaces. Repair as required
Partitions	Plaster and wood frame inbetween rooms	Good condition
Floor	Carpet or vinyl	
Doors	Flush veneer hollow-core doors; original hardware	Weathered wood surfaces. Repair as required. Finish to match existing.
Ceilings	Wood joists; veneered plywood panel in dark finish	Good condition
Light fixtures	Surface-mounted round or rectangular fluorescent fixtures	

## Elevators

Two lifts enclosed in hoist ways were added in 1995 to improve accessibility. The elevator connecting the Narthex level to the classroom level is carved out of room 127 adjacent to stair no. 3. The remainder of the room is dedicated to storage. As noted above, this elevator can be modified or upgraded as new uses or codes require, provided its exterior appearance remains in-line with the design of the perimeter spaces.

The other elevator connects the Narthex level only to the upper tier of the pews in the nave. On

the Narthex level this elevator replaces an earlier stair, which is mirrored on the north side of the Nave vestibule. As noted above, the elevator can be modified or upgraded as required, provided its exterior appearance remains in-line with the design of the vestibule. Because the main level of the nave is reached via a set of stairs, the nave in its current configuration is not accessible to all.

Elevator construction details can be found in the modified Narthex level, and modified nave level drawings, with additional information in the Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo & Associates collection, at the Manuscripts and Archives, at Yale University.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>85</sup> See specification information in Appendix E

## Elevators conditions – images



*Entrance to lift from Narthex level to nave – image by P&P*



*Entrance to lift from Narthex level to lower-level (at lower-level entrance is through typical hollow-core door) – image by P&P*



*Exit from lift to pew-level in nave – image by P&P*



## Elevators conditions and recommendations – Summary:

Access was not granted to the elevator interiors.

The elevator exteriors maintain the typical design of office fronts, with dark-finished veneered plywood panels, and hollow-core wood doors with the typical original door pulls.

Materials mostly in good condition. Wood surfaces are weathered and should be treated to match existing. (See appendix E for original 1963 and other specifications). (For more information and elevator specifications, see appendix E for 1990s lift specifications)

Element	Materials	Conditions & Recommendations
Elevator exterior	Veneered plywood panels in dark finish	Weathered wood surfaces. Repair as required
Elevator doors (exterior)	Flush veneer hollow-core doors with typical original door pull hardware	Good condition. Repair wood surface as required to match existing
Elevator entry at top pew	Wood parapet and metal handrails typical for nave	Good condition

### Minister's Office

While the original minister's office appears to have been planned to be room 129, in the current plan this function is assigned to room 121. This room, as others in this row of offices retains the window wall, and corridor partition wall, largely intact and both features are to be maintained as is. Though the room has changed functions, the original built-in shelves along the corridor wall also remain intact and should be maintained.

Designated Zone 1

See also "Narthex level offices and classrooms: Conditions and Recommendations" above for guidance.

### Library

The library is located on the south elevation in room 136. The interior of this room is almost entirely intact with few if any changes. It retains the original built-in shelves, and some of the original furniture. A wood model of the platform and Communion table sits in the middle of the conference table and is an important original design artifact by Eero Saarinen & Associates. The library represents most clearly the original design intended for all offices on this floor. As such it is significant and should be preserved.

Designated Zone 1

## Library and Minister's office conditions – images



*Image from minister's office (no. 121) showing original built-ins. Typical inconspicuous light switch is also visible at door frame – image by P&P*



*Image from library/conference room (no. 136). original wood model of Communion table and platform is visible on conference table – image by P&P*



*Curtain wall in minister's office – image by P&P*



*Original ceiling and built-in shelves in library – image by P&P*

## Library and Minister's office – conditions and recommendations – Summary:

Materials mostly in good condition. Wood surfaces are weathered and should be treated to match existing. (See appendix E for original 1963 and other specifications).

<b>Element</b>	<b>Materials</b>	<b>Conditions &amp; Recommendations</b>
Walls	Corridor side – wood studs, veneered plywood in dark stain and glass transoms; exterior side – curtain wall with concealed plenum at base millwork	Weathered wood surfaces. Repair as required
Ceilings	Plywood joists on four-foot module; veneered plywood panels	Good condition. Repair wood surface as required to match existing
Doors	Flush hollow-core doors with original door hardware	Good condition. Repair wood surface as required to match existing
Floor	Carpeted	Replace to match existing as required.
Original built-ins	Book cases at interior side of corridor partition	Good condition. Repair wood surface as required to match existing
Light fixtures	Typical round (library) and rectangular (minister's office) fluorescent	If upgrading - match existing as possible
Artefacts	The library has an original model of Communion table and platform	In good condition. Should be safely stored in appropriate setting



## Support spaces

Tucked underneath the sloping floor of the nave are several spaces at both the north and the south side. They include coat rooms, restrooms and storage spaces. These spaces are accessed through a few plain openings in the bush-hammered core concrete wall which separates them from the corridor. None of these spaces are of any significance. However, the openings into the corridor, with the unique base detail, are to be maintained as much as possible.

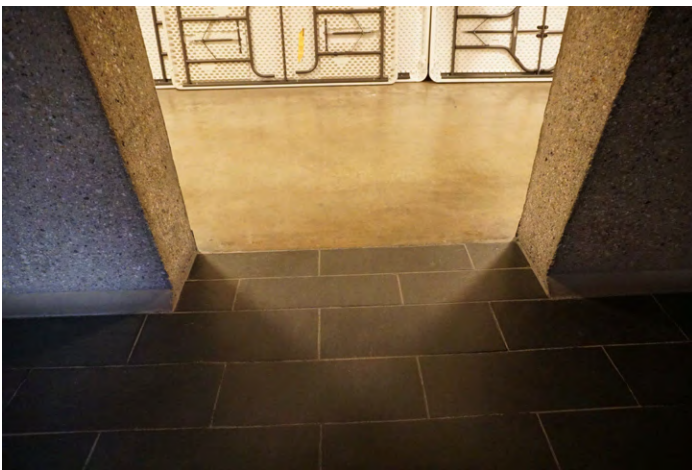
## Narthex level support spaces – images



*Typical coatroom and door behind core wall – image by P&P*



*Typical restroom and finishes behind core wall – image by P&P*



*Transition detail between Narthex corridor and coatroom – image by P&P*



*Transition between coatroom and Narthex corridor– image by P&P*

Other miscellaneous storage spaces exist throughout this floor mostly occurring as a result of plan configuration transitions in the hexagonal geometry.

## Designated Zone 3



### Support spaces – conditions and recommendations – Summary:

Materials mostly in good condition. Wood surfaces are weathered and should be treated to match existing. (See appendix E for original 1963 and other specifications).

<b>Element</b>	<b>Materials</b>	<b>Conditions &amp; Recommendations</b>
Walls	Concrete walls at plenum and corridor sides, smooth finish; partitions of concrete block, paint finished	Good condition. Preserve openings from corridor side as they are; including detail at corridor base
Ceilings	Smooth-finished concrete (underside of plenum)	Good condition
Doors	Flush hollow-core doors with original door hardware	
Floor	Polished concrete; porcelain tiles in restrooms	

## Nave

The nave is the most significant space in the overall program of the building. Its interior and furnishings were fully and carefully designed, are significant, and deserve preservation in their entirety, with few exceptions. A detailed description and assessment of the interior and its furnishings is not deemed to be necessary because the space in its entirety is designated Zone 1. Probably the only significant alteration that was made in the space is the discrete introduction of an elevator to improve access to the upper row of pews and related spaces for wheel chairs.<sup>86</sup>

Because of the change in use for the building to a secular purpose, some minor changes in the interior of the nave are to be anticipated with the removal of the obvious religious symbols and furnishings. The removal of the central Communion table and its platform is one example.<sup>87</sup> This will not require any other design interventions as both were originally designed to be removable. The removable extension of the chancel area does not appear to be original and can be retained as desired.

The preservation of the organ is probably the most important consideration in the nave architecturally as well as programmatically.

### Designated Zone 1

### Nave Conditions:

Floors, stairs and walls seem to be in good condition. The interior finishes are largely wood

including pews, walls and balustrades, and are stained the same dark color found throughout the building. The damage is typical of the wear and tear of use. It is limited to corners and edges, and requires refinishing or repair.

Records show that all railings in the space were replaced and made code-compliant in the 1990s, coinciding with the installation of the elevator.<sup>88</sup>

Lighting needs updating, re-lamping or re-fixturing. Some of the peripheral cove lights were not working. The rest of the lights require surveying to determine what, if any lighting, is to be added or modified to serve its new purpose.

The butt-jointed glazing at the periphery, also visible from the Narthex level, which closes the gap between the 'bowl' of the nave and its plaster 'hat' is a critical feature of the design and provides the light ban that creates the ethereal appearance of the Nave. This glazing is heavily soiled.

There are safety concerns regarding access to the cove lighting, which is not restricted, and open to anyone who can climb over the wood enclosure behind the pews.<sup>89</sup>

Carpeting at the top pew is not shown in the original drawings and may be a later addition. Records indicate that the carpeting may have been replaced in the 1980s.<sup>90</sup> The existing carpet now requires replacement.

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<sup>86</sup> It is to be noted that no such elevator access exists to the main level of the Nave and will be quite difficult to accomplish without very significant interventions.

<sup>87</sup> As noted elsewhere, the Communion table was designed by Eero Saarinen's office in close consultation with members of the congregation and is an important object worthy of preservation in an alternate location.

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<sup>88</sup> See Appendix E for specification information from KRJDA records, and from Eero Saarinen and Associates

<sup>89</sup> In the original electrical drawing E-3 the lighting is noted to be mounted on the classroom ceiling along the perimeter wall. The fixture is identified as type S. It is not clear how these fixtures were to be serviced and it may be the reason why the fluorescents have been placed in their current location, in the periphery cove. NCC Records, CIAA Columbus, IN

<sup>90</sup> See Appendix E for specification information

## Nave conditions – images



*Image looking south from top pew. Shows central Communion table and chancel at bottom of 'bowl' – image by P&P*



*Image shows central oculus – image by P&P*



*Image shows glass band between nave 'bowl' and 'hat', and cove lighting at rim of 'bowl' – image by P&P*



*Image shows chancel, chorus, and original pipe organ at west end of nave – image by P&P*



*Image shows original movable platform at chancel – image by P&P*



*Image shows wooden and upholstered pews – image by P&P*

## Nave – conditions and recommendations – Summary:

Materials mostly in good condition. Wood surfaces are weathered and should be treated to match existing. Metal surfaces to be repaired as required to match existing finish. (See appendix E for original 1963 and other specifications).

Element	Materials	Conditions & Recommendations
Floors	Black slate with natural cleft finish; carpeting at top pew	Slate in good condition, repair as required to match existing; carpet to be replaced to match existing.
Ceiling	Rough plaster finish; oculus with recessed can fixtures	Good condition. Repair to match existing. Upgrade lighting as required.
Doors	Wood and glass doors from Narthex	Good condition. Repair wood surfaces as required to match existing finish.
Pews	Built-in solid wood pews, with dark brown upholstery	Wood in good condition. Repair surfaces as required to match existing finish. Replace upholstery as required to match existing.
Built-ins	Veneered panels with solid edges	In good condition. Repair wood surfaces as required to match existing finish.
Artefacts	Original artefacts include: the central communal table of 13 separate pieces; the movable platform; the pulpit; chancel seating	Original artefacts listed shall be stored in appropriate location to be determined.
Natural lighting	Through the oculus; through glass band between the rim of the nave 'bowl' and the sloped ceiling	Oculus requires surveying; the glass band is soiled and requires surveying and cleaning or replacing.
Light fixtures	Tubular fluorescent lamps installed in cove at rim of nave 'bowl'; recessed can light fixtures with flood lamps surround the oculus	Upgrade light fixtures as required to match existing configuration
Railings	Metal square bars with concealed anchors	Replaced in the 1990s. In good condition. Repair as required to match existing finish.



## Summary of design and preservation considerations

Many preservation aspects relevant to North Christian Church have been addressed in the discussion of the particular spaces, but are reiterated below for clarity.

### Religious features, furnishings, and symbols

The change in use from religious building to a more secular function has a direct impact on some of the existing design features and symbols. Aside from religious objects and furnishings only the fixed or building-attached features are noted here. The two most prominent examples are the cross atop the spire and the cross mounted against the back wall of the baptistry.

The two most significant spaces in the building are the nave and the baptistry. Aside from the removal and storage of furniture items such as the Communion table in the center, the platform and pulpit on the chancel, and other loose furniture items, no major changes are deemed to be necessary in the nave. The baptistry, however, presents a more complex challenge because of the architectural arrangement of the space itself. The pool can be covered as noted with a designed platform, either the existing original or similar, which recalls the solution already suggested in the Saarinen drawings. Screens, partitions and finishings (particularly the mosaic back wall and screen) are to be maintained, but the fixed seating, while original, may have to be altered. The support spaces behind the baptistry can be altered as necessary.

### Subsequent design changes

While design changes and alterations are minimal, some did occur. Aside from the removal of some partitions at the Narthex level, the most significant alterations relate to creating better accessibility and are expected to remain or be further improved. These are the ramps located in the center of the entrance steps on the east, and at the south side of the west entrance, the related railings and the assisted entrance doors at both east and west entries. The replacement of the original wood doors with standard aluminum doors, at the west entrance, should be reconsidered.

### Interior finishes and fittings

While the building has been in use for almost sixty years, the original finishes and palette have survived remarkably intact. Their continued preservation is to be assured. This includes the dark slate flooring in the Narthex and nave levels, the bush hammered concrete finish of walls and ceilings, the dark stain on all wood and plywood throughout the building, the hardware and fittings on doors, and the movable partitions.

### Systems

The majority of changes are expected to be related to systems and support spaces. Most of these are out of date or inadequate for future different or more intensive uses. Additional systems for fire detection or data, for instance, are anticipated.

## Conservation policies related to the landscape

### Summary of detailed landscape assessment

Overall, the landscape of North Christian Church retains its core tenets: a clear spatial organization of the landscape that is in dialogue with the church building. The design intent of Dan Kiley is evident, though the condition of vegetation and hardscape is degraded after decades of natural processes, plant growth, and visitor use. The main takeaways from the Existing Conditions documentation are:<sup>91</sup>

- A mature and overgrown tree canopy presents maintenance challenges and inevitable replacement of trees at the end of their lifespan.
- Fair to poor condition of infrastructure, including deterioration of perimeter “retaining” walls and railings, and the negative impact of inadequate solutions to drainage issues.
- Opportunities to restore the original design intent were identified.<sup>92</sup>

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91 Taken from the Landscape Assessment Summary section of the *Landscape Overview and Analysis*. See Appendix B for full report.

92 See Appendix B for detailed assessment.

### Summary of landscape-related recommendations

As identified in the Landscape Analysis, the site can be divided into the original, smaller site dating to the completion of the church building, and to subsequent expansions to the east and south, which coincided with the development of the surrounding area.

The current site encompasses the landscape as designed by Dan Kiley in 1974, which would be considered the period of significance. Hence, our recommendation is that the site be maintained, in its current configuration.<sup>93</sup>

Based on the discussion and identification of landscape features contributing to the site’s significance, which include the Gridded Trees, the Patterned Vegetation, and the Experiential Circulation<sup>94</sup>, a set of long-term and short-term actions were recommended for conservation of the landscape. These actions can be categorized as follows:

- Retaining and maintaining identified contributing elements in good condition.
- Restoring contributing elements in fair or poor condition, by resolving damage or replacement where necessary.
- Refreshing elements identified as no longer appropriate for the site, and replacement with appropriate elements.
- Removing non-contributing elements.<sup>95</sup>

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93 See *Landscape Analysis*, Appendix B, p. 61, for further recommendations

94 See previous Landscape Significance discussion.

95 Summary of Conservation Recommendations section of the *Landscape Overview and Analysis*. See Appendix B for detail recommendations.

# Interim Conservation Policies

## Introduction

### Expanded and Alternate Uses

#### Use as a religious facility

At the onset of the preparation of this Conservation Management Plan, it was assumed that the church function would continue but that the focus would be to expand the use of the facilities by others. While the congregation was small, and the facility was much larger than needed for its own use, it would continue its church services and provide access to its own community and to compatible programs sponsored or organized by others. The goal was to create a more intensive use of the existing facilities and to generate additional revenue to enable maintenance and operation of the premises in good order. In essence the strategy was to make the church building also function as a community center for various non-church related but compatible activities.

With that goal in mind at the start, an investigation was conducted to explore this concept. This effort consisted of two parts: a survey of the existing needs and opportunities within the community, and an overview of how other churches in other parts of the country address similar challenges. The latter was accompanied by a summary of rental rates to be able to establish a financial model with the recommendations. This study, prepared by Bryony Roberts Studio, is attached as Appendix C.

#### Alternative uses

During the Conservation Management Plan investigation and preparation process, suspended during the first two years of the pandemic in 2020 – 2021, the congregation continued to shrink. The remaining members determined that the congregation would not be able to continue to meet its obligations and maintain the building in good order. Even after the disbanding of the congregation, the significance of the building and grounds architecturally and culturally has been widely recognized and is not in dispute. Additionally, the building was never in any immediate danger, except for concerns for its long-term fate without a stable caretaker.

Because the process of finding an alternative use and accommodating that use appropriately within the building, was likely to take some time, some interim conservation policies have been added to this Conservation Management Plan. The following interim guidelines are limited and primarily seek to maintain the building as is at minimal expense, in anticipation of an alternative use. The long-term conservation policies, detailed in the previous chapter, address the building and its various components, and outline its significance and recommendations for its care.

## Site

### Grounds

Maintenance of the grounds is envisioned to be kept to a minimum, with enough site maintenance, mowing and trimming to avoid excessive overgrowth, damage to significant site features, impeded access or creation of hazardous conditions. No replacement of plants or trees is anticipated in the interim.

### Access

Road and parking should be kept clear and free of obstructions so as to allow adequate access to maintenance and emergency vehicles.

### Drainage

Site drainage to be inspected regularly to assure that it is working properly. This concerns not only the drainage of the site and the parking lot, but also drains directly adjacent to the building in the moat areas and the trench drains directly in front of both the east and west entrances.

### Playground

The playground located at the northwest corner of the site was installed when part of the Narthex/ office floor was converted to a childcare facility. It is no longer in use and has not been the subject of regular maintenance. While the remainder of the site and building are not in use, it is recommended that the playground be removed until such time as a new use and user of the building can assume responsibility for its maintenance.

## Security and building access

Building access is to be limited to a few individuals that have been charged with the inspection and maintenance of the building. A record should be kept of who has access and a log is to be kept of when the building is accessed and by whom.

Installation of a security system may have to be considered.

Access codes are to be changed regularly.

### Walkthroughs and inspections

A comprehensive checklist is to be prepared that serves as the basis for walkthroughs, which ought to occur at least weekly. The list is to include items to be checked to assure that the building is secure and weather and watertight, and that all systems are working properly and functioning to the appropriate settings. The checklist should also cover the condition and functioning of plumbing, mechanical, electrical and drainage systems.

A written record of the walkthroughs is to be kept for reference.

In addition to the weekly walkthroughs a schedule of required and necessary maintenance inspections is to be developed for the various building systems. This is to assure that they function properly, are serviced, and parts are replaced as necessary.



## Maintenance and service

Maintenance activities shall be on two levels: repair of detrimental conditions observed, and regular maintenance and inspection activities.

Detrimental conditions observed during the walkthroughs are to be remediated. Care is to be taken that ad hoc repair in itself does not damage or compromise significant parts or materials of the building.

A schedule and description for regular maintenance activities such as cleaning gutters or drains is to be developed and implemented.

A schedule for servicing and inspecting the mechanical, electrical and elevator systems is to be developed and implemented.

## Exterior conditions

The primary concern for the exterior is to assure that the building envelope remains secure, and in good order. The exterior is to be inspected during the regular walkthroughs to make sure that the exterior envelope remains weather and watertight. Long term maintenance requirements that will be necessary but are not considered urgent or directly detrimental are to be noted for future action. Where immediate action is required to avoid damage, work is to be scheduled. Examples include broken windows, missing parts, backing up drains or gutters, rusting members or rotted wood, etc.

## Interior conditions

During the walkthroughs interior conditions or exterior envelope failures that are visible on the interior are to be noted. This may include leaks, backed up drains, flooding etc. Appropriate action is to be undertaken to prevent permanent damage to the interior of the building or its materials and finishes.

## Interior climate

Of particular concern are the interior climate conditions. Settings for heating and cooling are likely to be set to minimize energy use on the one hand, but also must be adequate to conserve the building interiors and its material fabric on the other. System settings may have to be adjusted on a seasonal basis.

## Organ<sup>96</sup>

### Interior conditions

Of particular concern are the interior conditions as they affect the organ. In consultation with the organ maintenance and tuning company – the optimal conditions are to be established. They should include both temperature and relative humidity as well as any actions to be taken at various intervals to keep the instrument in good physical condition.

### Temporary protection

An organ is a fragile instrument. Because no construction or any other maintenance or building repair is anticipated at this time, unless specifically recommended by the organ maintenance company, temporary protection for the organ is probably not deemed necessary. Covering and protecting the console is to be considered.

## Archives<sup>97</sup>

A great deal of the historical and architectural information referenced in this report was accessed at the church where many of the records remained and were accessible. While not used for this report, records related to the life and activities of the congregation over the many decades were also on-site. The preservation and conservation of these records is very important. Since the congregation has disbanded and left the building, all on-site records are being, or have been, transferred to the Columbus Indiana Architectural Archives (CIAA), located in the Cleo Rogers Memorial Library. Records are being reviewed and a determination will be made regarding their permanent location.

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96 Good summaries for care may be found in the following pamphlets: "Caring for the king of instruments" as published by the Royal School of Church Music in 2008, [http://www.rscm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/ResourcesAndInfo/Misc/Gwynn\\_article.pdf](http://www.rscm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/ResourcesAndInfo/Misc/Gwynn_article.pdf) or "Church Heating and the Organ" published by the Institute of British Organ Building, 2003, <https://www.harrisonorgans.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Church-Heating-and-the-Pipe-Organ.pdf>

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97 Jana Wiersema. The Republic News. <https://www.therepublic.com/2023/02/21/showcase-of-living-architecture-architectural-archives-discuss-north-christian-and-other-projects/>

# Selected Bibliography

## Archives:

Balthazar Korab Archive, Library of Congress

Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut

Irwin-Sweeney-Miller Collection, Columbus Indiana Architectural Archives (CIAA) Archives, Columbus, Indiana, part of the Bartholomew County Public Library (BCPL)

Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo and Associates Records, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut

North Christian Church (NCC) Records, Columbus Indiana Architectural Archives (CIAA), Columbus, Indiana, part of the Bartholomew County Public Library (BCPL)

## Books and Articles:

"Saarinen's Church", *Architectural Record* (September 1964): 185-190

Arnold Van Acker (†) and Stef Maas, "Historical Development of Hollow Core Slabs," Apr 29, 2021, <https://hollowcore.org/historical-development-hollow-core-slabs/>

Eeva-Liisa Pelkonen and Donald Albrecht, eds.: *Eero Saarinen: Shaping the Future*, New York and London: Yale University Press, 2006

Ricky Berkey, "Timeline of Columbus History," Columbus Indiana Architectural Archives.

Ed. Saarinen, Eero. Saarinen, Aline B.: *Eero Saarinen On His Work: A selection of buildings dating 1947-1964*, New York: Yale University Press; First Edition (January 1, 1962)

# Appendices

- A. Historical overview and analysis
- B. Landscape overview and analysis
- C. Sociocultural analysis
- D. Site and plan layouts as of February 26, 2020
- E. Specifications and later additions
- F. Memorial Garden plan



**A. Historical overview and analysis**

**Eero Saarinen and Associates’  
North Christian Church (1964):  
A Report on its Historical and Historiographical  
Significance**

Made in Preparation for a Conservation Management Plan as part of the Getty Foundation’s  
Keeping it Modern Program

21 July 2023

For Client Purposes Only

Enrique G. Ramirez, PhD  
enrique.gualbertoramirez@gmail.com  
44 Clifton Place, Apt. 3  
Brooklyn, NY 11238



Vertical aerial photograph of North Christian Church site, ca. 1980s. Source: Records Office, North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana

## **Executive Summary**

North Christian Church, completed in 1964, is a cipher in the short but illustrious career of Eero Saarinen (1910-1961). At the time of Saarinen's death, his office had been working on a group of projects that would cement his reputation as a brilliant, yet eclectic designer. And though North Christian Church is one of Saarinen's most beloved and well-known buildings, it has neither been held in as much critical esteem nor received its due in architectural histories and monographs.

A timeline and building description show that the history of North Christian Church begins with the purchase of a site on the northern edges of Columbus in the late 1950s. As with Eero Saarinen and Associates' signature, construction began only after Eero Saarinen's death. The building was completed in 1964, and though modifications and improvements have been carried out since then, the design and structural integrity of the buildings has been maintained.

There are a number of archival resources that shed light on the design and construction of North Christian Church. Among them, the most significant are the holdings inside the Records Office at North Christian Church and the Eero Saarinen Collection at Yale University. The latter of these, donated by Kevin Roche in 2002, contains extensive documentation for North Christian Church. It is not complete, however. A combination of digital and physical materials at other institutions—including the Columbus Indiana Architecture Archives, the Archives of American Art at the Smithsonian Institution, as well as the G.E. Kidder Smith Image Collection at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and the Library of Congress—are useful in assembling a more complete history of this building. At the time of this report, several archives were not consulted due to travel restrictions and university closings during the coronavirus pandemic: the Papers of Dan Kiley at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design and the Maurice B. Allen papers at Cranbrook Academy. Time permitting, these two resources will be visited.

The history of North Christian Church is more than an account of a building designed by Eero Saarinen and Associates. It is the history of a physical site and a document of the involvement of the congregants and various committees woven into the daily life and operations of North



Christian Church. It is also a history of the constellation of design and engineering practices that brought their talents and energy to this project. Henty Pfisterer and Van Zelm, Heywood & Shadford's work on engineering and electrical; Walter Holtkamp's organ design; Alexander Girard's interior; Kevin Roche and John Dinkeloo's site development work; Dan Kiley's landscape design; and improvements by the Storrow Kinsella Partnership, Louis Joyner, and others: all are evidence that North Christian Church was a collaborative project and continued to be so throughout its life.

The design and maintenance history of North Christian Church is a work in progress. Opportunities remain to use archives and other sources of documentation to help reevaluate and recover a historiographical significance for this building. Until then, North Christian Church's absence in professional, monographic, and critical assessments of modern architecture in the United States is noted. Yet the work of Eero Saarinen and Associates began to receive more serious and critical attention in 2006 with the opening of the traveling exhibition *Eero Saarinen: Shaping the Future*. The catalogue for that exhibition delves momentarily into the history of North Christian Church as well as Eero Saarinen's relationship with Columbus, Indiana. This report augments prior work on the history of Eero Saarinen and Associates with a statement of architectural significance based on six different themes. First, North Christian Church established the reputation of designers that would play a significant role in maintaining the architectural legacy of Columbus, Indiana. These include Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo Associates and Paul Kennon. Their work contributed to the second theme on the architectural significance of North Christian Church: it was a building that advanced architectural form. Its familiar, elongated hexagonal plan and spire was a bold design statement that veered away from contemporary trends in architectural modernism. Third, North Christian Church is an iconic late modernist building that has been often imitated. Its "lateness" is evidenced in the way in which it abandons International Style principles while anticipating some of the formal and historical eclecticism seen in postmodernist architecture. Fourth, North Christian Church proposed a new spatial solution for sacred gatherings. It is a centralized structure that folds all of North Christian Church's spiritual and programmatic requirements into a bold, sculptural, and contained form. Fifth,

North Christian Church is part of the civic infrastructure of Columbus, Indiana. It is a building that shares many of the civic and spiritual ambitions for architecture throughout the city. And lastly, North Christian Church is more than a building. It is a designed site.



Figure 0.1: Marilyn Wellemeier, "An Inspired Renaissance in Indiana," *Life*, November 17, 1967. Photographs by John Loengard. Source: Columbus Indiana Architecture Archives

## Introduction

Architectural historian Claire Zimmerman argued recently that modern architecture had several afterlives preserved and communicated by dint of the photographic image.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, modern architecture in Columbus, Indiana continues to live in our collective imagination because of the work of photographers like Ezra Stoller, Balthazar Korab, and more recently, Hadley Fruits. Yet there is one image that captures the spirit of Columbus, Indiana's commitment to modern architecture like no other. Appearing in the November 17, 1967 issue of *Life*, John Loengard's photograph of Eero Saarinen and Associates' North Christian Church (Figure 0.1) is arresting. It lacks the high contrast of Balthazar Korab's early black-and-white photographs, which seem to capture buildings in a kind of dazzling play between light and shadow. Loengard's photograph of North Christian Church is not meticulous in the same way as, for example, Ezra Stoller's images of Saarinen's Miller House. In Stoller's iconic photographs of J. Irwin Miller's family residence, architectural space becomes a stage set for potted plants, bookshelves, and Alexander Girard's paprika-hued fabrics. Loengard aimed for something altogether different in his photograph of North Christian Church. Here, what really captures the viewer's attention is not the background, where the building's familiar spire reaches into the sky, but rather the foreground, where a tractor lumbers slowly through rows of planted corn. This is more than an instance where modern architecture and agricultural machinery share equal billing in a photograph. Here, architecture and community are inseparable.

This unity of architecture and community has been historically regarded as one of the defining attributes of civic life in Columbus. It was born under the visionary leadership of the philanthropist and business executive J. Irwin Miller, whose career in architectural stewardship is marked by his deep personal and professional relationship with Eero Saarinen. It could be one of the most significant modern architect-client relationships in the history of architecture. Their collaboration resulted in buildings that are recognizable not just as high-water marks in mid-century

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<sup>1</sup> Claire Zimmerman, *Photographic Architecture in the Twentieth Century* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).



modern architecture, but also for the ways in which they reflected their commitment to making buildings that were woven into the civic and spiritual life of Columbus, Indiana.

The relationship between Miller and Saarinen was only one part of a long-lasting period of intense architectural activity in Columbus. Written materials prepared for Exhibit Columbus in anticipation of the 2016-17 and 2018-19 J. Irwin and Xenia Miller Prize describe how buildings like Eliel Saarinen's Tabernacle Church of Christ (now First Christian Church) (1942), Eero Saarinen and Associates' Irwin Union Bank and Trust (1954), I. M. Pei's Cleo Rogers Memorial Library (1969), as well as Gunnar Birkerts' Lincoln Elementary School (1967) and St. Peter's Lutheran Church (1988) are linked to social and economic developments. This is also the case with another aspect of J. Irwin Miller's legacy — the establishment of the Cummins Foundation Architecture Program in 1957. The Foundation paid architects' fees to promote the design of innovative buildings for the city. This program began in earnest in 1957 with the completion of Harry Weese's Lilian C. Schmitt Elementary School.<sup>2</sup> As Will Miller, J. Irwin Miller's youngest son, has suggested, the Cummins Foundation "transformed the built environment of the community."<sup>3</sup> Although it is tempting to look at Columbus as a small city with dozens of signature modernist buildings, two facts stand out when considering how architecture and civic life were inseparable. First, Columbus is unique in its commitment to shepherding contemporary design as part of a civic agenda. Second, although it is a small city, Columbus has seven properties designated as National Historic Landmarks—a remarkable achievement for any community. The collection of modernist architectural masterpieces in Columbus is the result of a marked commitment to the betterment of community. They comprise a kind of civic infrastructure.

When completed, North Christian Church demonstrated the extent to which architectural developments were important to the growth of Columbus. The North Christian Church site was not part of the original 1821 plat and would have been well north of the city limits when the *Atlas of*

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<sup>2</sup> Will Miller, "Eero and Irwin: Praiseworthy Competition with One's Ancestors," in Eeva-Liisa Pelkonen and Donald Albrecht, eds., *Eero Saarinen: Shaping the Future* (New York and London: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 67. See also Ricky Berkey, "Timeline of Columbus History," Columbus Indiana Architectural Archives.

<sup>3</sup> Will Miller, "Eero and Irwin: Praiseworthy Competition with One's Ancestors," p. 67.

*Bartholomew County* appeared in the 1870s. Increased railroad traffic contributed to the growth of downtown Columbus. In the north, however, the rise of automobile culture set the stage for additional expansion. As early as 1820, the Bartholomew County Board of Commissions designated local roads as State Roads, and began to plan for additional 70 foot-wide roads that would extend northwards towards Indianapolis. One of these roads was the Edinburgh Road, which ran from the northwest corner of the public square in downtown Columbus towards the north. The second was a northern extension of Washington Street called Hawpatch Road.<sup>4</sup> Both roads would intersect with the main road connecting Madison to Indianapolis, eventually designated as U.S. Highway 31, and now known as National Road.

Throughout the early and mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, community groups focused their energies on the large area between National Road and Downtown Columbus as sites for additional buildings. Following on the success of First Christian Church, J. Irwin Miller established the Cummins Architectural Foundation in 1953 to foster the design and construction of “innovative” public buildings. In 1957, the Foundation commissioned the building of various schools throughout Columbus. Harry Weese’s Lilian C. Schmitt Elementary the first to be funded through this program.<sup>5</sup> Other architectural developments during this period included the construction of Weese’s Northside Middle School (1961) and Norman Fletcher/The Architects Collaborative’s Parkside Elementary School (1962). The most well-known project from this era is Eero Saarinen and Associates’s Miller House and Gardens, completed in 1957, which featured a substantial landscape program and site design by Dan Kiley, as well as interiors by Alexander Girard.

The Miller House and Gardens continued several aspects of Saarinen’s, Kiley’s, and Girard’s designs for the Irwin Union Bank and Trust building on Washington Street. Yet around this time, J. Irwin Miller was facing a pressing community concern. The conservative First Christian Church ousted Miller and other members from their home at Tabernacle Church of Christ in 1956, forcing

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<sup>4</sup> George Pence, “Makers of Bartholomew County,” *Indiana Magazine of History*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (Mar., 1926), 75.

<sup>5</sup> Ricky Berkey, “Timeline of Columbus History,” Columbus Indiana Architectural Archives.

them to consider a new site and building for their congregation in 1958.<sup>6</sup> The congregation moved to the old Caldwell Mansion on 25<sup>th</sup> Street, which gave Miller and his colleagues time to deliberate a new building and location. They chose a site on Tipton Lane, just south of National Road, and in 1959, hired Eero Saarinen to design a building for the congregation. Saarinen and Miller chose the site because it would create a northern entrance to Columbus. It would be one of the last buildings Saarinen designed before his death in 1961.

North Christian Church is a breathtaking building that shows the work of the Saarinen firm at its most mature. Its abstract hexagonal plan is more abstract and visually distinct from the rectilinear gestures of Tabernacle Church of Christ and Eero Saarinen and Associates' Irwin Union Bank and Trust. The Saarinen firm's last building echoed the same expressive designs seen in the Ingalls Rink at Yale University (1953-1958), Washington Dulles International Airport (1958-1962) and the TWA Terminal (1962). Viewed from the outside, the building mediates between earth and sky, or, between the Congregation and God—literally. The flat cornfields bordering on Tipton Lane reveal a building that, at first glance, appears to be rising from the ground. When approaching the building more closely, one can see how the building rests inside a hexagonal-shaped sunken garden. The distinctive form of North Christian Church features an interplaying of receding and extruding angles that meld into the angled rooflines forming the building's iconic 192-foot tall spire. The interior is a kind of landscape in itself that continues the building's hexagonal motif. The arrangement of pews also echo the building as it leads down into a central space, one that uses architecture to affirm the centrality of not only congregational space, but also the congregation itself.

North Christian Church appears to soar, and yet it is a building that is firmly and indelibly rooted in Dan Kiley's masterful landscape scheme. Early site and roof plans reveal the same kind of geometric simplicity evident in the Irwin Union Bank and Trust. Both projects featured lines of trees or *allées* designed to provide shade or visually screen the building away from the rest of the city. Yet

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<sup>6</sup> Will Miller, "Eero and Irwin: Praiseworthy Competition with One's Ancestors," in Eeva-Liisa Pelkonen and Donald Albrecht, eds., *Eero Saarinen: Shaping the Future* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006), 64.

at North Christian Church, the Red Maple *allées* and Saucer Magnolia *bosques* create verdant promenades that orchestrate the approach from the Eastern side along Tipton Lane. Once in the parking lot, “rooms” of Maple and arborvitae frame the ascent into the main entrance. From here, one can discern the how the landscape complements and affirms Saarinen’s formal gestures. For example, hedge plantings inside the sunken hexagonal-shaped gardens that surround the building reinforce the building’s plan. So do the rows of arborvitae at ground level, planted so as to echo and root Saarinen’s hexagonal plan into the earth.<sup>7</sup> As the form of Saarinen’s building connects Earth to Heaven, Kiley’s landscape connects the building to its site.

When Eero Saarinen died in 1961, Kevin Roche and John Dinkeloo took over the firm. They continued to give form to Saarinen’s design legacy, and yet it was Eero himself who understood the significance of this building as well as its importance to the community. Shortly before his death in 1961, he wrote to J. Irwin Miller,

I feel I have this obligation to the congregation and as architect I have that obligation to my profession and my ideals. I want to solve it so that as an architect when I face St. Peter I am able to say that out of buildings I did in my lifetime, one of the best was this little church, because it has in it a real spirit that speaks forth to all Christians as a witness to their faith.<sup>8</sup>

Eero Saarinen and Associates’ North Christian Church and Kiley’s landscape design were recognized as National Historic Landmark and placed on the U.S. National Register of Historic Places in May 2000. However, though the building and landscapes of North Christian Church are generally in good shape (despite even alterations to the site in the 1970s and 1980s), the Congregation disbanded in July 2022. With this in mind, a need arises to assess the *material, archival, and historical* conditions of the building—all necessary for the developing of a conservation management plan for North Christian Church.

## **The Scope of This Document**

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<sup>7</sup> A very good summary of Kiley’s landscape work for North Christian Church appears in Chris Merritt, “Dan Kiley: Modern Landscapes in Columbus, Indiana,” Unpublished Document, 2016. Special thanks are in order for Chris Merritt and Richard McCoy for sharing this document with me.

<sup>8</sup> Miller, “Eero and Irwin: Praiseworthy Competition with One’s Ancestors”, 64.



The following document is organized roughly into three sections. **Part One features a Temporal and Physical Description of North Christian Church.** It begins with a *timeline* of the site and building of North Christian Church. The timeline will give the reader a sense of how the development of the site was integral to the design and construction of North Christian Church, as well as to the roles played by various actors throughout the design process. The timeline also includes information about subsequent alterations and repairs to North Christian Church. This will be followed by a *description* of the building, the landscape, and the site.

**Part Two provides an inventory of the various archival resources dedicated to North Christian Church.** The contents of two major archives relevant to the history of North Christian Church will be briefly considered and discussed: the Records Office of North Christian Church in Columbus, Indiana and the Eero Saarinen Collection at Yale University Library's Manuscripts and Archives. This section will also discuss and give information for other archival sources, including the Papers of Dan Kiley, held in the Special Collections Department in the Frances Loeb Library at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design, and the Aline and Eero Saarinen Papers at the Smithsonian Institutions Archives of American Art.

**Part Three documents the Historical Conditions of North Christian Church.** It delves into the histories of the building and the landscape, as well as the site of North Christian Church. As suggested in the Introduction to this report, the building should be considered as a formal masterstroke that was part of a deliberate and meaningful strategy that *integrated* art and architecture into the community physically, metaphorically, and spiritually through the site. This is not to say, however, that this section will abandon any historiographical significance for Saarinen's or Kiley's schemes for North Christian Church in favor of this integrated, site-based approach. Rather, this section will also outline the ways in which this heralded building can be assessed within histories of architectural modernism and landscape, histories of ecclesiastical architecture, as well as histories of interior and industrial design. This section will conclude with a statement of architectural significance based on the archival and historiographical approaches used to construct the history of the building.

It will consider the historic, aesthetic, social, scientific, and spiritual importance of North Christian Church. Each of these categories will be weighed accordingly and equally—they should all be viewed as important to determining the architectural significance for the building. These, in turn, will be indispensable to determine the appropriate policies and recommendations for the final conservation management plan for North Christian Church

**Part One:**  
**Building Timeline and Description**

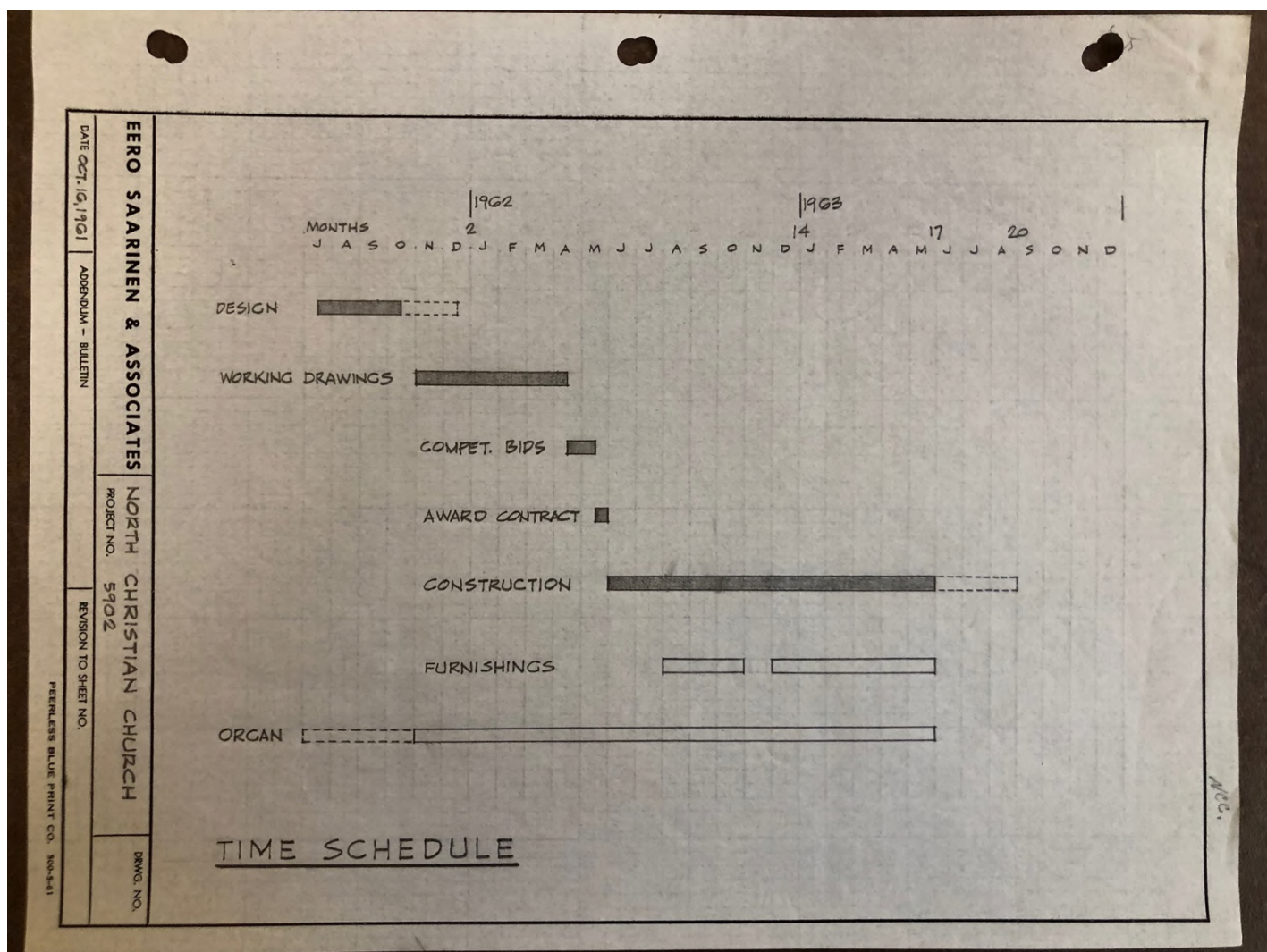


Figure 1.1: Eero Saarinen and Associates, 20-Month Time Schedule for Design and Construction of North Christian Church, 16 October 1961. Source: Job No. 5902, North Christian Church, Columbus, IN, Box 562, Folder 1, Client Correspondence MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.



## Section Overview

This section provides both a timeline of the history of North Christian Church and a building description. The purpose of the timeline is to provide a concise history of the design and construction of North Christian Church. The building description will be modeled on those used in the forms for nominating North Christian Church as a National Historic Landmark and Columbus to the National Register of Historic Places. Both the timeline and building description should also be considered working documents that will assist in the creation of a conservation management plan for North Christian Church.

## Building Timeline

September 25, 1955	The Disciples of Christ establish North Christian Church and begin to hold services at St. Paul's Episcopal Church.
February 1956	North Christian Church moves into the Caldwell Mansion at 2117 25th Street in Columbus.
March 18, 1958	The Trustees of North Christian Church purchase the Third Northlawn Addition, the future site of North Christian Church.
February 1959	North Christian Church commissions Eero Saarinen and Associates for the design and construction of North Christian Church.
March 3, 1959	Eero Saarinen officially accepts the commission for the design and construction of North Christian Church.
April 23, 1959 determine the	Eero Saarinen and Associates' first "Membership Survey and Program Questionnaire" is distributed to the Congregation in order to programmatic needs for the new North Christian Church.
September 23, 1959	North Christian Church establishes the initial construction budget for the new building at \$650,000.
October 7, 1959	North Christian Church increases the construction budget to \$700,000.
July 10-11, 1960	Eero Saarinen presents an "Architectural Progress Report" to J. Irwin Miller and the Architectural Committee of North Christian Church.
November 6, 1960	Reverend James Stoner meets with J. Irwin Miller, Eero Saarinen, Paul Kennon, and others to discuss alterations to the height of the spire to make the building compliant with new Federal Aviation Agency regulations.

December 13-14 1960	Paul Kennon and Maurice Allen present first designs for the General Board of North Christian Church and unveil the new building to the Congregation. The design is approved with an adjusted \$870,000.00 budget.
April 4, 1961	Eero Saarinen explains to the Architectural Committee that delays in design and construction are a result of his firm taking on additional projects.
April 5, 1961	J. Irwin Miller informs Eero Saarinen that the Congregation is frustrated by delays and may be giving up on the project altogether.
May 9, 1961	North Christian Church commissions Walter Holtkamp to design an organ for the Nave.
June 20, 1961	J. Irwin Miller asks Eero Saarinen to begin the project in July without further delays.
September 1, 1961	Eero Saarinen dies during a surgical procedure for removing a brain tumor.
October 16, 1961	Eero Saarinen and Associates prepares an initial schedule for the design and construction of North Christian Church.
November 1961	North Christian Church modifies the Third Northlawn Addition by including a connection from Sycamore street across National Road.
December 7, 1961	Kevin Roche, John Dinkeloo, John Kinsella, Paul Kennon, and Joe Jensen meet with the Architectural Committee and begin the working drawings for North Christian Church. Henry Pfisterer is hired as the structural designer. Van Zelm, Heywood & Shadford is hired for mechanical and electrical services. Current estimated construction costs are adjusted to \$1,247,300.
December 13, 1961	Pfisterer and Van Zelm, Heywood & Shadford meet with Eero Saarinen and Associates to work out ducting and HVAC for North Christian Church.
February 15, 1962	Eero Saarinen and Associates meets with North Christian Church to discuss acoustics and materials for the Nave, auditorium, and choir rehearsal rooms.
March 19, 1962	Walter Holtkamp presents his organ design to Eero Saarinen and Associates. A meeting is held to discuss the design of the interior furnishings.
March 29, 1962	Eero Saarinen and Associates meets with Pfisterer and Van Zelm, Heywood & Shadford to discuss rearranging of programs in the lower levels of North Christian Church due to a high water table.
June 15, 1962	Eero Saarinen and Associates produces plans and specifications for construction and interior furnishing contract bidding.
August 1, 1962	Walter Holtkamp prepares his first drawings of the organ for the Nave.

August 14, 1962	Discussions with the top construction bidder collapse, causing North Christian Church to meet with Repp & Mundt and discuss a revised budget.
September 2, 1962	The groundbreaking ceremony for North Christian Church is held.
October 1962	Negotiations about the height of the spire and Federal Aviation Agency regulations continue.
November 1, 1962	Eero Saarinen and Associates meets with North Christian Church to discuss the design of "General Furniture" and "Religious Objects." Alexander Girard is put forward for the design of flatware, chalices, textiles, and vestments needed for religious service.
November 8, 1962	Walter Holtkamp prepares an additional set of drawings of an organ for the Baptistery. This organ would never be built.
December 3, 1962	North Christian Church hires Repp & Mundt for construction services
March 1963	Construction of North Christian Church begins.
March 25, 1963	Paul Kennon and John Dinkeloo present models and drawings of the interiors and furnishings for North Christian Church.
July 8, 1963	Paul Kennon and John Dinkeloo present additional models and drawings of the interior furnishings for North Christian Church.
August 14, 1963	Eero Saarinen and Associates prepares "Specifications for Wood Furnishings" covering all aspects of materials and fabrication for the interiors.
March 1964	North Christian Church is completed.
March 8, 1964	The first service inside the new North Christian Church is held. Aline Saarinen, Kevin Roche, John Dinkeloo, Paul Kennon, and Alexander Girard are in attendance.
April 25, 1964	The Holtkamp Organ is dedicated in a special service.
June 26, 1964	Dan Kiley's office prepares its initial landscape design for North Christian Church.
October 14, 1964	Kiley's office begins leveling, topsoil work, and plantings in the areas immediately surrounding North Christian Church.
February 16, 1971	Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo Associates prepares a site study that analyzes traffic flow in and out of North Christian Church.
May 15, 1971	Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo Associates prepares another site study that analyzes traffic flow in and out of North Christian Church.
December 18, 1971	Dan Kiley's office prepares a modified site plan that keeps Sycamore Drive in its current state and adds additional plantings and parking bays.

March 1974	Dan Kiley's office prepares the final landscape design for North Christian Church.
October 1983	A Capital Campaign is established to raise funds to repair the slate roof, oculus, and ceiling and to establish a "Maintenance Reserve Fund."
June 29, 1988	The Storrow Kinsella Partnership prepares drawings for improvement to the roof and framing details.
August 31, 1990	Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo Associates creates a comprehensive framework for renovations and improvements to North Christian Church.
July 11, 1995	Columbus architect Todd Williams is commissioned to design a new Memorial Garden for North Christian Church.
September 21, 1997	The new Memorial Garden is dedicated.
1999	Another Capital Campaign is established to fund accessible ramps to the building entrances. North Christian Church receives an American Society of Landscape Architects Centennial Medallion.
2000	North Christian Church designated a National Historic Landmark by the National Park Service.
2003	The metal cladding on the spire is replaced.
2005	A Capital Campaign provides funds for new gutters, renovation of fascia, parking lot resurfacing, spire lighting, and a "Welcome Center."
2008-2009	Columbus architect Louis Joyner designs improvements for the slate roof, fascia, and the Memorial Garden. Funds are provided from the Capital Campaign and a "Save America's Treasures" grant from the National Park Service.
July 16, 2022	North Christian Church holds a "Celebration of Life" service, shortly before the Congregation disbands and the building is closed to the public.

### **Description of Present and Historic Physical Appearance**

North Christian Church is located at 850 Tipton Lane, on the northern edge of Columbus, Indiana. The site on which the building currently sits was developed from the late 1950s until the early 1970s. The site is mostly flat and is bounded by US Highway 31 (also known as National Road) on the north, Sycamore Drive on the west, Tipton Lane on the south, and Home Avenue on the east. Single-family houses surround the building.



North Christian Church is a one-story building with an elongated hexagonal plan oriented from east to west. The building is sunken into an earthen, hexagonally shaped berm that rises six feet above grade. The northern and southern sides of the buildings contain recessed gardens, each framed by a low concrete wall.

The distinctive form of North Christian Church is comprised of three elements. *First*, six steel ribs sheathed in lead-coated copper run along each of the roof hips. They converge to create a tall central spire that rises 192 feet into the air. This external frame supports and defines the *second* element: a steeply pitched slate roof. At the top, the roof terminates below the point where the ribs conjoin to form the base of the spire. Bells were supposed to hang in this space between the top of the roof and the spire.<sup>9</sup> The roof flares outwards and downward to create a wide overhang with upturned fascia on the each of the building's six sides. The roof is also supported by six buttresses bolted to massive concrete piers and made of wide-flange steel elements shaped like inverted rhombuses. A recessed glazed curtain wall appears below the roofline. The *third* element is the massive concrete base appearing in the spaces between the roofline and the sunken gardens on the northern and southern edges of the building. These three elements combine to give the impression of a building that is slightly detached and hovering above the ground.

There are two different ways to approach the building. A small turnaround joins the western entrance of the building to Sycamore Drive. From there, a series of ramps and stairs lead to set of glass doors. The main entrance of the building is on the eastern side, approached from a driveway leading from Tipton Lane and into the main parking lot. From there, a walkway leads through banks of Red Maple and arborvitae and into a series of ramps and stairs that extend slightly up, and then down into the main entrance.

The interior of the building is comprised of three separate levels, each stacked on top of the other, each experienced once entering the building. The first is the *Narthex Level*, which is the main

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<sup>9</sup> These bells appear only in the drawings. As of the revision of this document, it is unclear why these bells never made it to the final design, or whether excluding them due to budgetary constraints.

floor of the building. It is hexagonally shaped and provides access to the other areas of the building. The northern and southern sides of the narthex level contain all of the administrative offices, a meeting room, storage areas, and bathrooms. The offices and meeting rooms have walls made from mahogany and have clerestory windows facing the corridor. Visitors approaching from the main entrance arrive at the eastern part of the narthex level. The opposite side contains the Chapel and Baptistry, the latter containing a hexagonal-shaped pool that echoes the general plan of the building. Wooden screens separate this Chapel from the rest of the narthex level—both spatially and programmatically. The floors of the narthex level are black slate.

The ceiling of the narthex level is part of the *Nave Level*.<sup>10</sup> The Nave is a discrete structure resembling a hexagonal shaped bowl. Its bottom is a reinforced concrete “tube floor” with wood decking and the ceiling is made of plaster suspended on wire lath. It sits in the middle of the Narthex Level. Seen from there, the Nave's rough exterior walls extend from the floor and bend upward in a shallower angle to a clerestory band. The top edges of the band meet the ceiling, made of plaster on wire lath, that angles downward. The exterior nave walls, the plaster ceiling, and the clerestory band comprise the ceiling of the narthex level.

One approaches the interior of the Nave through an entrance on the Narthex Level. From there, one encounters a series of steps that lead up, and through here, the pipes of the Holtkamp organ are visible. Inside, the Nave's suspended ceiling slopes upwards, its sides joining together to form a large hexagonal shaped panel ringed with recessed lighting. In the center of this panel is an oculus with slatted louvers. The interior of the Nave follows the same hexagonal motif. Its middle is shaped like an elongated hexagon with a stepped, shallow and movable plinth in the center. It supports a communion table made of twelve identical chalice-shaped waist-high units, and a larger, taller one at the front. On top of the table and in the chancel are different textiles and religious items designed by Alexander Girard. Banks of pews emanate upwards from this central hexagonal space

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<sup>10</sup> Although archival documents sometime refer to this as the “Sanctuary,” this document will use the term “Nave” throughout in keeping with Eero Saarinen and Associates’ terminology in drawings and other documents. “Sanctuary” will be used when it is the preferred description, as is the case in some client correspondence.

and are separated by access stairs. The western edge of the Nave contains choir seating, a pulpit, and the massive Holtkamp organ. In addition to the ring of recessed lighting, natural light pours in from both the oculus and the clerestory band at the periphery. The latter creates an illuminated ring that casts the Nave ceiling with warm, natural glow that highlights the rough surface of the suspended ceiling.

The *Classroom Level* sits below the Narthex and Nave Levels. It shares the same hexagonal motif as these. A multipurpose auditorium occupies the middle of this Classroom Level, accessible from a kitchen and lounge area on the east. Corridors separate the auditorium from banks of classrooms, restrooms, storage areas, and vestibules leading into the auditorium. Two rooms occupy the western part of the Classroom Level. One is a Youth Activities room. It is attached to a mechanical room. These two sit directly underneath the Chapel and entrance stairs.

The alterations and improvements to the building began in the decades after its completion in 1964. In the interior, the most significant is the installation of chair lifts that provide access to the Nave from the Narthex Level, and from the Narthex Level to the Lower Level. Other interior projects include the floor improvements and the repair to HVAC and ducting elements. Exterior improvements and renovations include: the installation of accessible ramps and handrails to the entrance; the replacement of metal cladding on the spire; repair of the gutters and fascia; parking lot resurfacing; and the construction and installation of a Memorial Garden on the southeastern side of the building. The building's structure has remained unaltered and remains in good condition.

Throughout the design and construction of North Christian Church, the site has been altered significantly. The alterations began around the time that the lots surrounding the site were purchased and single-family homes were built. Tipton Lane was straightened and extended eastward to connect Sycamore Drive with Home Avenue. Sycamore Drive was never altered so that it could cross National Road and meet Hawthorne Drive, however. Photographs reveal well-worn easement paths connecting these two roads during the life of the building.

Dan Kiley's office designed the landscape for North Christian Church shortly after the building's completion. The landscape scheme consists of four parts. The first are the various plantings on the sunken gardens and berms on the northern and southern edges of the building. These include a combination of Japanese Yew, Sergeant Crabapple, and cotoneaster. The second are the banks of Red Maple and arborvitae that separate the parking lot in to a series of "rooms." Bosques of Saucer Magnolia are arranged along the northern and southern parts of the site. They are planted in a grid pattern derived from diagonals extending from the building's northern and southern edges. Third, a Red Maple *allée* runs along Tipton Lane along the southern edge and Sycamore Drive on the western end of the site. The two *allées* screen out the surrounding areas and, depending on the vantage point, also frame North Christian Church.

The landscape has been altered in the years since its completion in 1974. The different plantings on the northern and southern berms along North Christian Church were removed and replaced with grass. Dan Kiley's office, working with Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo Associates, added more bosques on the eastern portion of the site. Here, 43 Cherokee Princess Dogwood trees—commemorating the original 43 charter members of North Christian Church—were planted in 1995, creating a clustering of trees that connects the parking lot entrance on Tipton Lane to the site border on Home Avenue, and eventually to National Road.



## **Part Two:**

### **Archival Assessments**

## **Overview**

One of the goals of a conservation management plan is to ensure that any future actions on a candidate building align with the intent of its designers. A host of methods are available to meet this goal, and in the case of North Christian Church, a consideration of its historical and historiographical significance of paramount importance. The fruits of archival research cannot be overstated—they will provide architects, historians, conservators, and other stakeholders with an unparalleled glimpse at a building that has received scant attention in academic and professional monographs.

With this in mind, the purpose of this section is to give a brief inventory of the various archival sources used to assess the historical record of the design of North Christian Church and its historiographical significance. The below descriptions indicate that the records related to North Christian Church are by no means complete. Moreover, they suggest how a physical, tactile object like a building exists in more than one place and time. North Christian Church is not just a building in Columbus, Indiana. It was a building conceived in part in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, Hamden, Connecticut, and Columbus, Indiana. Its designs were wrought, perfected, and altered in the offices of Cummins Engine Company, Eero Saarinen and Associates, Dan Kiley and Associates, and Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo Associates. The life of North Christian Church began before the groundbreaking ceremony held on 2 September 1962 and extended decades beyond its completion in 1974.

## **Brief Archival Inventory**

### *Records Office, North Christian Church*

The Records Office at North Christian Church has two major groups of archival holdings. The first, located inside a set of flat files, includes digital and physical versions of the complete and updated drawing set and list of specifications. In addition to the materials produced by Eero Saarinen and Associates, these files also have drawings and studies prepared by Dan Kiley and Partners and Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo and Associates from the mid 1960s until the 1970s. Other materials in

the Records Office include drawings and studies by Bolt, Beranek & Newman, Walter Holtkamp's preparatory drawings for the Nave organ, and historical materials such as the plat drawings and infrastructural diagrams for the site. With the exception of the digital and physical drawing sets, these materials are neither indexed nor properly accessed. Many of them are in poor condition and in need of repair or conservation. No finding aids exist. In this document, all the materials consulted from this archive were found in unmarked drawers. Because of this, a general descriptive name for the archive will appear in each reference.

The second group of archival holdings includes correspondence and memoranda about the daily and business operations of North Christian Church. At the time of the writing of this project, only some of these materials were consulted.

<https://www.northchristianlegacy.org/>

*Columbus Indiana Architectural Archives, Bartholomew County Public Library*

The Columbus Indiana Architectural Archives (CIAA) at Bartholomew County Public Library contains drawing sets for many of the buildings in Columbus. CIAA, however, does not have the drawing sets for North Christian Church; it does, however, have an extensive collection of clippings and ephemera that shed light on the life of the building and its subsequent reception.

North Christian Church is currently in discussions to move all the drawing sets to CIAA.<sup>11</sup> This will provide an opportunity to conserve the materials that are in poor condition. It will also ensure that all the visual materials related to North Christian Church in Columbus are in one place. In this document, the materials provided by CIAA were in the form of shared Dropbox files without any box and/or folder numbers.

<http://www.columbusarchives.org/architecture.html>

*Irwin-Sweeney-Miller Family Collection, Indiana Historical Society*

The Irwin-Sweeney-Miller Family Collection at the Indiana Historical Society in Indianapolis includes materials dedicated to J. Irwin Miller and Cummins Engine Company. Among these are

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<sup>11</sup> As of the writing of this report, this material may have already been transferred to CIAA.

photographs and other materials documenting J. Irwin and Xenia Miller's involvement in various projects in Columbus.

The materials dedicated to North Christian Church consist mainly of correspondence outlining the purchasing of the site property, construction, and subsequent modifications and improvements to the building. The Collection has color slides and copies of the Saarinen office's original site plans for North Christian Church.

<http://images.indianahistory.org/cdm/landingpage/collection/p16797coll23>

*Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library*

In 2002, Kevin Roche donated all of the job and publicity materials produced by Eero Saarinen and Associates to Yale University. North Christian Church is one of the best-represented projects in the collection. In addition to drawing sets, the Eero Saarinen Collection has conceptual sketches, photographs of physical models, as well as extensive conference notes and correspondence between Saarinen's office and the Architectural Committee at North Christian Church.

The material is well organized, accessioned, and indexed. They are also supplemented by a thorough finding aid and overview of the entire collection. The materials are organized in order of their receipt. The box numbers are also non-sequential. However, the excellent online finding aids cross-reference many of the materials related to North Christian Church.

When combined, the materials at the Records Office, CIAA, and the Eero Saarinen Collection form the most comprehensive archival record of North Christian Church.

<https://archives.yale.edu/repositories/12/resources/4418>

*Aline and Eero Saarinen Papers, 1906-1977, Smithsonian Institution, Archives of American Art*

The Archives of American Art at the Smithsonian Institution contains the Aline and Eero Saarinen Papers. The bulk of this material documents Aline Saarinen's professional dealings and her life with Eero Saarinen. There are, however, a number of conceptual sketches of North Christian Church here that are otherwise unavailable at Yale University or in Columbus, Indiana. The sketches

of North Christian Church at the Smithsonian are labeled as “North Xian Church,” which can make their discovery somewhat problematic.

<https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/aline-and-eero-saarinen-papers-5589>

*Eero Saarinen Collection, 1956-1964, Archives, Canadian Centre for Architecture*

The Archives at the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal are among the best in the world. They document eight Eero Saarinen and Associates projects in the United States, including 36 conceptual sketches for North Christian Church. These were the gift of the Canadian photographer and collector David Graham Powrie.

<https://www.cca.qc.ca/en/archives/422920/eero-saarinen-collectionfa-ls-17669>

*Papers of Dan Kiley, Francis Loeb Library, Harvard University Graduate School of Design*

The Dan Kiley Papers at Harvard’s Francis Loeb Library are the only archives dedicated to the landscape architect’s life and practice. The holdings include one tube with 10 drawings of the landscape design for North Christian Church, including site plans with additional parking and plantings. At the time of the writing of this report, this material has not been consulted and is not available digitally. According to the website, the materials related to North Christian Church include “drawings for additional planting and parking, dated 1971-1974, together with a print of architect’s site plan,” all of which are found in the Records Office at North Christian Church and are discussed in this report. Plans will be made to consult the materials if necessary.

<https://hollisarchives.lib.harvard.edu/repositories/7/resources/724>

*G.E. Kidder Smith Image Collection, Massachusetts Institute of Technology*

The Library at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology includes a trove of photographs taken by the architect, author, and architectural photographer G.E. Kidder Smith (1913-1997). The collection contains 12 photographs of North Christian Church, presumably taken in from 1964 to 1974. These images are valuable because they record the building shortly after its completion as well as the early stages of Dan Kiley’s landscape design.

<http://dome.mit.edu/handle/1721.3/163510>



### *Library of Congress*

A number of drawings and photographs of North Christian Church can be found among the vast holdings at the Library of Congress. In addition to a handful of drawings donated by Eero Saarinen and Associates, the collection includes photographs from the Balthazar Korab and Carol M. Highsmith Archives.

<https://www.loc.gov/search/?in=&q=north+christian+church+saarinen&new=true>

<https://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/krb/> (Balthazar Korab Archive)

<https://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/highsm/> (Carol M. Highsmith Archive)

### *Maurice B. Allen Collection of Eero Saarinen and Associates Material, Archives, Cranbrook Academy*

The Archives at Cranbrook Academy include materials donated by Maurice B. Allen, who worked for Eero Saarinen and Associates from 1954 to 1962 and was involved in the early design of North Christian Church. The Maurice B. Allen Collection includes photographs of North Christian Church.

[https://www.cranbrook.edu/sites/default/files/ftpimages/120/misc/misc\\_36113.pdf](https://www.cranbrook.edu/sites/default/files/ftpimages/120/misc/misc_36113.pdf)

**Part Three:**  
**Historical Assessments**

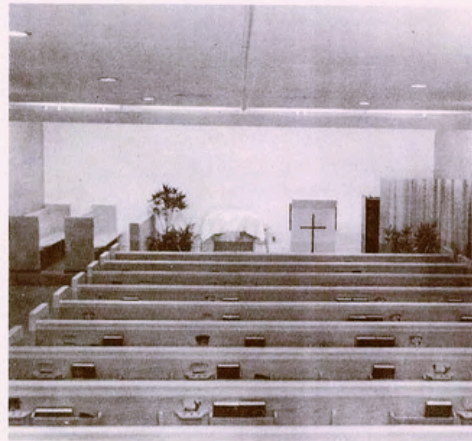


**CALDWELL MANSION, 1917**



**North Christian Church, 2117 25th Street — 1956-1964**

*Dedication  
June 17, 1956*



**North Christian Church**

2117 Twenty-Fifth Street  
COLUMBUS, INDIANA

Figure 3.1: Views of the interior and exterior of North Christian Church at the Caldwell Mansion, 2117 25th Street.  
Source: North Christian Church Legacy website

### **A History of the North Christian Church Site**

Around 1960, a set of developments occurring at the northernmost reaches of Washington Street were beginning to shape the future of Columbus—and the community. This was a part of the city that was still being platted and recorded, and as development moved north towards National Highway, most of the parcels were empty and being recorded with the names of the families and future companies that would be established there. It was also around this time that the Disciples of Christ, the congregation headed by the Reverend James L. Stoner and which counted J. Irwin Miller among its higher-profile members, moved to a temporary facility at the Caldwell Mansion on 2117

25<sup>th</sup> Street (Figure 3.1). It was from there that they planned a new home for their congregation, the future North Christian Church, to be sited at among the confluence of four plats: the F.M.

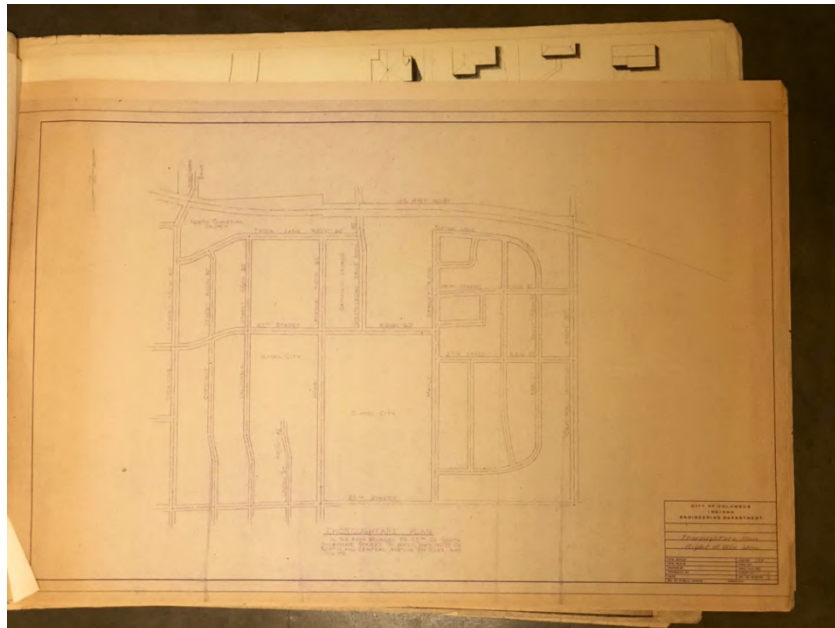


Figure 3.2: City of Columbus, Indiana Engineering Department, Thoroughfare Plan, 1957, Records Office, North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana

Overstreet plat, the North Columbus Addition, the Forest Park Addition, and the Second Northlawn Addition.<sup>12</sup>

If the planning of the Washington Street corridor was a result of consecutive and concerted urban design and landscaping efforts, the siting of North Christian Church was born from a completely different bramble of physical and legal constraints. This was because at the time, the Trustees of the congregation—now called North Christian Church—were considering an undeveloped parcel at the edge of the City of Columbus’ “Thoroughfare Program.”<sup>13</sup> Essentially a northward extension of the street grid, the Program (Figure 3.2.) determined the shapes of many of the parcels that were to occupy this part of the city. One issue that would eventually determine the shape of the future site of North Christian Church involved the extension of Sycamore Street to meet National Highway. During the late 1950s, with the exception of Washington and Central Streets, many of the roads that were to be part of the Program had yet to reach National Highway. Maps and diagrams produced by the Columbus, Indiana Engineering Department show Sycamore Street, Chestnut Street, and others represented in terms of their “R/O/W” (“Right Of Way”), all suggesting that the Thoroughfare Program was a dynamic, evolving process that was fraught with problems. The difficulties in extending Sycamore Street were twofold. On the one hand, an extended Sycamore Street would join National Highway as it turned slightly in a northern direction towards Indianapolis. On the other, Sycamore Street did not directly align with Hawthorne Drive on the opposite side of National Highway. Extending Sycamore Street and connecting it with Hawthorne Drive required significant concessions and alterations that would result in awkwardly shaped site.

The Trustees of North Christian Church began filing several applications to purchase a tract of land bounded by National Highway on the North, Sycamore Street on the West, and an extended Tipton Street on the South. The City Plan Commission of Columbus met to review the Trustees’ application, and the resulting plat, called the Third Northlawn Addition, was approved by the Board

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<sup>12</sup> City of Columbus, Indiana Engineering Department, Thoroughfare Plan and Right of Way Map, Thermofax reproduction (1960?), Records Office, North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana

<sup>13</sup> “Church Design, Plans Approved,” *The Evening Republican*, December 15, 1960, Box 561, Folder 1527, North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana, Job No. 5902, Clippings, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.



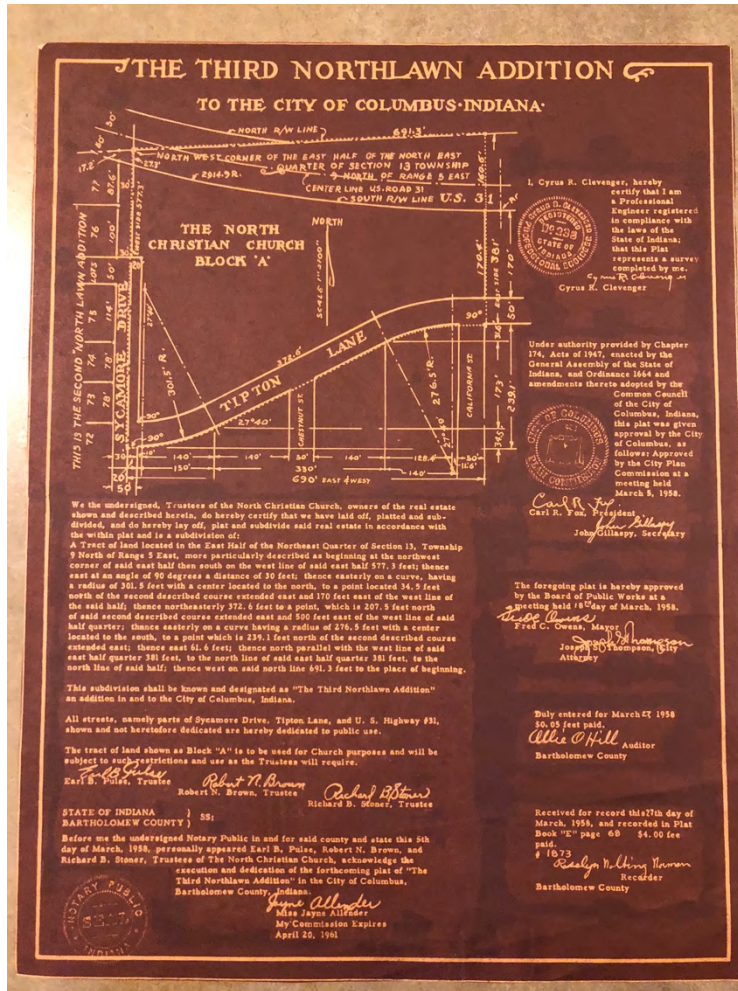


Figure 3.3: Original Plat for the Third Northlawn Addition to the City of Columbus, Indiana, March 18, 1958, Records Office, North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana

of Public Works on March 18, 1958.<sup>14</sup> Set within the “Northeast Quarter of Section 13, Township 9 North of Range 5 East,” the Third Northlawn Addition was shaped like the top of a grand piano (Figure 3.3), its larger part flaring south- and downward as it met Sycamore Street. National Road bordered it on the north, Sycamore Street on the west, California Street on the east, and Tipton Lane on the south, creating the curve that gave the site its distinctive grand piano-like shape. Within this plat, “Block ‘A’” was designated as the site of the new North Christian Church.<sup>15</sup> A glance at the plat application reveals that the site is squared off at the top left-hand corner, an indication that the issue

<sup>14</sup> The Third Northlawn Addition to the City of Columbus, Indiana, Thermofax original, March 18, 1958, Records Office, North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

of Sycamore Street had yet to be resolved. And even as late as November 1961, the Third Northlawn Addition was still being modified, showing further explorations for connecting Sycamore Street to Hawthorne Drive across National Highway.<sup>16</sup> A site plan study from 1960 shows another attempt at connecting the two roads, and a drawing by Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo Associates from 1971 reveals the site as following the original shape from the 1958 application.<sup>17</sup> The final version of the plat, approved on December 14, 1976, retains the original squared top left-hand corner.<sup>18</sup>

The irregular shape was one of several difficulties presented by the site for the new North Christian Church. Correspondence with surveyors for test boring services describe the site as a “wet site” with a high water table and would require adjusting the orientation of the building as well as its interior programming.<sup>19</sup> Fees and budgeting were also likely to be affected, and it was becoming clear that building on “Block ‘A’” would be no easy task. By 1959, Eero Saarinen’s office had already been sketching and trying out different versions of North Christian Church, and though some of these had different forms at the base, all featured the tall spire that would become the building’s most distinctive attribute. And yet the design of the spire brought its own attendant set of problems, all having to do with the physical siting of “Block ‘A’.”

To the members of the congregation who had been meeting with Saarinen’s office about the design of North Christian Church, the events of Saturday, June 30, 1956 would have seemed far away in time from the current concerns regarding the design of “Block ‘A’.” Around 10:30 a.m. on that morning, a United Airlines Douglas DC-7 airliner collided with a TWA Lockheed Constellation over the Grand Canyon, leaving no survivors. Poor air traffic control coordination was blamed for the incident, spurring a series of legislative overhauls regarding commercial airlines in the United States. One of these was the Federal Aviation Act of 1958, which placed the two former agencies—the Civil

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<sup>16</sup> Site Plan, Revision No. 2, November 17, 1961, Records Office, North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana

<sup>17</sup> “Site of North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana,” April 26, 1960, Records Office, North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana; Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo Associates, Scheme A, “North Christian Church, Site Study,” February 16, 1971, Records Office, North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana.

<sup>18</sup> “The North Christian Church Addition to the City of Columbus, Indiana,” Thermofax copy, December 14, 1976, Records Office, North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana.

<sup>19</sup> Box 562, North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana, Job No. 5902, Client Correspondence [1959-1960], Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

Aeronautics Administration and Civil Aviation Board—under the jurisdiction of the newly created Federal Aviation Agency. Of the national reforms instituted by the new Federal Aviation Agency, two in particular would cause problems for the design of “Block ‘A’.” The first one affected the classification of airfields in Indiana. During World War Two, Atterbury Army Air Base, was built north of what would become the Third Northlawn Addition and “Block ‘A’.” After a decade or so of minimal activity, the airfield became a center for transport aircrew operations and rechristened Bakalar Air Force Base in 1954. The longest runway was only 2.4 miles away from the site of North Christian Church, which set the stage for another problem. New FAA regulations stated that structures higher than 200 feet and built near an air base’s runway approach required the placement of red navigation lights at the top, and if necessary, the midpoint. Whereas the runway aprons at Bakalar Air Force Base were at 651 feet above sea level, the cross atop the spire at North Christian Church would reach 851 feet above sea level. In short, North Christian Church would be about 200 feet too tall and would require the placement of red navigation lights along its spire.

Having red lights on the church spire was seen as potential eyesore, one that would take away from the intended effect of North Christian Church. It was also an issue that required shuttle diplomacy between Eero Saarinen and Associates, J. Irwin Miller, the Air Force, and the Federal Aviation Agency. The issue was first addressed in a November 6, 1960 meeting between Rev. Jim Stoner, J. Irwin Miller, Eero Saarinen, Paul Kennon, and others. In the conference notes, Kennon writes, “The question came up about the building height of the spire in relation to flight patterns of the air base near by – will there have to be warning lights? Tom Harrison [J. Irwin Miller’s executive assistant] is going to check this out.”<sup>20</sup> In subsequent correspondence from early 1961, Harrison and Maurice B. Allen Jr. from Saarinen’s office in Birmingham, Michigan considered how to lobby the Air Force and Federal Aviation Agency against the placement of red navigation lights on the church spire. Their first instinct was to ask Colonel James Hoff, Bakalar’s Commanding Officer the

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<sup>20</sup> “Conference Notes, Conference Room of Cummins Engine Plant, Columbus, Indiana, 6 November 1960,” Conference Notes (1960-1965), Box 561, Folder 1528, North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana, Job No. 5902, MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library

feasibility of labeling the base as an “Express” or “Intercontinental Express” airport, which would categorically exclude North Christian Church from warning light requirement.<sup>21</sup> Hoff agreed, and even offered to write a letter in support of the variance and to bring up the matter to an Air Force liaison to FAA’s Kansas City office, which had jurisdiction over these matters. Furthermore, Hoff believed that although the proposed spire would exceed the 200 foot threshold, it would not interfere with air traffic in the area.<sup>22</sup>

The issue of the building height was highly contentious, and some believed that the building should have navigation lights installed. At one point, Harrison commented on the complex regulations regarding building height, noting, “I am sure we, as members of our congregation, do not want to build something that would be an obstruction to the air traffic in our community and might

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<sup>21</sup> M.T. Harrison to Maurice B. Allen, Jr., January 5, 1961. Box 562, Folder 1, Client Correspondence [1959-1960], North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana, Job No. 5902, MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

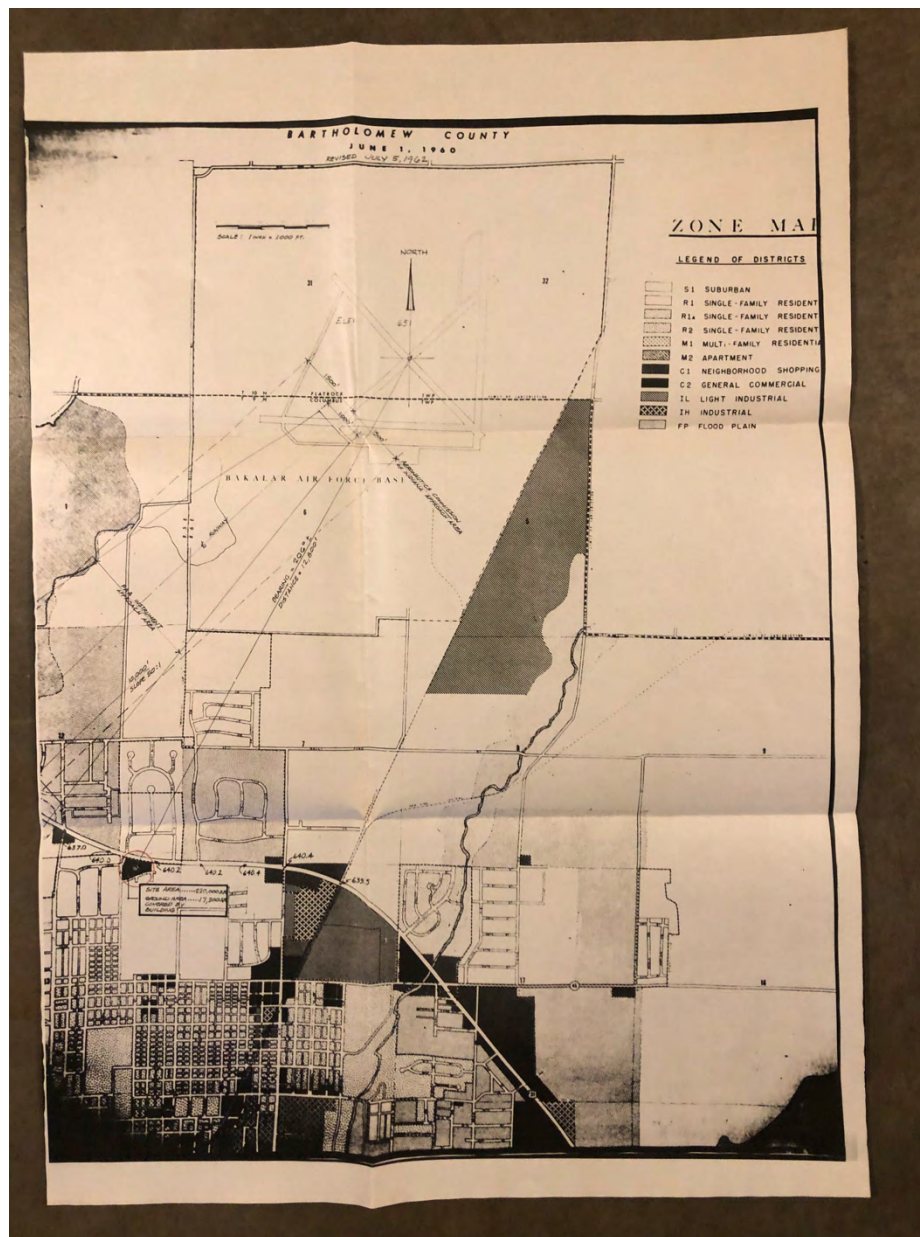


Figure 3.4: Zoning Map showing relation of North Christian Church site to Bakalar Air Force Base. Source: Records Office, North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana

endanger the lives of people, yet it is quite evident that CAA or FAA have so many regulations governing clearance lights that it becomes purely a matter of opinion as to whether a light is required.”<sup>23</sup> And yet Saarinen’s office was already thinking of avoiding any concessions by reducing the height of the tower to 190 feet.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*



Although subsequent sections of this document will concern the symbolism of the form and the significance of the spire, it is unclear why Saarinen's office had decided on a scheme that topped out at exactly 851 feet above sea level. However, the extent to which this issue was occupying the minds of the architects is revealed through office drawings and site studies. Some of these, prepared for Form 41-R034.6 for the Federal Aviation Agency and Form 501 for the State of Indiana Aeronautics Commission, are relevant in that they make no distinction between the building and the site in "Block 'A'." A zoning map of northern Bartholomew County from June 1, 1960 (and revised in 1962) (Figure 3.4) for example, shows the general orientation of the site in relation to Bakalar Air Force Base.<sup>24</sup> The site studies produced by Eero Saarinen and Associates, however, consider the site within larger contexts. Drawn on December 20, 1960, these drawings are unusual in that they are oriented in relation to the glide approach angle to Bakalar. Devoid of any context that would situate this drawing within Columbus (except for the recognizable shape of the North Christian Church site), one set shows that whereas an Intercontinental Express-designated airway would begin in the airspace directly above the site, an Intercontinental airway would begin well north of National Highway.<sup>25</sup> Another (Figure 3.5) uses a reproduced section of the building to study its relationship to the FAA-mandated approach airway 1500 feet above site. Two red lines drawn roughly in parallel to

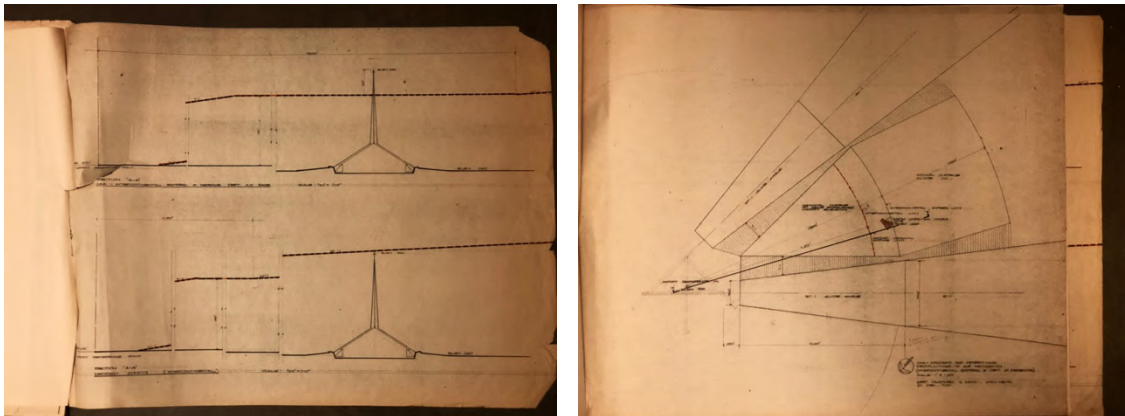


Figure 3.5: Eero Saarinen and Associates, Analysis of CAA-mandated Intercontinental and Intercontinental Express Airways, 1960. Source: Records Office, North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana

<sup>24</sup> Bartholomew County Zone Map, June 1, 1960 (Revised July 5, 1962), Records Office, North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana.

<sup>25</sup> Eero Saarinen and Associates, "CAA Standard for Determining Obstructions to Air Navigation (Intercontinental Express = Dept. of Defense)," December 20, 1960, Records Office, North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana.

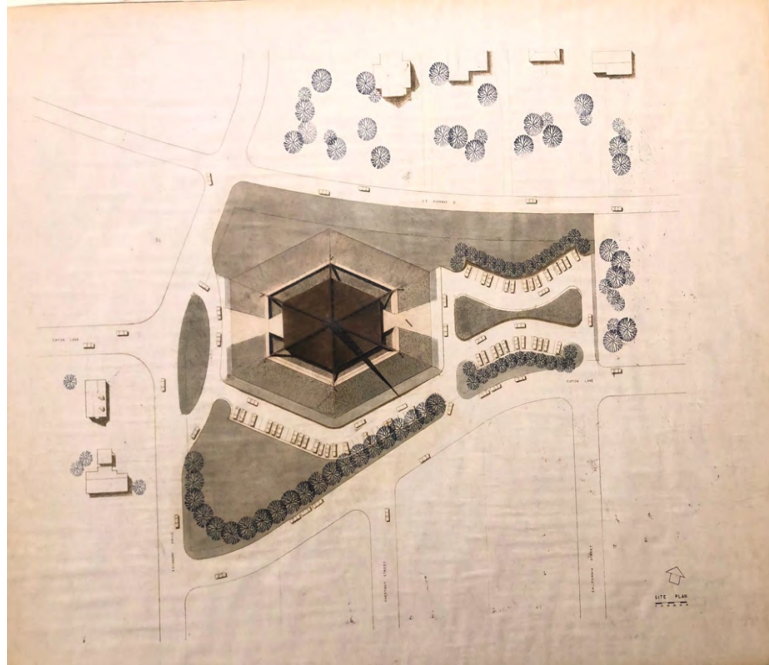


Figure 3.6: Eero Saarinen and Associates, North Christian Church, Site Plan, December 1960. Source: Folder 695B (Mixed Materials), North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana, Job No. 5902, MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University. Library.

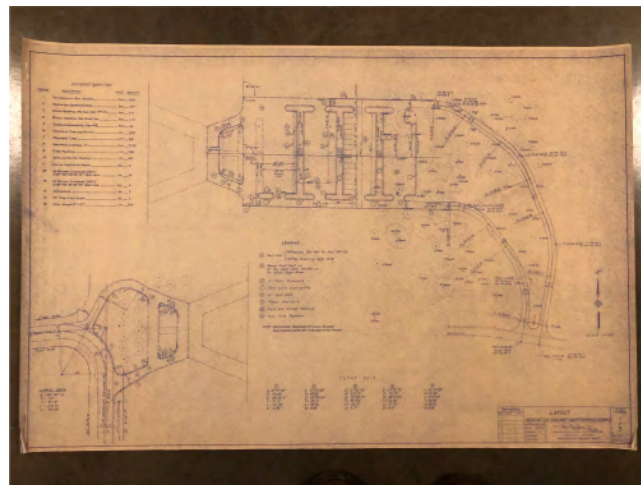


Figure 3.7: Huntington & Wade, Site Study for North Christian Church, 15 May 1973. Source: Records Office, North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana.

the airway show the locations of the Intercontinental Express and Intercontinental airway envelopes in relation to the spire. They reveal that the Intercontinental Express airway would intersect the spire



Saarinen's office show how the building was linked inextricably to the site, physically and conceptually, so much so that North Christian Church appears almost as an afterthought in these documents.

The site design for North Christian Church remained unresolved even though the Trustees and the Architectural Committee of North Christian Church approved the new building in December 1960 (Figure 3.6). This is evident in the first group of conceptual and design drawings presented by Saarinen's office to the congregation. These site plans show how Sycamore Street takes a northeasterly bend to meet Hawthorne Lane on the other side of National Highway.<sup>27</sup> This was also the case with some of the earliest models for the actual building and the versions presented to the congregation for approval, all emphasizing the topographic features of the site along with a series of etched lines indicating the Sycamore Street extension across National Highway. And yet site plans made in the years after the building's completion show Sycamore Street taking its eventual and familiar straightened westerly bend. Site studies by Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo and Associates in 1971 as well as site plans by Dan Kiley and Partners from 1971 and 1974 confirm this straightening.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, a set of site plans from 1973 by the consulting engineering firm Huntington and Wade (Figure 3.7) show the western edge of the site as it is today: a driveway entrance that generally echoes the hexagonal plan of North Christian Church and then curves around to meet Tipton Lane as it extends to the west to intersect with Washington Street.<sup>29</sup> These documents suggest that the most important factor leading to the eventual resolution of this issue was maintaining the legibility of the grid. This is clear when looking at Kiley's site plans from 1971 and 1974 (Figure 3.8). The former maintains the integrity of the original Third Northlawn Addition, with the western edge running north along Sycamore Street and into National Road. The latter confirms the influence of the 1973

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<sup>27</sup> Eero Saarinen and Associates, Site Plan for North Christian Church, 1960, Records Office, North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana. A version of this can also be found in Folder 695B (Mixed Materials), Box 562, and Box 566, Job No. 5902, Eero Saarinen Collection, North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana, MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

<sup>28</sup> Dan Kiley and Partners, "North Christian Church, Addition to Parking Area," December 18, 1971; Dan Kiley and Partners, "North Christian Church," March 1974; and Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo and Associates, "Scheme A, North Christian Church, Site Study," Records Office, North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana.

<sup>29</sup> Huntington & Wade, "Layout, Parking Lot Addition—North Christian Church," May 15, 1973, Records Office, North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana.

plan by the City of Columbus, which would maintain the integrity of the grid south of National Road.<sup>30</sup>

The drawings from 1971, 1973, and 1974 all show another aspect of the grid that would affect the design of the site. Tipton Lane, the street that gave the Third Northlawn Addition its form, was straightened to meet Home Street further east. This increased the overall size of the site at the time when Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo and Associates began studies for extending the parking lot towards the west. This was done presumably to ease traffic flow to and from North Christian Church, as Roche Dinkeloo's drawings feature arrows highlighting the movement of cars through the parking lot.

### **Landscape and Site Design at North Christian Church**

The developments along the western edge of the site and the proposed extensions to the parking lot demonstrate the degree to which Roche and Kiley's offices played a vital part in the future of North Christian Church. By the time that designs for North Christian Church commenced in 1961, Saarinen, Roche, and Kiley had already worked together on a range of projects throughout the United States and in Columbus proper and continued to flourish. Kiley had known Saarinen since 1944 while both worked in the Presentations Branch of the Office of Strategic Services.<sup>31</sup> Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo and Associates completed Saarinen's projects after his death in September 1961, with Roche taking on design duties and Dinkeloo working on technical aspects.<sup>32</sup> Yet the site designs and alterations associated with the parking lot extension at North Christian Church will cast some light on the importance of landscape architecture to this project. As the scholar and designer Caroline Constant argues in *The Modern Architectural Landscape* (2012), landscape designers are overlooked contributors to the success and legacy of modernist architecture projects.

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<sup>30</sup> Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo and Associates, "Scheme A, North Christian Church, Site Study," Records Office, North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana.

<sup>31</sup> Caroline Constant, "The Public Urban Landscapes of Dan Kiley," unpublished manuscript. Special thanks again are in order to landscape architect Chris Merritt, who shared this document with me. For more about Saarinen's and Kiley's work during World War Two, see Jean-Louis Cohen, *Architecture in Uniform: Designing and Building for the Second World War* (Paris, France and London, England: Editions Hazan and Yale University Press, 2011.)

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* For more on Kevin Roche collaborations with John Dinkeloo, Dan Kiley, and Eero Saarinen, see Eeva-Liisa Pelkonen, *Kevin Roche: Architecture as Environment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011.)



Far from rectifying this situation, this section will instead focus on how Kiley's vision drove Roche and Dinkeloo's work on the project.

By this point, it should be clear that the site of North Christian Church was *designed*. Infrastructural and legal issues were crucial to the site's development, and yet its general shape, dimensions, and topography were born of aesthetic considerations. Nowhere is this more evident than in the first set of drawings presented to North Christian Church's Trustees in December 1960, mentioned above (See Figure 3.6). These reveal the familiar form of North Christian Church as the primary determinant of the site and landscape design, as if the building were emanating waves that cast hexagonally shaped indentations in the landscape. This scheme seems unrecognizable when compared to the current, more familiar version. The landscape design in the Saarinen firm's site plan from 1960 consists of two berms. The western berm, elliptical in plan, is set along a Sycamore Street that is bending towards Hawthorne Lane. A driveway curves around the berm and provides pick-up and drop-off for churchgoers. The eastern berm had an elongated hourglass shape, roughly symmetrical, extending east to west. A driveway rings around it, and opposite each of the elongated indentations, rows of parking spaces are arranged in forms that echo the hourglass shape. One row faces National Road, the other Tipton Lane. A line of trees fringes each of these. And along the southern edge of the site, another bank of trees continues the bottom indentation. Although this scheme never came to fruition, it is important to recognize the extent to which it serves to both seclude and expose the church to pedestrian and vehicular traffic. Driving along Tipton Lane, for example, one would not see the actual church until driving through the parking lot on the proposed access road between Chestnut Lane and California Lane. Approaching from an entrance via the latter, however, would reveal the true effect of the hourglass-shape berm, as the trees along the parking spaces compress the point of view and frame North Christian Church between walls of trees, creating a monumental approach reminiscent of that at St. Peters in Rome. It would be a different story driving along National Road, however. There are no trees here to visually separate North Christian Church from traffic. One can imagine drivers seeing at least two sides of the church's

recognizable form rotating underneath the ever-present spire as National Road bends slowly through the landscape. Sited on the northernmost fringes of a Columbus that was yet to be developed or platted, North Christian Church was perhaps meant to be viewed from a moving car.

As the building's form was the primary determinant for this proposed site design, this does not mean that landscape architecture did not play an important role in this project. And this is even the case when none of the concept models produced by Saarinen's office had any substantial landscape interventions. By this time, Saarinen and Kiley had been loyal collaborators. The two had worked together on designs for the Detroit Civic Center (1947), the National Expansion Memorial in St. Louis (1947-1965), and were busy with Bell Laboratories in Holmdel, New Jersey (1961), and Dulles Airport (1962). Moreover, their collaboration on the Miller House (1957) in Columbus had gained national attention. Yet here it is important to recognize just how atypical this design is from Kiley's eventual scheme.

Kiley was a designer whose fascination with American forests and agricultural patterns were tempered by an interest in the classical formalism epitomized by French landscape architects like André Le Nôtre (1613-1700). As Kiley explained in an interview,

THIS was what I had been searching for—a language with which to vocalize the dynamic hand of human order on the land—a way to reveal nature's power and create spaces of structural integrity. I suddenly saw that lines, *allées* and orchards/bosques of trees, *tapis verts* and clipped hedges, canals, pools, and fountains could be tools to build landscapes of clarity and infinity, just like a walk in the woods. I did not see this then, and to this day do not see, a problem with using classic elements in modern compositions, for this is not about style of decoration but about articulation of space. The thing that is modern is space. You can't touch it; it is elusive but felt.<sup>33</sup>

In this sense, the formalism that defined much of Kiley's work should be considered as a evidence of a kind of hybrid modernism, a Janus-faced temporality that is rooted in the geometric sensibilities of the past while sensitive to the life cycles of native plant and tree species. Caroline Constant elaborates on how the richness in Kiley's work was architectural in nature:

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<sup>33</sup> Dan Kiley and Jane Amidon, *Dan Kiley: The Complete Works of America's Master Landscape Architect* (Boston, New York, and London: Little, Brown, and Company, 1999), 13, in Constant, "The Public Urban Landscapes of Dan Kiley," unpublished manuscript.

Kiley imparted an analogous spatial sensibility to his mature landscape designs through the iterative juxtaposition of a limited range of trees and shrubs, chosen for their formal attributes and spatial potential as well as their seasonal variation to afford a kinesthetic sense of spatial dynamics owing to the effects of parallax perceived by the human body in motion. The architectonic qualities of that idea—an architecture of trees and vegetation, water and sky, fulfilling “in organic richness” what Kiley viewed as the stillborn promise of the modern movement—contributed to the success of his collaborative undertakings with a number of prominent American architects.<sup>34</sup>

With this in mind, Kiley’s landscapes can be viewed as complex spatial assemblages, design interventions that complement—and never overtake—the buildings located within.

It is unclear when the figurative, expressive site design presented in 1960 by Saarinen’s office became the more formal and recognizable scheme eventually adopted for North Christian Church. The first photographs of the completed building show no evidence of landscape. However, a set of

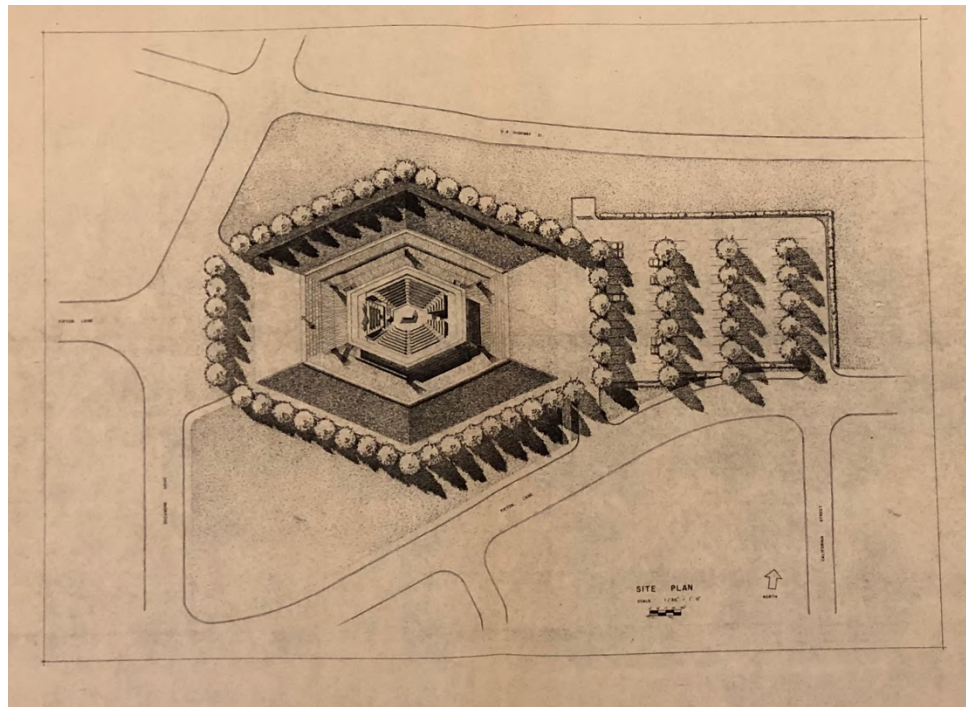


Figure 3.9: Eero Saarinen and Associates, Site Plan, North Christian Church, 1960?. Source: Records Office, North Christian Church, Columbus Indiana.

undated yet published site plans from Saarinen’s office show the familiar rows of trees placed in between three parking bays (Figure 3.9). They also feature trees running along the edges of the

<sup>34</sup> Constant, “The Public Urban Landscapes of Dan Kiley,” quoting Kiley, “Panel Discussion,” in Reuben Rainey and Marc Treib, eds., *Dan Kiley Landscapes: The Poetry of Space* (Richmond, CA: William Stout, 2009), 36.

building, echoing its hexagonal form. This approach is also seen in some of the photographs of the presentation model from 1960, with trees that first appear to dot the landscape, and then are revealed to follow the general form of the building.

In subsequent site plan drawings for North Christian Church, Kiley refers to himself as “Landscape and Site Architect.” It is an unusual designation given that for other projects, Kiley was more specific about the role to be played by his firm. Some projects, for example, clearly identified “Landscape Architecture, Architecture, and Planning” as the fields of expertise. And yet in the 1999 monograph of his practice, Kiley lists his role as solely “Landscape.”<sup>35</sup> For the purposes of this document, Kiley’s self-designation as “Landscape and Site Architect” remains useful. This is because the earliest site drawings completed for the project in 1964 (Figure 3.10) exemplify the kind of methodical formalism and interest in spatial effects that would come to define his work.

In looking at these drawings, dated 26 June 1964 and subsequently modified, it is useful to think of the site in four different groupings, each having a distinct relation to the building, each featuring different kinds of landscape interventions. *First*, there are the fields surrounding North Christian Church, which for the purposes of this document are those bounded along Sycamore Street on the west, extending from the building north towards National Road, and south towards the curving Tipton Lane. Here, straight rows of hybrid Saucer Magnolia (*Magnolia x soulangeana*), oriented

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<sup>35</sup> Kiley and Amidon, *Dan Kiley: The Complete Works of America’s Master Landscape Architect*, 210.

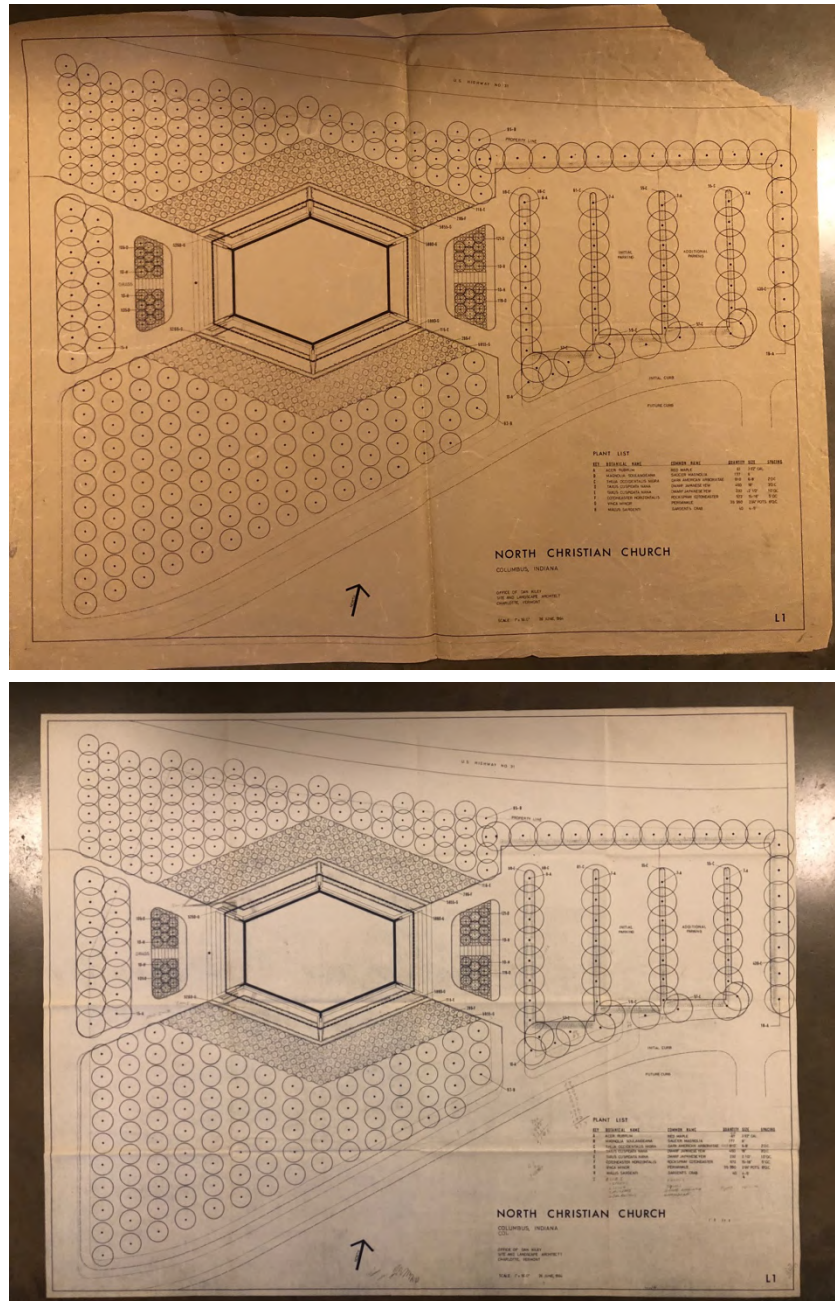


Figure 3.10: Dan Kiley and Partners, Site Plan, North Christian Church, 26 June 1964.  
Source: Records Office, North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana.

roughly along a north-south axis, give uniformity to the site while obscuring its irregular shape.<sup>36</sup> While this may exemplify the kind of rigid formality that endeared Kiley, the trees are also planted in a staggered pattern. At first, this may appear as a kind of concession, as if Kiley is yielding his interest

<sup>36</sup> *Magnolia x soulangeana* is also known as “Soulange’s hybrid Chinese magnolia,” U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Report of the Chief of Engineers U.S. Army (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1900), 5288.



in geometry to the overall form of the site. However, a closer glance reveals that the trees are also planted in diagonal rows that correspond to the shape of the building. The lines that give North Christian Church its familiar form seem to extend into the landscape and into the rows of magnolias. It is possible to imagine a wander through this landscape, one that may first appear as a mass of trees flanking either side of the building, with their blooming canopies providing a cloud of pink and white that seems to hover some 25 feet above the ground. And once inside, a viewer may encounter the tree trunks lining up and extending into the distance, creating a sense of stillness, order, and calmness.

The *second* set consists of two groves placed in front of the main (east) and rear (west) entrances. Both groves are shaped like isosceles trapezoids with rounded corners, surrounded by paving. The grove in front of the main entrance is slightly larger in size than the one on the opposite side of the building. Both, however, feature combinations of Sargents Crabapple (*Malus sargentii*) and Dwarf Japanese Yew (*Taxus cuspidata nana*). The second, larger grove, also shaped like an isosceles trapezoid, contains two rows Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*) arranged in a staggered procession. This combination of plantings would also have a similar effect to that in the first group. In approaching the building from the east and into the main entrance, for example, a person would walk around the tall crabapple and banks of shorter yew bushes and perhaps see the façade framed by Saucer Magnolia on either side. It would be a different story on the opposite side, however, as the phalanx of red maple would certainly obscure the entrance from Sycamore Street.

The *third* grouping consists of plantings inside the gardens and the upward sloping berms along the northern and southern sides of the building. A version of these still exist, with roof overhangs creating the illusions that these plantings would have been inside moats that separate the nave from the rest of the landscape. In Kiley's site plan, these gardens are covered in rows of Periwinkle (*Vinca minor*), and the upward slopes with alternating rows of Dwarf Japanese Yew, Rockspray Cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster horizontalis*), and Periwinkle. When arranged, these plantings would create alternating zones of lavender during the spring and bright red berries during the autumn and

winter. Kiley's strategy would have added a bit of visual complexity and drama, softening the bold, hard edges of the church with waves of color. Kiley made modifications to the scheme, however. In an undated site plan from 1964, for example, Kiley reduced the number of Red Maple and arborvitae. And more importantly, he added rows of bulbs for the garden areas, including Crocus, Siberian Squill (*Scilla siberica*), Grape Hyacinth (*Muscari armeniacum*), and Snowdrop (*Galanthus nivalis*). The effect would be to add even more color.

The *fourth* grouping is the tree plantings in and surrounding the parking lot, the part of the site that would be the most controversial as it would be in a state of flux after the completion of North Christian Church in 1964. Kiley's original site plan divides the lot into three bays, each separated by a single row of Red Maple set within a low hedge of Dark American Arborvitae (*Thuja occidentalis nigra*). This pairing is also found along the northern and eastern edges of the parking lot. At first, these design interventions seem like mere formalities, as if the trees and plantings were only supposed to accentuate the form of the parking lot and its various bays. Saarinen, however, wanted to instill a sense of dramatic urgency with these plantings. In comparing this drawing to the earlier one, it is clear that Kiley is adhering generally to Saarinen's intentions for the site. Kiley's site plan preserves the parking bays (and their plantings) from the earlier drawing. However, the 1964 site plan must be understood as consistent with Kiley's approach. Whereas both the site plan presented in

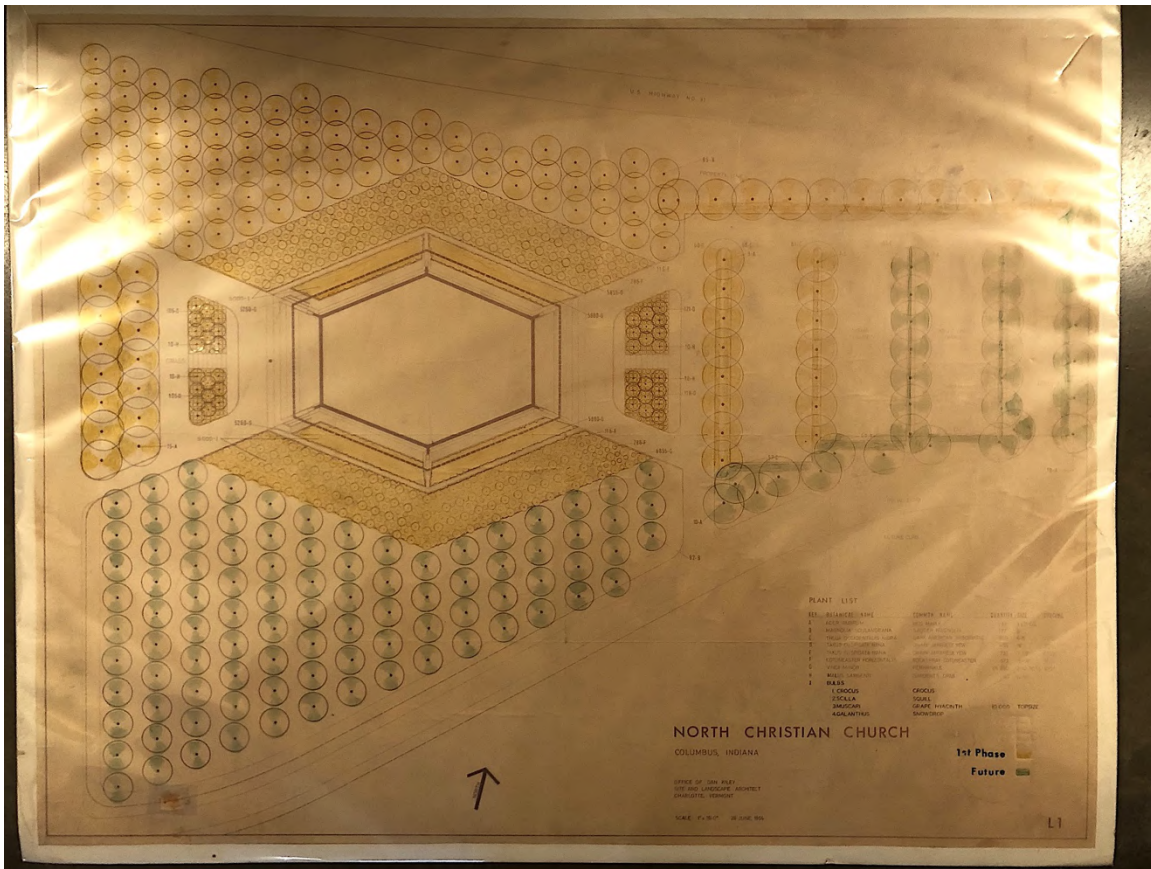


Figure 3.11: Dan Kiley and Partners, Site Plan for North Christian Church with Planting Schedule. Source: Records Office, North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana.

1960 and the subsequent version show Saarinen's interest in the parking lot as part of the building's processional axis, Kiley's scheme appears to be more concerned with integrating the building into the site and its attendant infrastructure.

Kiley intended his scheme to be implemented in different stages, presumably to accommodate the different growth cycles for the various plant and tree species and budgeting revisions. A version of the site plan from 26 June 1964 (Figure 3.11), for example, is overlaid with a vellum sheet showing two distinct planting phases. The first phase includes planting the trees, brushes, and flowers along the north edge of the site, the berms and gardens on the north and southern sides of the building, both entrances, as well as two rows of arborvitae separating two parking bays. The second includes everything else on the site, such as the grid of Saucer Magnolia and the Red Maple on the southernmost side of the parking lot, both running along Tipton Lane. A

schedule and proposal (Figure 3.12), dated 14 October 1964, shows that Kiley's office began work in October 1964 with leveling and topsoil work, focusing on those plantings directly surrounding the building, such as the gardens, berms, and entryways. Spring 1965 would be dedicated to planting the grid of Saucer Magnolia, yew, and crabapples. Red Maple, and arborvitae would be planted in the fall of 1965.<sup>37</sup> This schedule, it should be added, featured revised estimates, as well as a note indicating,

Figure 3.12: Dan Kiley and Partners, Planting Schedule and Budget, 14 October 1964. Source: Records Office, North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana

<sup>37</sup> Office of Dan Kiley, Estimates and Minimum Proposal for Landscaping at North Christian Church, 14 October 1964, Records Office, North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana.





Figure 3.13: Aerial View of North Christian Church from the December 1965 issue of *Architectural Forum*

in a relatively clean condition, almost devoid of landscape elements (Figure 3.13). Here, the original contours of the Third Northlawn Addition are clear, as is a small dirt easement connecting Sycamore Street to National Highway. The familiar bend of Tipton Lane is also visible, connecting Sycamore Street to the parking lot. The lot appears undeveloped, or at least, unrealized, as there are only two bays visible. A closer look at this image, however, reveals two rows of red maple barely discernible on the boundary between the site and National Road. An undated aerial photograph, presumably





Figure 3.14: North Christian Church, late 1960s. Source: G.E. Kidder Smith Image Collection, MIT Libraries

from around the same time, shows slightly more growth. Here, the alternating bands of cotoneaster, yew, and periwinkle are visible, as is the grid of Saucer Magnolia on the northern edge of the site. And a look at the parking bays reveals some amount of growth—all indications that the second planting has taken place. The main vegetative feature in this image is a large cornfield on the other side of Tipton Lane. This is the same field that foregrounds North Christian Church in the November 1967 feature from *Life*, entitled “An Inspired Renaissance in Indiana.” (See Figure 0.1) In that image, a tractor can be seen moving towards the camera, through the rows of corn, and beyond, the building’s familiar form and spire seem to rise from the field. The rows of cotoneaster, yew, and periwinkle are visible here. They appear small, and though it is difficult to ascertain the age of these trees and plants from this image, they show the results of the first two plantings. The extent of this is seen further in a series of photographs taken by G.E. Kidder Smith from the late 1960s. (Figure 3.14)

In one, the rows cotoneaster, yew, and periwinkle appear unkempt, a bramble that seems to be creeping towards the entrance. In another, wispy Red Maple saplings appear to grow from banks of low-cut arborvitae. Weeds are beginning to sprout through the paved parking lot surface.

By 1971, Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo Associates were in charge of site planning and development at North Christian Church. As is evident from studies and drawings made in 1971 by



Figure 3.15: Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo Associates, Site Plan ("Scheme A"), North Christian Church, 16 February 1971. Source: Records Office, North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana

Roche and Dinkeloo and Kiley's offices, there were two major proposed alterations to the site that would eventually result in its most familiar, and current manifestation. The first is the redesign and widening of Tipton Lane. During and after the completion of North Christian Church, Tipton Lane appears as a rough, slightly uneven though paved roadway that gave the site its original geometry. This is the version of Tipton Lane in Roche and Dinkeloo's site study, dated 16 February 1971. (Figure 3.15) Like the thoroughfare plans from the late 1950's, this study is also focused on traffic—specifically automobile traffic to and from North Christian Church. The series of black arrows



Figure 3.16: Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo Associates, Site Plan ("Scheme B"), North Christian Church, 16 February 1971. Source: Records Office, North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana

weaving in and out the parking bays already give a sense of the problem, as access to the building is limited. One can already imagine the kind of bottlenecking that could occur with cars backing in and out of parking spaces as others are maneuvering in search of an elusive open spot. A second study also from 16 February 1971 (Figure 3.16) shows a redrawn site with Tipton Lane extending from Sycamore Street eastward to Home Avenue while lowering it to make it parallel to the rest of the Columbus grid. This would have two effects. First, it would ease traffic to and from the site, providing two points of access from National Road. Although it is unclear how much traffic had increased during construction and since completion of the North Christian Church, it is reasonable that the Trustees had the congregation in mind, and given that they had reached over 400, finding alternate means of access to the site was definitely needed. Moreover, the extension and relocation of Tipton Lane would also add more land south and southeast of the original site.

The second alteration was to the parking lot itself. The original site plans produced by Saarinen's office in 1964 had already contemplated adding at least one extra parking bay, and it appears that by 1971, Roche and Dinkeloo wanted to add more. The site drawing from Kiley's Office, dated 18 December 1971 (See Figure 3.8) adopts this last scheme, even though Tipton Lane is referred to as a "proposed street."<sup>39</sup> It is clear, however, that by 1973, only two bays were added, bringing to the total to four. This was done presumably for traffic calming reasons. Roche and Dinkeloo's site study as well as the drawings prepared by Huntington and Wade feature the familiar roads connecting the northeast and southeast corners of the parking lot to Tipton Lane. This last drawing also features a red mark indicating the location of the entrance site, an indication that the Trustees were also concerned with proper wayfinding as well as an entrance befitting the building.

At first, the redesign of the site appears to treat landscape design as an afterthought. However, Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo Associates and Dan Kiley's office had a good working relationship. The site drawings for North Christian Church show that ideas about the site were still developing and were changing rapidly. Roche and Dinkeloo's drawings from February 1971 show two new designations in the site. In "Scheme A" a "wooded area" extends from Home Drive to an area roughly corresponding to the eastern edge of the parking lot, as well as a large "park" occupying a swath of land that extended from Tipton Lane south to 27<sup>th</sup> Street. Moreover, rows of "New High Planting" would extend along Sycamore Street south and along 27<sup>th</sup> Street as well. "Scheme B," the second version of the site plan, replaces the "park" with "possible residential" and eliminates the landscape design elements extending to 27<sup>th</sup> Street. All are indications that Roche and Dinkeloo at least considered the reconfigured site as including some kind of landscape scheme. The original drawing from 18 May 1971 (Figure 3.17) contained more detailed information as to the specific kinds of landscape interventions, at one point even supplementing the existing trees with "New Magnolia Plantings."<sup>40</sup> Of the two site studies by Roche and Dinkeloo, it appears that something similar to

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<sup>39</sup> Dan Kiley and Partners, "North Christian Church, Addition to Parking Area and New Planting," 18 December 1971, Records Office, North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana.

<sup>40</sup> Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo and Associates, "North Christian Church, Site Study," 16 May 1971, Records Office, North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana.



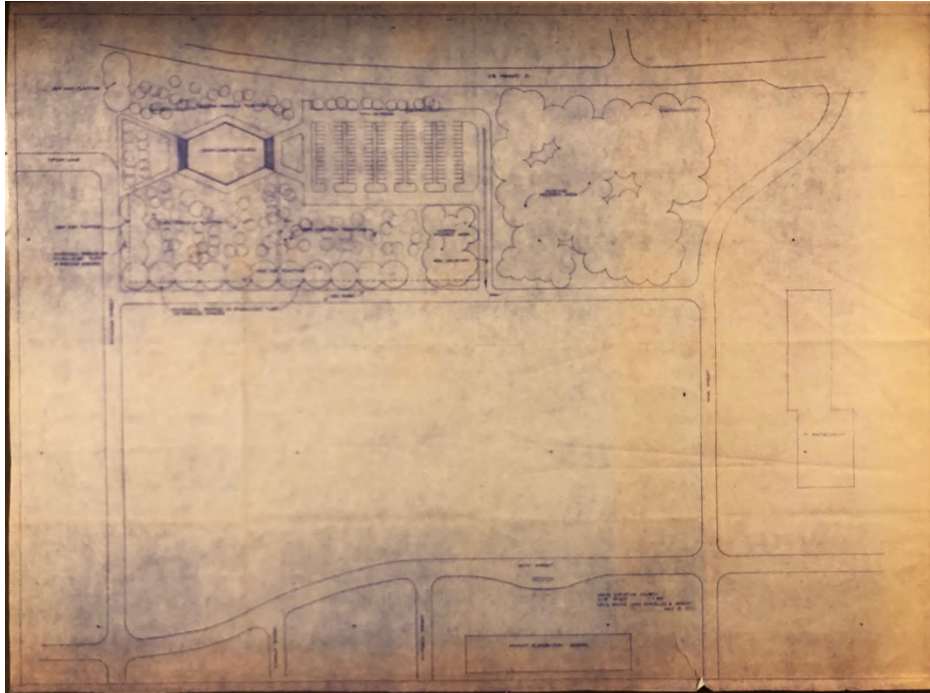


Figure 3.17: Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo Associates, Site Plan, North Christian Church, 18 May 1971. Source: Records Office, North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana

“Scheme B” was eventually adopted. As in this drawing, the areas south of Tipton Lane are now residential, and it is reasonable to assume that the main alteration was the redirection and widening of Tipton Lane. “Scheme B” did not include any design elements for the areas south of Tipton Lane, and yet it would have enormous implications for Kiley’s work.

This is evident in Kiley’s two subsequent site plans. The site plan from 18 December 1971 (See Figure 3.8) continues Kiley’s original scheme with a grid of Saucer Magnolia corresponding to North Christian Church’s hexagonal form. However, Kiley labels the Saucer Magnolia grid on the southern edge of site as “New Magnolias,” an indication that by this time, the second phase of planting had yet to begin. Additional arborvitae hedges are placed on the northern and southern sides of the extended parking lot, conforming the new site to the original version. The most significant design interventions occur along the fringes of the newly redesigned site. Kiley wanted beech trees planted along the eastern edge of the parking lot, extending below and towards Tipton Lane along the access driveways. The areas directly east and toward New Road are to be cleared out and replaced



by “small beech trees on scattered grid.”<sup>41</sup> In the drawing, the scattering occurs on a north-south axis, even though the trees are arranged in rows along an east-west axis. More notable, however, is the placing of two large Red Maple *allées* on the southern edge of the site, on either side of Tipton Lane, and following the boundary of the site as it turns north along Sycamore Street. The final version of the landscape design, dated March 1974 (See Figure 3.8), is essentially a reprint of version from 18 December 1971 save for the fact that the grove of magnolias on the southern part of the site has been reduced in size.

### **An Architectural History of North Christian Church**

As this report proposes, the history of North Christian Church is indelibly woven into the history of the site. Up to now, the site of North Christian Church had been revealed to be utterly dynamic, a consequence of the fact that this part of Columbus was developing in tandem with the new building. In other words, the histories of the site and of the landscape design are part of the history of Columbus proper. However, archival materials reveal that North Christian Church was a formal masterstroke that changed little from its conceptual origins to its final execution. It was designed as if it could have been located elsewhere, a building that was almost independent of site, and yet sensitive to the spiritual and programmatic needs of the congregation. This is best expressed when the late architectural writer and photographer G.E. Kidder Smith remarked how North Christian Church was “[c]onceived in symbolism and nurtured by perceptive talent” and “among Eero Saarinen’s favorite designs of all his work.”<sup>42</sup> These observations are certainly not disputed, and yet in this section, the building is revealed to be a personal project that was fraught with design issues and yet became the product of extensive involvement on behalf of the congregation. From its iconic form to its interior design and programming, North Christian Church was a collaborative design project across different scales.

### **Collaborations Between Client and Designers**

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<sup>41</sup> Dan Kiley and Partners, “North Christian Church, Addition to Parking Area and New Planting,” 18 December 1971, Records Office, North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana.

<sup>42</sup> G.E. Kidder Smith, *Sourcebook of American Architecture: 500 Notable Buildings from the 10<sup>th</sup> Century to the Present* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996), 488,

G.E. Kidder Smith and others describe North Christian Church as an “Eero Saarinen building.” And though this is certainly true, it is not completely accurate as an important constellation of designers and consultants worked together in the completion of this building. It is also important to highlight this network of people because Saarinen had died before construction of the building began. Moreover, and given that archival materials are unclear as to who actually designed what during the earliest stages, North Christian Church should be considered as the combined effort of designers and consultants that brought the singular vision of this building into existence.

The following is an inventory of the various actors that played a crucial role in the design, construction, and maintenance of North Christian Church:

**North Christian Church (Client, Established 1955)**

Rev. James Stoner (Chairman of the Trustees, North Christian Church)  
Keith Moore (Chairman of the Congregation, North Christian Church)  
J. Irwin Miller (Chairman of the Architectural Committee, North Christian Church)  
The Congregation

**Cummins Engine Co.**

M.T. Harrison, Manager of Plant Engineering

**Eero Saarinen and Associates**

Eero Saarinen (d. September 1961)  
Maurice B. Allen (Project Manager for North Christian Church)  
Paul Kennon  
Kevin Roche  
John Dinkeloo  
John Kinsella

**Consultants**

Structural Engineering: H.A. Pfisterer (New Haven, Connecticut)  
Mechanical, Electrical, and Plumbing: Van Zelm, Heywood & Shadford (West Hartford, Connecticut)  
Organ Design and Installation: Holtkamp Organ Company (Cleveland, Ohio)  
Construction: Repp & Mundt (Columbus, Indiana)  
Interiors: Alexander Girard (Santa Fe, New Mexico)  
Acoustics: Bolt, Beranek & Newman  
Lighting: Stanley McCandless

**Project Completion (1961-1974)**

Eero Saarinen and Associates (1961-1964)  
Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo and Associates (1964-1974)  
Dan Kiley and Partners (1964-1974)

**Project Alterations and Improvements (1980s-2000s)**

Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo and Associates

Swolen, Calini, and Anastos, Consulting Engineers/Chair Lifts (New Haven, CT)  
The Storrow Kinsella Partnership (Columbus, Indiana)  
Louis Joyner, Architect (Columbus, Indiana)  
Todd Williams, Architect (Columbus, Indiana)

As subsequent sections in this document will make clear, there are no equivalents to separate structural or mechanical, engineering, and plumbing (MEP) drawings. Engineering and electrical drawings are integrated into the complete drawing sets available at North Christian Church, Yale University, and elsewhere. These individual pages include H.A. Pfisterer and Van Zelm, Heywood & Shadford in the project mastheads.

### **The Client: The Disciples of Christ, First Tabernacle Church, and the Origins of North Christian Church**

An understanding of the client, North Christian Church, necessarily begins with a brief discussion of the role the Disciples of Christ played in the design of Eliel and Eero Saarinen's First Tabernacle Church (1942). This building, perhaps one of the most recognizable in Columbus, marks the beginning of J. Irwin Miller and Xenia S. Miller's sponsorship of modern art and architecture in the city. Completed in 1942, this elegant, abstracted interpretation of a Romanesque or Early Renaissance piazza and campanile is situated on Fifth Street between Franklin Street and Lafayette Avenue, directly across the street from the Cleo Rogers Memorial Library and diagonally across from the Irwin Home and Gardens. This area did not officially exist when Columbus was founded in 1820. But by 1879, the Irwin, Mount, Finley, Sims, and Jones families had purchased many tracts of land north, east, and southeast of the original 1821 plat, including those that would eventually become the site for the First Christian Church.

The history of the First Tabernacle Church site begins with a series of additions made to lots 23 and 22 of the original 1821 plan of Columbus. These sites were not linked to purchases made by the Irwin, Jones, or Mount families and were presumably made by the town, which was officially

incorporated in 1835.<sup>43</sup> The sites, however, are linked to railroad development and subsequently to the establishment of the City Fire Department in Columbus.

The site's links to railroads begin as early as 1836, with the signing of the Internal Improvement Bill by Governor Noah Noble. One of the key provisions of the bill was the establishment of a railroad line from Madison to Lafayette that would pass through Columbus and Indianapolis. The Madison-Columbus line was completed in 1844, and by 1848 it was called the Madison-Indianapolis Railroad. In 1852 the Jeffersonville Railroad reached Columbus via a competing spur through Edinburg, and in 1866 the two lines merged, creating the Jeffersonville, Madison & Indianapolis Railroad.

A spur of the original Jefferson, Madison & Indianapolis Railroad ran south through the site on Fifth Street, and a small depot was constructed there. This area was once known as Railroad Square and when the original depot was demolished, it became a small public square known as Commercial Park. In 1871 the City Council ordered the construction of a small firehouse on the Park on the block of Fifth Street, between Franklin and Mechanics Streets (now Lafayette Avenue). It used to stand roughly in the same place as the First Christian Church's bell tower.<sup>44</sup> After the St. Denis and American Starch Company fires of 1894 and 1895 respectively, the city purchased the land next to the City Hall and built Firehouse No. 1.

In 1871 the Pennsylvania Railroad established a small subsidiary called the Pennsylvania Company to purchase all of the smaller lines in Indiana, including the stations and tracks belonging to the Jeffersonville, Madison & Indianapolis Railroad. In 1890 the Jeffersonville, Madison & Indianapolis Railroad became part of the Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Chicago & St. Louis Railroad Company, which would be purchased by the Pennsylvania Railroad on March 26, 1921 for a lease term of 999 years. Railroad service would decline during the 1930s. The original Columbus-Madison line ceased operations in 1931, and by the mid-1930s most passenger traffic had been replaced by

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<sup>43</sup> Melvin Lotstutter, ed., *City Fire Department of Columbus Indiana, 1835-1941*, p. 3.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

U.S. Mail and LCL (Less Than Carload) cargoes. And once the United States entered the Second World War, many of the lines in the region were dedicated to moving materials from Camp Atterbury in Edinburgh and the Jefferson Proving Ground, as well as from Atterbury Air Base.<sup>45</sup>

The role played by Columbus' religious community in the development of the site cannot be overstated. The early religious history of Columbus begins with the New Hope congregation. It was established in 1829 to welcome practitioners from the area. New Hope competed with other congregations for worshipers, the most important being the Christian Church of Columbus. Members of this church met in what was considered one of the most important religious buildings in Indiana—L.L. Levering's Tabernacle. Completed in 1879 under the guidance of Z.T. Sweeney, the Tabernacle attracted parishioners from throughout the region. It was a Gothic-inspired structure with modern flourishes. The church was even used as shelter to house victims from the Ohio River Flood of 1937.<sup>46</sup> It was around this time that the church established a "unified" service that began with a traditional church service followed by Bible School.

In 1937, the Christian Church of Columbus, the forerunners of the Disciples of Christ, began to consider building a new church for their congregation. That year, Will G. Irwin and Linnie I. Sweeney purchased Commercial Park from the Pennsylvania Railroad as the site for their new church.<sup>47</sup> The Irwins and Sweeneys had long been associated with the New Hope church as well as the Christian Church of Columbus, and initially, they had wanted a building that would continue the style made famous by the Tabernacle. According to Elise Irwin Sweeney, Linnie's sister, they asked their nephew, J. Irwin Miller, for advice about the church design.<sup>48</sup> Miller, who had been taking architecture courses at Yale, had declared that the new church should be "modern" if only for the fact that there was nothing about their congregation that was "Gothic or Early American."<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Phil Anderson, *Pioneer Railroad of the Northwest: History of the Jeffersonville, Madison, and Indianapolis Railroad*.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20040406165425/http://www.hometown.aol.com/ma393/railroad/index.htm>

<sup>46</sup> Hugh Th. Miller, "Tabernacle Church of Christ of Columbus, Indiana: History, 1829-1940", in *Tabernacle Church of Christ, Columbus, Indiana. Dedication Services, May 31, 1942*, p. 16. Columbus Indiana Architectural Archives.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, p. 7. Columbus Indiana Architectural Archives.

<sup>48</sup> Elise Irwin Sweeney, "Symbolism of the First Christian Church", unpublished manuscript, Columbus Indiana Architectural Archives.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*.



Irwin and Sweeney's search for a modern architect initially led them to E.B. Gilchrist, then a faculty member at Princeton University. Gilchrist had to resign due to health problems. Not long after this, at a Bible Study course, a woman overheard Mrs. Sweeney's frustrations at having to find a new architect and suggested she consider "Mr. Booth's architect."<sup>50</sup> She was referring to Eliel Saarinen, who had recently completed the Cranbrook School and Art Academy for the Detroit newspaper baron Charles Gough Booth in 1938. Frank Lloyd Wright had been considered as well, but was deemed too regional and Wisconsin-centered.<sup>51</sup> Saarinen was seen as a more appropriate choice because his own religious beliefs mirrored those of Columbus churchgoers.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, Saarinen insisted that a modernist idiom was appropriate, for the Sweeneys desired that the new church should be modest, bright, and a home for anyone, no matter his or her stature. In Saarinen's words, "As we compare this development of your church with that of the new architectural thought—according to which your church is conceived—we find that they are very much alike, both

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<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> Balthazar Korab, *Columbus, Indiana* (Document Press, 1989), 50.

<sup>52</sup> Elise Irwin Sweeney, "Symbolism of the First Christian Church," unpublished manuscript, Columbus Indiana Architectural Archives.



Figure 3.18: Construction of Eliel and Eero Saarinen's Tabernacle Church of Christ, 1939. Source: Cranbrook Archives.

as to meaning and course of development, for as your church emancipated itself from theology, so the new architecture has freed itself from traditional styles. And, as your church has been based upon the fundamentals of Christianity, so the new architectural thought is endeavoring to build upon the fundamental principles of architecture. As you see then, your form of religion and the design of your church are spiritually related to one another.”<sup>53</sup>

When construction began in 1939, the old block that contained Commercial Park was razed and dug out to install the foundations and the “sunken garden” that would dominate the site. Completed in 1942, Saarinen's First Christian Church is considered to be first example of modern architecture in Columbus. And like other subsequent “signature” projects, Saarinen's First Christian Church balanced its commitment to modernism with a respect for history and tradition. This is evidenced in what appears to be a fairly traditional *parti*: a simple, rectangular nave alongside a

<sup>53</sup> Eliel Saarinen, “Our Church Is People”: Building Committee's Theme,” Undated Document, Columbus Indiana Architectural Archives.

separate bell tower, evocative of Romanesque basilicas and Renaissance piazzas and campaniles. For the First Christian Church, Saarinen clad both structures in stone and light, buffed brick. The bell tower features a sparse, yet elegant ornamental relief on its sides (similar to that found at Cranbrook Academy), inspired by the finials of a Jerusalem Cross.<sup>54</sup> In looking at the two structures, the sense is of a volumetric emphasis that does not feel heavy and that yet occupies the site with a firm, resolute footprint. Yet this is a highly improvisational modernism, one that combines the rational grids on the facades of the nave and top of the bell tower with subtle, asymmetrical motifs that heighten the experiences of the space. This is especially the case with the front facade as well as with the sacristy inside: neither lies on the dominant axis and therefore calls attention to the simplicity and functionality of the spaces inside. Like other Saarinen projects, this too was a collaborative endeavor: Loja Saarinen designed the tapestry on the eastern wall of the interior; Charles Eames designed the pews.

The First Christian Church is also unique for its negotiation of site in plan and elevation. Like other signature projects in the city, this one involved the substantial redesign of an entire city block. The nave connects to a long, two-story classroom building that hovers above the site on pilotis. This is only one instance of how the First Christian Church also incorporates subtle changes in elevation. The classrooms flank a “sunken garden” that occupies the western part of the site, which once featured a reflecting pool. The “sunken garden” on the west of the site is just that, a space of refuge that encourages both contemplation and exploration of the site—people were even allowed to walk underneath the classroom. When viewed from across Fifth Street, the nave and bell tower appear as if on a shallow plinth, recognizing that the civic importance of a religious building can sometimes demand that it be literally raised above everything else, if only at a modest height. A substantial addition and renovation to the classroom was completed by Columbus architect Nolan Bingham in 2000. The building was designated as a National Historic Landmark in 2002.

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<sup>54</sup> Elise Irwin Sweeney, “Symbolism of the First Christian Church,” unpublished manuscript, Columbus Indiana Architectural Archives.

As mentioned earlier in this document, the First Tabernacle Church congregation began to experience ideological differences. In 1955, J. Irwin Miller and those who identified themselves as part of the original Disciples of Christ left the congregation and formed what would be called North Christian Church. They met in individual homes and at St. Paul's Episcopal Church before moving into temporary facilities at 2117 25<sup>th</sup> Street, on the northern edges of Columbus, in February 1956.<sup>55</sup> In 1958, under the guidance of Miller, Keith Moore, and the Reverend James Stoner, the members of North Christian Church began planning for a new site, a new church, and a new architect to design the spiritual home for their congregation in 1959.

### **1959: Inspirations, Ideas, and Sketches for a “Spiritual and Physical Building Program”**

Eero Saarinen and Associates received the commission for the design of North Christian Church in February 1959 and officially accepted on March 3.<sup>56</sup> And by March 25, Saarinen's office had delegated project management duties to Maurice B. Allen.<sup>57</sup> Like other important modernist architectural commissions, the “what if” of the project becomes an important element in the story of its design and development. We know, for example, that the architects invited by J. Irwin Miller and the Architectural Committee in 1959 to propose designs for North Christian Church included Eduardo Catalano, Victor Lundy, Walter Netsch, Paul Rudolph, Edward Durrell Stone, John Carl Warnecke, Harry Weese, and Minoru Yamasaki. A letter from Yamasaki, dated 25 May 1959 states, “As you know, I think Eero is one of the most imaginative architects that we have and I am sure that he will give you the kind of church to which you aspire.”<sup>58</sup> This letter is significant for two reasons.

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<sup>55</sup> “North Christian Church, Tipton Lane, Columbus, Indiana,” April 1964, Folder 1, Box 562, Job No. 5902, Client Correspondence, North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana, Eero Saarinen Collection, MS 593 Series IV, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library. (This document was filed with other materials from 1959-1961.)

<sup>56</sup> Eero Saarinen to Keith Moore, 3 March 1959, North Christian Church website, <http://northchristianchurch.org> (accessed 27 April 2020).

<sup>57</sup> Keith Moore to Eero Saarinen, 25 February 1959 and Joseph M. Lacy to J. Irwin Miller, 25 March 1959, 25 May 1959, Folder 1, Box 562, Job No. 5902, Client Correspondence, North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana, Eero Saarinen Collection, MS 593 Series IV, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

<sup>58</sup> Minoru Yamasaki to J. Irwin Miller, 25 May 1959, Folder 1, Box 562, Job No. 5902, Client Correspondence, North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

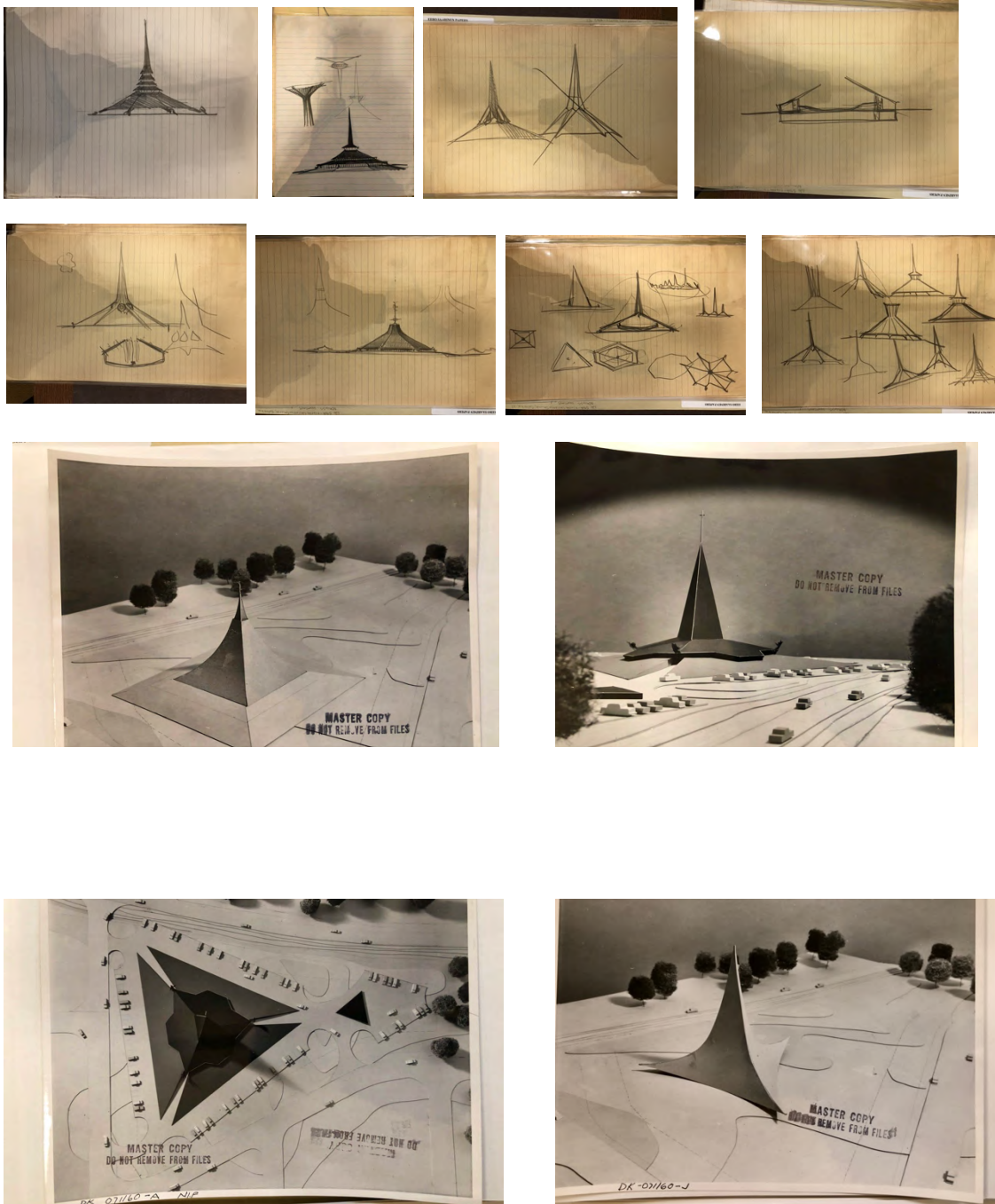


Figure 3.19: Eero Saarinen and Associates, Conceptual Sketches and Models for North Christian Church, 1960? Source: Job No. 5902, North Christian Church, Columbus, IN, Box 566, Folders 1537 and 1539, MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University

First, it demonstrates that J. Irwin Miller shared client responsibilities with the Architectural Committee at North Christian Church and was, in essence, the voice for that organization at that



stage in the design.<sup>59</sup> Second, the letter suggests that all the interviewees were informed that Eero Saarinen and Associates was chosen for the commission.

Yamasaki's invocation of the church "to which you aspire" may suggest that North Christian Church had a well defined idea about what their new church should be. And though this may point to a streamlined process, the initial design and development of the church nevertheless began along two different tracks, each operating along different timelines. The first of these, which is more conceptual in nature, concerns the *symbolism* of the new church. Discussions about this aspect of the project occurred as early as 1958 before the Architectural Committee decided to interview different architects for the commission. A pamphlet issued in 1964 for the opening of North Christian Church states, "For nearly a year the architecture committee discussed theology before it interviewed architects. Mr. Eero Saarinen, who was at the pinnacle of his creative career, was selected because he wanted to design a church that would be a 'prototype of Twentieth Century Christianity.'"<sup>60</sup> What is clear from these discussions is that the congregation, the Trustees, and architecture committee for North Christian Church were all invested in having a Nave as the primary design element for the

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<sup>59</sup> Will Miller, "Eero and Irwin: Praiseworthy Competition with One's Ancestors," 64.

<sup>60</sup> "North Christian Church, Tipton Lane, Columbus, Indiana," April 1964, Folder 1, Box 562, Job No. 5902, Client Correspondence, North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana, Eero Saarinen Collection, MS 593 Series IV, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library. (This document was filed with other materials from 1959-1961.)



The Sketches and model photographs of “Job No. 5902” in the archives at Yale University reveal that from the earliest moments, North Christian Church was conceived of as a symmetrically-planned building topped by a spire. (Figure 3.19) All are more or less variations on this theme, with the most significant differences being in the general shape of the plan and in the relationship between the building and the spire. With regard to the first, it is clear that Saarinen’s office was not dedicated exclusively to the now-familiar hexagonal plan. Some sketches show versions of the church with triangular and square plans. Moreover, these sketches compare the plans with those derived from Latin and Greek crosses, and in one instance, with the plan of Saarinen’s own Kresge Chapel at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (1955-1956). (Figure 3.20)<sup>62</sup>

The inspirations for these early designs come from a number of sources. It has been suggested, for example, that the decisive formal and conceptual gesture underlying the earliest designs are technological in nature. In an interview from early 2018, the Finnish architectural historian Eeva-Liisa Pelkonen mentioned the competition model for Toivo Korhonen and Jaako

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<sup>62</sup> See Box 2, Folder 13: Sketches of North Xian Church, Eero Saarinen, 1950s, Aline and Eero Saarinen Papers, 1906-1977, Smithsonian Institution, Archives of American Art.

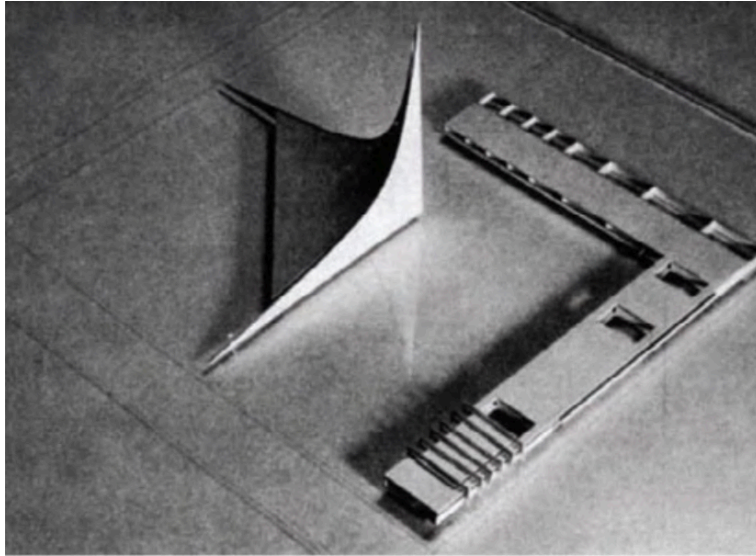
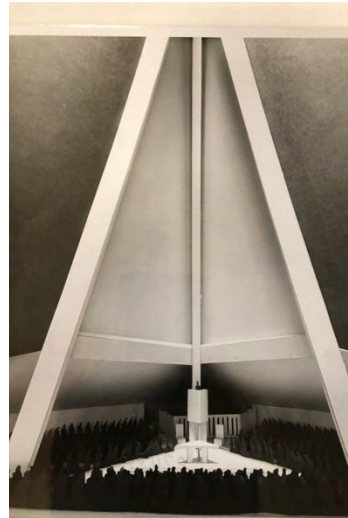


Figure 3.21: Toivo Korhonen and Jaako Laapotti, Lauritsala Church, Model, 1958

Laapotti's Lauritsala Church (1958) (Figure 3.2) as a possible inspiration for Saarinen's design. Located in Lappeenranta, a small city on the Russian border about 100 miles east-northeast of Helsinki, the Lauritsala Church bears at least a passing resemblance to North Christian Church. Korhonen's and Laapotti's building features a plan generated from an equilateral triangle. The roof is a dynamic, sweeping form comprised of a hyperbolic paraboloid surface that culminates in a spire that aligns with one of the equilateral triangle's vertices. Though the church was deeply symbolic—Korhonen and Laapotti used the equilateral triangle to symbolize the importance of the Holy Trinity to the Lutheran Church—Saarinen may have been interested in the form as it was made from a thin shell of prestressed concrete.



1960?. Source: Job No. 5902, North Christian Church, Columbus, IN, Box 566, Folders 1537 and 1539, MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

The earliest sketches and models of North Christian Church show that Saarinen was keen on developing a scheme that centered on the importance of the congregation. For example, photographs of model interiors (Figure 3.22) reveal triangular plans with an assemblies of figures surrounded around central pulpits—a sure indication that the physical and symbolic role of the Nave was of paramount importance.



Saarinen also looked to non-Western architectural history not for inspiration, but rather to justify the conceptual underpinnings for the earliest designs of North Christian Church. The images

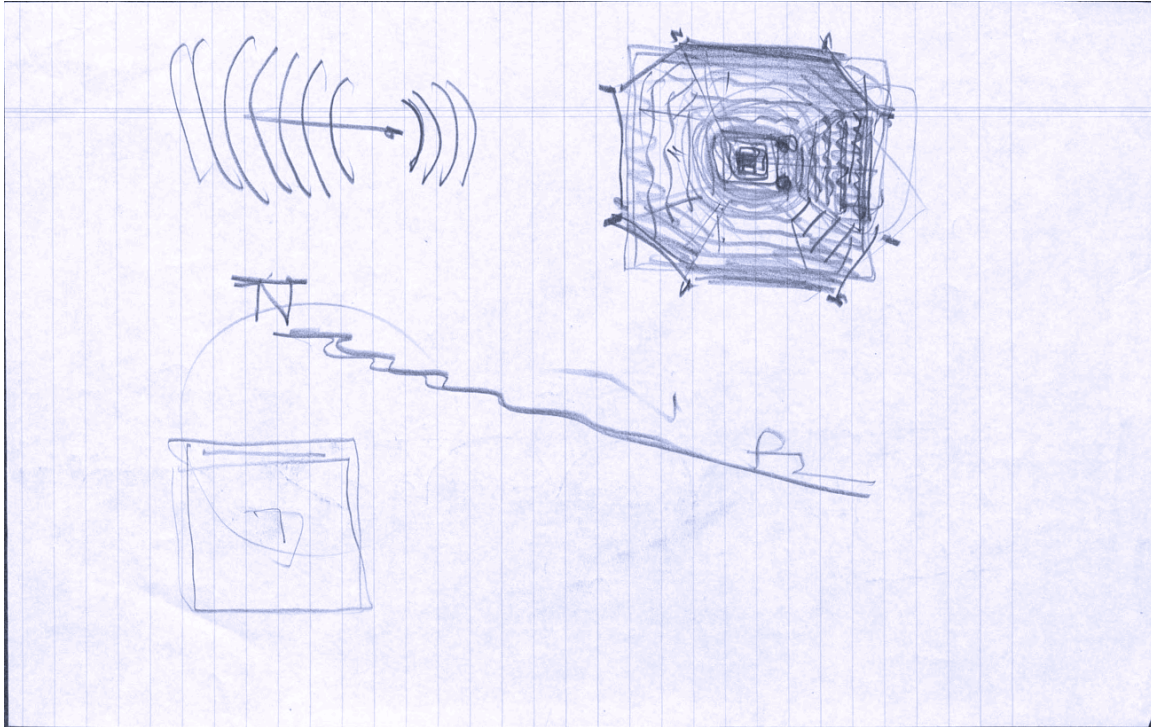


Figure 3.23: Eero Saarinen, Conceptual Sketch Suggesting Elevational Promenades, 1960?. Source: Aline and Eero Saarinen Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution

of the Latin and Greek cross plans, as well as those of the MIT Chapel, are supplemented by sketches of sections showing differences of elevation in the approach to as well as inside the Nave. (Figure 3.23) These sketches resonate with the posthumously published *Eero Saarinen On His Work* (1964):

In the eleventh-twelfth centuries, there was the cathedral and it was the significant thing. Maybe it had a cloisters or a priory or some little low building off to the side, but the cathedral itself dominated everything. Today, there are Sunday school rooms and good-fellowship rooms and kitchens and gymnasiums and square dancing rooms and so forth. All of these have tended to sprout into separate buildings and to get bigger and bigger and more important and finally, the church itself has become an insignificant, almost forgotten little thing.

So, in this church, I would like to put the activity downstairs. Maybe underground, hidden away, and put only the sanctuary above ground and make it the significant visual and architectural thing.

Then, congregations and church building committees always want the architect to make everything on one level and easy, sort of inviting you to come in like a supermarket. But I don't think religion should be something easy. I think you should have to work for it

and it should be a special thing. The architecture should express this. That is an absolutely marvelous experience at Borobudur and Angkor Wat, when you keep climbing those steep steps and all the time are being subjected by the architecture to awareness of special and spiritual qualities.<sup>63</sup>

Although these are recollections, they nevertheless affirm that the Nave was more than a symbolic consideration—it was perhaps the most singular architectural component for North Christian Church. This is related to what Jeremy Kargon calls “opticalism,” a modernizing trend in sacred architecture characterized by “the deployment of aggressive and large-scale visual effects within spaces of worship.”<sup>64</sup> The practice of opticalism in postwar American sacred architecture has three characteristics: first, “[a]n emphasis upon visible technical innovation to signify prestige”; second, “[t]he spatial *centrality* of decorative installations of an unusually stimulating nature”; and last, “[t]he spatial *dissociation* of religious symbol from primary visual effect.”<sup>65</sup> Although these three may seem applicable to North Christian Church, Kargon admits that his own take on opticalism focuses more on how “artwork instead determined the spatial precinct of the sacred experience.”<sup>66</sup> For James R. Stoner, Irwin Miller, and even Eero Saarinen, the determination of the sacred, “spatial precinct” (and its characteristics) within North Christian Church had other sources. These will be discussed later in this document.

Whatever their symbolic or theoretical rationales, there is a degree of variance in the earliest designs for North Christian Church that suggest that the form of the building was more important than the site. North Christian Church could have a square or triangular form as long as the centrality of the Nave was maintained. The previous sections have discussed how the site for North Christian Church was not in a state of indeterminacy; rather, its alterations over time show that Columbus was changing rapidly, and the site had to accommodate such developments. Yet the photographs of the

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<sup>63</sup> Eero Saarinen, *Eero Saarinen on His Work: a Selection of Buildings Dated from 1947 to 1964, with Statements by the Architect*, Aline B. Saarinen, ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), xx.

<sup>64</sup> Jeremy Kargon, “Seeing, Not Knowing: Symbolism, Art, and ‘Opticalism’ in Mid-Century American Religious Architecture,” in Anat Geva, ed. *Modernism and American Mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century Sacred Architecture* (New York: Routledge, 2018), n.p. A note should be made here that Kargon’s idea of “opticalism” finds a theoretical predecessor in art critic Clement Greenberg’s controversial idea that abstraction in modern art is breaks away from the tactile conditioning of visual experience (as with the work of the Old Masters) towards a more optical orientation.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

early models for North Christian Church show the building being placed on a topographical model of the Third Northlawn Addition. And in some instances, the model itself fits awkwardly on the site. This is especially the case with the one featuring a triangular base, as it appears to be balancing precariously on the site.

PROGRAM QUESTIONNAIRE

Sanctuary

Seating 12<sup>4</sup>/person 450 people \$1500/seat INCL. MAINTENANCE

1. Is your present arrangement entirely satisfactory? NO
2. Would a different arrangement work as well or better? COMMUNION TABLE MUST BE FOCUS OF WORSHIP
3. Are pews more desirable than individual chairs or seats?
4. Is the ability to see or be visually aware of the congregation as a whole from each seat important to the service? DISCUSS
5. Taking the last row of seats of your present sanctuary as a starting point, how many more rows do you think could be added before an undesirable relationship between a person and the chancel would exist with regard to his vision and a comfortable feeling of participation in the service?
6. What would be the objections to gently sloping the floor of the sanctuary toward the chancel? NONE
7. Should there be a special area defined for certain members officiating at services? NO
8. Would a balcony be useful? FOR CHOIR ONLY
9. For what purposes other than Sunday worship will the sanctuary be used? DISCUSS WEDDINGS, FUNERALS

Chancel

1. Should there be steps to the chancel and the communion table? How many? DISCUSS
2. Where should the pulpit and lectern be placed? Should one be higher than the other?
3. Are there reasons why the communion table should not be approachable from all sides? ALL SIDES
4. What is the maximum number of people who will serve at the communion table? 8 - 1 ELDER, 7 DEACONS
5. Where should the minister's seat be? DISCUSS
6. How many seats will be required for other persons serving in the chancel area and where? MINISTER, ASSOC. MINISTER, ELDER
7. Choir
  - a) Present minimum and maximum size 12 19
  - b) Projected minimum and maximum size 40
  - c) Can the choir be located outside the chancel area? REAR BALCONY POSSIBLE BUT NOT DESIRABLE
  - d) If proper acoustics can be obtained with an alternate arrangement, is it necessary that the choir face the congregation? YES
  - e) What is the greatest number of instrumentalists who may accompany the choir or play in concert? 20-25?

- 1 -

Figure 3.24 Eero Saarinen and Associates, "Program Questionnaire," with notes in Saarinen's hand, 23 April 1959. Source: Job No. 5902, North Christian Church, Columbus, IN, Box 562, Folder 1, Client Correspondence MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

North Christian Church.

Shortly after receiving the commission for the design, Eero Saarinen and Associates began a series of prolonged exchanges with the congregation relating to the design of North Christian Church. It should be mentioned here that none of the back and forth between the congregation and

## The Congregation as Client/Designer

Client input was important to the design of Eliel Saarinen's First Tabernacle Church. And as Will Miller stated in his contribution to *Eero Saarinen: Shaping the Future*, North Christian Church was the only project in Columbus where J. Irwin Miller shared client responsibilities with others. However, archival materials reveal the extent to which this was actually the case. Miller was in charge of the Architecture Committee for North Christian Church, who was acting on behalf of, and with express approval, of the Trustees and the congregation at large. The degree of this involvement is evident in what can be designated as the "pre-design" phase of

Saarinen's office dealt with site, landscape, or form of the building. Rather, it was almost all concerned with the programming and interior design elements for the building.

This is the case with the very first exchanges between Saarinen's office and North Christian Church. The first, a "Membership Survey and Program Questionnaire," dated 23 April 1959 (Figure 3.24), is a lengthy document organized generally around the major programmatic needs for the church. In the section entitled "Sanctuary," the survey asks participants to assess seating requirements for the Nave in the future chapel. Some of the questions, however, consider spatial aspects and seating sightlines. For example, Question 5 asks, "Taking the last row of seats of your present sanctuary as a starting point, how many more rows do you think could be added before an undesirable relationship between a person and the chancel would exist with regard to his vision and a comfortable feeling of participation in the service?"<sup>67</sup> Participants were also asked about the number of people congregating around the chancel during communion as well as possible requirements for choir space. Other questions considered the service spaces outside the Nave as well as the distribution of rooms in the narthex area, and in one case, asked whether an organ could be "located outside the chancel area."<sup>68</sup> For the last set of questions in this group, participants were asked about the seating and space requirements for different types of ceremonies that would take place inside a chapel adjoining the Nave. The concluding sections of the survey concern similar needs in other areas, such as the auditorium, kitchen, community rooms, library, and staff offices. Others are dedicated to specific needs, such as choice of music during ceremonies and proposed locations for exhibits to be displayed inside the new church. An additional survey form asked participants to provide answers to some of the above questions according to the time of the day and to the age group present inside the church. Another was dedicated to assessing the specific classroom needs for Sunday School.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Eero Saarinen and Associates, "Membership Survey and Program Questionnaire, Proposed North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana," 23 April 1959, Job No. 5902, North Christian Church, Columbus, IN, Box 562, Folder 1, Client Correspondence MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

These last forms suggest that Saarinen's office was already thinking of the new North Christian Church as a building with two general programmatic requirements—a Nave and classrooms. What is significant is the way in which these two requirements are treated. In other words, there are no questions, no language dedicated to access to services or to a spatial configuration or envelope that would contain both the Nave and the classrooms. This is not to suggest that Saarinen was already thinking of the current arrangement for North Christian Church, one where the Nave is central and placed atop the classroom and auditorium, displacing and pushing the administrative areas to the sides of the building. Rather, it shows that the designers were thinking about these programmatic needs as an aspect of the design that would continue to be discussed and altered throughout subsequent exchanges between Saarinen's office and the Architectural Committee for North Christian Church.

Presumably based on further exchanges, Saarinen's office prepared additional questionnaires designed to articulate the programmatic needs for North Christian Church more definitively. One of these, from 26 June 1959, was sent to J. Irwin Miller, M.T. Harrison, and to the rest of the congregation. The questions were as follows:

1. What is the teaching philosophy of the Disciples of Christ and of this church in particular?
2. What distinguishes the North Christian Church from other Protestant Churches i.e. Methodist, Baptist, Congregationalist, 1<sup>st</sup> Christian Church and other Disciples of Christ Churches? What is there in your history, present program of worship and activities, and your future plans around which we can design and build the church? In other words, we must discover the central idea, the axis or emphasis this congregation expresses.
3. What does this congregation of this church in particular hope to express and achieve for its members in building the new church?
4. What declaration should this church make to the community?
5. How would you list the church activities in order of interested response and meaningful participation by (a) the congregation (b) attending non-members?
6. Would you like to shift the emphasis of the above list? If so, why?
7. What activities of the church appear to promise most in maintaining vigor, interest and dynamic participation of the congregation as well attracting others to the church and its program?
8. What activities of the church appear to promise most in expanding the membership of the Disciples of Christ?
9. What is the feeling you would wish to be imparted to yourself or to a new visitor upon approaching the new church for the first time, i.e. what should the architecture for the Disciples of Christ declare?



10. What atmosphere or feeling should the sanctuary impart as a place of worship of the Disciples of Christ?<sup>70</sup>

As the above suggest, Saarinen's office was certainly invested in the congregation's own understanding of itself. Architectural considerations seem secondary to more programmatic concerns, and yet this questionnaire seems to place a symbolic emphasis on form and structure. At least this is what is suggested by the use of words like "central idea," "axis," "emphasis"—all an indication that the interest in architecture "declaring" something was a unifying idea for North Christian Church.

During the following months, the Architectural Committee and Saarinen's office began assigning cost figures to the programmatic requirements for North Christian Church. On September 23, 1959, the Architectural Committee convened, as J. Irwin Miller summarized in a letter to Maurice Allen and notified Saarinen's office that, based on the total number of people in the congregation, the Nave at the new North Christian Church should have a seating capacity for 465 people.<sup>71</sup> A

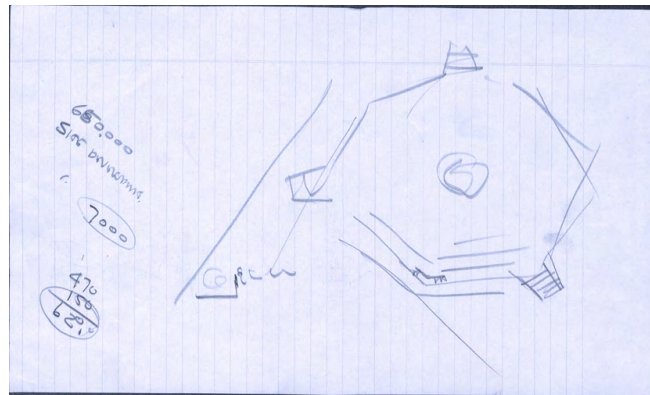


Figure 3.25: Eero Saarinen, Conceptual Sketch for North Christian Church with a Note Concerning the \$650,000 Site Development Cost. Source: Aline and Eero Saarinen Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

preliminary budget was also set at \$650,000, not counting "land or the organ" but including "all other

<sup>70</sup> Questionnaire for "New North Christian Church", 26 June 1959, Job No. 5902, North Christian Church, Columbus, IN, Box 562, Folder 1, Client Correspondence MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

<sup>71</sup> J. Irwin Miller to Maurice B. Allen, Jr., 24 September 1959, Job No. 5902, North Christian Church, Columbus, IN, Box 562, Folder 1, Client Correspondence MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

cash expenses, namely building, furnishing, landscaping, paving, architect, engineers, etc.”<sup>72</sup> Miller also requested a pro forma memorandum from Saarinen’s office with initial fee estimates. On 29 September, Maurice B. Allen replied with a breakdown based on Miller’s \$650,000 figure. (Figure 3.25) In it, \$45,000 are allocated for design and engineering fees, \$65,000 for site work “including walks, paving, storm drains, sewers or septic tank, gas, water, elec.”, \$15,000 for landscaping, \$40,000 for furnishings and equipment, and \$15,000 for contingency fees, totaling \$180,000.<sup>73</sup> As for the building, Allen suggested \$700 per-seat for the Nave, a move that would reserve more funds (space) for the inclusion of an auditorium as well as additional classroom space. Moreover, this figure would have totaled around \$505,000, which would have allowed an additional \$145,000 for fees.<sup>74</sup>

The Architectural Committee convened on 7 October 1959 to go over Allen’s numbers and responded with fee qualifications and spatial modifications for the new North Christian Church. This document is, in some respects, a confirmation of the exchange from 23 September. Occupancy for the Nave was maintained at 465, for example. Miller attached a table calculating the total occupancy for the Sunday School at 578.<sup>75</sup> The budget allowance was increased to \$700,000 with the proviso that the designers should still aim for the \$650,000 figure in anticipation of “unforeseen extras.”<sup>76</sup> The Nave, church offices, and pastor’s study were to remain single-use spaces, allowing for the possibility that the auditorium and other areas have some degree of programmatic flexibility. Moreover, Miller asked Saarinen’s office to begin submitting initial schemes to the Architecture Committee and congregation for approval. And on 13 November, Miller wrote to Saarinen confirming a meeting on 12 January 1960 to finalize costs, to agree on the “general philosophy,

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<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> Maurice B. Allen to J. Irwin Miller, 29 September 1959, Job No. 5902, North Christian Church, Columbus, IN, Box 562, Folder 1, Client Correspondence MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> J. Irwin Miller to Maurice B. Allen, Jr., 8 October 1959, Job No. 5902, North Christian Church, Columbus, IN, Box 562, Folder 1, Client Correspondence MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

atmosphere, and spirit of the church,” and for the review of the initial “design, materials, space arrangements, and locations.”<sup>77</sup>

Although Miller also requested more meetings, Saarinen’s office responded with a summary of the results of the 26 June 1959 questionnaire. Paul Kennon compiled the answers to this questionnaire in a document dated 21 June 1960. Split up into two sections—“Sanctuary” and “Chancel”—the document reads as follows:

Sanctuary

1. Provide seating for 465 in pews.
2. Floor may be sloped.
3. Steps in aisles should be avoided.
4. Funeral services normally are not held in the church, but this may change.
5. Seat arrangement should focus on the Communion table.

Chancel

1. The Communion table is the focal point. It should be approachable from all sides and may be elevated; however, the number of steps to approach it is not specific. A total of eight lay persons serve at the communion table and distribute the bread and wine to the congregation in the pews.
2. The minister and the laymen occupy positions of equal importance in the Disciple Services. Provide seating accordingly for the Minister, Associate Minister and an elder. Provide a small room with toilet near the chancel for robing of the two ministers and eight lay persons.
3. The Baptistry usually is located in the chancel area. Baptism is by total immersion and often in the presence of the congregation. The pool must accommodate two persons, be attractive to the candidate and be in view to the congregation when in use. Steps to approach or enter the pool should be in multiples of three or seven. A seat within the pool is desirable. A tiled floor dressing room with toilet facilities and six private dressing stalls is required nearby. Include storage for baptismal robes and linen.
4. The choir area ideally is in the chancel. If located elsewhere it should be in full view of and facing the congregation. It should be possible to seat a choir of 40 although the average size probably will be 25 to 30. The choir director and organist should be hidden from view. The general choir program includes the processional, six responses, offertory, anthem, congregation hymns, and the recessional.
5. Church School. Provide classrooms for 578 (See program diagram).<sup>78</sup>
6. Auditorium  
250 seats with stage and 600 s.f. kitchen. This room is the main “multi-use” area and can serve as the meeting room for the adult church school class, coffee fellowship, suppers, entertainment, receptions, meetings, etc. Provide for audio-visual aids.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> J. Irwin Miller to Eero Saarinen, 13 November 1959, Job No. 5902, North Christian Church, Columbus, IN, Box 562, Folder 1, Client Correspondence MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

<sup>78</sup> This diagram was not found in the archival materials.

<sup>79</sup> Eero Saarinen and Associates, “North Christian Church: Summary of Answers Received to Program Questionnaire,” 21 June 1960, Job No. 5902, North Christian Church, Columbus, IN, Box 562, Folder 1, Client Correspondence MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

In response to these results, Saarinen's office held a number of conferences with J. Irwin Miller and other members of the congregation during the Summer of 1960 in order to flesh out additional practical and spiritual needs for the new church. The first of these, held on 11 July 1960, was intended as an "Architectural Progress Report" whereby Saarinen would inform members of the congregation as to the status of the project.<sup>80</sup> A number of conferences followed. Although the exact content of the questionnaires presented to the congregation in advance of these meetings are not in the archives, Paul Kennon's summaries give a good sense of how Saarinen's office asked the questions and how they were answered. The first of these, dated 10 July 1960, is reproduced in full to give a sense of how they transpired:

1. Eero opened up the meeting by explaining the concept of the scheme. He emphasized the combining of Sanctuary and Sunday School into one building, elevating the building above cars and the existing houses; the build-up of planes becoming a tower; the symbolism of the triangle; the feeling of approaching, entering, and being within the church.
2. The central location of the communion table was accepted. There should be three or seven steps. An Elder presently sits at the table during the communion ceremony which lasts 10 to 12 minutes. It was felt that the communion meal should be executed without a cloth cover and that a chalice should be placed on the table before and after the communion ceremony.
3. The seating in the Nave should be studied more thoroughly to provide for the ease of vision and seating angle toward the Minister as well as the communion table. The sermon lasts 20 minutes. We should make overlays of the seating facilities of the present North Christian Church and Central Christian Church. It is desired that the Nave have a feeling of fullness at all times; therefore, groups of chairs or pews should be removable during the summer months.
4. Eero felt that the inside of the tower should be so shaped to keep intense light off the first row. The seating should be contracting light with small down lights for reading. Artificial light should give a similar character.
5. The location of the choir and pulpit in relation to the Chapel was felt to be quite good. Choir robing and rehearsal should be near stairs to the Chapel. The choir arrangement should be restricted as the organist directs.
6. The question of steps up to the Nave and down to the Sunday School concerned part of the committee.
7. Narthex area should be reduced.
8. The Minister's office should be located near a stair to the Chapel. Perhaps doors near his office for control of building use. His offices should be larger.
9. Brides dressing room near Narthex entry.
10. Service near chapel entry.

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<sup>80</sup> William G. Fish to J. Irwin Miller, "Architectural Progress Report to Congregation North Christian Church," 9 June 1960, Job No. 5902, North Christian Church, Columbus, IN, Box 562, Folder 1, Client Correspondence MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

11. It was agreed that the Chapel should contain the Baptistry. This should be so designed that the Baptismal ceremony will make a lasting impression upon the individual. The Chapel should be open 24 hours.
12. The tower could be possibly taller and wider.
13. Provide anti-child protection for low roof.
14. It was felt that the youth activities area (grades 7-12) was not adequate. Eero suggested multi-use of the Sunday School area. The question of should the youth activities program be within the Church or a separate building remained unanswered.
15. It was felt that the Coffee Fellowship room should be separate from the adult class rooms. This room could become part of the corridor.
16. Location of flowers in the Nave and Chapel?
17. The overall scheme was generally approved based on an adequate seating arrangement.
18. Irwin Miller suggested a recording of the design process in the form of slides to educate the entire congregation.
19. Eero suggested that we concentrate entirely on the Nave and Chapel for the next meeting, in four to six weeks. We should show in models how the ... service, Baptismal Ceremony, Wedding and Funeral works.
20. The cost estimate was discussed and the committee decided to meet without the Architects to decide either to increase the budget to the "reasonable added" cost or set their program requirements.<sup>81</sup>

These meetings, as comprehensive as they were, set the stage for what would be a pivotal set of meetings during the Fall of 1960.

### **November-December 1960: First Glimpses of (and Reactions to) North Christian Church**

Whereas meetings held in the summer of 1960 addressed issues of program and budget, those held in November and December were dedicated to presenting and finalizing schemes and designs for North Christian Church. On 6 November, Eero Saarinen and Paul Kennon presented plans, sections, models for North Christian Church to J. Irwin Miller, James Stoner, M.T. Harrison, as well as other members of the congregation at the Cummins Engine Plant. Saarinen and Kennon also discussed audio visual needs and seating arrangements around the pulpit and Baptistry, as well as construction materials and "the flexible use of the Nave for Sunday Service, Weddings, Funerals, Choral Productions, Baccalaureate Sermon, and guest speakers."<sup>82</sup> Although it is not clear exactly what models were presented to the Miller and others, the schemes were apparently approved with

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<sup>81</sup> Paul Kennon, Conference Notes, 10 July 1960, Job No. 5902, North Christian Church, Columbus, IN, Box 561, Folder 1528, Conference Notes 1960-1965, MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

<sup>82</sup> Paul Kennon, Conference Notes, 6 November 1960, Job No. 5902, North Christian Church, Columbus, IN, Box 561, Folder 1528, Conference Notes 1960-1965, MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.



“much enthusiasm.”<sup>83</sup> Miller also entreated Saarinen and Kennon to prepare a formal presentation of the schemes and designs before the congregation on 14 December. According to the conference notes, Saarinen was asked to present “Large scale plans showing the flexibility of the Nave,” “Sections,” a “Developed site plan,” “Exterior model,” “Interior model,” and “Slides.”<sup>84</sup>

Paul Kennon and Maurice Allen unveiled the initial designs for North Christian Church in two meetings held in December 1960. In the first of these, from 13 December, Kennon and Allen presented the new North Christian Church building to the General Board of North Christian Church. According to the conference notes, the presentation consisted of slides, drawings, and models. The notes also state that during this meeting, “The General Board voted unanimously to accept the design and a budget of \$870,000.00 for construction of the building, such amount not include cost of land, organ and architectural fees, but to include the sum of \$52,600 for furnishings. The vote also recommended the building design and budget to the congregation for its approval at the meeting to be held the following evening.”<sup>85</sup>

The next evening, 14 December 1960, at 7:30pm to be exact, Kennon and Allen presented the designs for the new building to the entire congregation of North Christian Church. No transcript

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<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> Paul Kennon, Conference Notes, 13-15 December 1960, Job No. 5902, North Christian Church, Columbus, IN, Box 561, Folder 1528, Conference Notes 1960-1965, MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

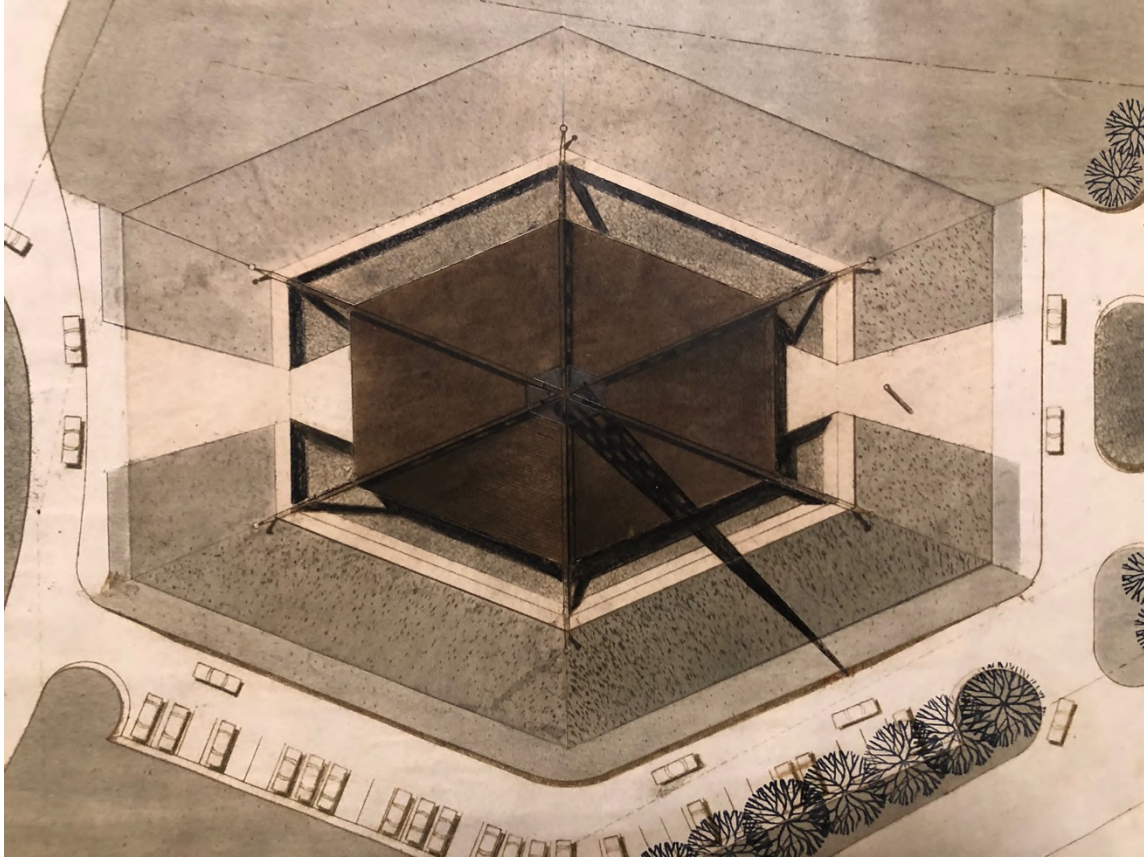


Figure 3.26: Eero Saarinen and Associates, Site Plan, North Christian Church, Detail Showing Perforated Ribs and Spire, December 1960. Source: Folder 695B (Mixed Materials), North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana, Job No. 5902, MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

of this meeting is in existence. In looking at the conference notes and the materials available from the Eero Saarinen Collection at Yale University's Manuscripts and Archives, it is however possible to reconstruct an inventory of the various items presented to the North Christian Church congregation.

### *Drawings*

The designs presented by Kennon and Allen provide the "D.N.A." of North Christian Church. In them, one can find, for example, the familiar hexagonal plan and tall spire. (Figure 3.26) These indicate that Saarinen's office was committed not only in principle but also in the form to this design. Kennon and Allen presented transverse and longitudinal sections, as well as plans and a site plan for North Christian Church. All of these, however, bear significant differences from the final version of the building. For instance, this plan of the building appears stouter, as if the eastern and

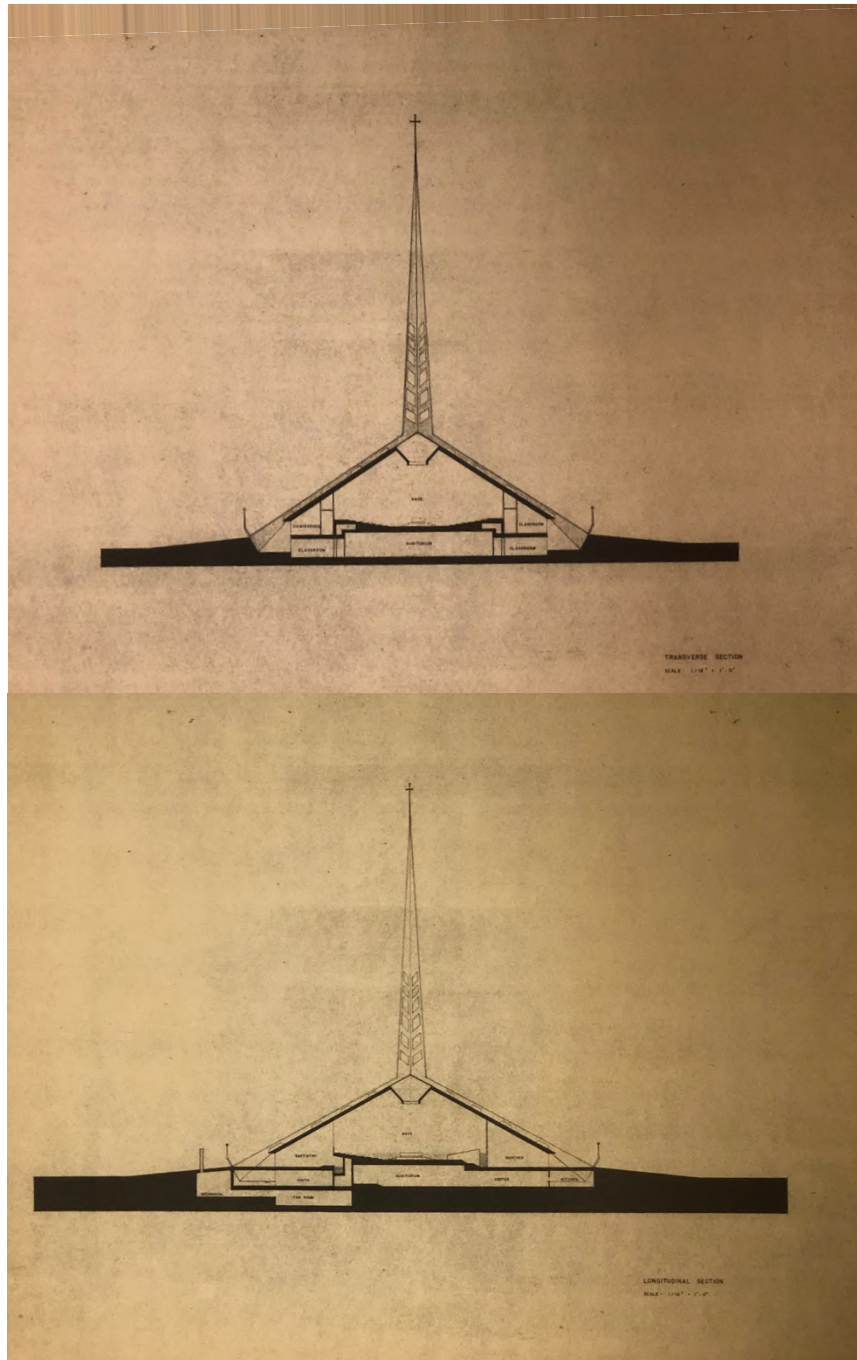


Figure 3.27: Eero Saarinen and Associates, North Christian Church, Transverse and Longitudinal Sections, December 1960. Source: Records Office, North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana

western parts were pushed in and caused the middle to flare out. Moreover, the pitch of the roof

appears a little steeper. And in both the transverse and longitudinal sections, a series of circular lights or apertures can be seen dotting the inside of the roof. The site plan is also substantially different. As mentioned in previous sections, this version of site is notable for its lack of landscape; or rather, for a landscape that was made without Dan Kiley's input. The conference and meeting notes make clear that Kiley was not part of the design conversations at this point—and this in spite of the fact the Kiley was a frequent collaborator with Saarinen's office and a known designer in Columbus. Moreover, the site plan follows the general contours of the Third Northlawn Addition. Saarinen's office had already received documentation about the platting of the site from M.T. Harrison.<sup>86</sup> And yet, it should be mentioned that by 1960, the site was still in a bit of flux.

The drawings show one of the most significant differences between this version of North Christian Church and the one that eventually was constructed. The site plan and sections all show perforations on the spire as well as the “ribs” that reach to the ground. (Figure 3.27) The purpose for this design is not clear. Neither is it clear for the “stakes” that appear to anchor the ribs to the ground. It should be noted here that the perforations achieve an effect substantially different from the final version. The completed building is remarkable for its seamless integration of form and structure. With the version presented in 1960, however, the building's recognizable hexagonal roof and spire appear constrained. Instead of allowing it to soar, the perforated ribs moor North Christian Church to the ground.

### *Physical Models*

Saarinen's office was known for making large study and presentation models for their projects, and North Christian Church was no exception. Archival materials show a rather sizable model for North Christian Church placed on a large, white surface. (Figure 3.28) There is no reference to site, only a landscape scheme that amplifies the building's hexagonal form. A set of

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<sup>86</sup> M.T. Harrison to Maurice B. Allen, 8 May 1959 and 11 May 1959, Eero Saarinen Collection, Folder 695B (Mixed Materials), North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana, Job No. 5902, Box 562, Folder 1, Client Correspondence 1959-1960, MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.



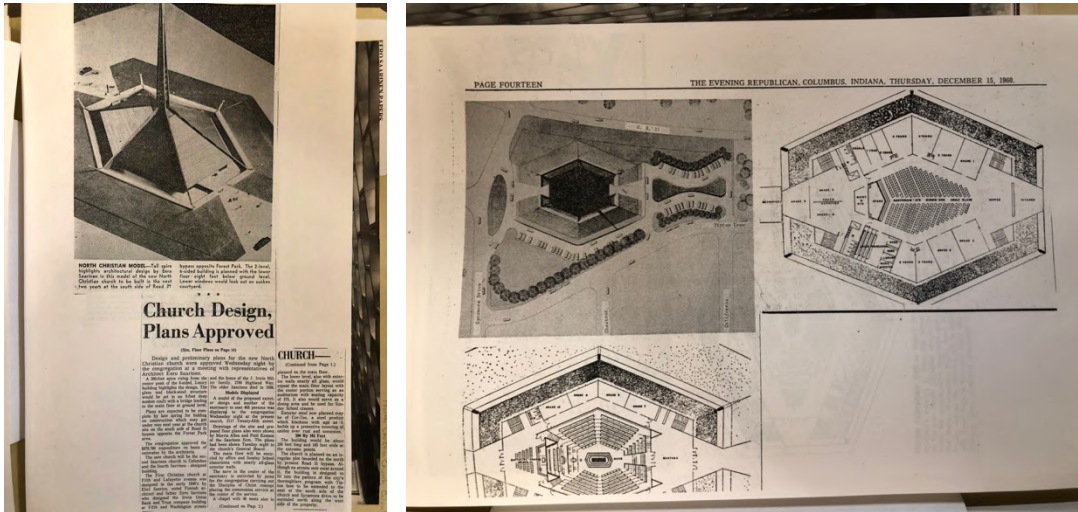


Figure 3.28: Physical Models and Initial Drawings Presented by Paul Kennon and Maurice Allen to North Christian Church, appearing in the December 15, 1960 issue of *The Evening Republican*. Source: Eero Saarinen Collection, Box 673, Folder 52, North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana, Job No. 5902, MS 593 Series IV, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

paper figures and cars are seen in front of each of the entrances, giving a sense of the model's use and scale. This model was also lit and photographed from various angles to show how the building would appear at different times of the day and, presumably, during the four seasons. In all, the effect is of a project meant to *live*; that is, a representation of not just a scheme, but of a building that was to exist and be inhabited.

### Slides

As implied above, many of the drawings were presented as slides. (Figure 3.29) Some show plans of the classroom level, the narthex level, and Nave. Others show the sections. Neither the conference notes nor correspondence between Saarinen's office and the Architectural Committee indicate how many slides were shown. There is also no transcript of the presentation, which means that it is difficult to reconstruct how the model was presented along the slides.

The December 14 meeting was successful, however, causing Kennon to remark in the conference notes that "[t]he congregation voted unanimously to accept the recommendations of the General Board [...] and authorized the Architects to proceed with the development of final design details and working drawings with the intention of receiving bids for construction and breaking



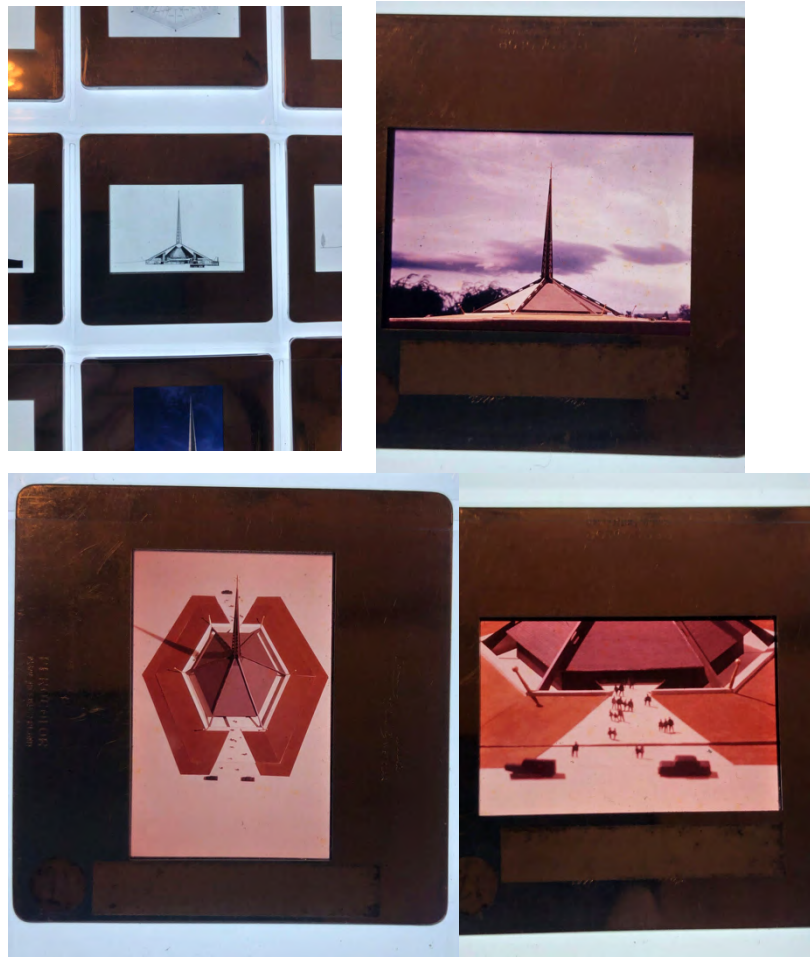


Figure 3.29: Presentation Slides of Models and Drawings of North Christian Church, December 1960. Source: Job No. 5902, North Christian Church, Columbus, IN, Box 566, Folder 1550, Mixed Materials, Undated, MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

ground in the second quarter of 1961.”<sup>87</sup> Kennon’s conference notes for this meeting also itemize a list of design recommendations for the building. In addition to prescriptions for classroom capacity and uses for the auditorium, one suggestion in particular is important as it would have an influence on the final form of the building. Here, Kennon notes “[c]onsideration should be given to the height of the roof eave and the materials of the narthex and nave to avoid a depressed or “gloomy” atmosphere upon entering the church.”<sup>88</sup> Kennon was perhaps acknowledging the comments of one

<sup>87</sup> Paul Kennon, Conference Notes, 13-15 December 1960, Job No. 5902, North Christian Church, Columbus, IN, Box 561, Folder 1528, Conference Notes 1960-1965, MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

member of the congregation, “Hal Del ----,” who wrote the following in a letter to Keith Moore dated 24 December 1960:

Dear Keith:

Just a message regarding my opinion of the Saarinen design for North Christian. I don't like it.

Perhaps I should explain. I am delighted with much of what he has done. I like most good designs in modern churches. I am not old fashioned. I just don't like this plan.

The floor plan is excellent. I think the use of space and the central communion area are meaningful and thoughtful solutions to the needs of our congregation. I do not like, however, the bomb shelter appearance of the structure. I do not like the lack of outdoor light. I do not like the feeling of crawling back into the womb that this turtle-type building creates.

Why can't there be more use of natural light? Why can't there be a feeling of strength [*sic*], by scooping out around the church instead of mounding up to it—like a bomb shelter? Why can't we feel the lightness and the height of our location, instead of pinning the place down with enormous nailheads on each corner?

My investment in the church is quite small, I know. But this is something beyond my control. I am sure there are many people in the congregation who are more of a conservative bent than they would appear. This building is not a statement of what the Christian Church represents to me. When that tower gets red lights put on top (it is too high not to, with the air base so close) the place will look like a submerged TV station, not an indication of the ecumenical beliefs of the Christian church. We are supposed to be an outreaching church, not a Freudian group that has to crawl in a dark hole to worship. I have been told that this design has been successfully executed other places. I have seen his chapel at M.I.T. This is no criterion for us to say that if it worked there, it will work here.

To summarise, I think the design lacks two things: better use of natural light (Ann has even suggested that light panels run down the ribs of the roof structure—this would not detract, but certainly bring in a feeling of daylight); and, a feeling of standing up in an outreaching church—we need a positive appearance, not a warm hole mounded up with dirt.<sup>89</sup>

Also important is J. Irwin Miller's response to the letter. He forwarded it to Maurice Allen noting, “Please show to Eero. The general reaction has been most favorable, but here is one negative response. Give it some thoughtful consideration.”<sup>90</sup> As these comments suggest, there was some criticism relating to the general form of the building and its relation to the ground plane. The result would be a shallower roof.

### **Winter-Spring 1961: Interiors For a Symbolic and Performative North Christian Church**

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<sup>89</sup> Hal Del---- to Keith Moore, 24 December 1960, Job No. 5902, North Christian Church, Columbus, IN, Box 562, Folder 3, MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

<sup>90</sup> J. Irwin Miller to Maurice B. Allen, 24 December 1960, Job No. 5902, North Christian Church, Columbus, IN, Box 562, Folder 3, MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

During January of 1961, Saarinen's office was lobbying Colonel Hoff from Bakalar Air Force Base and the Kansas City office of the Federal Aviation Agency for advice on how to avoid placing navigation lights on the spire of North Christian Church. Starting in February, however, Saarinen's office started refining the designs for the new building. At this time, a great amount of energy was spent on discussions for the design of North Christian Church's interiors. Saarinen's office looked to both the congregation and J. Irwin Miller for guidance on the design and furnishing for the Nave, pulpit, as well as the Baptistry.

Jim Stoner, the Head of the Congregation, and Walker Breland, the Director of Music for North Christian Church were outspoken and influential voices. They provided Saarinen's office with observations about the symbolism and significance of the Nave. In a series of comments forwarded to Maurice B. Allen in February 1961, Stoner had much to say about the centralized orientation and seating arrangements for the pulpit and wanted the final design to eschew a lectern. Stoner noted,

I am very much concerned with symbolism in the sanctuary. I am extremely pleased with the family feeling generated by the communion table in the center, chairs surrounding it, with the pews surrounding it, and the central place that we have given to the communion service. However, for the other important things that occur in the worship service there is no central altar and the communion table hardly takes that place. Therefore, it seems to me very imperative that the pulpit also be a part of an altar setting.

After much consideration and prayer I am ready to advocate that there not be a lectern and a pulpit but rather that there be a very impressive altar kind of pulpit without a lectern. Since we focus on being a New Testament Church and we preach from The Word, it seems quite appropriate that the pulpit should also be the lectern in what we are trying to express theologically. We are vitally concerned about unity and the theological unity about which Paul is concerned, which it seems to me commends the central pulpit, rather than a divided chancel of a pulpit and a lectern. The Bible on the pulpit should be readily observable as it is now in our church. The Open Book is historic in Protestantism and since we say "no creed but Christ" and "Where the Scriptures speak we speak, and Where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent", we are a people of The Book and we need to proclaim this.<sup>91</sup>

As with other exchanges with Saarinen's office, the rest of the comments concerned the various uses of the spaces inside the church. Of note is Stoner's insistence that the Nave and Baptistry be programmatically—that is, ritualistically—separate. Whereas the nave was an ecumenical space

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<sup>91</sup> Jim Stoner's Comments on the Design of North Christian Church, in M.T. Harrison to Maurice B. Allen, Jr., 20 February 1961, Job No. 5902, North Christian Church, Columbus, IN, Box 562, Folder 2, MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

designed to communicate the general ideas underlying the Disciples of Christ, the Chapel was held to be not just a place of great spiritual distinction, but also one that was outfitted with the latest audiovisual equipment. In his words, the Chapel

[w]ould be a very significant place to have and to use different types of crosses. There probably does not need to be a pulpit, lectern arrangement, here, either, put probably a pulpit-altar arrangement, making sure that there is use of the organ from the chapel too. The chapel should allow for the possibility of a closed circuit TV. Red carpet down the aisle would signify the sacrifice which would be consistent with the major use of the chapel, which is to focus on baptism. The baptistry should remind us that Christ died for our sins and that Salvation is now possible. This may mean a picture on the ceiling of the baptistry that would connote new birth, or it might be a marble dove at the baptism of our Master. An outlet for a hi-fi should be arranged so that individuals who wish to meditate could hear recorded music as background. The Chapel should be open 24 hours a day.<sup>92</sup>

Like Stoner, Walker Breland was also interested in the audiovisual requirements for North Christian Church and wanted to incorporate the latest in playback systems for the music room and for choir rehearsals.<sup>93</sup>

The symbolism of the Nave and its various furnishings were also discussed during the early months of 1961. Like Stoner, J. Irwin Miller was also invested in using different furnishings to communicate the symbolism of the Nave. Miller, however, approached the issue from a more artistic and historical context. Specifically, he suggested LeRoy H. Appleton and Stephen Bridges' *Symbolism in Liturgical Art* (1959) as a possible source of inspiration.<sup>94</sup> In a subsequent letter, Stoner would provide citations in the book relating to the symbolism of specific objects, such as the use of Greek letters and different versions of crosses.<sup>95</sup> Although Alexander Girard was brought in eventually to design several of the interior textiles and furnishings, Saarinen's office would also consider both Harry Bertoia and Alberto Giacometti for this task in the future.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> Walter Breland, "Architecture Notes," Job No. 5902, North Christian Church, Columbus, IN, Box 562, Folder 2, MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

<sup>94</sup> J. Irwin Miller to Maurice B. Allen, Jr., 23 March 1961, Job No. 5902, North Christian Church, Columbus, IN, Box 562, Folder 2, MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University. James Stoner would provide more information about this book in a subsequent letter to Eero Saarinen on 4 August 1961.

<sup>95</sup> James R. Stoner to Eero Saarinen, 4 August 1961, Job No. 5902, North Christian Church, Columbus, IN, Box 562, Folder 2, MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

<sup>96</sup> See Jim Stoner's Comments on the Design of North Christian Church, 20 February 1961 and Kevin Roche to J. Irwin Miller, 14 December 1962, Job No. 5902, North Christian Church, Columbus, IN, Box 562, Folder 3, MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

One of the most important components for the interior of North Christian Church was the organ. More than just an instrument, the design and future installation would become its own kind of miniature project. On 4 May 1961, J. Irwin Miller contacted organ designer Walter Holtkamp about the possibility of building and designing a new organ for North Christian Church. An initial memorandum and contract was executed on 9 May, with a \$2,500 retainer for services.<sup>97</sup> In this document, Holtkamp agreed to “design work” services, including “drawings and specifications for the structural and mechanical preparation of the organ location, necessary for the completion of the building architect’s sanctuary design.”<sup>98</sup> This last proviso is worth noting as it suggests that the design of the organ was a kind of architectural project in itself. However, work on the organ did not begin in earnest until 1962. The design of this important part of the building will be discussed in a subsequent section.

### **Spring-Summer 1961: Delays**

Understandably, James Stoner and the Architectural Committee wanted Saarinen to begin the project as soon as possible. And yet for all the amount of activity and energy brought to bear onto the design and planning of North Christian Church from 1950 until the early months of 1961, progress on the project began to slow down in the Spring. Part of the reason, as Saarinen himself explained to J. Irwin Miller, was that his office had also taken on several important projects—all involving more resources than North Christian Church. They were: the Athens Airport, the CBS Building, and Lincoln Center.<sup>99</sup> It should also be mentioned that these additional projects were among the many that Saarinen’s office still had on the drawing boards, which included the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial (Gateway Arch), Trans World Airlines Terminal, and Dulles International Airport.<sup>100</sup> It is not possible to know to what extent the client group understood Saarinen’s commitments, and yet it is not unreasonable to assume that because of his office’s

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<sup>97</sup> Walter Holtkamp to J. Irwin Miller, 9 May 1961, Job No. 5902, North Christian Church, Columbus, IN, Box 562, Folder 2, MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> Eero Saarinen to J. Irwin Miller, 4 April 1961, Job No. 5902, North Christian Church, Columbus, IN, Box 562, Folder 2, MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

<sup>100</sup> See Eeva-Liisa Pelkonen, “(Un)timely Saarinen,” *Log*, No. 19 (Spring/Summer 2010), 107.



prominence that there would be some delays. At one point, Miller even offers some understanding of Saarinen's workload, writing of the congregations' growing sense of dissatisfaction over delays, "Much of this can be overcome and forgotten if work can be begun in July which can permit a beginning of construction before year's end. We know your problems; we have some, too."<sup>101</sup>

Miller was referring to a set of exchanges between himself and the rest of the congregation, who was exasperated with the lack of momentum on the project. By Summer 1961, it appeared that progress on the project had halted. This caused Miller to write the following letter, reproduced here in its entirety as it encapsulates many of the dilemmas confronting the congregation:

Dear Eero:

This is written not to add to your problems, but to help you understand one of them. I think I know a little of the pressure under which you now find yourself, a pressure exerted by the twin and opposing forces of clients (who first beg you to take the job, then unreasonably to hurry up and finish it) and your own integrity which makes you insist on giving to each job the best you have in your [sic], and which, of course, is a principal reason why the clients came to you in the first place. All this I think I understand pretty well. I too am under pressure, but the nature of my work calls for more delegation than does yours, and in that respect our pressures differ.

You are now well aware that part of your pressure comes from Columbus. I am doing what I can to sit on the lid. The congregation sees the matter this way: The architect was selected now over two years ago in February, 1959. At the time he accepted, he told the church there would be a delay of nearly six months before he could commence work, and the church agreed. There was no great concern when this stretched to ten months, and, as a matter of fact, last December, when the design was submitted, it was received with such enthusiasm that the past was forgotten, a new and additional fund drive started, and all assumed that only details needed to be settled before the working drawing stage could commence.

The congregation continued to flourish, even in its present rundown and crowded quarters, because it could see its new church in a very near future. A favorable time for bidding exists, and the detailed solutions proposed on this last trip were extremely good ones. The congregation had come to feel "Now we can go." So the constant question began to arise "When do we start to dig?"

The committee has decided that it has to be honest, and we have said the only thing we can say, which is now we have no idea when the church will be ready for bids. Having made a good many promises in the past, the committee now refuses to make any. The reaction of the congregation frightens us, and this is why I write this letter.

The people of the church haven't got mad, or shown any of the symptoms of irritation I might have expected. They have simply given up. From an excited, growing congregation concerned with doing something new and valid, they seem to be turning into a passive dispirited group. Programs are not pushed any more, because they see little point. The fund drive has stopped, because they are afraid the church will be beyond reach as to

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<sup>101</sup> J. Irwin Miller to Eero Saarinen, 20 June 1961, Job No. 5902, North Christian Church, Columbus, IN, Box 562, Folder 2, MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

cost (with times becoming less favorable), and attendance and interest is on the decline. It is possible that I exaggerate this because of my concern and the responsibility I feel. If I do, you will have to make allowances.

My concern arises not so much from a parochial interest in “my” congregation or “my” group as it does from a belief that this group of Christians has the possibility of becoming an astonishingly perceptive and creative congregation, and that of all groups for whom you might do a church this one may be more stimulated by it and inhabit it with greatest understanding and sensitivity. I now think I am seeing these possibilities evaporate in an atmosphere of growing hopelessness, and this alarms me many times more than an all-out violent attack or campaign of complaints.

If this church doesn’t come off pretty soon, I think the congregation might fall apart. I know it shouldn’t. I didn’t think it would. But now I am concerned.

Sincerely,

Irwin<sup>102</sup>

### Fall 1961-Spring 1962: Scheduling, Saarinen’s Death, Subcontracting, and Site Mobilization

Perhaps concerned by J. Irwin Miller’s as well as the congregation’s dismay over the perceived lack of momentum on the project, Saarinen’s office prepared a “Time Schedule” for the design and construction of North Christian Church. (See Figure 1.1) Dated 16 October 1961, this document conceived of a 20-month schedule broken up into the following phases:

<b>Design:</b>	July through mid-October 1961 (possibly to mid-December 1961)
<b>Working Drawings:</b>	November 1961 through mid-April 1962
<b>Competition Bids:</b>	mid-April 1962 through mid-May 1962
<b>Award Contract:</b>	mid-May through late May 1962
<b>Construction:</b>	June 1962 through late May 1963 (possibly to late August 1963)
<b>Furnishings:</b>	August-October 1962 and December 1962-May 1963
<b>Organ:</b>	November 1961-May 1963 (commenced January 1961) <sup>103</sup>

When Eero Saarinen died less than a month later on September 1, 1961, his office was at the peak of a great creative flourishing. Work on the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, CBS Building, Dulles Airport, TWA Flight Center, the East Terminal for Athens International Airport, Lincoln Center, and other projects commenced. It is conceivable that many of his closest friends and clients—including J. Irwin Miller—were aware that Eero had been diagnosed with brain cancer sometime in 1961. Although it is unclear exactly how projects were delegated to other designers in

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<sup>102</sup> J. Irwin Miller to Eero Saarinen, 5 April 1961, Job No. 5902, North Christian Church, Columbus, IN, Box 562, Folder 2, MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

<sup>103</sup> Eero Saarinen & Associates, Time Schedule, 16 October 1961, Job No. 5902, North Christian Church, Columbus, IN, Box 562, Folder 3, MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

Saarinen's office after Eero's death, North Christian Church was now under the combined responsibility of Kevin Roche, John Dinkleoo, John Kinsella, Paul Kennon, and Joe Jensen.

At this time, Saarinen's office began working between Hamden, Connecticut with occasional trips to Columbus for project meetings. On 7 December 1961, Roche, Dinkleoo, Kennon, Kinsella, and Jensen met and began the working drawings for North Christian Church. Most of the discussions in this meeting were technical in nature, dealing with material treatments for the interiors, sourcing for the slate floors, with some discussion about removing or replacing the landscape scheme. This meeting is also significant as it inaugurates the collaboration between Saarinen's office and two of the major contractors for the project: Henry Pfisterer (structural) and Van Zelm, Heywood & Shadford (mechanical, electrical, and plumbing).<sup>104</sup> Although it is not clear from the conference notes for the meeting on 6 November, the cost estimate for the project had apparently been increased to \$870,700. Discussions about materials during the 7 December meeting concerned sourcing and substitution of different types of concrete and slate as the current estimated project cost had ballooned to \$1,247,300, or 25-30% over the budgeted \$870,000.<sup>105</sup>

From December 1961 until February 1962, the designers met with representatives from Pfisterer's, and Van Zelm's offices to go over specific details from the working drawings. In their meeting from 13 December 1961, for example, the group discussed incorporation of HVAC and ducting elements into the structure. As Maurice B. Allen summarized, "The structure can be utilized economically to distribute air to all upper spaces. This is done by rising through a shaft at the west end of the nave, utilizing a plenum between the floor of the nave and the ceiling slab of the auditorium and using a tube slab to distribute air."<sup>106</sup> This is illustrative of the discussions between the different design teams, which often veered into issues of value engineering. In one instance, they

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<sup>104</sup> Paul Kennon, Conference Notes, 7 December 1961, Job No. 5902, North Christian Church, Columbus, IN, Box 561, Folder 1528, Conference Notes 1960-1965, MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> Maurice B. Allen, Conference Notes, 13 December 1961, Job No. 5902, North Christian Church, Columbus, IN, Box 561, Folder 1528, Conference Notes 1960-1965, MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

discussed the cost effectiveness of combining of natural ventilation and radiation for the narthex. And in a meeting held on 15 February 1962, they discussed the impact of different combinations of materials on acoustics inside the nave, auditorium, choir rehearsal rooms, and kitchen.<sup>107</sup> This foregrounded the all-important discussion about the organ and other interior furnishings, which were covered during a meeting held on March 19, 1962. The interiors will be discussed in the following section, and yet as the bulk of the conference notes from the late winter of 1962 indicate, by far the most worrisome aspect of the project was the site itself.

One of the difficulties presented by the site was its location within a low water table. During the early months of 1962, Pfisterer's office prepared specifications for test borings, and several companies in Chicago and Indianapolis were approached to provide soil testing services to determine the condition of the site. On 29 March 1962, Henry Pfisterer and members of Van Zelm's team met with Saarinen's office to go over test results. They determined that the proposed mechanical room would be four feet below the water table. This would require relocating the room to the western part of the building, and thereby changing the dimensions of the Youth Activities room.<sup>108</sup> In a letter to M.T. Harrison dated April 4, 1962, Maurice B. Allen expressed concern over the test results, which revealed Allen also noted that these options were not without drawbacks: whereas moving the mechanical room would incur additional extra costs, leaving it would require the installation of additional pumping machines to prevent flooding.<sup>109</sup>

### **Summer 1962-Spring 1963: Interiors, Furnishings, Breaking Ground, and Contract Bidding**

Throughout the remaining months of 1962, and with Pfisterer's and Van Zelm's offices working on the integration of environmental controls with the building's structure, Saarinen's office turned their attention to the interior furnishings and to construction bidding. The design of the

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<sup>107</sup> Maurice B. Allen, Conference Notes, 15 February 1962, Job No. 5902, North Christian Church, Columbus, IN, Box 561, Folder 1528, Conference Notes 1960-1965, MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

<sup>108</sup> Maurice B. Allen to North Christian Church, 29 March 1962, Job No. 5902, North Christian Church, Columbus, IN, Box 562, Folder 2, MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

<sup>109</sup> Maurice B. Allen, Jr. to M.T. Harrison, 4 April 1962, Job No. 5902, North Christian Church, Columbus, IN, Box 562, Folder 2, MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

interior, as has been mentioned, proved to be an active and contentious aspect of the project. There are two reasons for this. First, given the importance of the building to the congregation at North Christian Church, the design and arrangement of the furnishings invited discussions about the architectural and artistic symbolism to be communicated by the design of the Nave and the Baptistry. Second, these discussions provided the Architectural Committee and members of North Christian Church a forum for input on the design and aspirations for the church that did not address its more technological and engineering aspects.

As an object lying somewhere between the scale of industrial and architectural design, the church organ was inextricably linked to the spaces and rituals of North Christian Church. Discussions about the organ began in May 1961 and after a bit of a lull, were once again at the forefront of discussions. Walter Holtkamp presented his design for the organ at the meeting held on 19 March 1962. The conference notes summarize his presentation, stating how “The arrangement of





Figure 3.30: Walter Holtkamp, Preparation Drawings for the Organ at North Christian Church, August 1962.  
Source: Records Office, North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana

pipes and massing of the component parts has been achieved in cooperation with the architects.”<sup>110</sup>

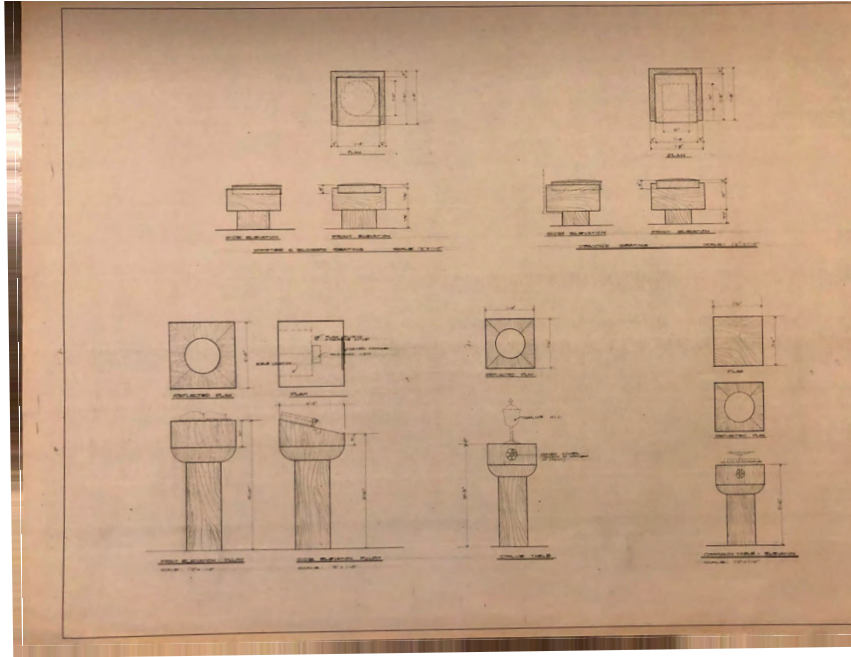
This is evident in Holtkamp’s drawings, dated 1 August 1962 (Figure 3.30), the organ appears unmistakably *designed*, an architectural installation with ranks of pipes arranged so that the lower-pitched tubes anchor the outsides, and the smaller, higher-pitched ones cascade toward the center of the instrument.<sup>111</sup> Moreover, as Holtkamp’s drawings make clear, the instrument is not so much an “organ” but an assemblage of several component instruments: a Great Organ flanked on either side by a Pedal Organ and a Positive Organ, and the larger Swell Organ in the back.<sup>112</sup> Holtkamp also made drawings for a smaller organ to be placed in the Baptistry. Like the larger instrument in the

<sup>110</sup> Conference Notes, 19 March 1962, Job No. 5902, North Christian Church, Columbus, IN, Box 561, Folder 1528, Conference Notes 1960-1965, MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

<sup>111</sup> Holtkamp Preparations Drawing, Nave Organ, Front Elevation, 1 August 1962, Records Office, North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana.

<sup>112</sup> Holtkamp Preparations Drawing, Nave Organ, Site Installation, 1 August 1962, Records Office, North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana.

Nave, a drawing of this organ from November 1962 (Figure 3.31) also features overlapping ranks of pipes, with lower-pitched tubes on the outside, and placed against the westernmost wall.<sup>113</sup> It was



and Seating for Elders, November 1962. Source: Records Office, North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana

never built.

During the fall of 1962, discussions turned to other aspects of the interior. In a letter dated 1 November 1962, Saarinen's office identified four different categories of interior furnishings: "Special Furnishings," "General Furniture," "Religious Sculpture," and textiles, including vestments and robes.<sup>114</sup> The "Special" furnishings included those to be located inside the Nave, Baptistry, classrooms and offices, and the auditorium. These were to be designed by Saarinen's office during a three month period and would take about six additional months to build and install. Working with North Christian Church, they would select the "General Furniture," including "all loose furniture in the classrooms and offices, the auditorium seating, banquet tables, student activities furniture, etc."

<sup>113</sup> Holtkamp Preparations Drawing, Baptistry Organ, 8 November 1962, Records Office, North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana.

<sup>114</sup> Eero Saarinen and Associates to J. Irwin Miller, 1 November 1962, Job No. 5902, North Christian Church, Columbus, IN, Box 562, Folder 3, MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

As for “Religious Sculpture,” different sculptors and artists would be hired to design and build “the cross on the spire, the symbol on the altar pulpit, the symbolic entry gates to the nave, the cross or any other symbol used in the baptistry, the crosses used throughout the classrooms and offices, the symbolic underwater pool screen, and all other such symbolic objects as are needed.” And lastly, Saarinen’s office suggested that Alexander Girard design the vestments, robes, communion table covers, chalice, plates, and other hardware necessary for religious services.<sup>115</sup>

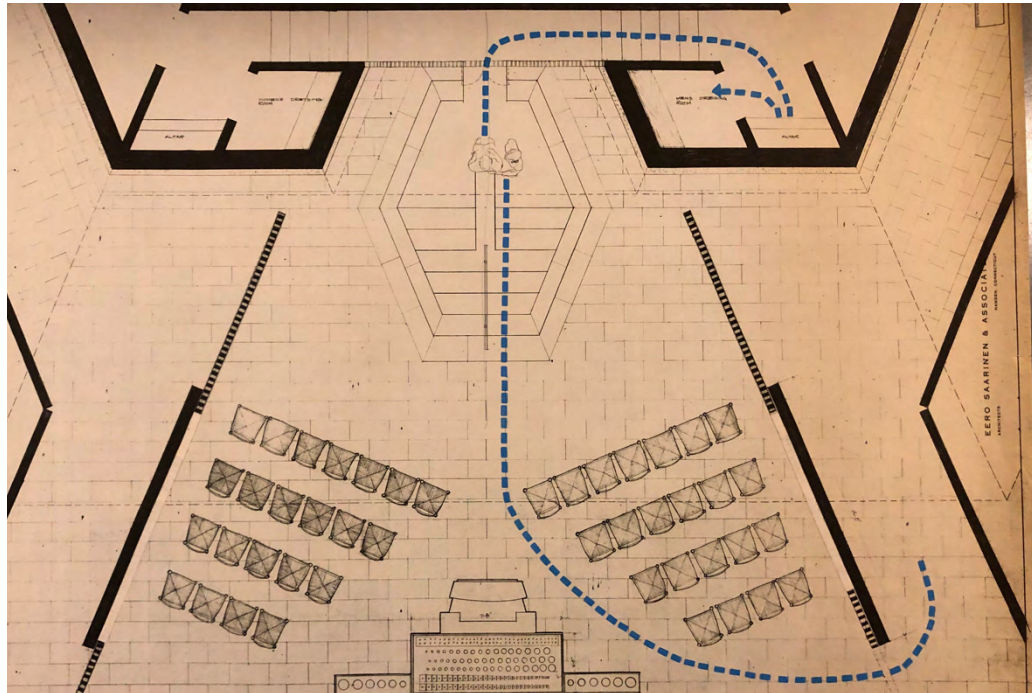
The Nave became the center of another group of discussions involving furnishings and acoustics. Saarinen’s office contacted Bolt, Beranek & Newman (BBN) to discuss the effects of the proposed colored cushions to the acoustics inside the Nave. The Saarinen firm and BBN had collaborated previously in designs for the Irwin Union Trust Company in Columbus (1950-54), the Kresge Auditorium at MIT (1950-55), a new satellite campus at the University of Michigan (1951-56), the Koussevitzky Shed at Tanglewood (1959), as well as the Vivian Beaumont Theater at Lincoln Center (1961). In their meetings, BBN determined that cushions would be “very desirable” even at 20-25% occupancy. The use of cushions would also depend on the kind of event occurring inside the Nave. According to the Saarinen firm, “the best course to follow here would be if the cushions were to be omitted for liturgical reasons then we should design the pews in such a manner so that a thin pad could be installed after completion, at least in the upper rows of the nave, should this prove acoustically necessary.”<sup>116</sup> Saarinen’s office recommended against the use of cushions in the pews, claiming that they would not be seen during service, and instead suggested that they be used for the deacons’ and elders’ chairs in the Nave.

Flexibility was also an issue in the design and outfitting of the Baptistry and auditorium. At one point, the issue of placing movable screens around the Baptistry and fountain was discussed. Yet by far the most important consideration was the creation of a space that would accommodate various

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<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*



rituals. During this time, Saarinen's office built and photographed scaled interiors of the Nave and Baptistry. Whereas models of the Baptistry feature dramatic lighting and stylized model figures, the Saarinen firm produced a series of plans that depict how the space could be outfitted and programmed for baptisms, weddings, and funerals. Using red and blue arrows, some solid, some dashed, these diagrams depict movement in and out of the Baptistry for various ceremonies.<sup>117</sup> (Figure 3.32) And in some instances, they call attention to movement around the movable screens and in front of the smaller organ. The Architectural Committee placed great importance on these screens as they transformed the Baptistry and fountain into a space that was separated visually and symbolically from the more common areas in the lower level.<sup>118</sup>

<sup>117</sup> These different versions of these drawings are undated and appear in Eero Saarinen and Associates, Baptistry Plan, n.d., Records Office, North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana.

<sup>118</sup> Eero Saarinen and Associates, Conference Notes, 19 March 1962, Job No. 5902, North Christian Church, Columbus, IN, Box 561, Folder 1528, Conference Notes 1960-1965, MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

In addition to the outfitting and design of the interior, the Saarinen firm also developed a comprehensive bidding framework for subcontractors during the summer and early fall of 1962. On June 15, 1962, the office produced plans and specifications for general contracting bids. Four firms responded: Dunlop & Company, Repp & Mundt, Huber, Hunt & Nichols, Inc., and Tousley Construction Company. Saarinen's firm was initially estimating a 30,000 square foot building with \$818,100.00 for total construction and \$52,600.00 for furnishings. These numbers were adjusted to take into account the proposed relocation of the mechanical room as well as \$10,000 of kitchen equipment funds moved in general furnishings, with a revised budget of \$873,100.00.<sup>119</sup> Of the four bidders, Dunlop & Company's was the lowest with a \$932,200 proposal. Although the other three bidders—Repp & Mundt, Huber, Hunt & Nichols, and Tousley Construction Company—all came in with roughly similar figures, Saarinen's office developed an additional framework for keeping Dunlop & Company proposal within budget. This was ultimately unsuccessful, and on 14 August 1962, North Christian Church asked to meet with Repp & Mundt to see if they could reduce their bid amount by \$168,583 to \$789,100.<sup>120</sup> Throughout the rest of the fall, Repp & Mundt met with North Christian Church to fine tune the budget, and on 3 December 1962, a contract was signed for construction services.<sup>121</sup>

At the same time that negotiations with Repp & Mundt for construction services were commencing, the Architectural Committee and Saarinen's office were occupied with other aspects of their design. As mentioned in previous sections, the offices were in negotiations with the Civil Aeronautics Agency about the height of the spire during October 1962. Moreover, discussions about the organ, its finishes and locations, as well as about the hiring of artists like Harry Bertoia, Alberto Giacometti, and Alexander Girard for interior furnishings were still ongoing during the fall of 1962

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<sup>119</sup> Eero Saarinen and Associates, Conference Notes, 20 July 1962, Job No. 5902, North Christian Church, Columbus, IN, Box 561, Folder 1528, Conference Notes 1960-1965, MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

<sup>120</sup> M.T. Harrison to Alvin Mundt, 14 August 1962, Job No. 5902, North Christian Church, Columbus, IN, Box 562, Folder 2, MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

<sup>121</sup> John Dinkeloo to M.T. Harrison, 13 December 1962, Job No. 5902, North Christian Church, Columbus, IN, Box 562, Folder 2, MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.



and early winter of 1963. And yet progress on North Christian Church had already been moving forward at an unprecedented pace: on September 2, a groundbreaking ceremony was held. Presided over by James Stoner, as well as the Elders, Deacons, and Trustees of North Christian Church, the ceremony ended with a hymn called “We Would Be Building.”<sup>122</sup>



Figure 3.33: Image of North Christian Church During Construction, from the March 9, 1963 Evening Republican. Source: Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

Period photographs and newspaper articles give a sense of the construction of North Christian Church. For example, the photograph on the front page of *The Evening Republican* from 9 March 1963 (Figure 3.33) shows a crane lowering the southeastern rib into the framework of the new North Christian Church building. The caption to the image reads “No Creature From Space,” suggesting that the spider-like framework was more otherworldly than intended. It is a black-and-white photograph, however, and the color images from North Christian Church’s website show how the six steel, lead-coated copper ribs are painted in red rust-inhibiting paint.

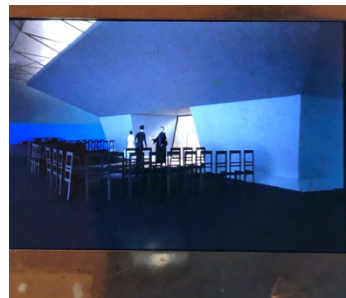
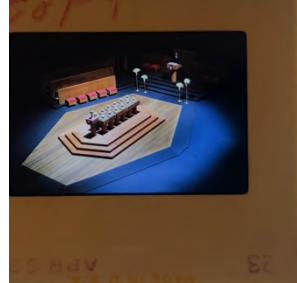
Other images give a glimpse of the life of the building through the various phases of its construction—from the concrete framework for the Nave, to the placing of roof tiles, to the installation of the Holtkamp organ, and finally to the erecting of the ever-important spire.<sup>123</sup>

In those meetings dedicated to furnishings, the topics turned from the symbolic to the material as the Architectural Committee and Trustees worked with Saarinen’s office to fine tune interior specifications. On 25 March and 8 July 1963, for example, Paul Kennon and John Dinkeloo met with the Trustees to present drawings and models of the interiors as well as concepts for

<sup>122</sup> North Christian Church website, <http://northchristianchurch.org> (accessed 27 April 2020)

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

furnishings in the “Nave,” “Baptistry-Chapel,” “Church School and Offices,” “Classrooms, Offices, Auditoriums, and Lounge,” and other areas. (Figure 3.34) They discussed the color of fabrics, carvings on the wood, the location of partitions and screens, as well as the composition and design of entry gates for the Baptistry. Some of the most significant and memorable aspects of the interior



Job No. 5902, North Christian Church, Columbus, IN, Box 566, Folder 1550, Mixed Materials, Undated, MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

came into fruition during these meetings. For example, the conference notes from the March 25 meeting describe the Communion Table as “symbolical solid units of wood.”<sup>124</sup> The conference notes state that these meetings often resulted with instructions for the architects to come back with additional or refined proposals. There were, however, instances where artists were mentioned for specific parts of the interiors or furnishings. The Committee approached the New York silversmith Paul Enko for the design of a sculpted dove that would grace the Baptistry pool. They also asked

<sup>124</sup> Eero Saarinen and Associates, Conference Notes, 25 March 1963, Job No. 5902, North Christian Church, Columbus, IN, Box 561, Folder 1528, Conference Notes 1960-1965, MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

Saarinen's office to have more meetings with Girard, thus confirming his participation and the overall design for the furnishings inside the Nave.<sup>125</sup> Girard eventually incorporated doves into the design for the altar tapestry, which would be embroidered by Marilyn Neuhart.<sup>126</sup> For their "Specifications for Wood Furnishings," created on 14 August 1963, Saarinen's office prepared a comprehensive list of framing and components to be crafted or fabricated from hardwood lumber such as Douglas Fir, African Mahogany, Honduras Mahogany, Red Oak, and American Walnut.<sup>127</sup> The document also covered the use of steel framing for the movable screens in the Baptistry and cost estimates for upholstery.<sup>128</sup>

### Completion and Dedication

Work on North Christian Church progressed throughout the Summer and Fall of 1963. Documents and archival materials related to the final months of construction could not be consulted as the initial drafts of this report were being completed.<sup>129</sup> However, there are several sources that can give a sense of how the project progressed until the completion of the building in March 1964. One is the North Christian Church Legacy website. As mentioned, the site has some photographs portraying the progress made on construction. Another is an article published in the September 1964 *Architectural Review* entitled "Saarinen's Church." The article is a reprinting of an excerpt from the Aline Saarinen-edited *Eero Saarinen on His Work* (1962) and features images of the completed building and one of the site plans produced by Dan Kiley's office. In addition to credits for architectural design, structural and mechanical engineering, and general contracting, the article lists Alexander

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<sup>125</sup> Eero Saarinen and Associates, Conference Notes, 8 July 1963, Job No. 5902, North Christian Church, Columbus, IN, Box 561, Folder 1528, Conference Notes 1960-1965, MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

<sup>126</sup> Alexandra Lange, "Alexander Girard in Columbus," in Mateo Kries and Jochen Eisenbrand, *Alexander Girard: A Designer's Universe* (Weil am Rhein, Germany: Vitra Design Museum, 2016), 315-317.

<sup>127</sup> Eero Saarinen and Associates, "Specifications for Wood Furnishings for North Christian Church of Columbus, Indiana," 14 August 1963, Job No. 5902, North Christian Church, Columbus, IN, Box 566, Folder 1555, Specifications, MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.. This document also has an addendum dated 30 August 1963.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>129</sup> Plans are being made to visit more archives to find information about the building's construction.

Girard as “Designer of Liturgical Fittings,” Bolt, Beranek & Newman as “Acoustical Engineers,” Howard L. Post as “Food Service Consultant,” and Stanley McCandless as “Lighting Consultant.”<sup>130</sup>

Three events were held in celebration of the building’s completion. On March 8, 1964, at 10:00 a.m., the congregation held its first service in the new North Christian Church. The event began with the Call to Worship from Psalm 190, followed by prayers and choral responses. A presentation of tithes and offerings followed, ending with a benediction.<sup>131</sup> A dedication ceremony for the new building was held on April 19, 1964. In attendance were leaders from the International Convention of Christian Churches, the United Christian Missionary Society, the Indiana Council of Churches, and the Association of Christian Churches of Indiana. Aline Saarinen, Kevin Roche, John Dinkeloo, Paul Kennon, and Alexander Girard also attended. The Holtkamp Organ was dedicated on April 26.<sup>132</sup>

### **Improvements and Alterations to North Christian Church**

Work on North Christian Church continued in the decades after its completion. Previous sections have described how Dan Kiley, Kevin Roche and John Dinkeloo all worked on modifying the landscape and site design as late as 1974. And from the 1980s until the early 2000s, North Christian Church underwent more alterations and improvements. This was on the heels of a Capital Campaign to raise money for repairs to the roof, oculus, Nave ceiling, kitchen, as well as computer equipment and the creation of a “maintenance reserve fund.”<sup>133</sup> This led to improvements on the seals in the Minister’s Office and by the Storrow Kinsella Partnership’s work on improvements to the roof and framing details.<sup>134</sup> In the following years, the bulk of improvements took place in the interiors. Starting in 1990, for example, Roche and Dinkeloo drew up a comprehensive framework

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<sup>130</sup> “Saarinen’s Church, *The Architectural Review*, September 1961, 187, Job No. 5902, North Christian Church, Columbus, IN, Box 562, Folder 2, MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University. David Knepper from Bolt, Beranek & Newman was present at a meeting with Eero Saarinen & Associates on 15 February 1962.

<sup>131</sup> “Divine Worship,” 8 March 1964, North Christian Church website, <http://northchristianchurch.org> (accessed 30 April 2020)

<sup>132</sup> Pamphlet from the Dedication Ceremony at North Christian Church, 15 March 1964, North Christian Church website, <http://northchristianchurch.org> (accessed 1 May 2020)

<sup>133</sup> North Christian Church website, 5 May 2014, <http://www.northchristianchurch.com/pages/buildingconstruction.html>, archived at Columbus Indiana Architecture Archives.

<sup>134</sup> Copies of these drawings exist in the Records Office, North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana.

for renovations that covered material specifications and workmanship for concrete, masonry, metal work, carpentry, gypsum board construction, ceramic tile and stonework, and elevators.<sup>135</sup> The last of these was especially important as it was one of the first major renovations was the installation of two chair lifts designed by Roche and Dinkeloo in the Nave. 1991 saw the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and its implementation took several years. It is conceivable that the installation of chair lifts was a necessary response to this piece of legislation. It is also likely that it was done in compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1974. However, in 1993, another Capital Campaign was established to fund the installing of these lifts in the Nave and one for access to the classroom levels. These funds were also set aside for the installation of wireless audio for the hearing impaired, as well as for improvements in exterior lighting, parking lot surfacing, the addition of an automatic door, and refurbishment of the Holtkamp organ.<sup>136</sup> This was followed by more work replacing and maintaining materials throughout the interiors of North Christian Church.

From 1995 until 2009, additional Capital Campaigns led to more improvements on the exterior and interiors of North Christian Church. In 1995, North Christian Church commissioned Columbus architect Todd Williams to design a new Memorial Garden on the southeastern side of the building commemorating members of the Congregation that had passed away. Williams' design featured a series of horizontal plaques mounted on the wall of the sunken garden opposite a bench designed for contemplation.<sup>137</sup> Dedication of the new Memorial Garden took place on 21 September 1997, and yet improvements continued. In 1999, for example, another Campaign raised funds to add ramps to the east and west entries. Funds were also allocated for an improved lighting and sound as well as ADA-compliant seating near the chair lifts. This continues to be an issue with construction and conservation of churches, especially taking into account aging congregations. There were also

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<sup>135</sup> Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo and Associates, "Specifications," 31 August 1990, Job No. 5902, North Christian Church, Columbus, IN, Box 566, Folder 1555, Specifications, MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

<sup>136</sup> "History of the Building Construction," North Christian Church website, 5 May 2014, <http://www.northchristianchurch.com/pages/buildingconstruction.html>, print out archived at Columbus Indiana Architecture Archives. A version of this website exists as "Architecture," <http://northchristianlegacy.org/architecture/>

<sup>137</sup> Records Office, North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana.



alterations to the interior during this time, including a new childcare center, improvements to the Youth Room, and the construction of a playground on the southwest corner of the site. Following the designation of North Christian Church as a National Historic Landmark by the National Park Service in 2000, more improvements to the exterior were made. The metal cladding on the spire was replaced in 2003 after it was discovered that the various fasteners securing it to the plywood base were in a severe state of deterioration. A 2005 Capital Campaign raised funds for new gutters and fascia renovations, parking lot resurfacing, improvements to the spire lighting, the creation of a new “Welcome Center” in the Narthex level, and a new fountain in the Baptistry. In 2009, for example, another Columbus-based architect, Louis Joyner, prepared materials for renovations to the Memorial Garden. These included the installation of additional seating, replacing the steps, and adding guardrails. The year before, Joyner worked on a scheme for roof replacement, and repairs to the gutter and fascia, with funding from a “Save America’s Treasures” grant from the National Park Service.<sup>138</sup>

### **The Historiography of Architecture and North Christian Church**

Though familiar to devotees of midcentury modern design, Eero Saarinen is a figure that has only recently begun to loom large in the historiography of modern architecture. His oeuvre is overshadowed by a constant supply of monographs, critical histories, and exhibits on work of canonical figures like Frank Lloyd Wright, Le Corbusier, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, as well as those about the Bauhaus. Of the monographic works dedicated to Saarinen’s, one of the first was *Eero Saarinen On His Work: A Selection of Buildings from 1947 to 1964*, published posthumously in 1962 and edited by Aline B. Saarinen. However, Saarinen’s work began appearing in different articles and books that began to take stock in the current state of American architecture during the 1960s.<sup>139</sup> The

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<sup>138</sup> North Christian Church website, 5 May 2014, <http://www.northchristianchurch.com/pages/buildingconstruction.html>, archived at Columbus Indiana Architecture Archives.

<sup>139</sup> See Walter McQuade, “A New Architecture for Jets,” *Architectural Record*, Vol. 127 (March 1960); Cranston Jones, *Architecture Today and Tomorrow* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1961); Peter Carter, “Eero Saarinen 1910-1961,” *Architectural Design*, Vol. 31 (Dec. 1961); Allan Temko, *Eero Saarinen* (New York: George Braziller, 1962); Reyner Banham, “The Fear of Eero’s Mana,” *Arts Magazine*, Vol. 36 (Feb. 1962)); McQuade, “The Birth of an Airport,” *Fortune*, Vol. 65 (March 1962); and Henry Russell-Hitchcock, “American Architecture in the Early Sixties,” *Zodiac, Edizioni di Comunità*, Vol. 10 (1962).

architect Peter C. Papademetriou wrote a series of brief, thoroughly researched retrospectives about Saarinen's work. His first, "Coming of Age: Eero Saarinen and Modern American Architecture," appeared in *Perspecta* in 1985. There was no museum exhibition dedicated to Saarinen until 2006, with the opening of *Eero Saarinen: Shaping the Future*. The Finnish Cultural Institute in New York, the Museum of Finnish Architecture in Helsinki, the National Building Museum in Washington, DC, as well as the Yale School of Architecture organized the show. Featuring never-before-seen artifacts and objects from Saarinen's office, the show began in Helsinki before traveling to Oslo, Brussels, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, Washington, DC, Minneapolis, St. Louis, New York, and finally Yale University. Eeva-Liisa Pelkonen and Donald J. Albrecht edited the companion volume, also entitled *Eero Saarinen: Shaping the Future* (2006), which stands as one of the most thorough—if not complete—assessments of Saarinen's work. This book followed two books that were considered the most comprehensive monographs on Saarinen: Antonio Roman's *Eero Saarinen: An Architecture of Multiplicity* (Princeton Architectural Press, 2003) and Jayne Merkel's *Eero Saarinen* (Phaidon, 2005).

Despite the appearance of the above more or less comprehensive volumes and momentous traveling exhibition, writing and research about Saarinen's work can be organized into three distinct categories. The first is a general body of literature, originating around the 1990s, all aimed at a popular readership and considered Saarinen's furniture and interiors within a burgeoning interest in midcentury modern design. A recent example is Alice T. Friedman's *American Glamour and the Evolution of Modern Architecture* (Yale University Press, 2010), which considers this interest in midcentury modernism through a critical lens. For Friedman, buildings like the TWA Flight Center did more than embody a romance with the glamour of jet age travel—it was an example of how modern design aligned itself with bourgeois tastes and appetites for aesthetic experiences. The second are monographs like Merkel's (and to a certain extent Pelkonen's and Roman's) that veer towards hagiographic accounts. Merkel, Pelkonen, Hélène Lipstadt and others have noted that Saarinen fell out of favor during the 70s and 80s due to the rise of academic postmodernism in design schools and scholarly literature. Saarinen was perceived as a popular architect seemingly

uninterested in the history of architecture. A glance at *Eero Saarinen On His Work* reveals that this is simply not the case, and as the 2006 exhibit has shown, Saarinen had a highly attenuated *visual* knowledge of architectural history.

The third group of literature was born out of the legacy of academic postmodernism and sought to locate Saarinen's work within a more critical framework. Books such as Francesco Dal Co, Mario Manieri-Elia, and Manfredo Tafuri's *The American City: From the Civil War to the New Deal* (MIT Press, 1983), and Kenneth Frampton's *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* (1980) introduced readers to histories of architecture modulated through the lenses of Marxist, social, and economic cities. Whereas Dal Co's book situated Eliel and Eero Saarinen's urban proposals within larger discourses about public space in postwar America, Frampton takes direct aim at the perceived positivism and celebration of technology and industrial capitalism in Saarinen's work. Even the erstwhile polemical defender of Yale modernist architects, Vincent Scully, agreed and decried Saarinen's General Motors Technical Center, TWA Flight Center, and Dulles Airport as "whammos" of shape, function, and structure.<sup>140</sup> In short, this critical work was historiographical in nature, mining archives to develop a body of work that sought to correct or augment perceived historical trends. It rapidly incorporated scholarly and theoretical trends from literature studies and art history, from Jacques Derrida's work on deconstruction, Michel Foucault's poststructuralist investigations into the history of spaces, as well as Freudian approaches to the history of art perfected by Rosalind E. Krauss, Yve-Alain Bois, and Hal Foster. Historiographical in nature, this work developed alongside two scholarly directions. One is the rise of architectural publications such as *Oppositions* and *Assemblage*, which featured innovative and influential work on the history of architecture as well as never-before-seen translations of seminal work by the likes of Alois Riegl and others.<sup>141</sup> Another is the rise of doctoral

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<sup>140</sup> Vincent Scully, quoted in Merkel, *Eero Saarinen*, 210.

<sup>141</sup> Other crucial publications that should also be considered here are: Demetri Porphyrios, ed., *On the Methodology of Architectural History*, Architectural Design (New York and London: St. Martin's Press, 1981); Joan Ockman, ed., *Architecture, Criticism, Ideology*, Revisions: Volume 1 (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1985); Beatriz Colomina, ed., *Architecture Production and Reproduction*, Revisions: Volume 2 (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1988); and Taisto Mäkelä and Wallis Miller, eds., *Wars of Classification: Proceedings of the Colloquium "Reinterpreting Modernism" Held at the School of Architecture, Princeton University* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1991).

programs in architectural history. Both of these became trading zones, mediums of exchange whereby a generation of scholars and teachers began advising a new crop of architectural historians under the mantle of the “history, theory, and criticism of architecture.”<sup>142</sup>

From this milieu, a body of critical work considered the Saarinen office’s output through these developing scholarly trends. In *The Organizational Complex: Architecture, Media, and Corporate Space* (MIT Press, 2003), Reinhold Martin analyzes Saarinen’s corporate campuses and facilities within larger discourses about design, technology, the social sciences, visual studies, and the ascendancy of what economic historian Alfred D. Chandler, Jr. called the “visible hand” of managerial capitalism.<sup>143</sup> For Martin, Saarinen office projects like the General Motors Technical Center (1945-1956), IBM Manufacturing and Training Facility (1958), the Thomas J. Watson Research Laboratory (1961), and Bell Telephone Laboratories (1962) were buildings that sublimated issues of control, computation, and technologically-mediated perception while presenting consumers with a palatable version of Cold War-era realpolitik. Jane C. Loeffler’s *The Architecture of Diplomacy: Building America’s Embassies* (Princeton Architectural Press, 1998) focuses momentarily on the Saarinen office’s designs for United States Embassies in London (1956-59) and Oslo (1959) as part of a program to use modern architecture to promote American ideals abroad. These two projects were backed partially from surplus World War Two-era Lend Lease funds and are portrayed as examples of how architectural innovations merged with geopolitical and aesthetic interests.

This trend continues. For example, John Harwood’s award-winning book, *The Interface: IBM and the Transformation of Corporate Design, 1945-1978* (University of Minnesota Press, 2016) used Saarinen’s Thomas J. Watson Research Center (1961) to investigate the ways in which modern design “normalized” the introduction of computing to everyday life. Recently, in *Jet Age Aesthetic: The Glamour of Media in Motion* (Yale University Press, 2020), Vanessa R. Schwartz argues that the

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<sup>142</sup> For an excellent account of the ascendancy of history and theory education at MIT’s School of Architecture and Planning, see John Harwood, “How useful?: The Stakes of Architectural History, Theory and Criticism at MIT, 1945-1976,” in Dutta, ed., *A Second Modernism*.

<sup>143</sup> See Alfred D. Chandler, Jr., *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1977).

swooping and aspirational forms of Saarinen's TWA Flight Center and Dulles Airport were deliberate attempts to capture the notion of transonic flight without movement, as if a fish swimming in water were unaware that it was in an aquarium. And when considering Saarinen's religious-oriented work, here it is useful to point out Reinhold Martin's piece about the MIT Chapel in *A Second Modernism: MIT, Architecture, and the "Techno-Social" Moment* (MIT Press, 2013). Martin notes how his study of this building "emphasizes the instrumental character of sacral or spiritual discourse and practice, at a moment when modernity's two ideological poles, the rational and the spiritual, were in the process of trading places."<sup>144</sup> These three examples all point to new and developing trajectories in the writing of critical histories of modern architecture. Whereas Harwood's and Martin's contributions look to institutional, technological, and economic histories of architecture, Schwartz's approach emphasizes architecture as a kind of medium communicating ideals and aspirations for modern living from the late 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards.

With the exception of *Eero Saarinen: Shaping the Future* and Martin's brief piece on the MIT Chapel, such works tend to overlook Saarinen's religious works. Histories of sacred architecture also overlook North Christian Church. The building is also absent from Gretchen Buggeln's *The Suburban Church: Modernism and Community in Postwar America* (2015), presumably because it focuses almost exclusively on churches in the Chicago and Minneapolis suburbs. The book does, however, discuss another Saarinen project—his Kramer Chapel at Concordia University in Fort Wayne, Indiana from 1958. North Christian Church also does not appear in *American Sanctuary: Understanding Sacred Spaces* (Indiana University Press, 2006), which stakes new theoretical and historical perspectives about sacred architecture in the United States.

North Christian Church did begin to make appearances in periodicals shortly after its completion, and has been mentioned occasionally in more specialized histories of sacred architecture. As mentioned in this report, one of the first appearances of North Christian Church in national

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<sup>144</sup> Reinhold Martin, "The MIT Chapel: An Interdiscursive History," in Arindam Dutta, ed., *A Second Modernism: MIT, Architecture, and the 'Techno-Social' Moment* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2013), 14-15.



media was in the September 1964 issue of *Architectural Record*, which excerpted *Eero Saarinen On His Work* while featuring photographs by Hedrich-Blessing. Both North Christian Church and Concordia Lutheran appear in an article about lighting and modern church design in June 1965 issue of *International Lighting Review*. In an article for the March/April 1966 issue of *Your Church*, Donald J. Bruggink provides a nuanced overview of North Christian Church, claiming that its success is rooted in “a congregation willing to look at its own reason for being (Dr. James L. Stoner and his committee discussed theology for a year), and to provide the superbly able architect adequate freedom to give its beliefs architectural expression.”<sup>145</sup> Bruggink and Carl H. Dropper devote a chapter to North Christian Church in *When Faith Takes Form: Contemporary Churches of Architectural Integrity in America* (W.B. Eerdmans, 1971) and an entire photo essay in Martin Pawley (writing as Rupert Spade), *Eero Saarinen* (1971). North Christian Church is also one of the case studies in G.E. Kidder Smith’s *Source Book of American Architecture: 500 Notable Buildings* (Princeton Architectural Press, 1996) and receives very brief mentions in Jeanne Halgren Kilde’s *When Church Became Theatre: The Transformation of Evangelical Architecture* (Oxford University Press, 2002) and Mark A. Torgeson’s *An Architecture of Immanence: Architecture for Worship and Ministry Today* (W.B. Eerdmans, 2007).

It is worth considering, however, how another body of current work may have implications for future work on the architectural history of North Christian Church. Much of it considers the history of modern sacred architecture through different methodological lenses. Although it is framed as a conventional building monograph, Victoria M. Young’s *St. John’s Abbey Church: Marcel Breuer and the Creation of a Modern Sacred Space* (University of Minnesota Press, 2014) is a remarkable study of how a close collaboration between the Benedictines and Marcel Breuer resulted in a singular work of architecture. Young, for example, discusses how this collaboration manifested itself in discussions relating to the use of reinforced concrete and the decorative program inside the building. As a “social history” of St. John’s Abbey, this approach is relevant to future studies of North Christian Church

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<sup>145</sup> Donald J. Bruggink, “A Witness to Faith: An Appraisal of North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana, Eero Saarinen, Architect,” *Your Church*, March/April 1966, 24.

when framed as a collaborative project between Eero Saarinen and Associates and the various committees and Congregation of North Christian Church. Young's book also embraces a materialist approach that verges into the realm of media studies. Such a methodology is at the heart of Erica Robles-Anderson's article, "The Crystal Cathedral: Architecture for Mediated Congregation" (2012). In this work, Robles-Anderson examines the architecture of two sanctuaries designed for Robert Schuller's Garden Grove Community Church in Orange County, California: Richard Neutra's modernist skyscraper and "walk-in, drive-in" facility (1961) and Philip Johnson's transparent, space-framed "Crystal Cathedral" (1980). For Robles-Anderson, Neutra's automobile-centric scheme and Johnson's temple to light and sound exemplify what she calls "Spectacular Protestantism." She writes, "Spectacular Protestantism provides an opportunity to understand the migration of a cosmology into new material conditions. Transformations in the church during the past half century demonstrate how materials, aesthetics, and practices help believers confirm a mythic worldview. Through acts of congregation, believers take the logics of mediation to be confirmations of the sacred dimension in everyday life."<sup>146</sup> A similar approach also underlies Anat Geva's edited volume, *Modernism and American Mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century Sacred Architecture* (Routledge, 2019). In a collection of essays covering a variety of projects throughout the United States, from Mies van der Rohe's Chapel of St. Savior at the Illinois Institute of Technology (1952), Paul Rudolph's Christian Science Building (1965, demolished in 1986), and even Saarinen's MIT Chapel, this volume considers mid-century sacred buildings as a flourishing and productive proving ground for advances in architectural form making, improvements in structural engineering, and innovative approaches to using media technologies as part of church interior fittings. These last works by Robles-Anderson and Geva are particularly relevant for future histories of North Christian Church. As discussed in previous sections, the project relied on a combination of building materials and audiovisual technologies to provide a kind of sacred environment for the congregants at North Christian Church.

### **The Architectural Significance of North Christian Church**

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<sup>146</sup> Erica Robles-Anderson, "The Crystal Cathedral: Architecture for Mediated Congregation," *Public Culture*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (2012), 599.

With the above forays into architectural history and historiography in mind, this section will provide criteria for assessing the significance for North Christian Church. The criteria can be organized into two general groups. The first are those used for “Determining the Eligibility of a Property for National Landmark Designation” under Title 36 of the Code of Federal Regulations, 36 CFR § 65. The second are the “registration requirements” used for the submissions from 1999-2007 to designate different properties in Columbus as National Historic Landmarks.<sup>147</sup>

#### *Criteria for Determining National Historic Landmarks*

In 2000, the National Park Service designated North Christian Church as a National Historic Landmark.<sup>148</sup> Two overlapping sets of criteria provided by the National Park Service guided the application process for properties in Columbus. The first is Criterion C of the National Register Criteria for Evaluation. To meet eligibility for Criterion C, a building has to possess at least one of the following:

- Embody distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction.
- Represent the work of a master.
- Possess high artistic value.
- Represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.<sup>149</sup>

The second are those used for applying for a National Historic Landmark designation. Three of these criteria were used for North Christian Church in 1999-2000. They include:

- **Criterion 1:** Properties that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to, and are identified with, or that outstandingly represent, the broad national patterns of United States history and from which an understanding and appreciation of those patterns may be gained.
- **Criterion 4:** Properties that embody the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type specimen exceptionally valuable for a study of a period, style, or method of construction, or that represent a significant, distinctive and exceptional entity whose components may lack individual distinction.

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<sup>147</sup> These documents go under different titles, the last one being “Modernism in Bartholomew County, Indiana, from 1942.”

<sup>148</sup> See Laura Thayer, Louis Joyner, and Malcolm Cairns, *National Historic Nomination: North Christian Church*, 2000, <https://npgallery.nps.gov/GetAsset/30dedb68-74e1-4e12-b0a3-79b0ab2240bf>

<sup>149</sup> “How To Apply the National Historic Criteria for Evaluation,” National Register Bulletin (1995), 17.

- **Criterion 5:** Properties that are composed of integral parts of the environment not sufficiently significant by reason of historical association or artistic merit to warrant individual recognition but collectively compose an entity of exceptional historical or artistic significance, or outstandingly commemorate or illustrate a way of life or culture.<sup>150</sup>

The previous submissions aligned these two sets of criteria. The brief entry for North Christian Church gives a conventional justification for its designation as a National Historic Landmark. In short, it is a notable building by Saarinen, located on a significant site, and marked for its collaboration with Dan Kiley. The entry reads:

Completed in 1964, North Christian Church is the work of Eero Saarinen (1910-1961), one of the most important American architects of the twentieth century. The design for the landscape was by Dan Kiley (1912-2004), a leading landscape architect of the Modern era. Saarinen and Kiley collaborated on several projects, including three in Columbus. It was the last building credited to Saarinen that he had a significant hand prior to his death. The property has a high degree of integrity.

The church is an elongated octagon [*sic.*] in plan, surrounded by a gently-sloped slate roof that practically hugs the ground. The roof planes are separated by large structural ribs that converge at the center and resolve themselves into a tall, slender spire.

In 2007, North Christian Church received a Save America's Treasures grant to restore the slate roof, gutters, and fascia.<sup>151</sup>

#### *Themes of Architectural Patronage and Exceptional Modern Architecture*

Two themes were also identified as justifications for inclusion into the National Register. The first, "Patronage in Public Architecture, 1957-1973," concerns what has been recognized as a defining attribute of modernism in Columbus, Indiana. According to the submission, the Cummins Architecture Foundation was instrumental not only for sponsoring groundbreaking projects in Columbus, but also for fostering "an outstanding design sensibility in the community, resulting in private sector construction of additional Modern architecture resources."<sup>152</sup> The signature projects under this theme consist of civic and educational projects funded by the Architecture Foundation, and categorically exclude North Christian Church and other sacred spaces in Columbus. With the

<sup>150</sup> National Park Service, "Determining the Eligibility of a Property for National Landmark Designation," <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalhistoriclandmarks/eligibility.htm> (Accessed 12 May 2020). See also "Modernism in Bartholomew County, Indiana, from 1942," 57.

<sup>151</sup> "Modernism in Bartholomew County, Indiana, from 1942," 63.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1.

second theme, “Modern Architecture and Landscape Architecture in Bartholomew County, 1942-1973,” the submission makes note of the high concentration of signature modernist works in Columbus:

The result has been an extraordinary representation of late twentieth century design. Columbus is distinctive in the United States in this way. Though some towns, businesses and universities have made a similar attempt, nowhere has the effort been as comprehensive or long-standing as in Columbus. The works are integrated into the community as schools, factories, office buildings, churches, government buildings, parks, bridges, and homes and gardens.<sup>153</sup>

North Christian Church appears in this theme as a work that cements the “early architectural identity” of Columbus. The submission states that along with Irwin Union Bank and the Miller House, North Christian Church has been “highly praised by architectural critics and observers.”<sup>154</sup> Given the nature of this document, there is no mention of how exactly the building was received—this despite the fact that the submission includes a general bibliography at the end. Moreover, those texts that more or less have become the “authoritative” histories of Columbus, such as *Columbus, Indiana: A Look at Modern Architecture* (1974, last updated in 1998), Balthazar Korab’s *Columbus, Indiana* (1989), or Thomas R. Schiff’s *Columbus, Indiana: Midwestern Modernist Mecca* (Rizzoli, 2013) are usually treated more as guidebooks than as critical histories. However, two recent publications have begun to mine archives to present a “deeper” historical understanding of Columbus. The first, Nancy Kriplen’s *J. Irwin Miller: The Shaping of an American Town* (Indiana University Press, 2019), is a history of the Miller family’s relation to Columbus, and specifically, J. Irwin Miller’s remarkable legacy of architectural stewardship. It is based on Kriplen’s work in the Irwin-Sweeney-Miller Family Collection at the Indiana Historical Society. The second is Mateo Kries and Jochen Eisenbrand, *Alexander Girard: A Designer’s Universe* (Vitra Design Museum, 2016), an exhibition catalogue to a museum exhibition dedicated to Girard’s work. In addition to the inclusion of the Miller House in the “Project Portfolio” section of *Eero Saarinen: Shaping the Future*, Alexandra Lange’s contribution to this volume, “Alexander Girard in Columbus,” stands as one of the most significant historical

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<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, p.21.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.



treatments of the history of art, architecture, and urbanism in Columbus. For this article, a study of Girard's urban design and beautification scheme for Washington Street, Lange consulted various archives and completed interviews with significant figures in Columbus. At one point, she notes that though "Although Girard is best-known today for interiors and textiles, his Columbus Storefront Project suggests a larger scale for his architectural ambition. His appreciation for Victorian architecture—as much an anathema for many modernists as neon and billboards—demonstrates his ability to find the beautiful in any environment."<sup>155</sup> These two works—Kriplen's and Lange's—echo the two "themes" identified in the submissions to the National Register. Whereas Kriplen's focuses on the theme of patronage, Lange's is an exemplary study of how modern art and architecture was indelibly woven into the social and physical fabrics of Columbus. With these in mind, an opportunity arises to situate the architectural significance for North Christian Church using combined archival and historiographical methods. The point of a Statement of Architectural Significance for North Christian Church is not to replace, but rather to augment the approaches outlined above.

### **Conclusion: Statement of Architectural Significance for North Christian Church**

In the previous sections of this document, a combination of archival and historiographical approaches has resulted in a more nuanced—if not different—understanding of North Christian Church. The historical and critical literature devoted to this project is scant, and yet as a collection of texts and monographs aimed at general audiences has shown, North Christian Church is portrayed as a significant project by Saarinen's office. This report offers six reasons as to why North Christian Church is to be deemed as architecturally significant for the purposes of establishing a conservation management plan.

*North Christian Church established the reputation of designers that would play a significant role in maintaining the architectural legacy of Columbus, Indiana*

Although North Christian Church is often depicted as one of the last projects in which Saarinen played a leading role, the above sections have shown that it was more of a collaborative

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<sup>155</sup> Lange, "Alexander Girard in Columbus," in Eisenbrand and Kries, *Alexander Girard: A Designer's Universe*, 281.

project. The conference notes detailing progress on the project—many of which are available in the Eero Saarinen Collection at Yale University Library’s Manuscripts and Archives—demonstrate that the main interlocutors for the project were Kevin Roche, John Dinkeloo, Paul Kennon, Maurice Allen, and John Kinsella. As mentioned above, the Saarinen office had been involved in a number of projects by the time Eero died. Many of these became the proving ground for a generation of architects such as Robert Venturi, Cesar Pelli, and Harold Roth. North Christian Church is different, however, as Roche, Dinkeloo, Kennon, and Kinsella all would have a significant role in maintaining the architectural legacy of Columbus, Indiana.

Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo Associates is especially important in this regard. The two architects were important to the early days of the firm. Roche, for example, was an assistant on signature projects such as the National Expansion Memorial in St. Louis, Irwin Union Trust Bank, and Miller House and Gardens. Roche and Dinkeloo not only completed North Christian Church in 1964, but they also managed subsequent alterations to the site and structure from the 1970s until the 1990s. Their carefully-wrought list of specifications also continue to guide future renovations, as it provides the most extensive inventory of North Christian Church’s material and structural aspects. Moreover, with the formation of Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo Associates in 1966, the firm went on to design several important architectural works in Columbus. These include the Columbus Post Office (1970), the Cummins Midrange Engine Plant (1973), a glazed addition to Eero Saarinen and Associates’ Irwin Union Bank (1973), the Cummins Engine Corporate Headquarters (1985), an expansion to the Columbus Visitors’ Center (1985), and a further renovation of the Cummins Engine Plant (1998).

Paul Kennon, another pivotal figure in the history of North Christian Church, made his own architectural contributions to Columbus. Paul Kennon began his career at Caudill, Rowlett, Scott in Bryan, Texas in 1951 before studying at Cranbrook Academy of Art in 1957 and worked with the Saarinen office until 1964, when he accepted a professorship at Rice University. Kennon rejoined Caudill, Rowlett, Scott in 1967 and became design principal in 1970. Kennon’s first Columbus

project with Caudill, Rowlett, Scott (which became CRS-Sirrinc or CRSS) was the Fodera Community School (1973), followed by the Irwin Union Bank State Street Branch (1974), the Indiana Bell Telephone Company Switching Station (1978), and streetscape renovations to downtown Columbus (1990).

John Kinsella was a frequent presence in client meetings throughout the history of North Christian Church. He began his career at Eero Saarinen and Associates, working as a draftsman on the National Expansion Memorial, Dulles Airport, and as a field engineer on the IBM Thomas J. Watson Research Laboratory. Kinsella remained with the Saarinen firm to complete work on North Christian Church and the Vivian Beaumont Theater and Plaza at the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in New York. Kinsella joined the office of Paul Rudolph 1964 and after starting an environmental design practice in Michigan, worked for Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo Associates from 1981 until 1985, working primarily on projects for Cummins. With Meg Storrow, Kinsella formed the Storrow Kinsella Partnership in Columbus, specializing in the design of landscapes and public spaces in urban areas. They contributed to the Front Door project (1993)—a combination of landscape and urban design elements meant to create an inviting entrance to Columbus— and in 1998, designed improvements to Dan Kiley’s Bicentennial willow corridor plantings along State Route 46 (1976). The firm became Storrow|Kinsella and relocated to Indianapolis in 1996.

This brief section would not be complete without mentioning the work of another long-time collaborator of Eero Saarinen’s: Dan Kiley. Kiley’s office established its reputation alongside Saarinen’s, and worked together on Irwin Union Trust Bank, the Miller House and Gardens, and North Christian Church. As one of the premier modernist landscape architects working in the United States, Kiley also contributed designs to other projects in Columbus. These include: Lillian Schmitt Elementary School (Harry Weese, 1957), Columbus North High School (1961), the Hamilton Cosco Office Building (Harry Weese, 1962), Hamilton House and Garden (Maurice Thornton and Anna Campbell Bliss, 1963-1971), Newlin House (Harry Weese, 1964), Otter Creek Golf Course (Harry Weese, 1964), First Baptist Church (Harry Weese, 1965), the Taylorsville Branch of the Irwin Union

Bank (1966), W.D. Richards Elementary School (Edward Larrabee Barnes, 1966), the Cummins Historic District (1968), and the Cummins Midrange Engine Plant (Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo Associates, 1973). Kiley's contribution to the design of North Christian Church will be discussed in more detail in subsequent sections.

*North Christian Church advanced architectural form*

North Christian church breaks from the kind of International Style-inspired modernist design that came of age in the United States before and slightly after World War II. It is an intimate work that shows Saarinen at his most spiritual while exemplifying his interest in materials and technology. The trend would continue through Saarinen's career. The orthogonal planning and brise-soleils in the John Deere World Headquarters, for example, echo some of the technical and environmental approaches associated with high and corporate modernism. Yet the complex elevations and rusticated formwork of Morse and Ezra Stiles Colleges at Yale University (1961) aimed for something completely different. As Saarinen himself noted in a 1961 issue of *Perspecta* (written mere months before he died), this elision of exterior and interior landscapes resulted in a building "of earthly, monolithic masonry [...] whose interiors of stone, oak, and plaster would carry out the spirit of strength and simplicity."<sup>156</sup> For Eeva-Liisa Pelkonen, however, the simplicity and intent marking these late buildings (a list that presumably includes North Christian Church) reveal that Saarinen was in search of "communicative form" that veered away from more familiar modernistic emphases on functionalism and alignments with International Style principles.<sup>157</sup> In one sense, this approach was purely technological. For Saarinen,

I want always to search out the new possibilities in new materials in our time and to give them their proper place in architectural design. I am not talking glibly about colored plastic in decoration. I am talking about much more fundamental things such as concrete and pre-cast concrete—basic things whose possibilities in architecture have not yet been fully fathomed.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Eero Saarinen, "Eero Saarinen," *Perspecta*, Vol. 7 (1961), 37.

<sup>157</sup> Pelkonen, "The Search for (Communicative) Form," in *Eero Saarinen: Shaping the Future*, 83-97.

<sup>158</sup> Saarinen, "Eero Saarinen," quoted in Pelkonen, 86.

Simply put, the architectural significance of North Christian Church lies in its bold form. This was due in part to the structural engineer Henry Pfisterer's contribution: a series of steel ribs that both suspend the nave in midair while sinking it into the ground. Pfisterer's "steel hat over a concrete bowl" provided minimal obstruction inside the building, encouraging circulation around and through the structure. The "strength and simplicity" of North Christian Church's hexagonal and spired "communicative form" differs from church typologies throughout the world as it abandons basilicas, Greek, and Roman Cross plans that defined ecclesiastical architecture in North Africa, the Mediterranean, and most of Europe. North Christian Church is also a radical departure from its neighboring spiritual and architectural forbearer: Tabernacle Church of Christ (1942). Eliel Saarinen's building is understood as an achievement in modern liturgical architecture in the United States. Yet the modernity of this building is rooted in the way it mediates between tradition and innovation. This is clearly discernible in the way First Christian Church is both a pristine volume that echoes International Style principles while referencing the basilica and campanile forms and arrangements associated with Romanesque and Renaissance architecture in southern Europe. The juxtaposition between rectangular and vertical volumes are also visible in earlier and contemporary projects by Eliel Saarinen, such as Helsinki Central Station (1919) and Crowe Island School (1940), and the emphasis on decorative finials is also present in the Cranbrook Academy of Art Museum and Library (1942). Moreover, First Christian Church is marked by a distinct separation of functions. This is clearly discernible in the way a side ambulatory acts as a conduit between the main space and the smaller, auxiliary spaces in the rear of the building, which include a small chapel as well as education rooms and offices. This has been a tried and true approach to postwar modernist liturgical architecture in the United States. For example, buildings such as Erich Mendelsohn's Mount Zion Synagogue (1954) and Marcel Breuer's St. John's Abbey and University Church (1961) feature bold, expressive forms that still hint at the separation of function within.

Eero Saarinen wanted to avoid such emphasis on functional separation and secondary spaces when designing North Christian Church. He viewed the project as an opportunity for a new kind of



architectural form. And indeed, North Christian Church is a breathtaking work that shows the architect at his most mature. Its elongated hexagonal plan is more abstract and visually distinct from the rectilinear gestures found at First Christian Church and Irwin Union Bank and Trust. North Christian Church is an example of Saarinen's later expressive designs, such as Ingalls Rink at Yale University (1953-1958), Washington Dulles International Airport (1958-1962) and the TWA Terminal (1962). Like those buildings, North Christian Church combines all functions within a single envelope. More specifically, it is a building that abandons the distinct basilica and campanile forms from First Christian Church. Saarinen wanted to design a church that called attention to its primary role as Nave while combining all its forms into a single tower that reached to Heaven.<sup>159</sup> Viewed in this way, then, North Christian Church is a building that mediates between earth and sky, and between the Congregation and God—literally and figuratively.

*North Christian Church is an iconic late modernist building that has been often imitated*

North Christian Church is significant because it is a building that represents a “late style” of American modern architecture. It represents a transition from the bold, geometric forms associated with high modernism to the kind of expressive and academic historicism characteristic of postmodernism. It abandons the volumetric, unadorned, and industrial aesthetics of the International Style before World War II and the kind of postwar modernist experiment characterized by the Case Study House Program in Southern California. It is also emphatically non-urban, a place of worship meant to be experienced in a suburban environment from a moving car. And though Saarinen's work has been lauded and criticized for its lack of formal consistency, North Christian Church does not fit easily into the Saarinen oeuvre. It is a dynamic building, and yet atypically so. In one of his earliest articles on Saarinen, Peter M. Papademetriou remarked on this aspect of Saarinen's work:

Using the metaphoric, symbolic, and representational potential of modern architecture, his intent was to articulate the essential nature of the institution or activity being housed. The artifacts produced also reflect the aesthetic culture of the time. The search for form, the new monumentality, abstract expressionism, hard-edge precision, and new materials dominated the concerns of the period. Saarinen's architecture exhibited all these preoccupations: he was a hard-line formalist in steel

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<sup>159</sup> Miller, “Eero and Irwin: Praiseworthy Competition with One's Ancestors,” 65.

at the same time that he pursued dynamic form in concrete. His work never evolved into a single aesthetic, nor did it evidence the 'signature' consistency of other artists and architects of the day; the 'style for the job' evolved from the unique qualities of program and site.<sup>160</sup>

Other sections of this statement of significance take up the issue of how North Christian Church addressed the "unique qualities of program and site." However, there are two ways to justify this building as an exemplar of a "late style" of American modernism.

First, North Christian Church is an example of Saarinen's "late style" because it is both an example of "intransigence, difficulty, and unresolved contradiction" and a "deliberately unproductive productiveness going *against*."<sup>161</sup> In architectural terms, if the latter suggests that North Christian Church is "an opposition to—if not transgression of—the tendencies characteristic in an artist's own oeuvre or of a moment in time in general," then the former represents an "inward-centered disciplinary critique."<sup>162</sup> The best way to evaluate these aspects of "lateness" is to consider North Christian Church as a reaction to his previous work in Columbus. His three earliest projects there—Tabernacle Church of Christ, Irwin Union Trust Bank, and the Miller House—show Saarinen having a kind of architectural dialogue with the architecture's past and present. Whereas Tabernacle Church of Christ exhibits a familiarity with the architecture of the Romanesque or Early Renaissance, then the Irwin Union Trust Bank and Miller House and Garden show Saarinen negotiating with and breaking free of the rigid orthogonal and prismatic volumes found in Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's Illinois Institute of Technology Campus Masterplan and Academic Campus (1939-1958), Farnsworth House (1951), and Lakeshore Drive Apartments (1951). Irwin Union Trust Bank, for example, features large cornices, overhangs, and interior light effects and surface treatments that interrupt the otherwise staid and geometric Miesianisms of this work. These cornices also appear on the Miller House, where the deviations from Mies' work are articulated more emphatically, even playfully. A series of skylights accentuate its nine-square grid while pouring light into an interior filled with

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<sup>160</sup> Peter M. Papademetriou, "Coming of Age: Eero Saarinen and Modern American Architecture," *Perspecta: The Yale Architectural Journal*, Vol. 21 (1984), 134.

<sup>161</sup> Edward W. Said, "Timeliness and Lateness," in *On Late Style: Music and Literature Against the Grain* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2006), 6-7.

<sup>162</sup> Peter Eisenman, "Lateness: A Critique of the Metaphysics of Presence," *Thresholds*, No. 33, Formalism(s) (2008), 11-12.

Alexander Girard's eclectic decorations. Inside, the roof is supported by a series of chromium-plated cruciform columns, the very same kind used inside Mies' Barcelona Pavilion (1929). Seen in this context, nestled hexagonal plan, elongated spire, and landscape-orientation of North Christian Church are all attributes of an expressive form that stands apart from Saarinen's previous work in Columbus.

Second, North Christian Church is a significant example of a "late" phase of architecture in that it is a building lingering between the twilight of American modernism and the dawn of postmodernism. The status of architectural postmodernism as the subject of contentious academic and disciplinary debates is well documented. Literary critics and cultural theorists like Frederic Jameson and Jean Baudrillard have both looked to the built environment to describe the "logics" of postmodernism and its various guises.<sup>163</sup> The historical status of postmodernism has also been the subject of seminal studies by Jean-François Lyotard, Andreas Huyssen, and Arjun Appadurai.<sup>164</sup> However, it was texts like Robert Venturi's *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (Museum of Modern Art, 1966), Venturi and Denise Scott Brown's *Learning from Las Vegas* (MIT Press, 1972), and Charles Jencks' *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture* (Rizzoli, 1977) that gave architectural audiences the first glimpses of a body of design work that fell under the category of "postmodern" architecture. And with *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture* (Bay Press, 1983), edited by Hal Foster, postmodernism became codified through a set of theoretical and critical works. Postmodernism also extended to studies about geography and urbanism, as demonstrated in and Edward W. Soja's *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (Verso, 1989), Michael Sorkin's edited volume *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space* (Hill and Wang, 1992), and Stephen Graham and Simon Marvin's *Splintering Urbanism: Networked Infrastructures, Technological Mobilities and the Urban Condition* (Routledge, 2002). Several themes run through this

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<sup>163</sup> See Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1991) and Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983).

<sup>164</sup> See Andreas Huyssen, "Mapping the Postmodern," *New German Critique*, No. 33, Modernity and Postmodernity (Autumn, 1984), 5-52; Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984); and Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

intellectually rich and diverse body of work: an emphasis on visuality, surface effects, technologies of representation, as well as an interest in history of art and architecture (and its corollary—the interruption of the continuities between the present and the past).

As a “communicative form” embodying a kind of expressive modernism, North Christian Church also anticipates some the above aspects of postmodernism. Its familiar hexagonal plan and spire give the building its assertive, yet meditative form. The building exterior—a combination of reinforced concrete, slate roof, cladded ribs, and upturned fascia—further attenuates boldness of form. It exemplifies what Mark Pasnik, Michael Kubo, and Chris Grimley have identified as “Heroic”:

“Heroic” refers at once to the formal attributes of the buildings themselves—powerful, singular, aspiring to the iconic—and to the attitudes of the architects and the institutions that created them. It attempts to bring into focus not just their visual character, but also their underlying motivations, to seek out an expression that could appropriately reflect the symbolic importance of civic life in urban centers. In this way, the forward-looking optimism of concrete architecture in the United States communicated the social ideals of John F. Kennedy’s New Frontier and Lyndon B. Johnson’s Great Society programs, emblems of the collective will to capitalize on growing national wealth to broadly repair and enrich the public realm.<sup>165</sup>

As a kind of emphatic, aspirational form making, North Christian Church represents a union of bold design and transcendent social vision. As suggested above, it was a moving away from the “reduced language of glass and steel towards forms of monumentality often inspired by the robust postwar buildings of the Smithsons, Le Corbusier, and others.”<sup>166</sup> Moreover, it was a building inspired by the relation of sacred architecture to urban and social fabrics.

North Christian Church’s irreverent, sculptural form may not have received much critical acclaim after its completion. However, one measure of its success—and perhaps of its iconicity—is how it has been often imitated in the Midwest. For the “Modern Living” column in the May 19, 1966 issue of the Dayton, Ohio *Journal Herald*, a proposal for a spired “progress pavilion” by local architecture firm Brown and Head was criticized because it lacked the same kind of ambition that

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<sup>165</sup> Mark Pasnik, Michael Kubo, and Chris Grimley, “Becoming Heroic,” in *Heroic: Concrete Architecture and the New Boston* (New York: Monacelli Press, 2015), 19.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

animated the design and construction of North Christian Church. “The cost of the church,” writes the critic, “is no doubt at least five times the \$80,000 value estimated for Dayton’s 1,400 square foot pavilion.” Next to an image of the proposal is a photograph of North Christian Church, an “unfair” comparison that nevertheless implies that the “progress pavilion” is a cheap imitation of Saarinen’s building.<sup>167</sup>

Moreover, the congregation envisioned North Christian Church as an iconic building. This was the case even during the construction of the project. A letter from Xenia Miller to Aline Saarinen from 19 October 1963, for example, was printed on paper featuring an engraving based on a photograph of the model of North Christian Church.<sup>168</sup> A similar engraving, presumably modeled on a photograph of the building made after completion, also appears in their official stationery.<sup>169</sup>

Around this time, North Christian Church also made postcards featuring ektachrome photographs of the exterior, Nave, and Baptistry by Bud Galbraith. With the exception of the stationery, these show a willingness to use the image and the form of the building as an expression of the congregation.

*North Christian Church proposed a new spatial solution for sacred gatherings*

North Christian Church is a building that stands apart from modernist sacred architecture. Its centralized plan is atypical and presents a solution that is as spatially innovative as it is symbolic. The previous sections have discussed how North Christian Church’s Elders, Trustees, and Architectural Committee were invested in the design of a building that would be programmatically and symbolically appropriate for the congregation. Saarinen’s use of a hexagonal plan satisfied these two requirements. On the one hand, by placing the pulpit and its attendant services in a hexagon in the middle of the Nave, the building called attention to the centrality of the congregation. On the other hand, the hexagon-shaped space, with radiating rows of pews and light entering up from light

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<sup>167</sup> Hubert Meeker, “Plan for ‘Progress Pavilion’ Lacks Impact,” *Dayton Journal Herald*, May 19, 1966, Job No. 5902, North Christian Church, Columbus, IN, Box 562, Folder 3, MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

<sup>168</sup> Xenia Miller to Aline Saarinen, 19 October 1963, Job No. 5902, North Christian Church, Columbus, IN, Box 562, Folder 3, MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

<sup>169</sup> North Christian Church to Eero Saarinen and Associates, 7 December 1964, Job No. 5902, North Christian Church, Columbus, IN, Box 562, Folder 3, MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

wells and bathing the poured concrete roof with a soft light—this was spiritually fitting. As described in the program for the April 1964 ceremony,

The hexagonal shape of the church represents the Star of David, symbolic of the Jewish faith, the faith which gave birth to Christianity expressed by the Cross.

The sanctuary, with a seating capacity of 615 persons, is in the shape of a bowl, symbolizing that the congregation is in the hand of God. The Lord's Table is in the center of the sanctuary around which gathers the family of Christians. The Table consists of twelve tables, one for each Disciple, plus a larger table for Christ. They are joined by crosses indicating that men are united by the Cross of Christ. Liturgical colors are used on the Tables and on the pulpit chairs and deacons' chairs.

Light from above comes from the oculus to remind all Christians that God is continuing to reveal Himself and that we should be receptive to new dimensions of His Eternal Truth and Light.<sup>170</sup>

During the postwar era, modernist churches still used the tried and true Latin and Roman cross arrangements. This was even the case with those churches that were architecturally significant and exercises in bold form making. For example, Frank Lloyd Wright's First Christian Church (1950-1972) and Wallace K. Harrison's First Presbyterian Church (1958), Marcel Breuer's St. John's Abbey Church (1961), Louis Kahn's First Unitarian Church of Rochester (1969) are all oriented towards a lectern at the front of the building.

The significance of these arrangements should not be overstated. The plan of North Christian Church has much more to do with the relationship between congregation and the building and the spatial responses appropriate to the rituals inside than the physical placement of the priest or officiant. It is in this sense that North Christian Church has more in common with Frank Lloyd Wright's Unity Temple in Oak Park, Illinois (1908). Its worship space is composed of cubes and features balcony seating that overlooks the central space from all sides. Spireless and sobering, Unity Temple was seen as a deviation from contemporary sacred architecture, having more in common with Wright's earlier work and other administrative buildings in the Chicago area. Yet Wright's choice to model the main worship space as an auditorium of meeting-place was momentous. For architectural historian Joseph M. Siry, "Wright's substitution of the auditorium for the steeple as the

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<sup>170</sup> "North Christian Church, Tipton Lane, Columbus, Indiana," April 1964, Folder 1, Box 562, Job No. 5902, Client Correspondence, North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana, Eero Saarinen Collection, MS 593 Series IV, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.



major architectural form legible on Unity Temple's exterior may represent his reinvestigation of the meeting house as an architectural type in light of liberal theology around 1900."<sup>171</sup> In a sermon given before the North Christian Church congregants on 7 May 1961, Jim Stoner observed the need for a similar reinvestigation. He observed, "As a new church, and one which has been misunderstood, we needed to interpret our church in the community and throughout the Brotherhood of the Disciples of Christ. This has been achieved and we are recognized for our outreach and our help." However, Stoner recognizes that a building is necessary to instill a sense of ecumenicalism. "We didn't want to be provincial and independent," Stoner observes. "We are aware of our life in the ecumenical movement. Yet because I talk about ecumenical movement and because Mr. J. Irwin Miller is President of the National Council of Churches, we must not assume that we are ecumenical. We are ecumenical only when we think cooperatively and when we attend church gatherings."<sup>172</sup> Although North Christian Church's hexagonal plan can be seen as a "reinvestigation" of the nave typology in light of Stoner's remarks, the design accommodated the desire for centrality and legibility. A combination pulpit and lectern occupied the western side of the Nave, whereas the central space was reserved for communion and other rituals. North Christian Church desired a building that expressed their evangelical and educational goals. They also wanted programmatic flexibility—an auditorium, youth room, offices, as well as a Chapel and Baptistry that were functional and modifiable. North Christian Church was to be a place where the congregation could tend to its various needs while anticipating a congregation that would grow in size. It was to be a place where its congregants could be baptized, married, and mourned. Saarinen's innovation was to accommodate these spiritual and programmatic needs within a single architectural envelope that was uniform, sculptural, and expressive.

*North Christian Church is part of the civic infrastructure of Columbus, Indiana*

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<sup>171</sup> Joseph M. Siry, "Frank Lloyd Wright's Unity Temple and Architecture for Liberal Religion in Chicago, 1885-1909," *Art Bulletin*, Vol. 73, No. 2 (Jun., 1991), 274. See also Siry, *Unity Temple: Frank Lloyd Wright and Architecture for Liberal Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) and Robert McCarter, *Unity Temple: Frank Lloyd Wright* (London: Phaidon, 1997).

<sup>172</sup> James Stoner, Sermon, 7 May 1961, Job No. 5902, North Christian Church, Columbus, IN, Box 562, Folder 3, MS 593 Series IV, Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

North Christian Church is significant because it is part of an ensemble of buildings that have become a civic infrastructure in Columbus, Indiana. When used here, the term “infrastructure” does not refer to a physical or technical artifact. Nor does it imply a kind of building that embodies all of a city’s social and commercial facilities, or, what architectural historian Reyner Banham famously defined as a “megastructure.”<sup>173</sup> Instead, the term “infrastructure” is recovered to mean two related ideas. First, it refers to the “trail of associations” between various buildings, clients, architects, and publics in Columbus.<sup>174</sup> It is in this sense that projects funded by the Cummins Architecture Foundation and buildings designed for the Miller family are part of a larger group of buildings that enhance and enliven the profile of the city in the United States and throughout the world. Some of these buildings, including North Christian Church, have been recognized as National Historic Landmarks. Together, these are the buildings that have educated and inspired the residents of Columbus. This is evident when considering the description of Exhibit Columbus as “an exploration of architecture, art, design, and community that activates the design legacy of Columbus, Indiana.”<sup>175</sup> The implication is that these are the buildings that help instill a sense of community in the city.

“Infrastructure” is also considered in the context and legacy of discussions about public monuments in the postwar era. The most important are those concerning the “New Monumentality.” The art historian Sigfried Giedion coined the term in a 1948 article, “The Need for a New Monumentality.” Railing against the “pseudomonumentality” of previous eras, Giedion had high hopes for architectural modernism’s ability to ennoble the “taste and emotions” of the public. Monumentality, for him, “springs from the eternal need of people to create symbols for their

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<sup>173</sup> See Reyner Banham, *Megastructure: Urban Future of the Recent Past* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976) and Nigel Whitely, *Reyner Banham: Historian of the Immediate Future* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2002).

<sup>174</sup> See Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 5. Latour’s definition of social reads as full: “Even though most social scientists would prefer to call ‘social’ a homogeneous thing, it’s perfectly acceptable to designate by the same word a trail of *associations* between heterogeneous elements. Since in both cases the word retains the same origin—from the Latin root *socius*—it is possible to remain faithful to the original intuitions of the social sciences by redefining sociology not as the ‘science of the social’, but as the *tracing of associations*. In this meaning of the adjective, social does not designate a thing among other things, like a black sheep among other white sheep, but a *type of connection* between things that are not themselves social.”

<sup>175</sup> Exhibit Columbus website, <http://exhibitcolumbus.org/about> (accessed 19 May 2020).

activities and for their fate or destiny, for their religious beliefs and for their social conviction.”<sup>176</sup> Modern architecture could achieve the status of monumentality through a process that began with a reassessment of dwelling and then its relation to the fabric of the city. “From the single cell, to the neighborhood, the city, and the organization of the whole region is one direct sequence,” Giedion writes. “Thus it can be said that the second phase of modern architecture was concentrated on urbanism.”<sup>177</sup> For the last step, “the reconquest of monumental expression,” Giedion observed how “People desire buildings that represent their social, ceremonial, and community life. They want these buildings to be more than a functional fulfillment. They seek the expression of their aspirations in monumentality, for joy and excitement.”<sup>178</sup> Moreover, this was achievable through collaboration and coordination of different scales of design. Giedion, writing with Josep Lluís Sert and Fernand Léger in 1943, saw the following “conditions” for monumentality: “the integration of the work of the planner, architect, painter, sculptor, and landscapist demands close collaboration.”<sup>179</sup>

These descriptions of the “New Monumentality” imagined a postwar world where architecture could reclaim its status as the highest of the fine arts. However, with their emphasis on civic life, community ideal, and collaboration across the arts, the “New Monumentality” seems to anticipate the very same spirit expressed in Columbus’ legacy of design excellence. This reputation has already been ensconced in descriptions of the city as “Athens on the Prairie” or “Modernist Mecca,” with North Christian Church figuring prominently within this ensemble. As one of the most celebrated modernist churches, North Christian Church was conceived under the same auspices as buildings funded through the Cummins Architecture Foundation. Meetings and exchanges between the Saarinen firm and North Christian Church took place at Cummins facilities and were recorded on Cummins stationery. Furthermore, the site selected for North Christian Church shows that the Architectural Committee and Trustees were envisioning their new building as a kind of landmark

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<sup>176</sup> Sigfried Giedion, “The Need for a New Monumentality,” in *Architecture, You and Me: The Diary of a Development* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1958), 28.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28.

<sup>179</sup> Sigfried Giedion, Josep Lluís Sert, and Fernand Léger, “Nine Points on Monumentality,” in *Architecture, You and Me*, 49.

adorning the northernmost entrance to the city—a testament to their belief in architecture as a civic presence in the city.

*North Christian Church is a designed site*

The design of North Christian Church extended beyond the landscape and into the site itself. Previous sections have outlined the ways in which the Third Northlawn Addition was still being designed and altered during and after the construction of North Christian Church. The contours of the site did not determine the form of North Christian Church. And yet in designing the building, Saarinen's office always had the particularities of the terrain and the site. North Christian Church, after all, was a building designed for a site that was more or less flat. And for all of its symbolism, the final design—especially in the ways that the fascia surrounding the roofline appear to meet the edges of the earthen berm and memorial garden—shows a sensitivity to the site. North Christian Church is an interface between the earthbound concerns of Columbus and the heavenly aspirations of the Disciples of Christ. Practical issues were also at stake during the design of the site. The elongated east-west axis shows that Saarinen's office was interested in making the building accessible from multiple points along National Road.

The design of the site of North Christian Church was as arduous and involved as the design of the building. Previous sections have shown that throughout the building's life—from the initial site plans, to the models unveiled to the public, and in alterations of the parking lot and landscape design in the 1970s—the site underwent a series of changes that responded to the needs of the Congregation as well as the northward expansion of Columbus. Although the size of the Congregation did not necessarily grow, aspects of the site design anticipate increased car use. These include the design of additional parking spaces, the modification of the roundabout on the west entrance to the building, as well as the extension of Tipton lane to ensure better access areas east of the site. Some of these changes also occurred because North Christian Church was also acquiring more land. This is not only evident in the actual shape of the site during the project's earliest days, but also throughout 1970s and 1980s when Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo Associates was in charge of

site planning and modifications. The expansion and reconfiguration of the site are coextensive with changes in the urban fabric of Columbus.

The design of the site also depended on one of the most important design collaborations in the history of postwar modern architecture. Saarinen's office had worked previously with Dan Kiley's office and was still working with them on other projects—including the Miller House—when Eero died in 1961. Kiley, however, did not begin working in earnest on North Christian Church until 1964, months before the project's completion. Kiley's landscape design for North Christian Church bears many similarities to his recently completed scheme at the Miller House. Both rely on *allées* of arborvitae to give the site a kind of rigid formality. What sets North Christian Church apart, however, is how the landscape design accommodates both the contours of the site as well as the plan of North Christian Church. This is especially evident in the way that Kiley spaced the banks of magnolias to accentuate the east-west orientation of the site while referencing the angles of the southern edges of North Christian Church. According to Joe Karr, who worked in Kiley's office during the 1960s with landscape architects Joe Osbaldeston and Ian Tyndall, "the original plan was simply the form of the building extended out into the landscape, and then the magnolia trees."<sup>180</sup> Overall, the modifications to the site design combined with Kiley's landscape scheme result in a signature building that is not enclosed in a churchyard, but rather sequestered in nature.

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<sup>180</sup> Charles A. Bimbaum, Transcript of Interview with Joe Karr (2017), 182, The Cultural Landscape Foundation website <https://tclf.org/pioneer/oral-history/joe-karr-oral-history> (Accessed 20 May 2020).

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## B. Landscape overview and analysis





# North Christian Church

## Landscape Conservation Management Plan

May 2023 | Merritt Chase



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As one of the most important Modernist churches in the United States, North Christian Church with its landscape is a long-standing, masterful example of how design excellence can elevate pride in a place.

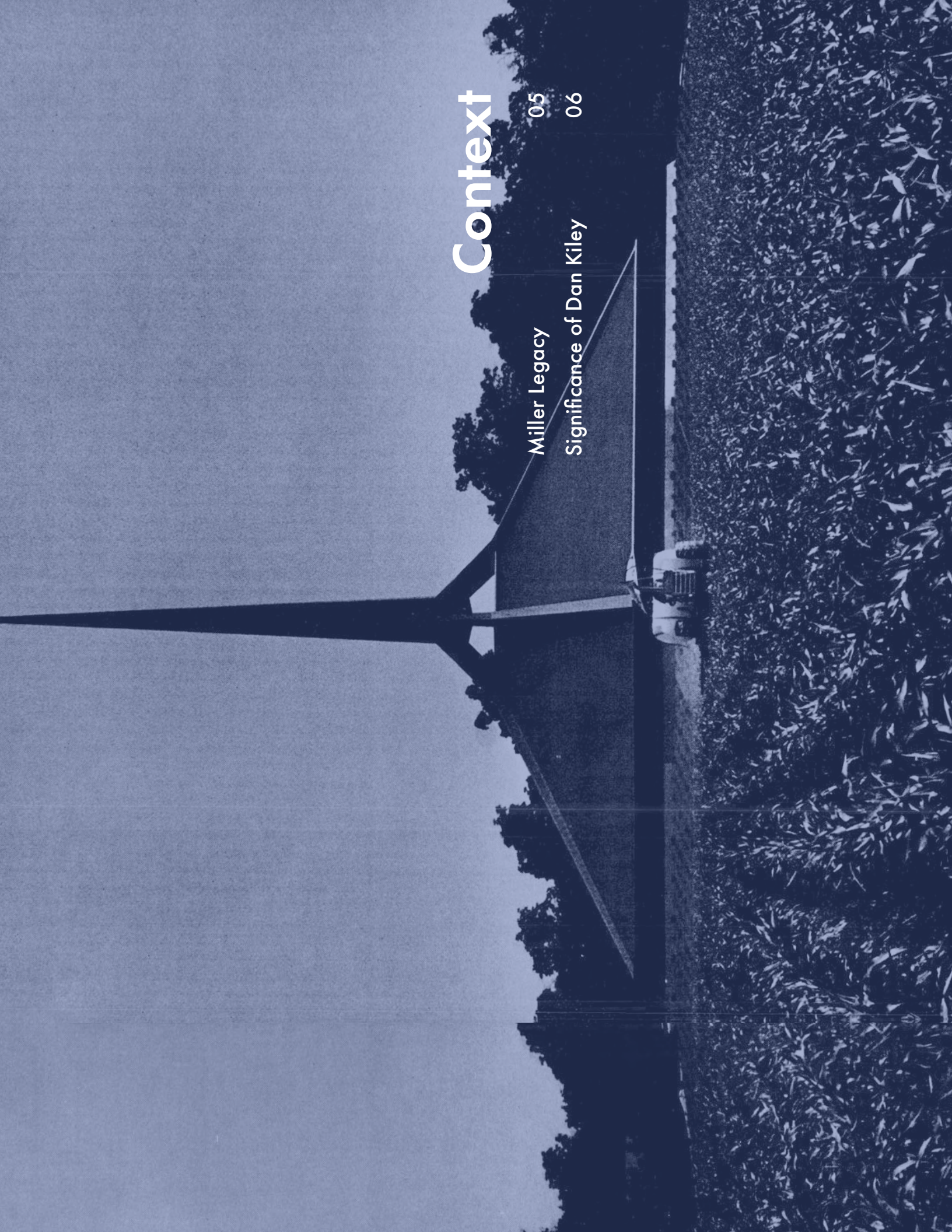
Dan Kiley was a landscape architect who made significant contributions to the art of Modern landscape design during the second half of the twentieth century. During this period he developed over forty projects in Columbus, Indiana, a small town with a remarkable legacy for Modern architecture and landscape design due to a culture of patronage, influenced by J. Irwin Miller. This environment attracted many distinguished designers to build in the community, and Kiley collaborated with several notable architects in Columbus, including Eero Saarinen, Kevin Roche, and Harry Weese.

This Landscape Conservation Management Plan (LCMP) comes together as the community contemplates the past, present, and future of the building and landscape of North Christian Church. The LCMP employs a methodology consisting of fieldwork, archive review, historic assessment, and engagement with key stakeholders to offer ways to honor the design intent and restore historic characteristics, while proffering the opportunity to think critically about the role of the landscape in this community and the state of Modern design today.

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# Context

Miller Legacy

05

Significance of Dan Kiley

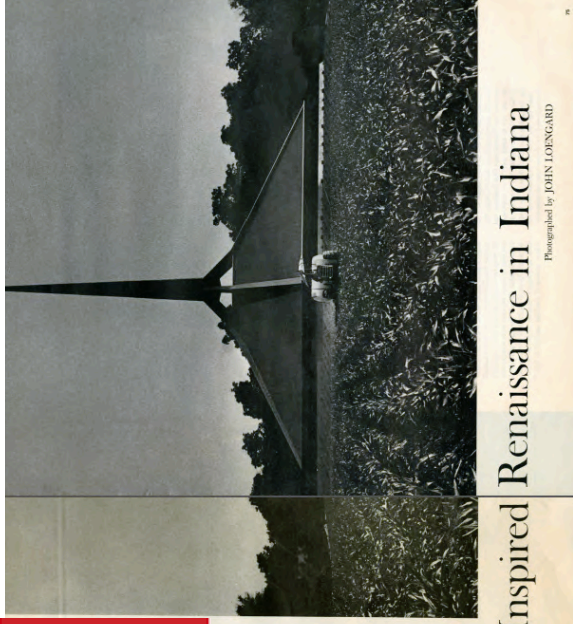
06



## MILLER LEGACY IN COLUMBUS

*"During the first century A.D., Emperor Augustus could claim that he found Rome a city of bricks and left it a city of marble. In the 20th century, J. Irwin Miller could make a similar boast of Columbus, Indiana: When he grew up there in the 1910s and '20s, it was a small Midwestern town; by the time he passed away in 2004, he'd left it a hub of Modernist architecture." (Volner 2017)*

The development of Columbus fostered a unique environment for the city to be recognized as a nationally significant center of Modern architecture, landscape architecture, and design. Notably, the culture of patronage in the built environment laid the groundwork for many designers to experiment with design concepts and build in Columbus. They then went on to apply lessons learned in Columbus to larger-scale and more well-known sites elsewhere. In the 1950s, guided by the vision of J. Irwin Miller, Cummins Engine Company Foundation established a program that paid architects' fees for school buildings, as long as the architect selected for the project was from a pre-determined list. The list included famous and up-and-coming architects known for their design excellence. Eventually, the program expanded beyond school buildings to also include public buildings, parks, public art, and planning studies. The goal was to create a beautiful city with a high quality of life, attract a talented workforce, and benefit local businesses. The innovative program spurred development in Columbus and the surrounding area. Overall, the Cummins Engine Company Foundation program enhanced the built environment of Columbus, strengthened the local community identity and pride of place, supported construction of Modern architecture and landscape architecture through private development, and attracted national recognition for the city as a center for Modernism.



## SIGNIFICANCE OF DAN KILEY IN COLUMBUS

Modernism rose as the dominant style in landscape architecture during the post-war era and through the 1950s. Its core principles emphasized organizing space and designing with trees and planting as three-dimensional elements. Dan Kiley is one of the most influential Modernist landscape architects of the 20th century. His contribution to the field of landscape architecture was “to combine the rational grids, geometries, and proportions of classicism with the open-endedness, the dynamism, and the simplicity of Modernism” (US DOI NPS 1999).

Dan Kiley collaborated with many architects throughout his career, though his work with Eero Saarinen is particularly significant. Their two offices worked together to submit plans for The Detroit Civic Center, as well as a winning design competition for the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, both in 1947. The first of their collaborations in Columbus was on the Miller House and Garden (1953). The site is recognized as an exemplar of Modernism for both architecture and landscape architecture. Here, Kiley drew on the design vocabulary Saarinen had developed for the house and created a sequence of outdoor green rooms with hedges, groves, and allées arranged to direct views and movement. Kiley continued to explore these forms and structures for another residential commission in Columbus with the Hamilton Garden with Maurice Thornton (1959).

Before 1942, there are few examples of significant designed landscapes in Columbus, except for the 1910 garden of the Irwin Home on Fifth Street. As a result of the Cummins Engine Company Foundation program, the reputation of Columbus grew as a center for architecture and design. Private and residential commissions were sought from the architects who participated in the program. The architects then engaged landscape architects as sub-consultants for these commissions, leading to a rise in notably designed landscapes in Columbus such as those discussed herein.

The National Park Service identifies several projects from the late 1940s and early 1950s as evidence that “strong classical language with spatial play was forming as Kiley’s design idiom,” highlighting sites he worked on in Columbus (US DOI NPS 1999). Besides the Miller House & Garden, Dan Kiley and Eero Saarinen also collaborated on two other sites in Columbus: Irwin Union Bank & Trust (1954) and North Christian Church (1964). North Christian Church is recognized as a significant example of design excellence. Its architecture and landscape form a unified composition with a clarity of expression that typifies the Modernist style.



### OFFICE CHRONOLOGY

1940-1968 Office of Dan Kiley  
1968-1971 Dan Kiley and Partners  
1971-1979 Kiley Tyndall Walker  
1979-1986 Kiley Walker  
1986-2003 Office of Dan Kiley



Text References & Image Sources : US DOI NPS 1999;  
The Cultural Landscape Foundation 2013

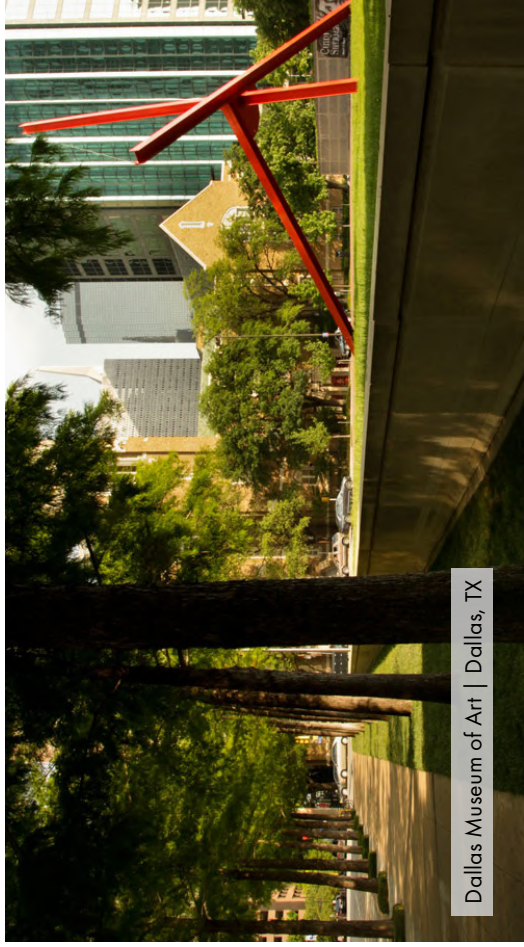
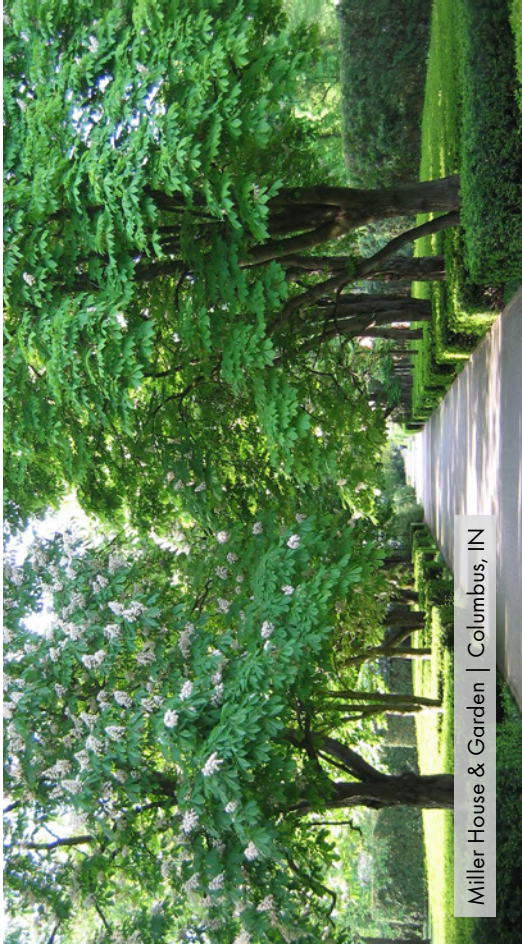


Context

## SIGNIFICANCE OF DAN KILEY DEFINING LANDSCAPE FEATURES | GRIDDED TREES

Kiley's main design influences are 17th-century French landscapes, specifically those by André Le Nôtre. The French garden provided Kiley with a precedent for spatial and formal relationships.

### ALLÉES



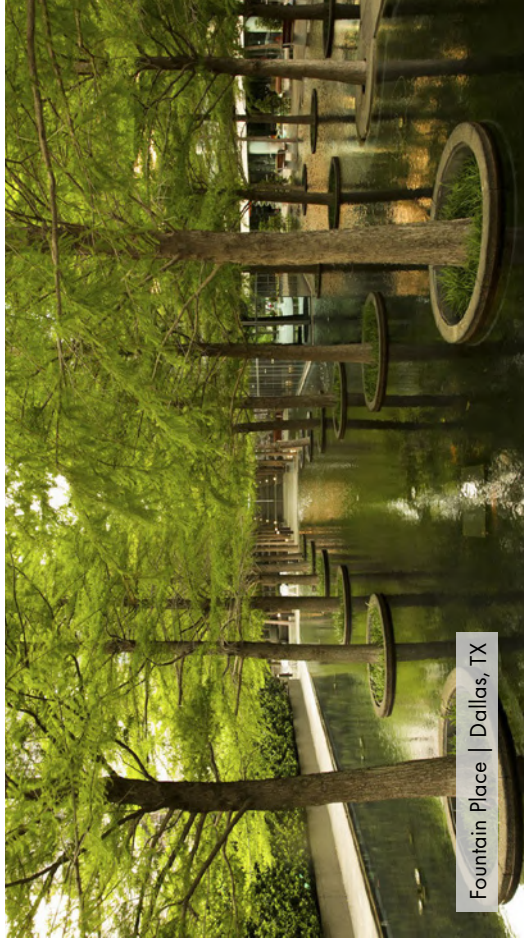
Source: The Cultural Landscape Foundation



Context

## SIGNIFICANCE OF DAN KILEY DEFINING LANDSCAPE FEATURES | GRIDDED TREES

### GROVES



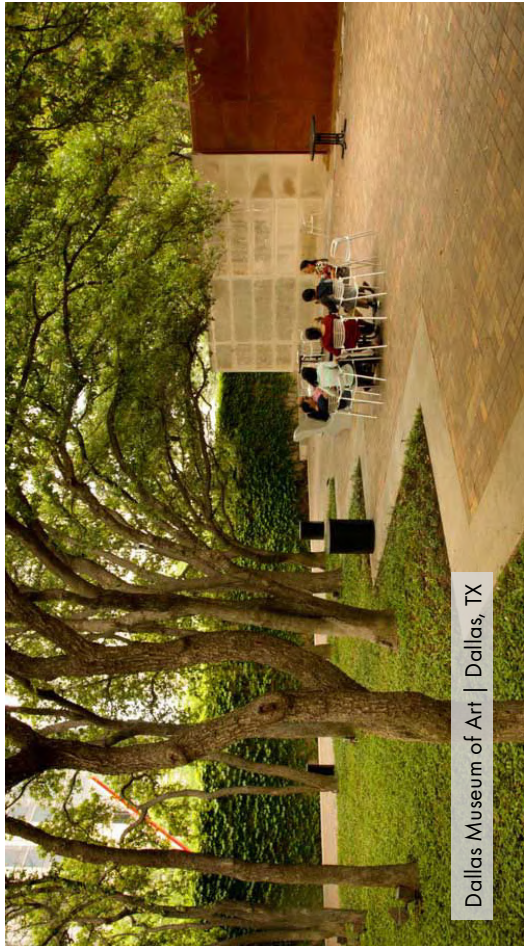
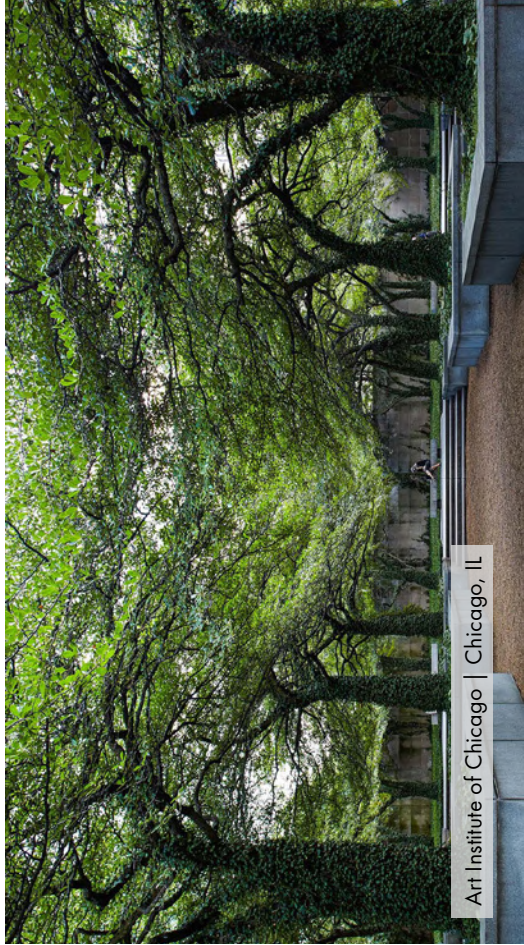
Source: The Cultural Landscape Foundation



Context

## SIGNIFICANCE OF DAN KILEY DEFINING LANDSCAPE FEATURES | GRIDDED TREES

### GROVES



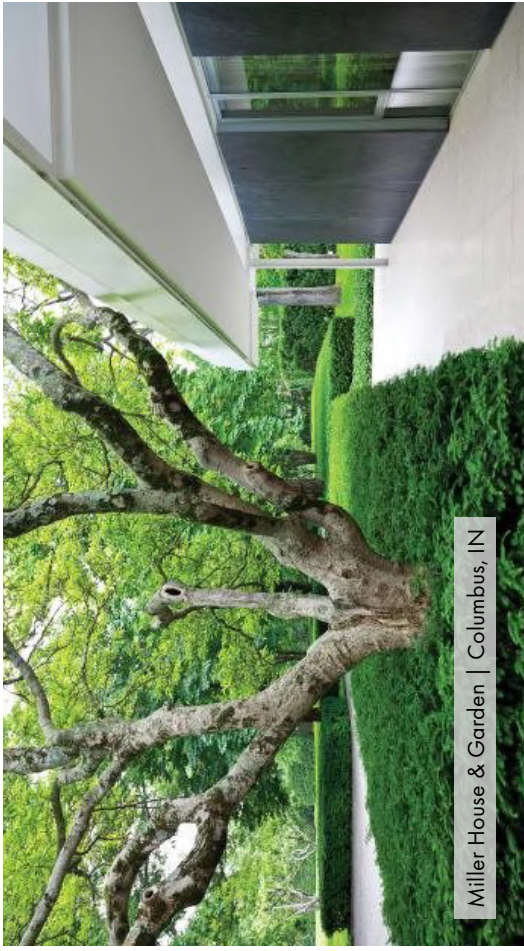
Source: The Cultural Landscape Foundation



Context

## SIGNIFICANCE OF DAN KILEY DEFINING LANDSCAPE FEATURES | PATTERNED VEGETATION

### HEDGES





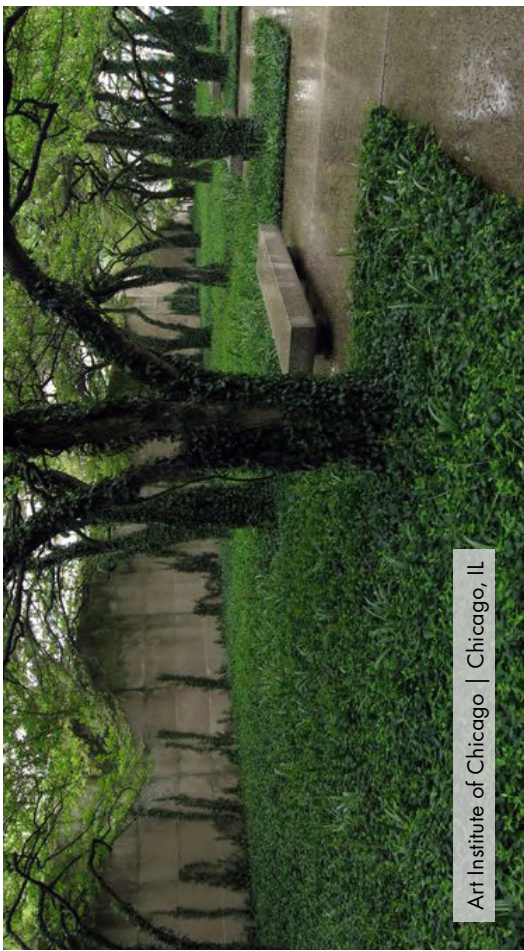
Context

## SIGNIFICANCE OF DAN KILEY DEFINING LANDSCAPE FEATURES | PATTERNED VEGETATION

### MONOCULTURE GROUNDCOVER



Miller House & Garden | Columbus, IN



Art Institute of Chicago | Chicago, IL



Ford Foundation | New York, NY



Dallas Museum of Art | Dallas, TX

Source: The Cultural Landscape Foundation

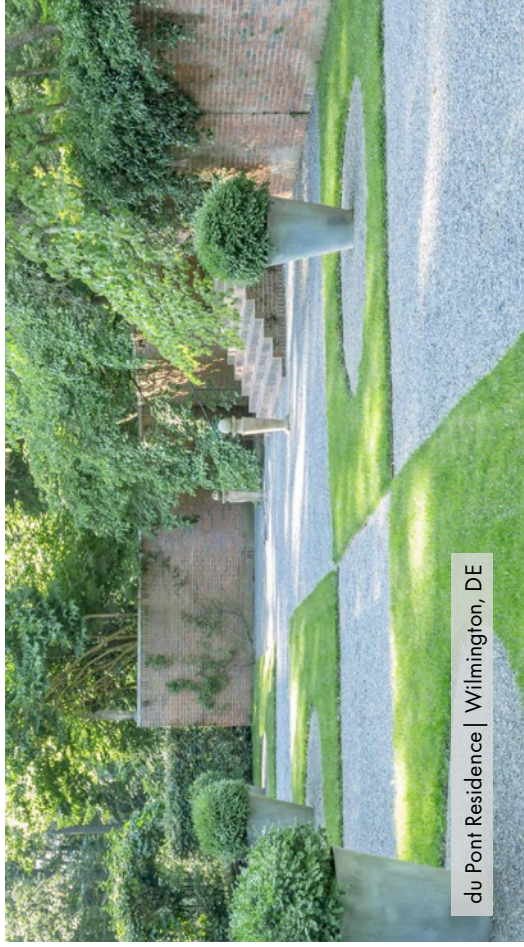
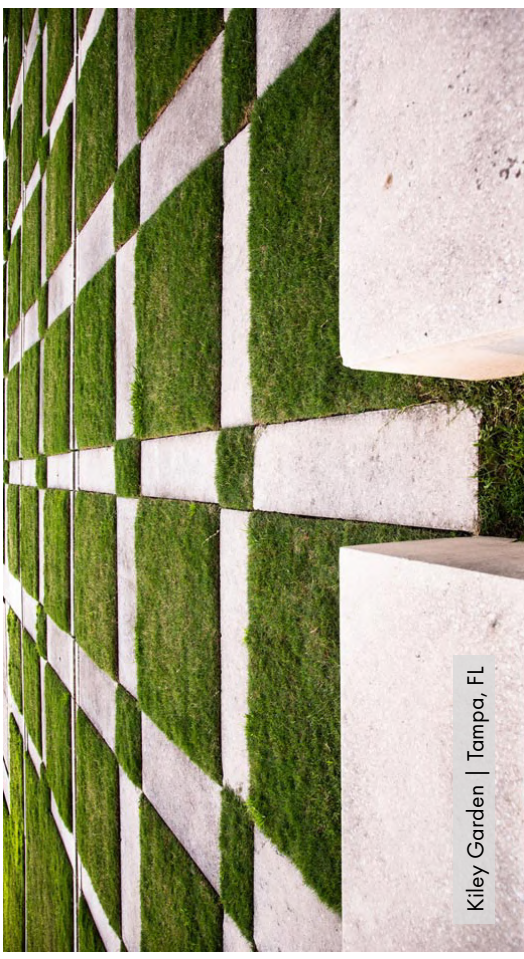


Context

## SIGNIFICANCE OF DAN KILEY

### DEFINING LANDSCAPE FEATURES | PATTERNED VEGETATION

#### GEOMETRIC FORMS



Source: The Cultural Landscape Foundation, Garden Design





# Site Development History

Timeline Summary

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Historic Images

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## TIMELINE

### DAN KILEY & NORTH CHRISTIAN CHURCH LANDSCAPE

**Bolded text** indicates significant events where North Christian Church and Dan Kiley are linked

1941	Dan Kiley works with Louis Kahn, George Howe, and Oscar Stonorov and meets Eero Saarinen at the US Housing Authority in Washington DC
1943	Eero Saarinen and Kahn serve as references for Kiley to obtain his architecture license in New Hampshire
1944	Dan Kiley replaces Eero Saarinen as Chief of Design at the Office of Strategic Services
1947	The Detroit Common Council approves a third civic center plan by Saarinen, Saarinen & Associates and Dan Kiley
1947	Eero Saarinen and Dan Kiley submit a winning proposal for the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial competition in St. Louis
1953 - 1957	Eero Saarinen, Dan Kiley, and Alexander Girard collaborate on the Miller House & Garden
1955	Dan Kiley begins work in Columbus for Cummins Engine Co. (Engine Plant Master Plan and CEP/Hawcreek Landscaping)
1954 - 1968	Eero Saarinen and Dan Kiley collaborate on the Irwin Union Bank & Trust
1958	Dan Kiley works with Eero Saarinen and Kevin Roche on Dulles Airport in Chantilly, Virginia
<b>March 18, 1958</b>	<b>The Trustees of North Christian Church purchase the Third Northlawn Addition, the future site of North Christian Church*</b>
February - March 1959	North Christian Church engages Eero Saarinen and Associates to design and build the church; Eero Saarinen accepts
September 1, 1961	Eero Saarinen dies during a surgical procedure for removing a brain tumor.*
<b>September 2, 1962</b>	<b>The groundbreaking ceremony for North Christian Church is held*</b>
<b>March 1963</b>	<b>Construction of North Christian Church begins*</b>
<b>March 1964</b>	<b>North Christian Church is completed*</b>
<b>June 26, 1964</b>	<b>Dan Kiley's office prepares its initial landscape design for North Christian Church*</b>
<b>October 14, 1964</b>	<b>Kiley's office begins leveling topsoil work, and plantings in the areas immediately surrounding North Christian Church*</b>
1968	Kiley works on the US Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs with SOM based on prior recommendation from Saarinen
<b>1971</b>	<b>The property expands to include the woods to the east of the church and Tipton Lane is redesigned and widened</b>
February 16, 1971	Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo Associates prepares a site study that analyzes traffic flow in and out of North Christian Church*
May 15, 1971	Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo Associates prepares another site study that analyzes traffic flow in and out of North Christian Church*
<b>October 18, 1971</b>	<b>Dan Kiley's office prepares a modified site plan that explores moving the existing magnolia trees south of the church and arranging them in an organic layout</b>
<b>December 18, 1971</b>	<b>Dan Kiley's office prepares a modified site plan that keeps Sycamore Drive in its current state and adds additional plantings and parking bays to the parking lot*</b>
<b>March 1974</b>	<b>Dan Kiley's office prepares the final landscape design for North Christian Church*</b>
1995	43 dogwood "Cherokee Princess" trees were planted to commemorate the original 43 charter members of North Christian Church*
July 11, 1995	Columbus architect Todd Williams is commissioned to design a new Memorial Garden for North Christian Church*
September 21, 1997	The new Memorial Garden is dedicated, on the southeastern side of the building*
1997	Dan Kiley is awarded the National Medal of Arts in recognition of his career and contributions to the field of landscape architecture
1999	North Christian Church receives an American Society of Landscape Architects Centennial Medallion for recognition as a significant American designed landscape
1999	Another Capital Campaign is established to fund accessible ramps to the building entrances*
2000	North Christian Church is designated a National Historic Landmark by the National Park Service*
February 21, 2004	Dan Kiley dies at his home in Charlotte, VT at the age of 91
2005	A Capital Campaign provides funds for new gutters, renovation of fascia, parking lot resurfacing, spire lighting, and a "Welcome Center"*
2008-2009	Columbus architect Louis Joyner designs improvements for the slate roof, fascia, and the Memorial Garden. Funds are provided from the Capital Campaign and a "Save America's Treasures" grant from the National Park Service*
Circa 2013	The mature arborvitae hedges and maple trees within the parking lot are removed and replaced with inkberry shrubs and new maple trees

(\*) = Source: Enrique G. Ramirez, "Eero Saarinen and Associates' North Christian Church (1964)"  
Other Sources: The Cultural Landscape Foundation 2013; Special Collections Department  
in Frances Loeb Library at Harvard University Graduate School of Design

## Site Development History

### 1958

Church congregation purchases property when the surrounding land uses are corn fields and woodland with little residential or commercial development adjacent to the site.

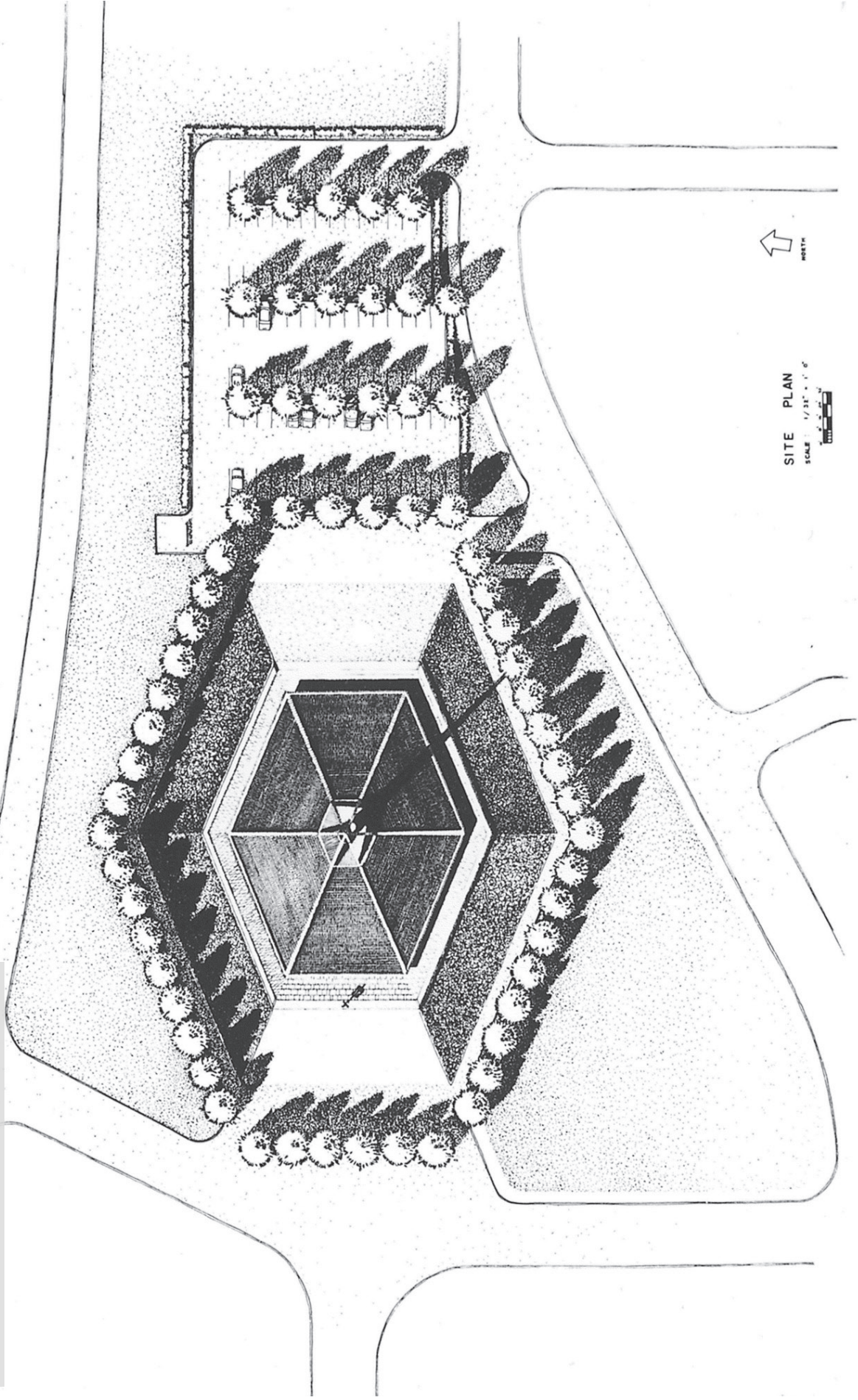


Source: Nationwide Environmental Title Research



1960

This drawing is an Eero Saarinen landscape plan before Dan Kiley joined the project, showing early thoughts on the relationship between the building and its surroundings.



Source: Eero Saarinen and Associates



**1963**

An aerial captures the construction of the church building (bottom left). Corn fields and woods are adjacent to the property, with residential development to the north.



Source: The Indiana Album: John D. Rondot Collection



### LATE 1960s

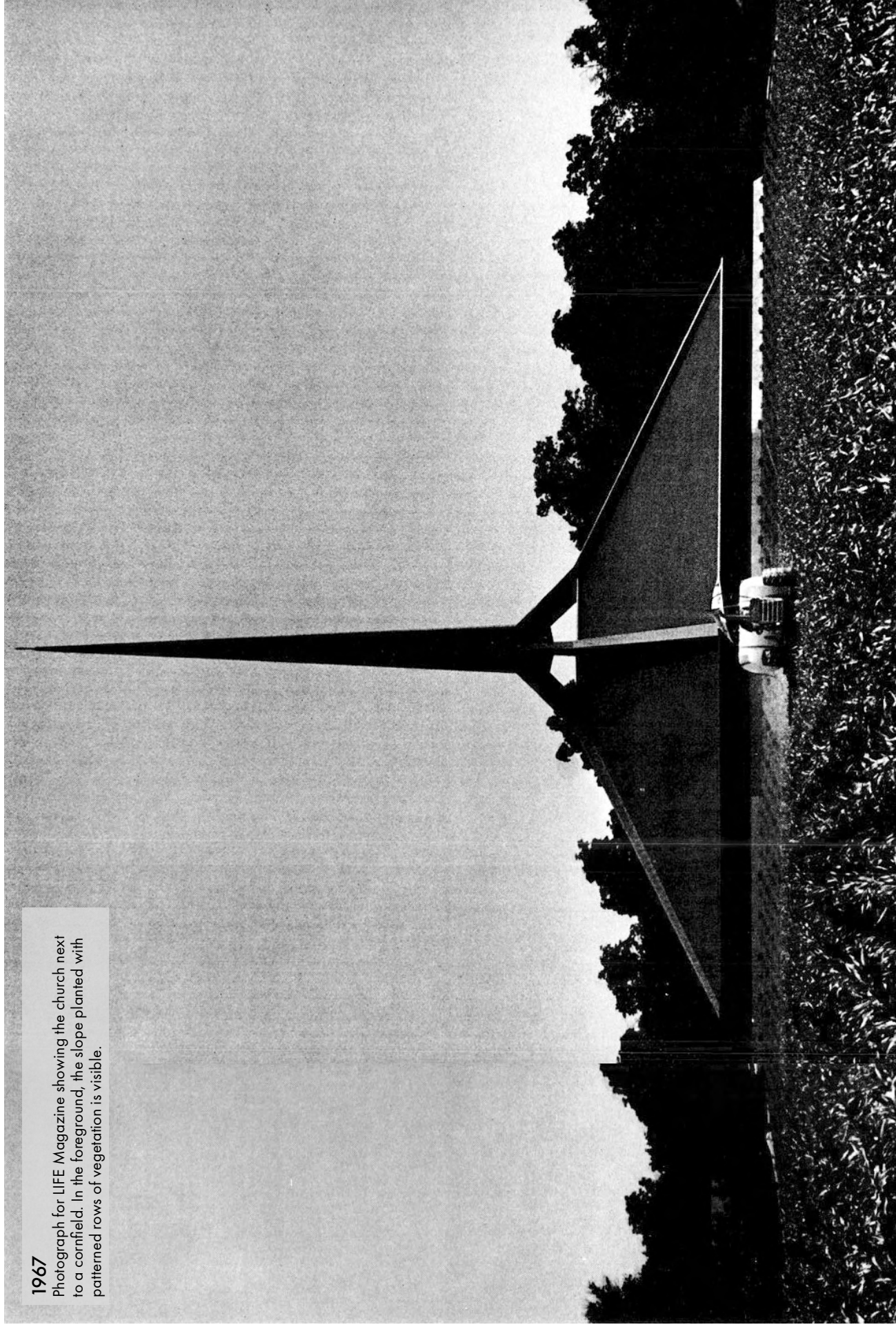
View looking east of the initial landscape design by Dan Kiley. As it was implemented, of note: the disturbed field to the right, the dirt roads, two bays of parking initially installed with hedge extending beyond initial limit of pavement, and the dense planting of the slopes adjacent to the sunken gardens.



Source: The Cultural Landscape Foundation

1967

Photograph for LIFE Magazine showing the church next to a cornfield. In the foreground, the slope planted with patterned rows of vegetation is visible.



Source: LIFE Magazine

### LATE 1960s

The parking lot with the arborvitae hedge walls forming spatial “rooms” and directing views towards the church as visitors approached by-foot from their parked cars.



Source: Library of Congress



**1973**

Looking west, the view from the woods showing a meadow groundcover condition.



Source: Jolene Nolte, Atomic Ranch



**1974**

A view showing the allée, magnolia grove, and manicured arborvitae hedge.

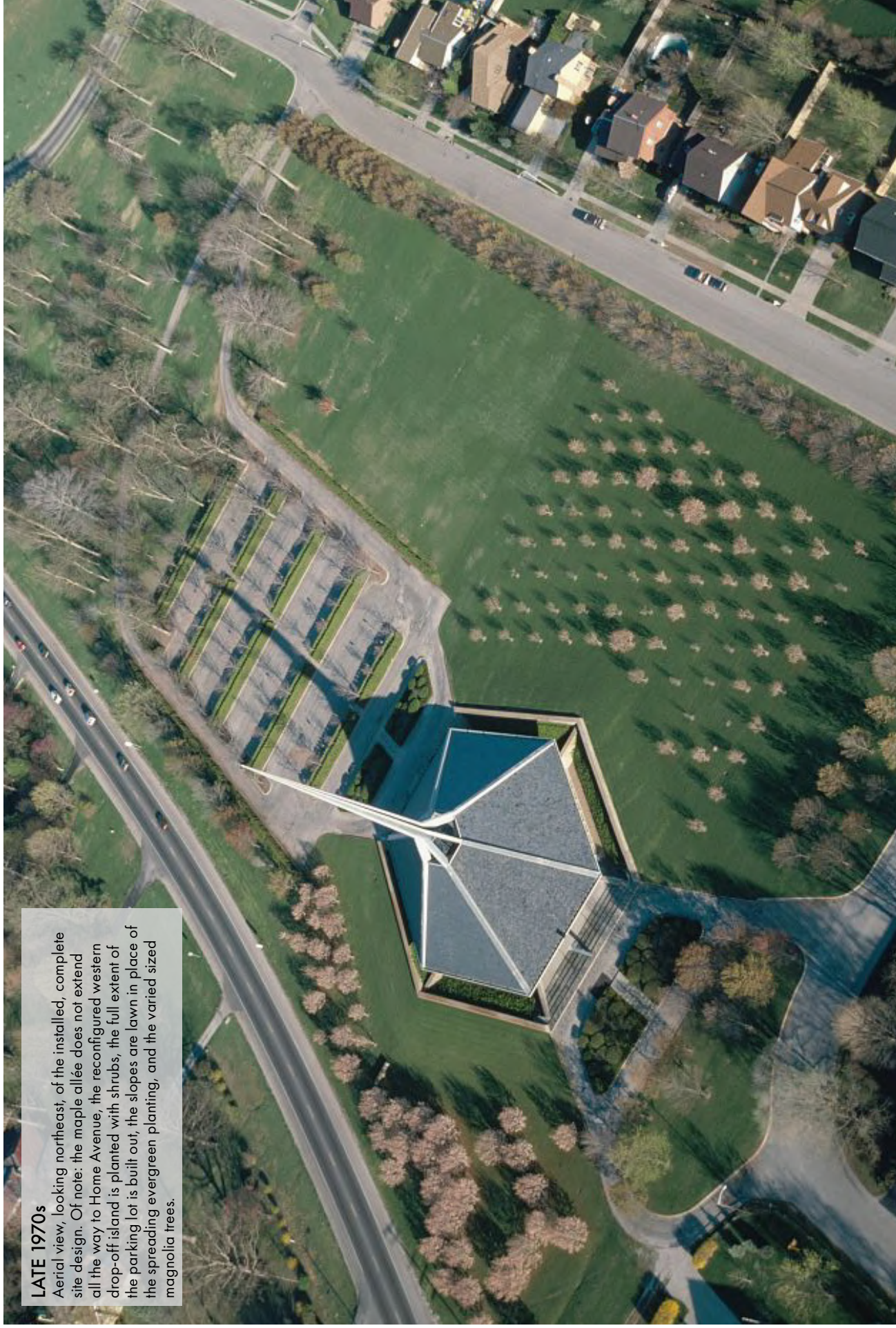


Source: The Cultural Landscape Foundation



### LATE 1970s

Aerial view, looking northeast, of the installed, complete site design. Of note: the maple allée does not extend all the way to Home Avenue, the reconfigured western drop-off island is planted with shrubs, the full extent of the parking lot is built out, the slopes are lawn in place of the spreading evergreen planting, and the varied sized magnolia trees.



Source: Library of Congress



**1980s**

Aerial showing the impending sprawl of development. The tree canopy is filling in and their spatial form and relationships are evident.



Source: Records Office, North Christian Church, Columbus, Indiana



**2009**

The parking lot maple trees in a mature state and the arborvitae hedges pruned to half their size.



Source: The Cultural Landscape Foundation (top); Architecture and Landscape Architecture Library at Penn State (bottom)





2013

The parking lot hedges and maple trees in an overgrown and deteriorating state, before the contemporary replacements were made.

Source: Ricky Berkey



**2022**

The recent parking lot vegetation replacements reflect a less extensive silhouette, resulting in a changed, less impactful presence.



Source: Merritt Chase





2022

An aerial showing the mature tree canopy on-site. The landscape has grown out and no longer shows the clear rigor of the Kiley design.

Source: Google Earth



**2022**

A bird's eye view of the mature tree canopy on-site.



Source: Hadley Fruits





# Site Design Evolution

Summary

31

Defining Landscape Features

32

North Christian Church Site Framework

36



# SUMMARY

## SIGNIFICANCE

Dan Kiley's design of the landscape at North Christian Church is a clear example of a landscape that visitors experience in a defined sequence, moving through ordered rooms formed by trees and hedges that control views. The design is particularly sensitive to those arriving by car, and incorporates vehicle circulation in such a way that does not disturb the experience of a pastoral landscape. A maple allée enforces the perimeter of the property and filters views of the church as people arrive from Sycamore Street and travel down Tipton Lane. A curvilinear drive draws visitors into the site, winding through woodland and meadow. The drive ends in the parking lot where evergreen hedges define the edges as an outdoor room, as well as an axial approach to the building. The path from the parking lot emerges to bring visitors to the building entrance, traversing wide, flat steps over a slope that brings the ground plane closer to the church's low hanging roof. Magnolia groves surround the church to the north and south, extending out from the architecture. The building is not a stand-alone object surrounded by plantings, but rather it is an integrated feature of its surroundings. The landscape and building form a unified composition, from the church base rising from the ground to the top of the spire ascending towards the sky.

The landscape is significant for it is an exemplary manifestation of Dan Kiley's Modernist style. While the condition of different elements varies, overall the site has matured with integrity and maintains the essential vision of the landscape architect. Also noteworthy is the collaboration between these preeminent landscape architect and architects—Dan Kiley, Eero Saarinen, Kevin Roche, and John Dinkeloo—in the city of Columbus. As part of the bodies of work of these distinguished designers, the landscape of North Christian Church is an important contribution to a collection of designed spaces in the city that influenced and advanced the discourse of Modernism.

## DEFINING LANDSCAPE FEATURES

The dynamic relationship between the structural elements of planting and the sequence of movement are defining landscape features of Kiley's work that appear throughout the North Christian Church landscape:

### Gridded Trees

- Kiley elements: allées, groves
- Tight tree spacing and experience of enclosure
- Perimeter planting frames the site as a whole

### Patterned Vegetation

- Kiley elements: hedges, monoculture groundcover, patterned groundplanes
- Vertical height creates spatial "rooms"

### Experiential Circulation

- Kiley elements: landscape features either frame or screen views of the church; the landscape is organized and arranged for visitors to move along a particular sequence
- A clear axial approach to the building from the parking lot

### Infrastructure

- The building and site walls were built when Kiley joined the project, remaining a consistent condition to respond to throughout the design iterations

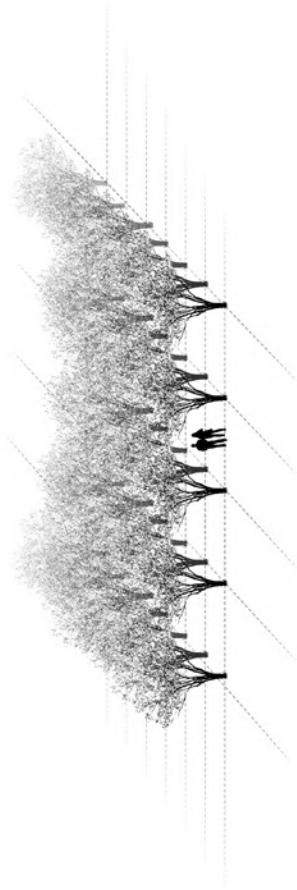
## PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE

Eero Saarinen was commissioned to design North Christian Church in 1959 and his building plans show early thoughts on the relationship between the architecture and landscape. Saarinen engaged Dan Kiley to design the landscape, but his death in 1961 predates Kiley's fully developed initial landscape proposal in 1964. Kiley continued to collaborate with Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo Associates to advance the landscape design, responding to changes such as the expansion of the property with the purchase of the woods to the east and the redesign of Tipton Lane. Kiley's final design proposal for North Christian Church was in 1974, though he continued to work on projects in Columbus until the early 1980s. Considering the landscape design evolved from 1964-1974 while Kiley was on the project, this time period best represents Kiley's intent for the site. This time period also reflects larger trends. There was a period of rapid population growth and subsequent development in Columbus from 1942 to 1973, but an economic downturn in the late 1970s slowed construction of Modernist projects.

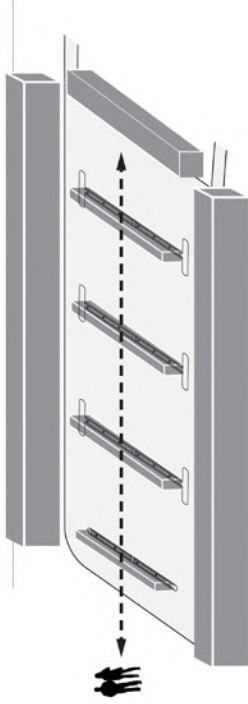


## DEFINING LANDSCAPE FEATURES NORTH CHRISTIAN CHURCH

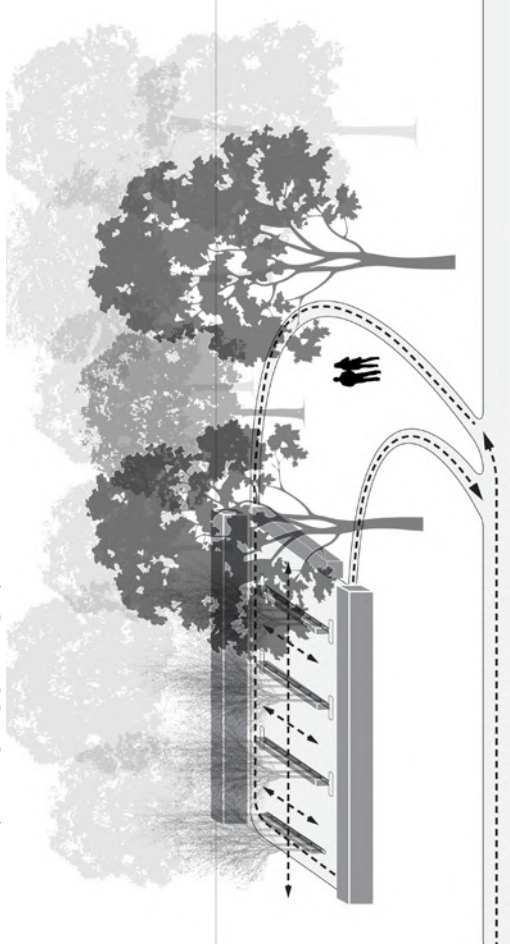
### GRIDDED TREES



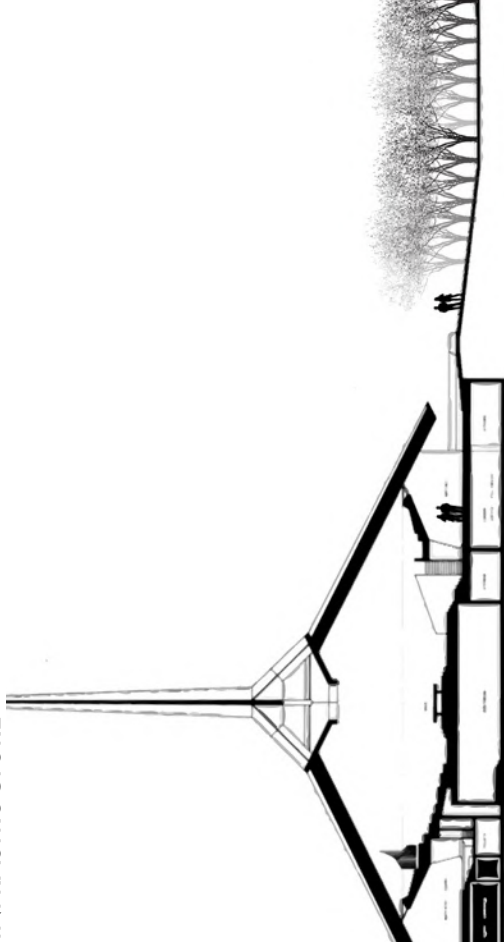
### PATTERNED VEGETATION



### EXPERIENTIAL CIRCULATION



### INFRASTRUCTURE

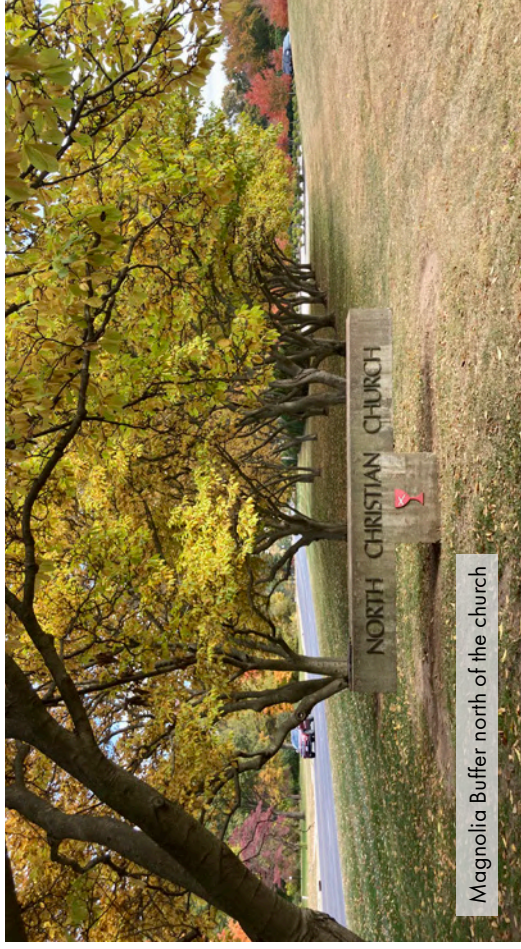




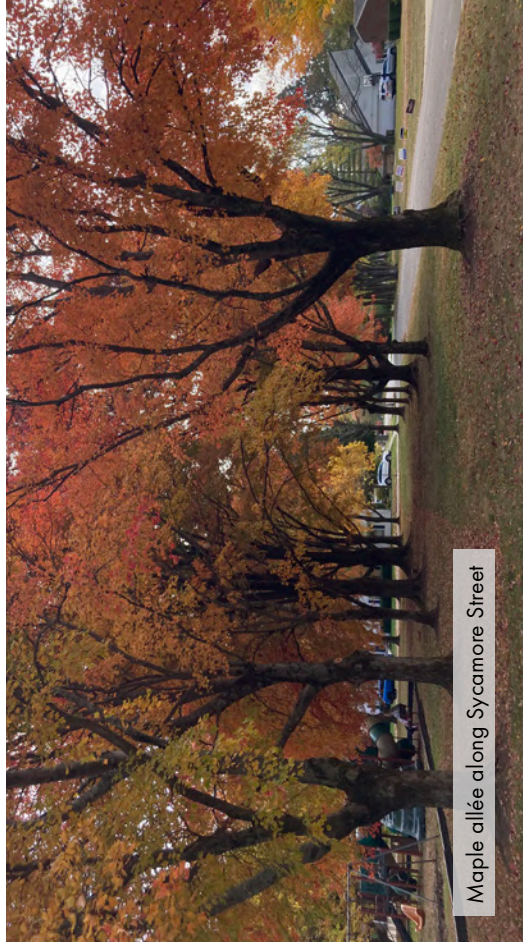
## DEFINING LANDSCAPE FEATURES | **GRIDDED TREES** NORTH CHRISTIAN CHURCH



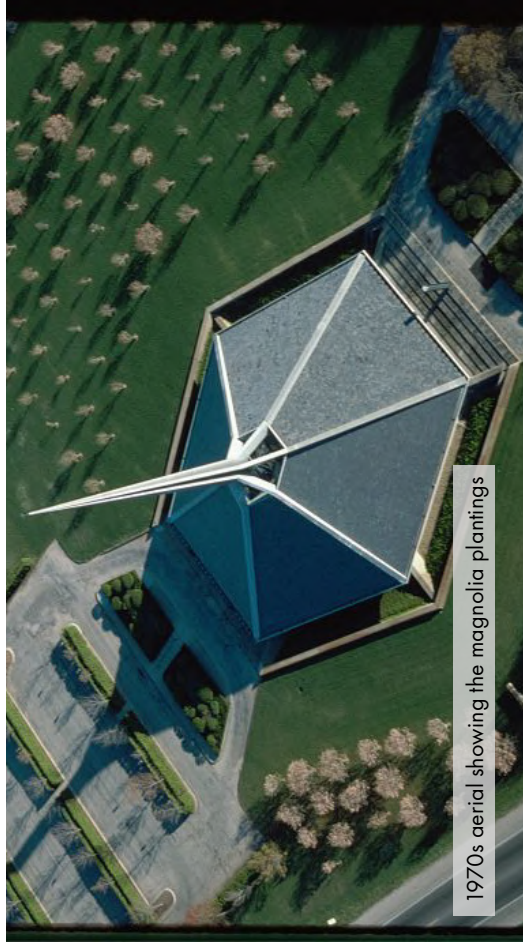
Maple allée along Tipton Lane



Magnolia Buffer north of the church



Maple allée along Sycamore Street



1970s aerial showing the magnolia plantings

Source: MIT Libraries, G. E. Kidder Smith Image Collection  
MERRITT CHASE



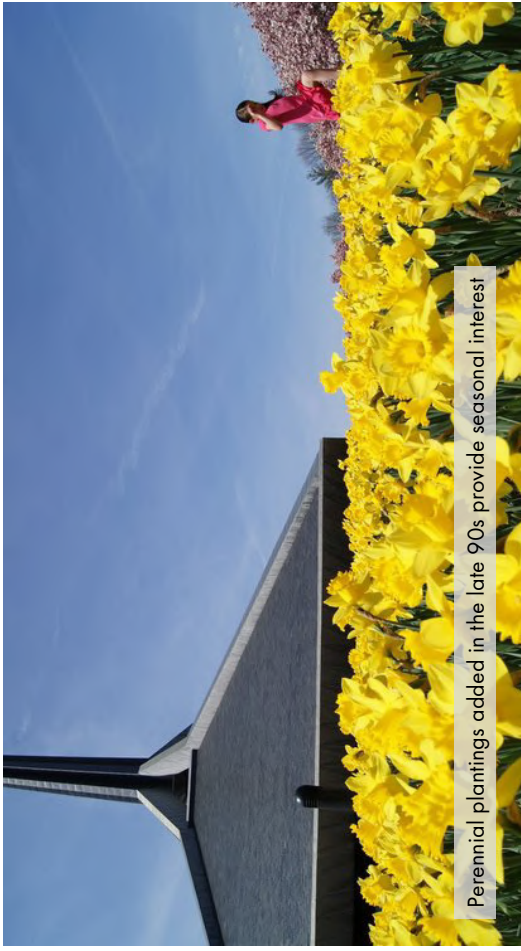
## DEFINING LANDSCAPE FEATURES | **PATTERNED VEGETATION**

### NORTH CHRISTIAN CHURCH

#### PATTERNED VEGETATION



Source: Hadley Fruits



Source: NPR Illinois



Source: MIT Libraries, G. E. Kidder Smith Image Collection



Source: MIT Libraries, G. E. Kidder Smith Image Collection  
MERRITT CHASE



## DEFINING LANDSCAPE FEATURES | EXPERIENTIAL CIRCULATION

### NORTH CHRISTIAN CHURCH

#### EXPERIENTIAL CIRCULATION



View from Tipton Lane across the open lawn

Source: The Cultural Landscape Foundation



The divided entry drive



The drive passes through a bosque of trees



The final axial approach to the church



## DEFINING LANDSCAPE FEATURES | **INFRASTRUCTURE** NORTH CHRISTIAN CHURCH



Uneven settlement of the sunken gardens' walls



Uneven settlement of the sunken gardens' walls



Drainage features

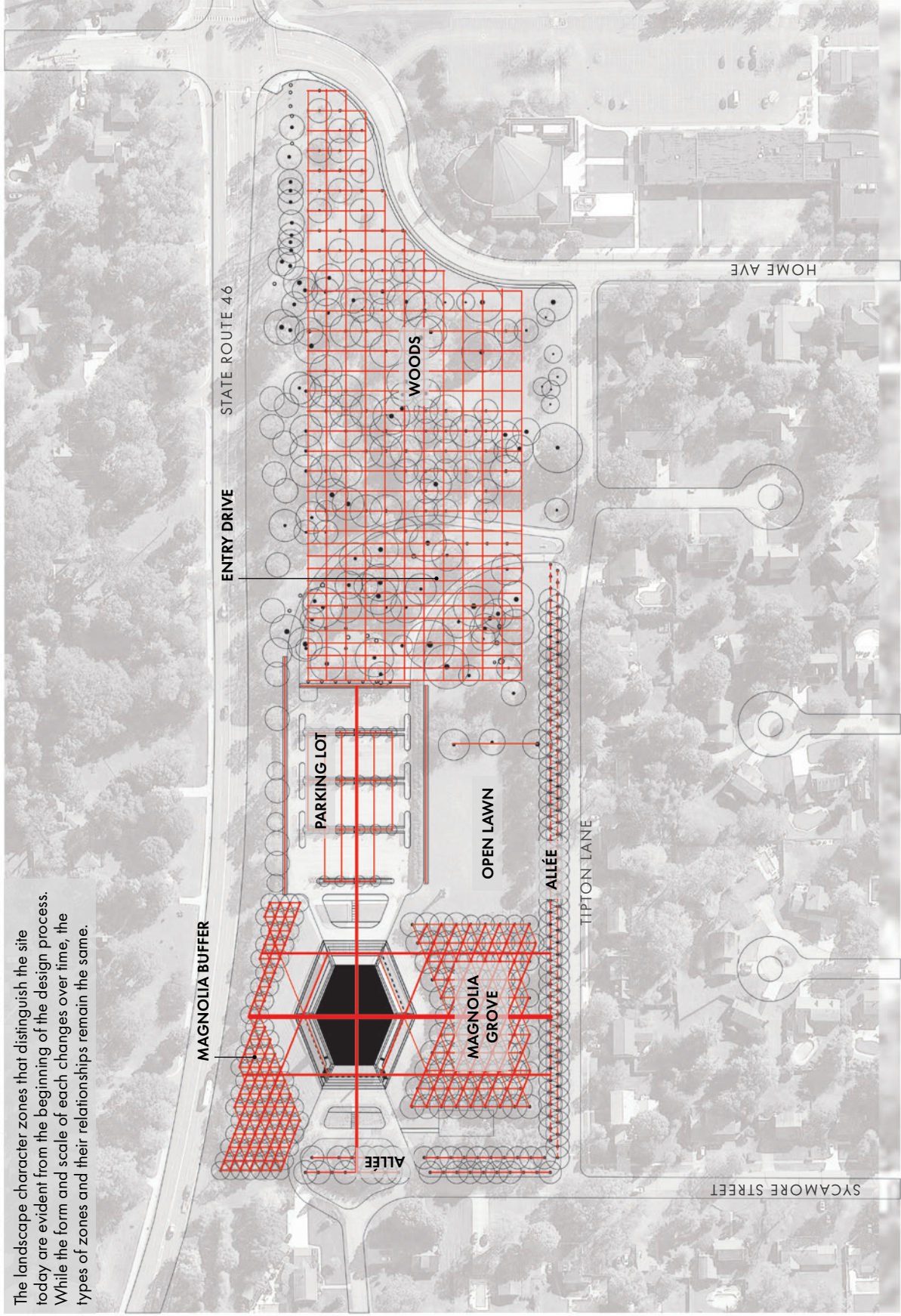


Railings and steps guiding visitors into the building



# NORTH CHRISTIAN CHURCH SITE FRAMEWORK SPATIAL RELATIONSHIPS

The landscape character zones that distinguish the site today are evident from the beginning of the design process. While the form and scale of each changes over time, the types of zones and their relationships remain the same.

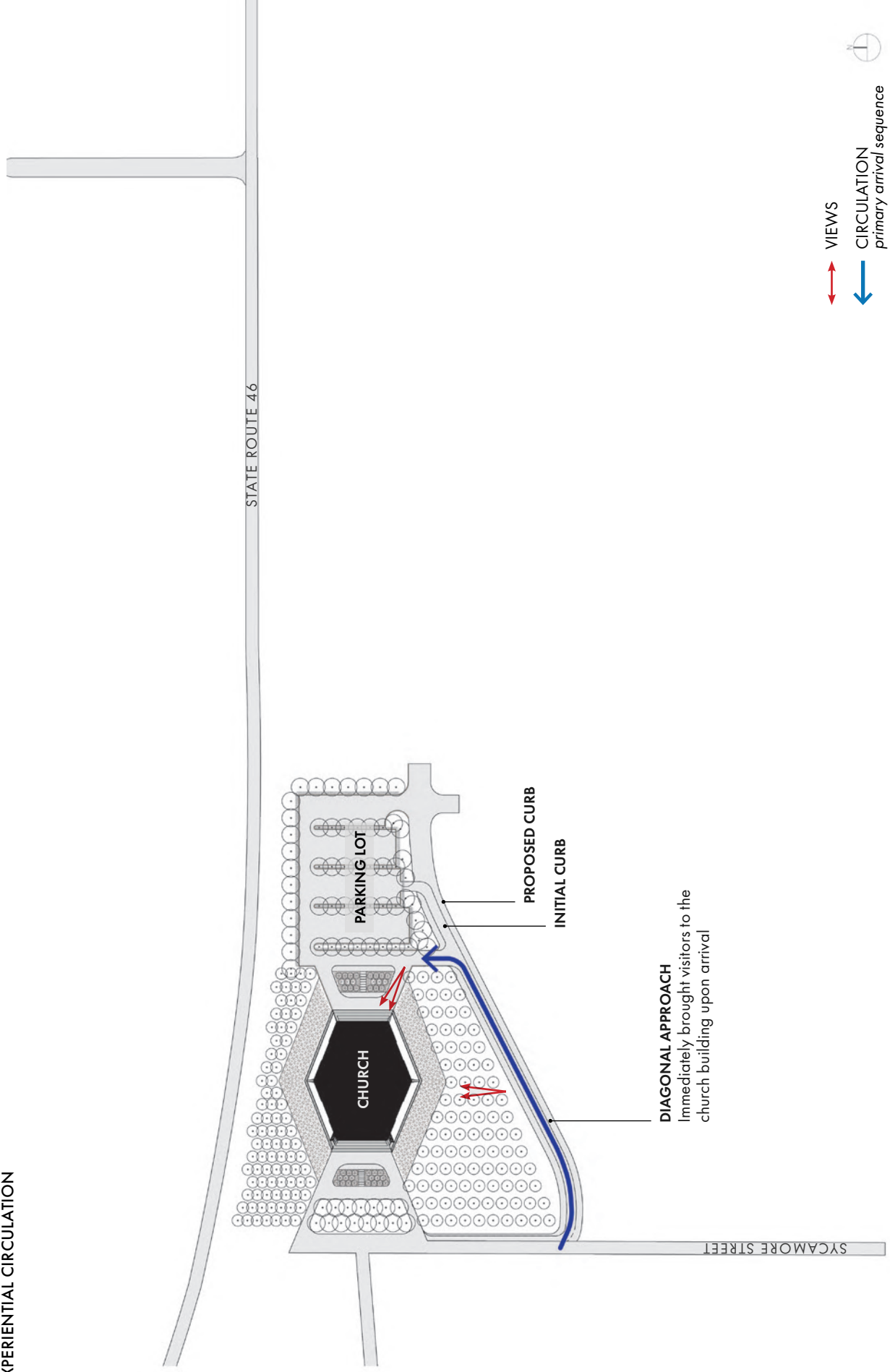


Source: Merritt Chase

# NORTH CHRISTIAN CHURCH SITE FRAMEWORK

## 1964 INITIAL SITE DESIGN

### EXPERIENTIAL CIRCULATION

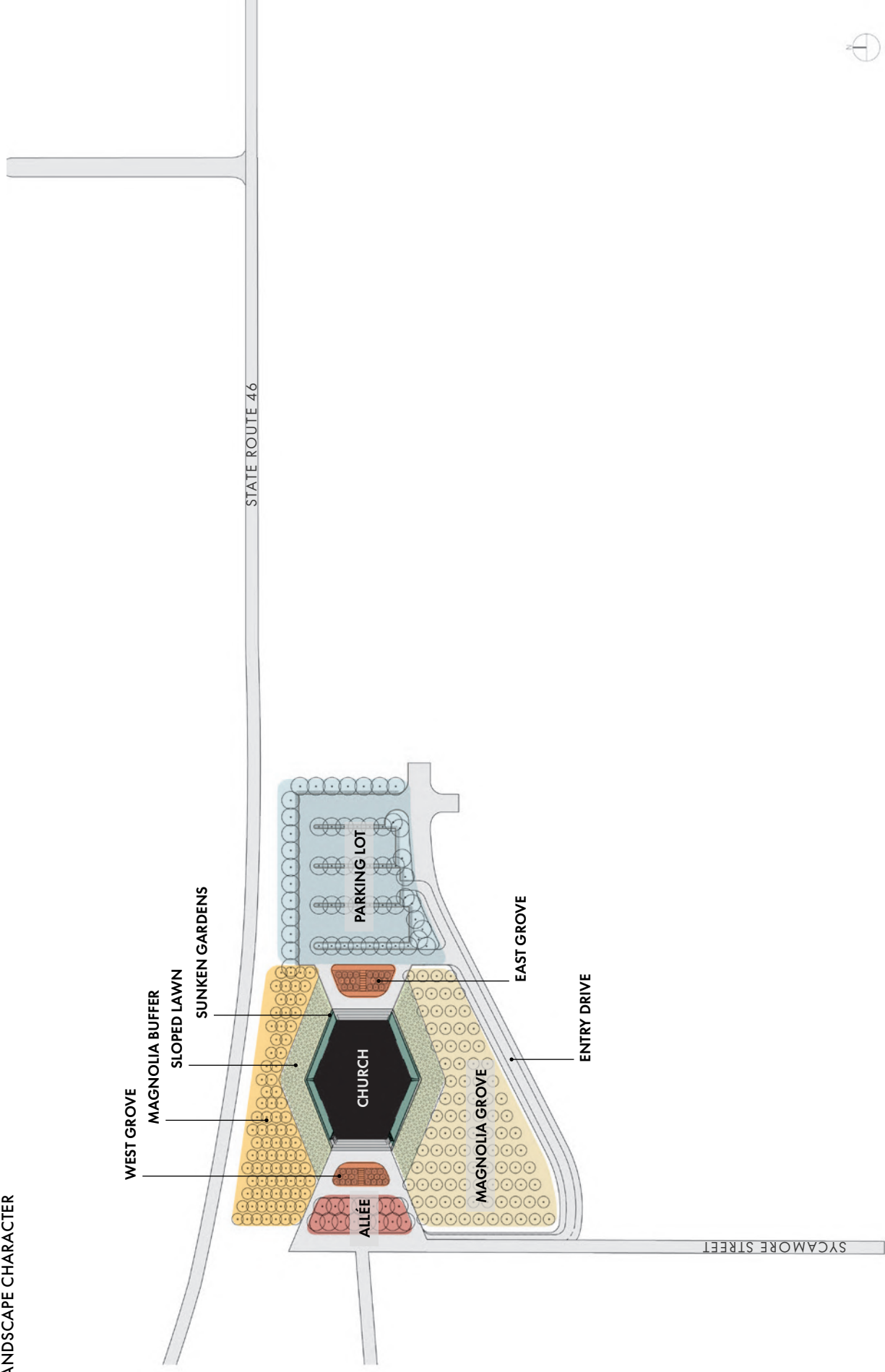




# NORTH CHRISTIAN CHURCH SITE FRAMEWORK

## 1964 INITIAL SITE DESIGN

### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER



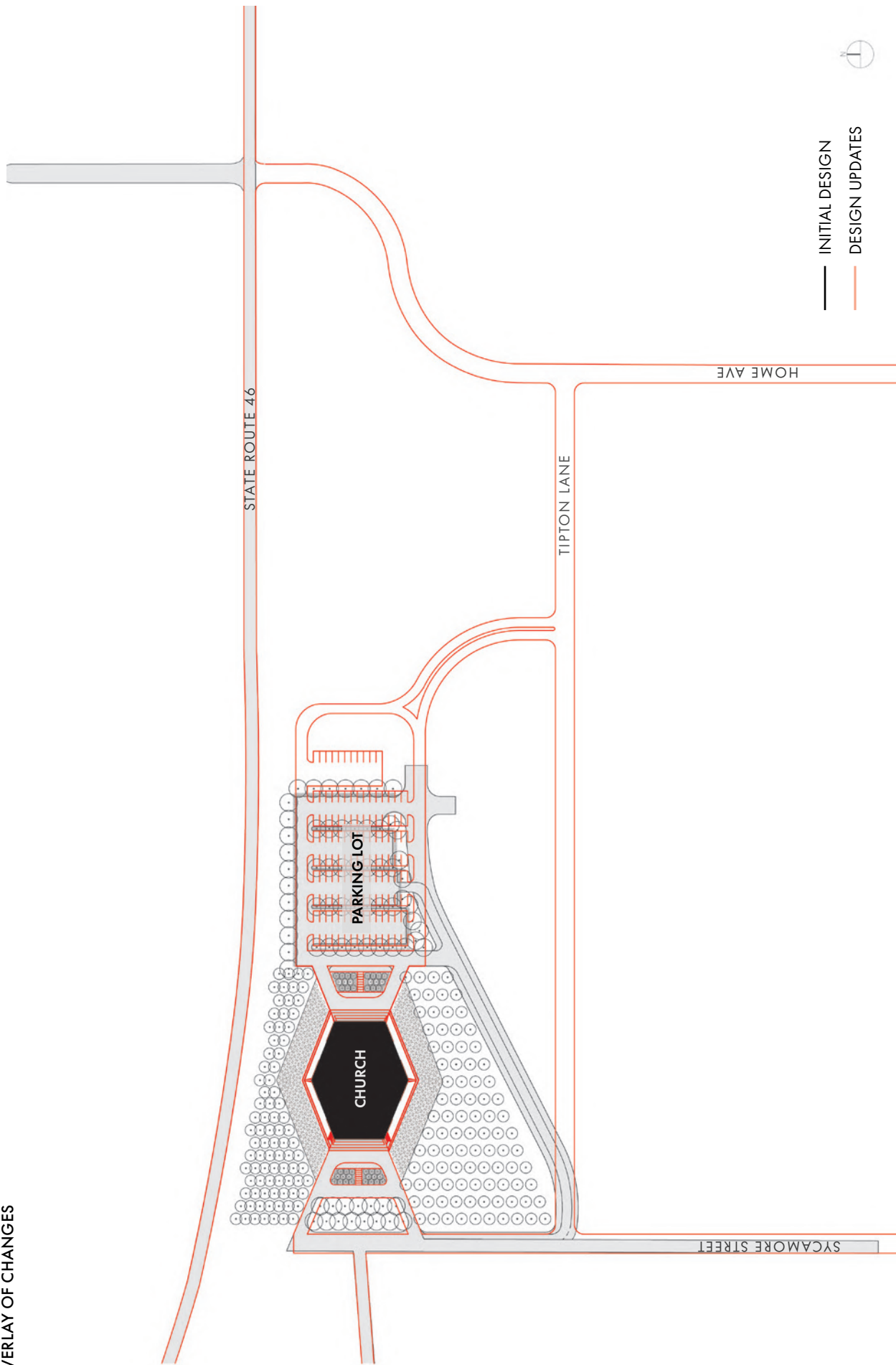


Site Design Evolution

## NORTH CHRISTIAN CHURCH SITE FRAMEWORK

1964 TO EARLY 1971

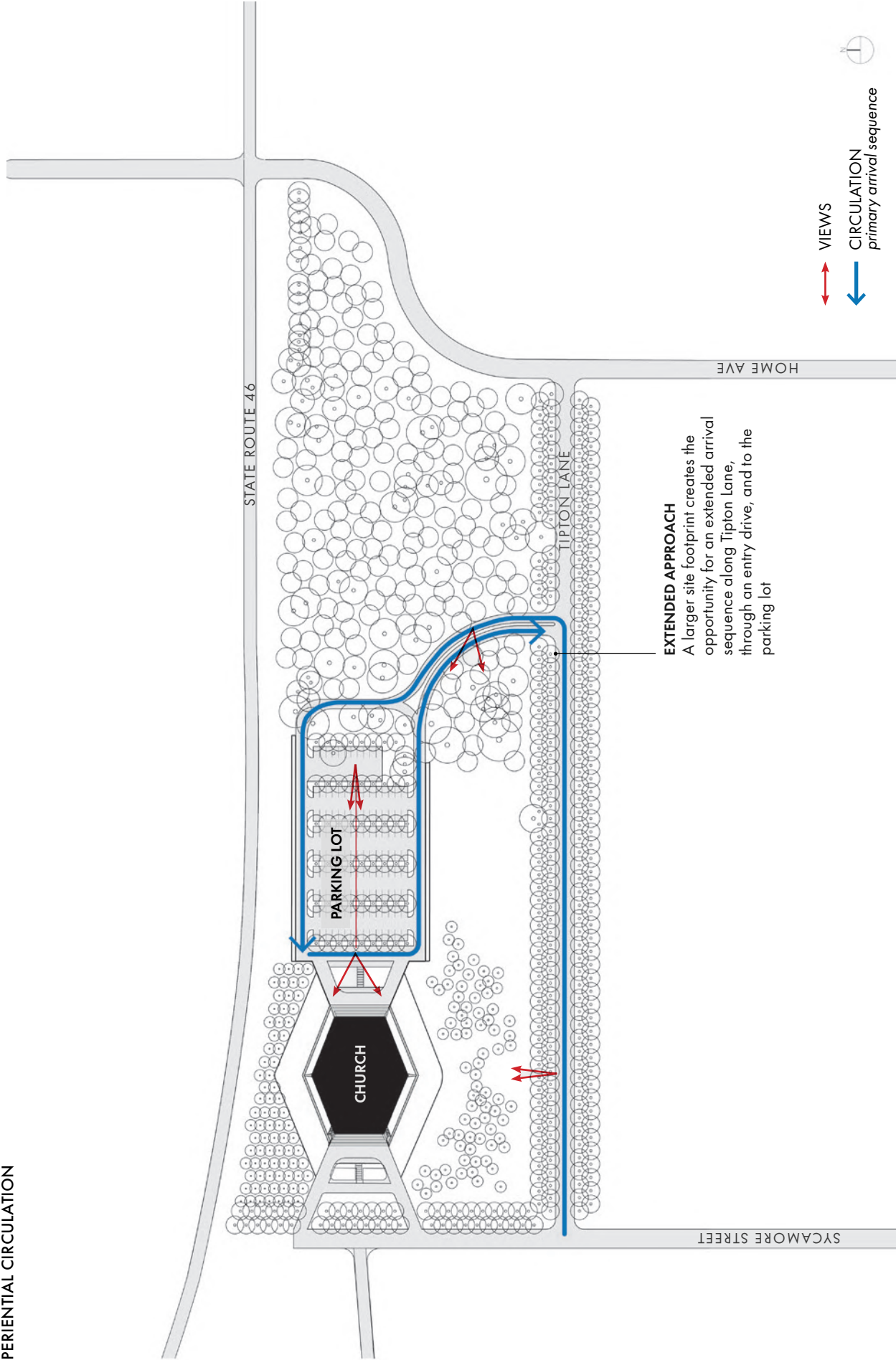
OVERLAY OF CHANGES



# NORTH CHRISTIAN CHURCH SITE FRAMEWORK

## EARLY 1971 ORGANIC ITERATION

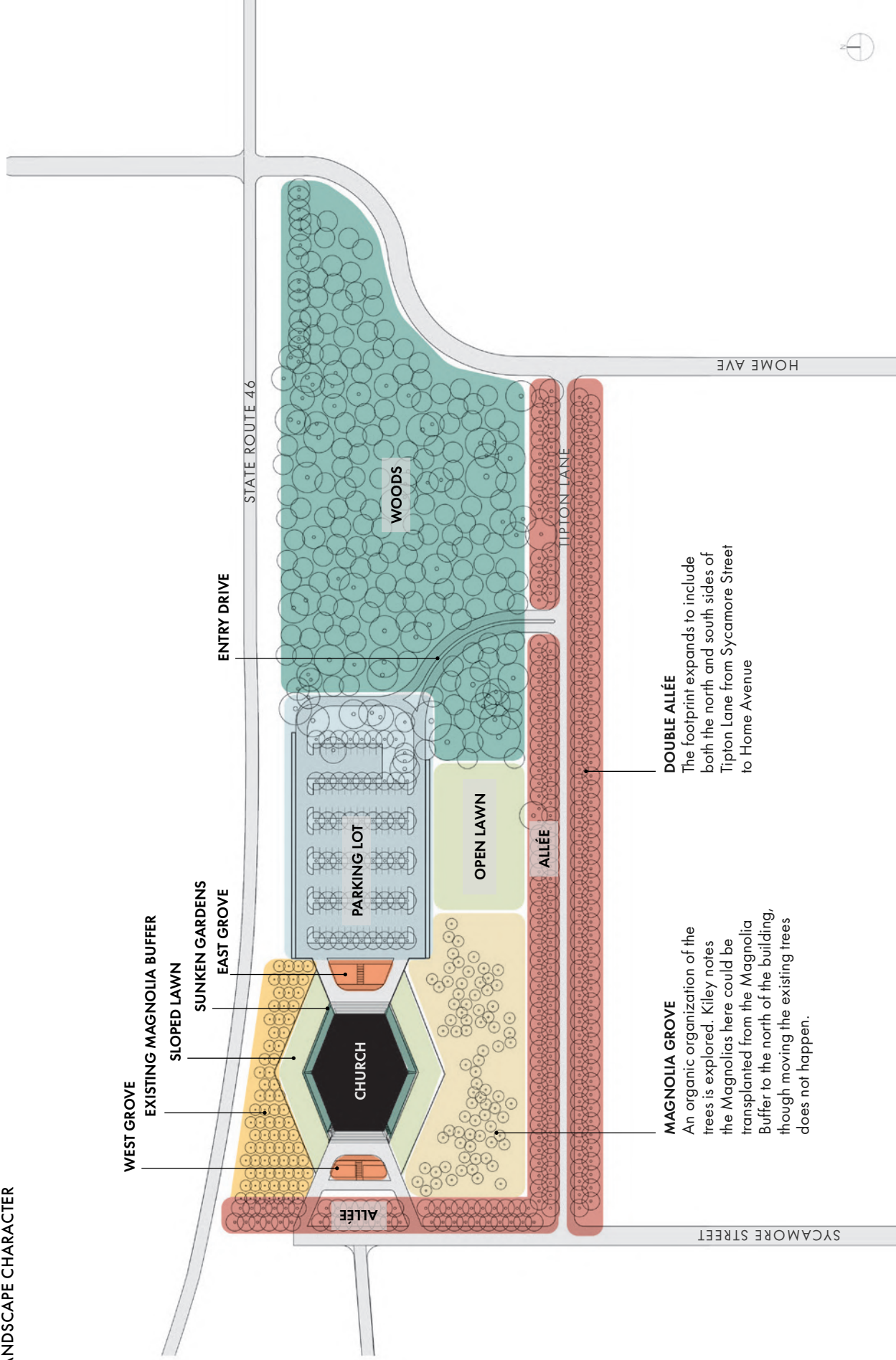
### EXPERIENTIAL CIRCULATION



# NORTH CHRISTIAN CHURCH SITE FRAMEWORK

## EARLY 1971 ORGANIC ITERATION

### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

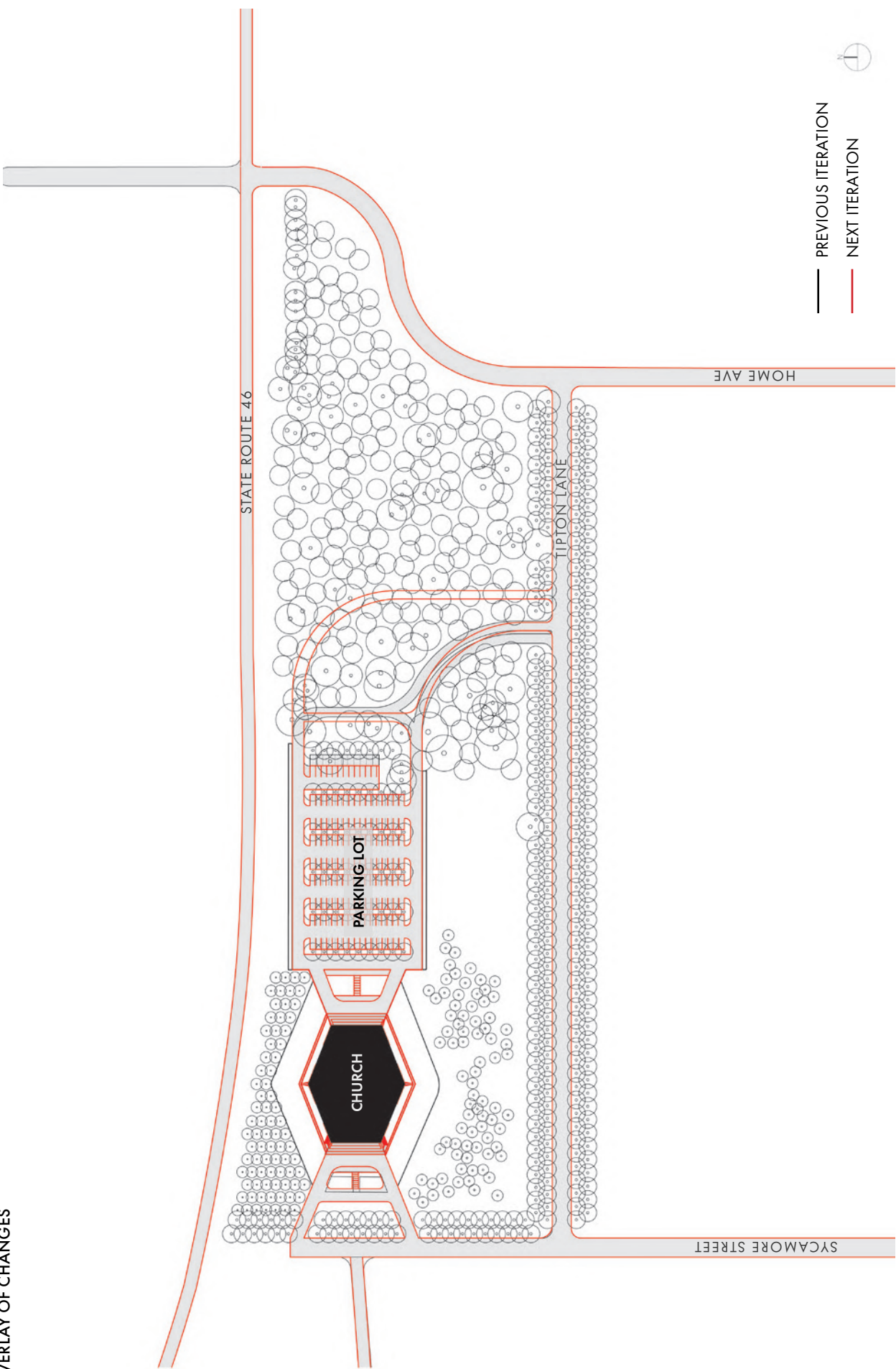




**NORTH CHRISTIAN CHURCH SITE FRAMEWORK**

**EARLY TO LATE 1971**

OVERLAY OF CHANGES

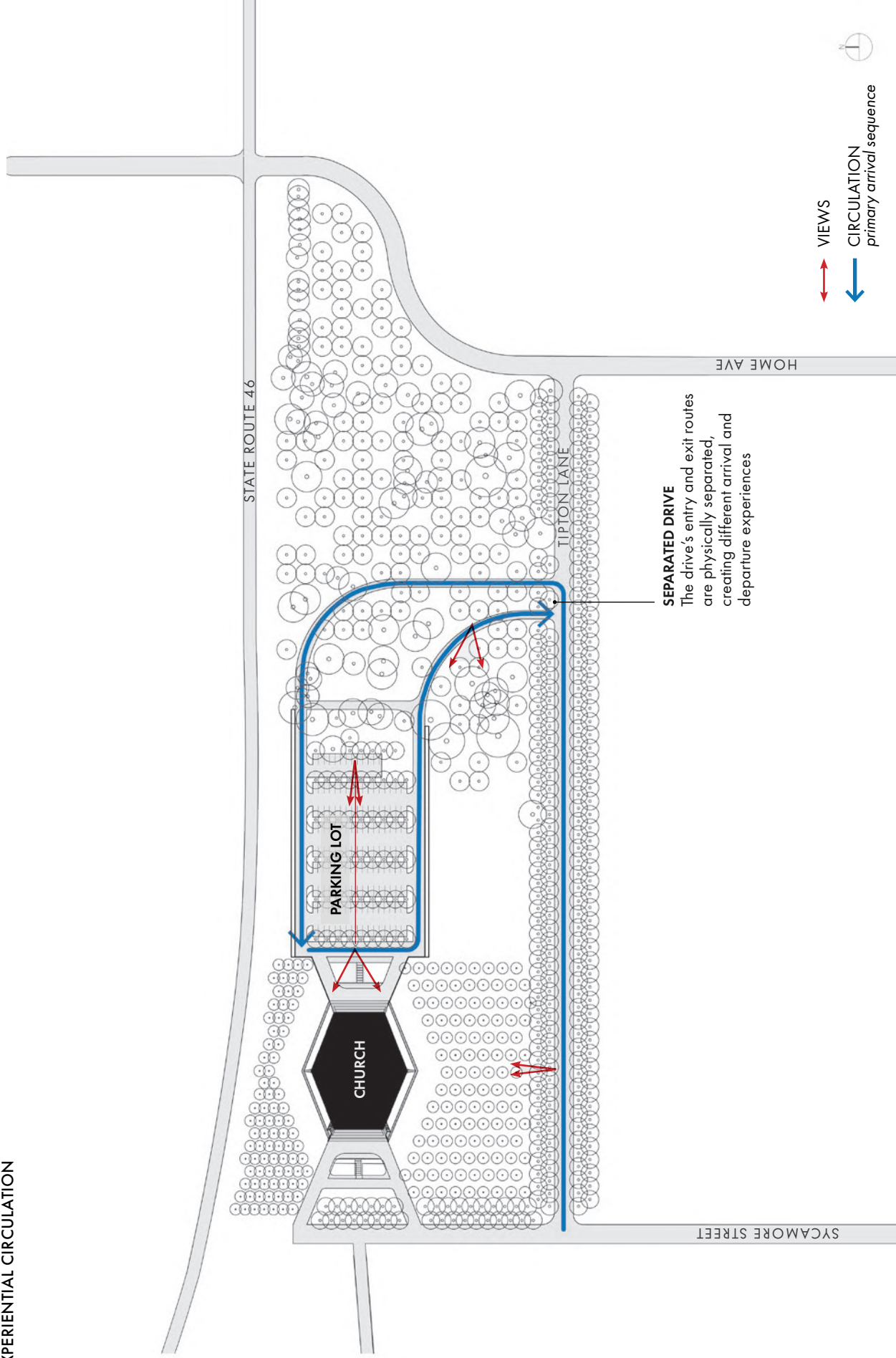




# NORTH CHRISTIAN CHURCH SITE FRAMEWORK

## LATE 1971 FORMAL ITERATION

### EXPERIENTIAL CIRCULATION



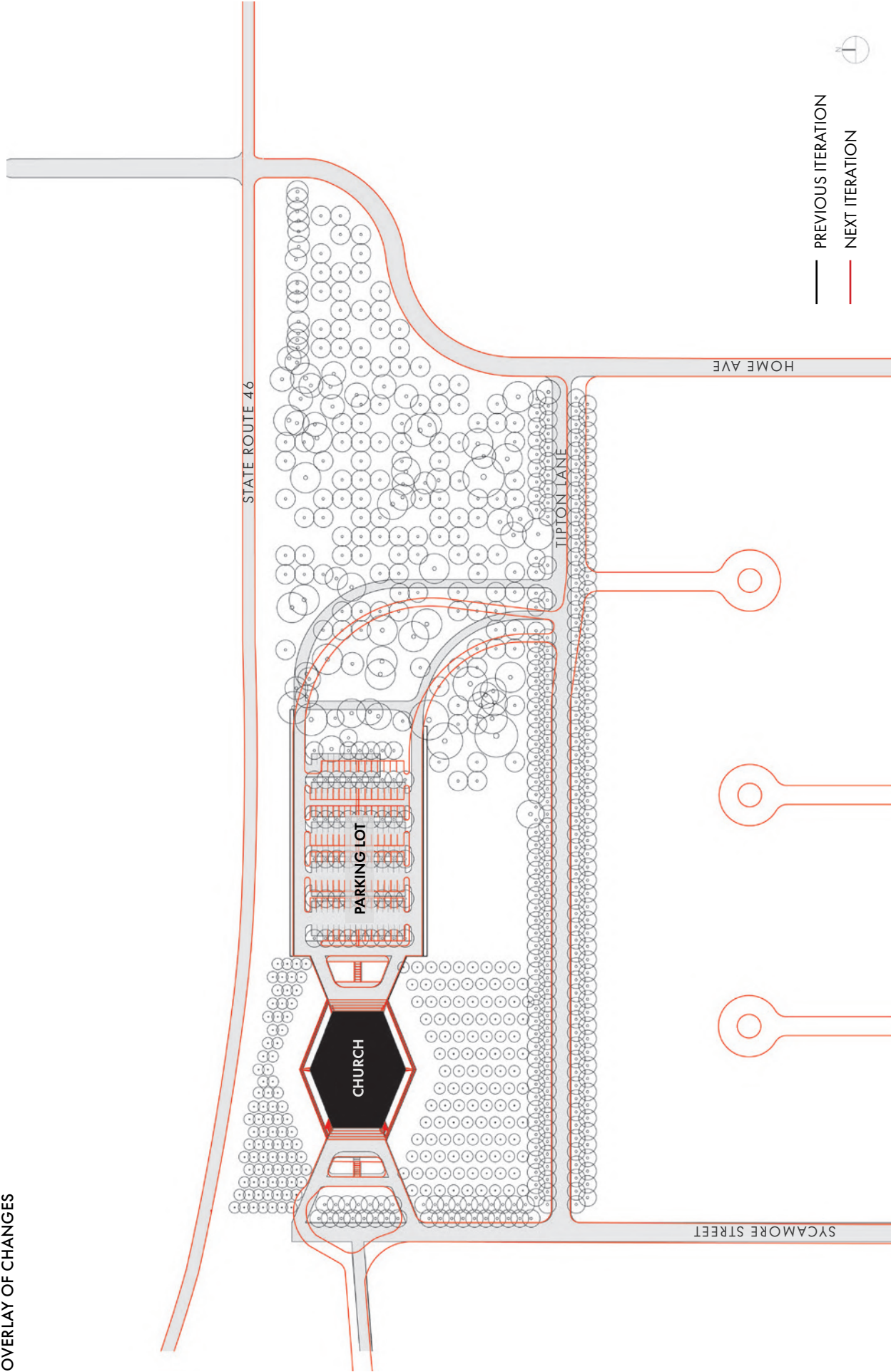


Site Design Evolution

# NORTH CHRISTIAN CHURCH SITE FRAMEWORK

LATE 1971 TO 1974

OVERLAY OF CHANGES

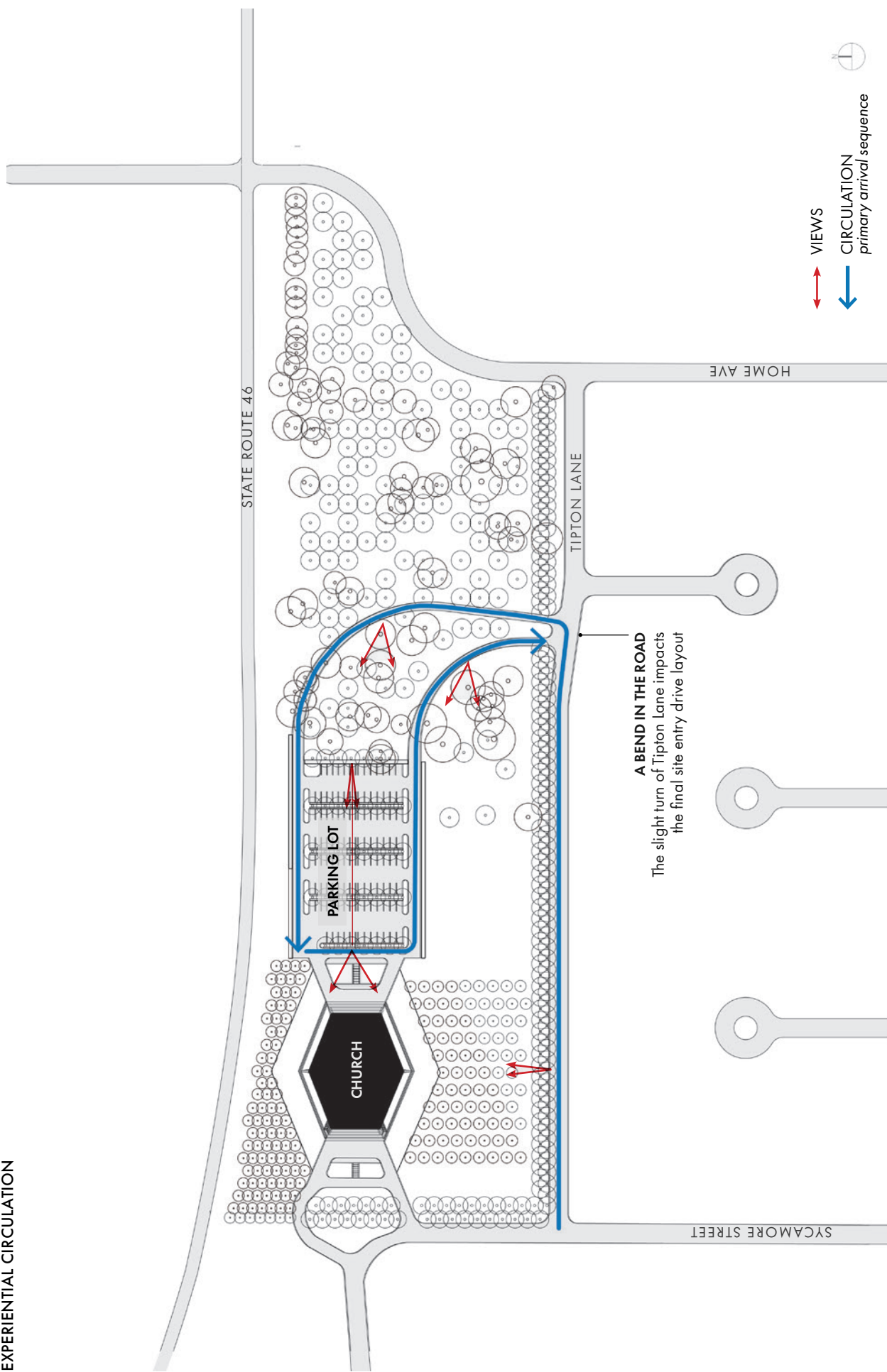




# NORTH CHRISTIAN CHURCH SITE FRAMEWORK

## 1974 EXPANDED DESIGN

### EXPERIENTIAL CIRCULATION

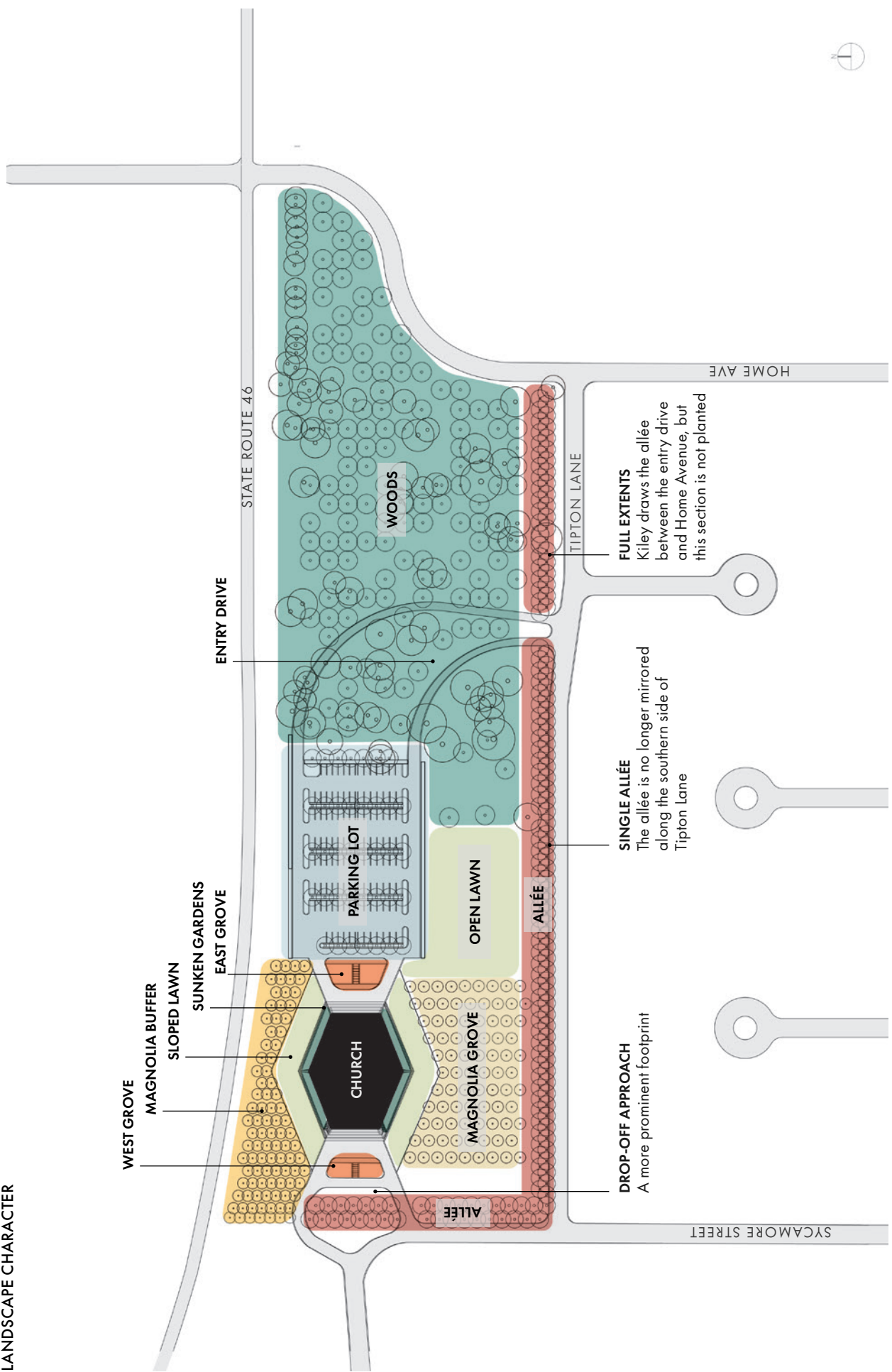




# NORTH CHRISTIAN CHURCH SITE FRAMEWORK

## 1974 EXPANDED DESIGN

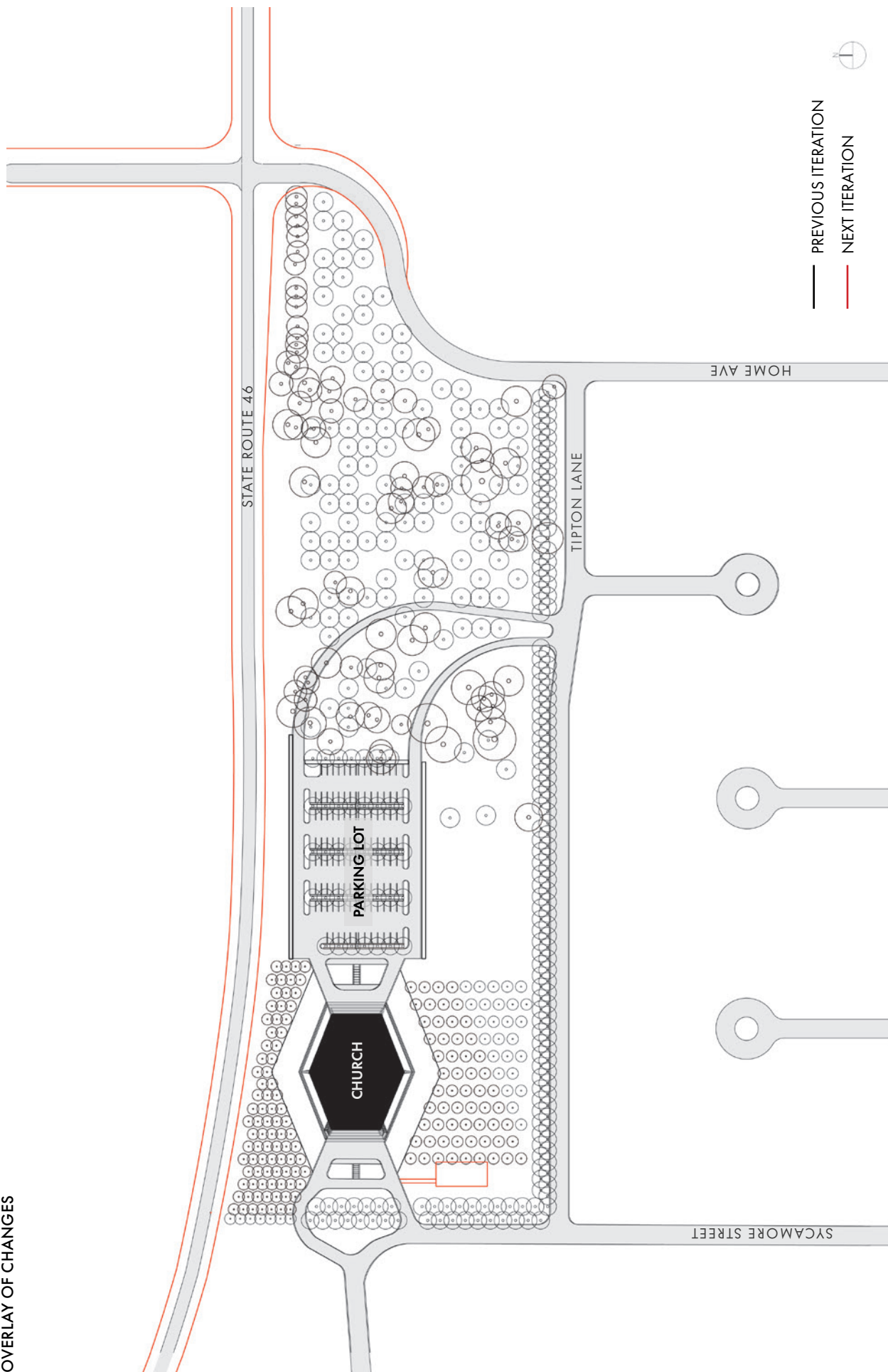
### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER



# NORTH CHRISTIAN CHURCH SITE FRAMEWORK

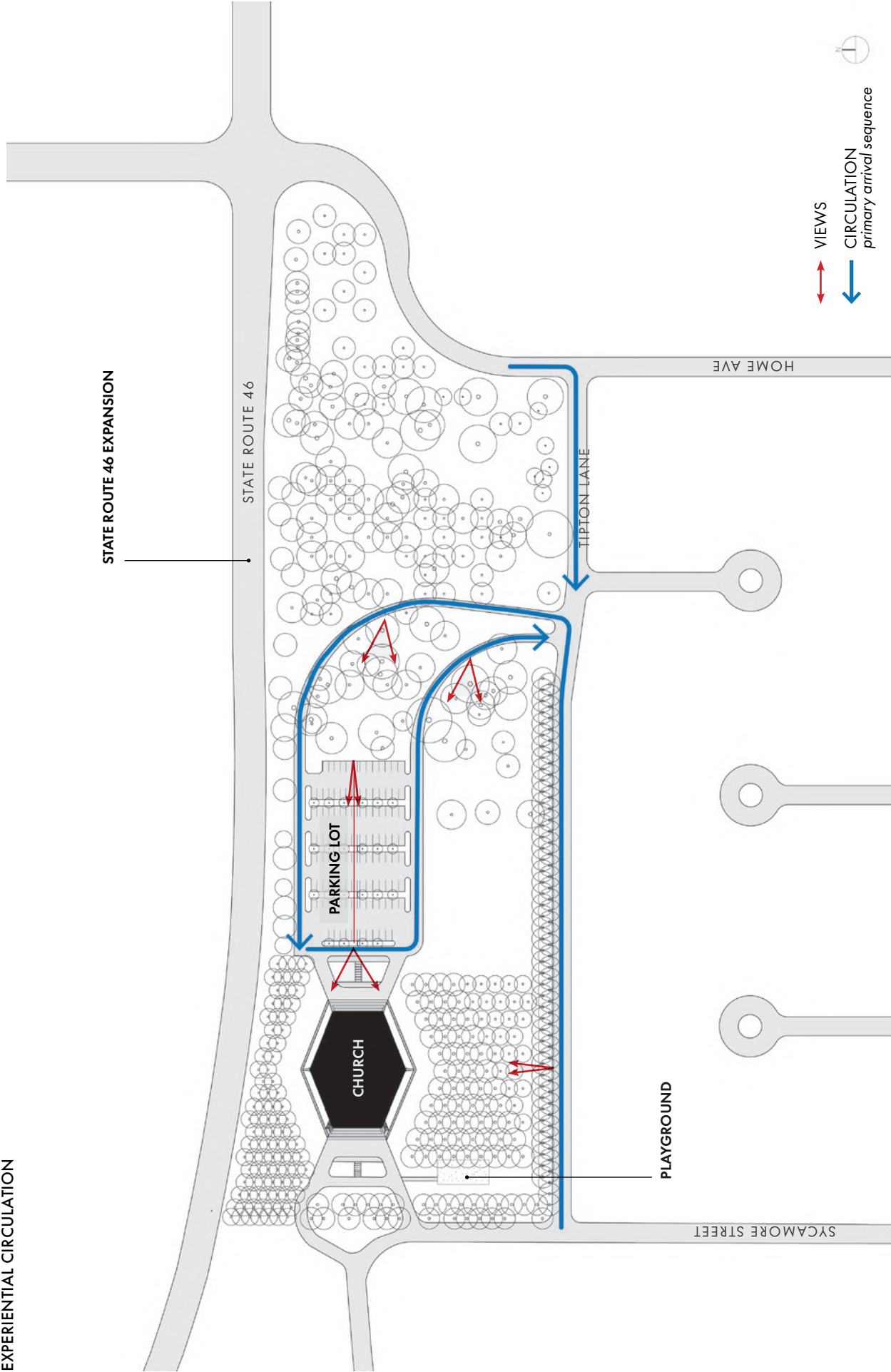
1974 TO TODAY

OVERLAY OF CHANGES



# NORTH CHRISTIAN CHURCH SITE FRAMEWORK

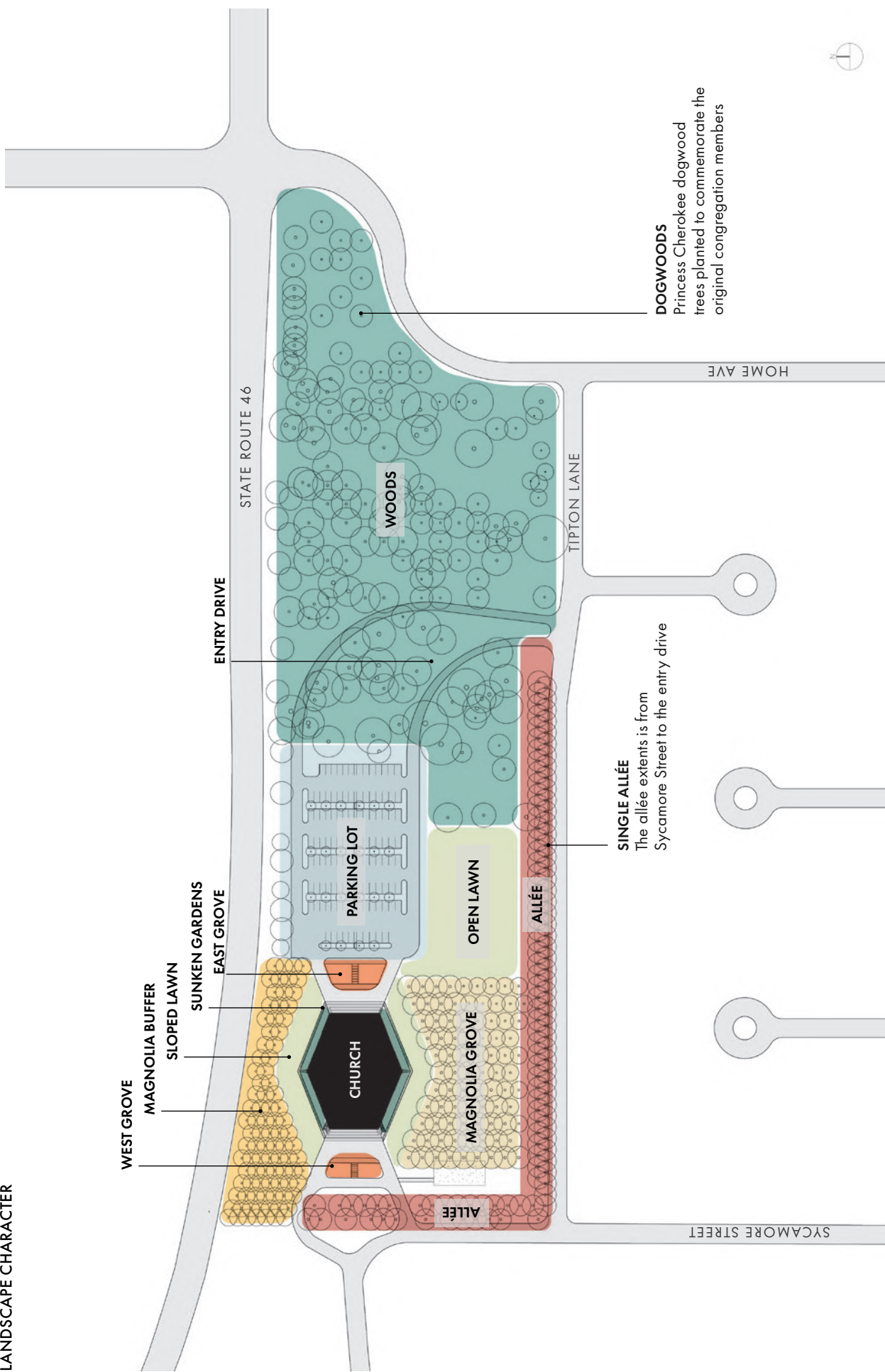
## TODAY'S EXISTING CONDITIONS EXPERIENTIAL CIRCULATION





## NORTH CHRISTIAN CHURCH SITE FRAMEWORK

### TODAY'S EXISTING CONDITIONS LANDSCAPE CHARACTER





An aerial photograph of a modern building with a prominent, tall, dark spire. The building has a dark, angular roof and is situated on a grassy area. In the background, there is a large body of water, likely a lake, with a forested shoreline. The sky is filled with soft, white clouds. The entire image is in a monochromatic blue-grey tone.

# Inventory & Analysis

Landscape Assessment

53

Existing Site Conditions

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# LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

## OBSERVATIONS

The following section describes the landscape of North Christian Church as it exists today. The documentation of the existing conditions is organized via the site's Defining Landscape Features, as outlined in the "Site Design Evolution" section:

### Gridded Trees

- The clear spatial organization of trees remains perceptible in the planted grids and quincunxes (offset grids) of the magnolia groves and maple allées and, to a lesser extent, the woods.

### Patterned Vegetation

- The parking lot features the original arborvitae hedge along its perimeter, but recent initiatives have replaced the original arborvitae hedges with inkberry shrubs within the lot itself.

### Experiential Circulation

- The site retains its defined arrival sequence for visitors with views that frame and screen the church on-approach.
- A clear axial approach from the parking lot is renewed following the removal of the overgrown arborvitae within the parking area, but with a minimized effect due to the change in species to inkberry, which will not achieve the intended height and volume.

### Infrastructure

- Built elements including the building perimeter retaining walls, ramps, railings, paving, and steps, remain in their original form, but their level of deterioration ranges from minor to extensive.

## METHODOLOGY

In this section, each Defining Landscape Feature is identified and recorded with:

### Imagery

- A collection of primarily contemporary photographs with historic images, as available, in addition to analysis plans and diagrams.

### Documentation

- Field visits informed observations of the existing conditions.
- ☒ Green checkmarks note positive attributes such as strong design integrity and physical conditions ranging from fair to good.
- ☒ Red X's indicate issues of concern: characteristics not aligned with design intent and/or poor physical condition beyond normal wear-and-tear.

## EVALUATION CRITERIA

For each Site Element, the assessment considers both the character and the condition:

### Character

Describes how well the site elements maintain the integrity of the historic design intent, the influence of the element on the visitor experience, and how the overall appearance contributes to the landscape's aesthetics.

### Condition

Focuses on structural maintenance, and safety issues, in addition to the health of living systems like trees and vegetation.

The assessment criteria identify the current state of the element's character and condition as evaluated within the following spectrum:

### Good

Exemplary character and its condition only requires continued maintenance; no immediate action required.

### Fair

Satisfactory character and its condition requires attention and long-term action.

### Poor

Lacking character and its condition requires immediate action and repair.

Recommendations to address the observed conditions are provided in the section: "Conservation Recommendations."

## LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

Overall, the landscape of North Christian Church retains its core tenets: a clear spatial organization of the landscape that is in dialogue with the church building. The design intent of Dan Kiley is evident, though the condition of vegetation and hardscape is degraded after decades of natural processes, plant growth, and visitor use. The main takeaways from the Existing Conditions documentation are:

### Mature & Overgrown Tree Canopy

- After 50+ years of growth, the full expression of the plant growth is remarkable, but mature trees present their own set of challenges with maintenance and inevitable replacement at the end of their lifespan.

### Fair to Poor Condition of Infrastructure

- The physical condition of elements like the perimeter retaining walls, paving, and railings has deteriorated beyond typical wear-and-tear, raising concerns about safety.
- Interim solutions to fix the drainage at the east and west entrances did not address the source of the issue and negatively impacted the site's built elements.

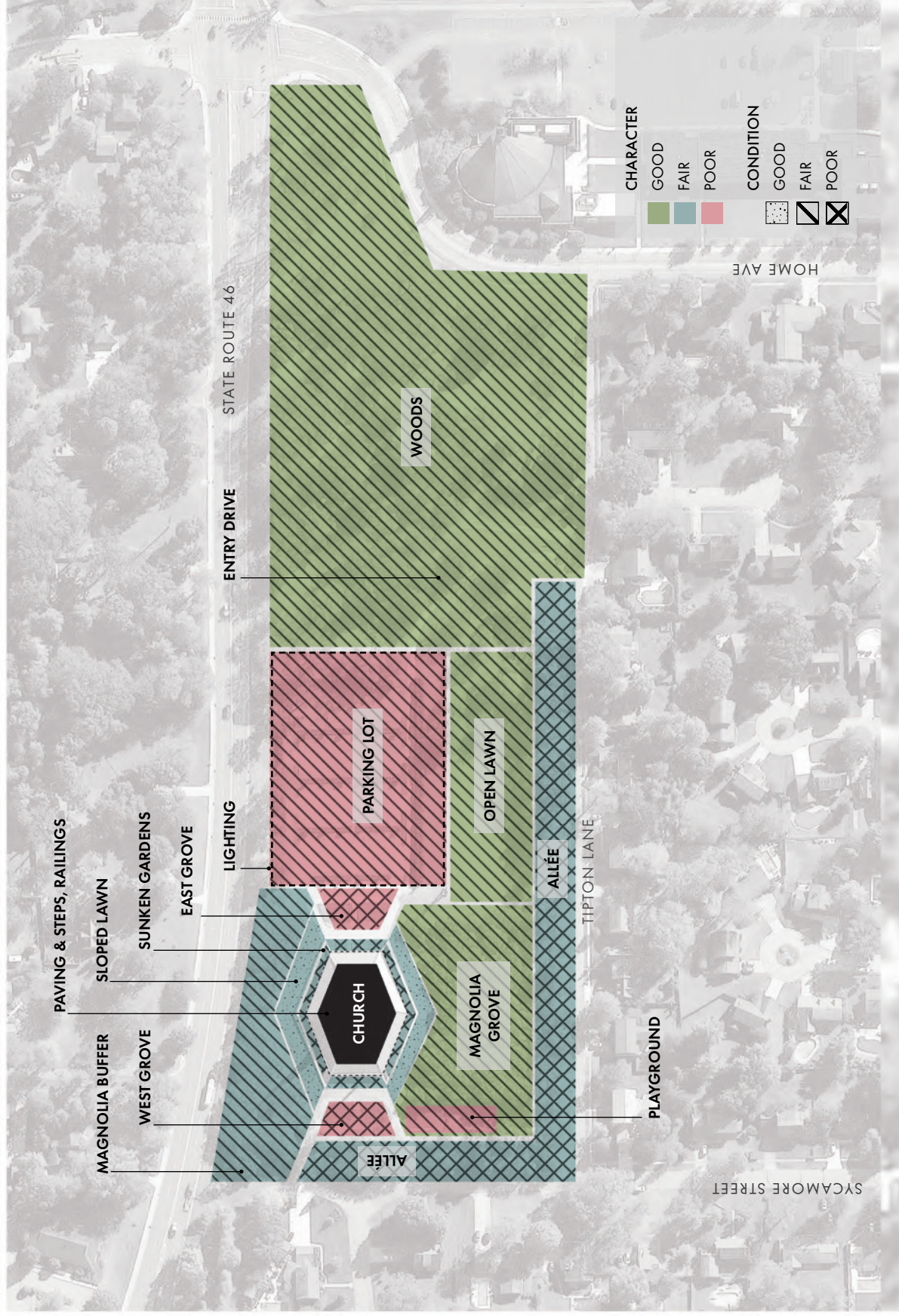
### Opportunities to Restore Design Intent

- The documentation identifies a range of opportunities to update the site to be both better aligned with the historic design intent, as well as positioned for a role of exemplary "living conservation" in the future. Landscape systems grow and evolve with a natural life cycle, so adapting to different perceptions and uses will be necessary to support a design vision for the site that is in the spirit of Kiley's legacy. This includes: addressing the prior treatment of the parking lot, the playground, groundcover conditions beyond turf in areas like the sloped lawn and the woods, and the allée along Tipton Lane.

SITE ELEMENTS	CHARACTER			CONDITION		
	GOOD	FAIR	POOR	GOOD	FAIR	POOR
MAPLE ALLÉES		●				●
MAGNOLIA BUFFER		●			●	
MAGNOLIA GROVE	●				●	
WOODS	●				●	
ENTRY DRIVE	●				●	
PARKING LOT PLANTING			●		●	
EAST & WEST GROVES			●			●
SUNKEN GARDENS		●				●
SLOPED LAWN		●		●		
OPEN LAWN	●				●	
DRAINAGE		●				●
PAVING & STEPS		●			●	
RAILINGS		●			●	
LIGHTING			●		●	
PLAYGROUND			●		●	

# LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT

## NORTH CHRISTIAN CHURCH

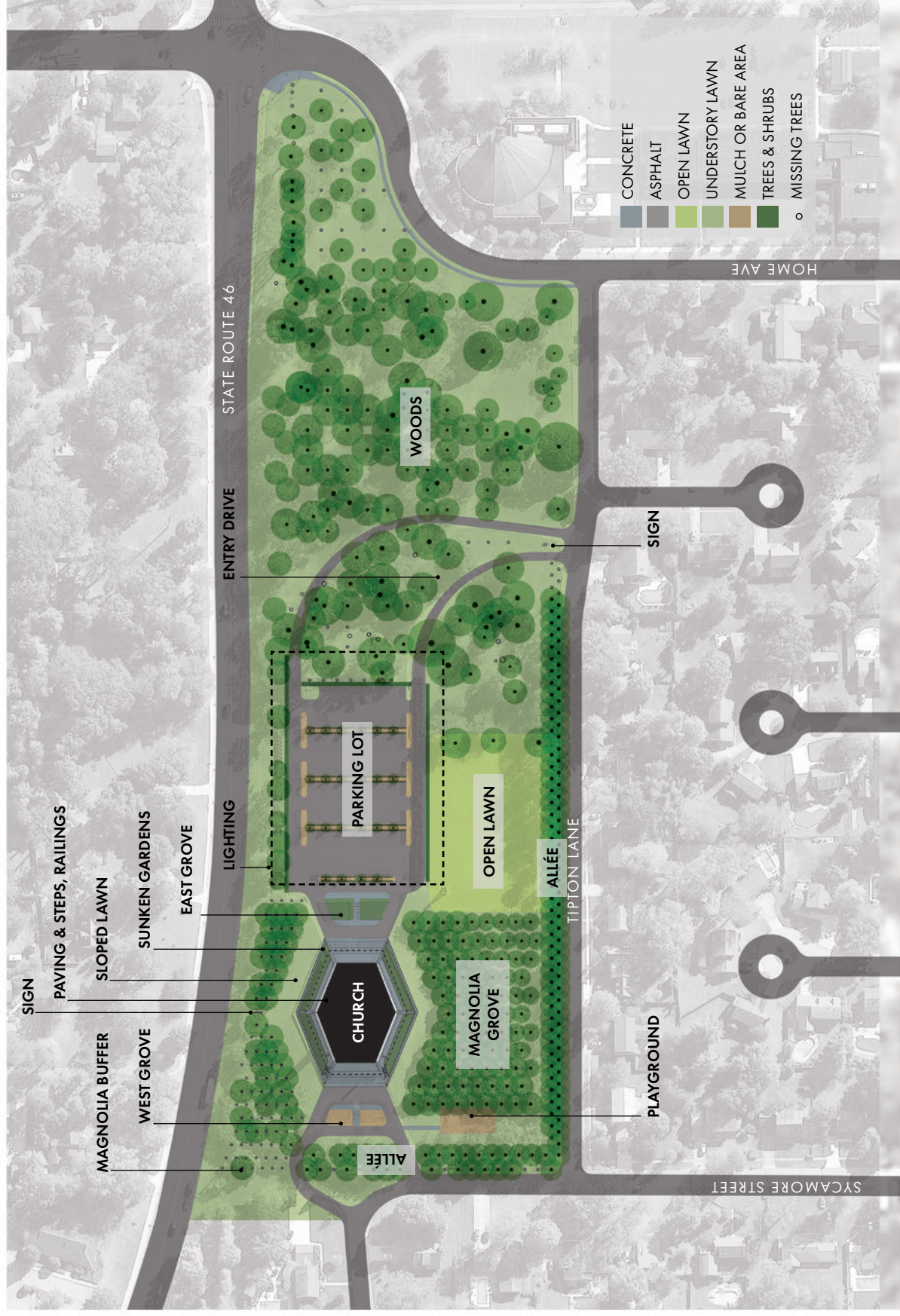


Source: Merritt Chase



## EXISTING SITE CONDITIONS

### NORTH CHRISTIAN CHURCH



Source: Merritt Chase



# EXISTING SITE CONDITIONS

## DEFINING LANDSCAPE FEATURES | GRIDDED TREES



### 1 MAPLE ALLÉES

- ✓ Defines the edge of the site
- ✓ Spatial experience of enclosure on a grand scale with high and upright canopy
- ✗ Tight plant spacing impacts form of trees as they mature
- ✗ Health of mature trees
- ✗ A few removed trees



### 3 MAGNOLIA GROVE

- ✓ Planted in a quincunx as a stand of trees
- ✓ Spatial experience of enclosure with low, upright, and sprawling canopy
- ✗ Tight plant spacing impacts form of trees as they mature
- ✗ Health of mature trees
- ✗ A few removed trees

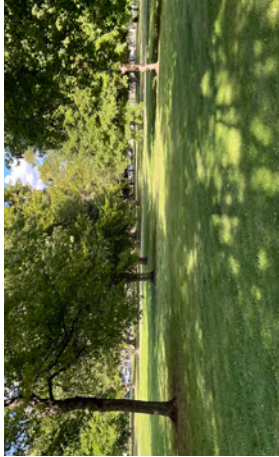


### 2 MAGNOLIA BUFFER

- ✓ Planted in a quincunx as a stand of trees
- ✓ Spatial experience of enclosure with low, upright, and sprawling canopy
- ✗ Tight plant spacing impacts form of trees as they mature (of note: spacing is tighter than in the Magnolia Grove)
- ✗ Health of removed trees
- ✗ Several missing trees

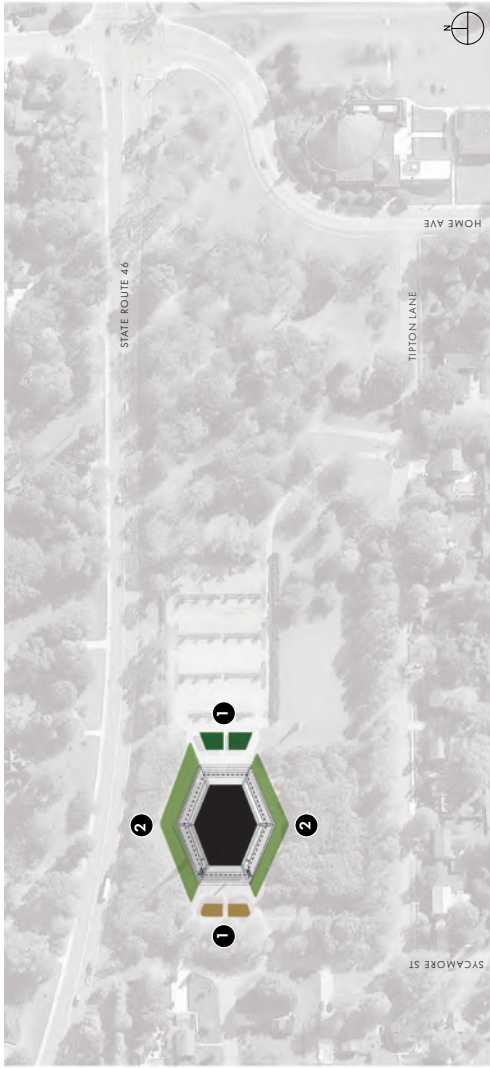
### 4 WOODS

- ✓ Spatial experience balances out the more formal and maintained landscape core around the church
- ✓ Planting in a grid is somewhat legible
- ✗ Health of mature trees; stumps in-place
- ✗ Removed trees, especially on the eastern edge that creates an experience of exposure, rather than enclosure in woods
- ✗ Lawn has dry patches; opportunity to lower maintenance with a woodland meadow groundcover



# EXISTING SITE CONDITIONS

## DEFINING LANDSCAPE FEATURES | PATTERNED VEGETATION



### 1 EAST & WEST GROVES

- ☒ Footprint still in-place
- ☒ Serves as transition zone to the church
- ☒ Eastern drop-off planting character of a single type of low groundcover does not match design intent
- ☒ Western drop-off planting of turf, which has many dry and bare patches, is in poor condition and does not reflect design intent



### 2 SLOPED LAWN

- ☒ Role as extension of the architecture of the church, reinforcing the "ascension"
- ☒ Transition zone from magnolia plantings to the church building





# EXISTING SITE CONDITIONS

## DEFINING LANDSCAPE FEATURES | EXPERIENTIAL CIRCULATION



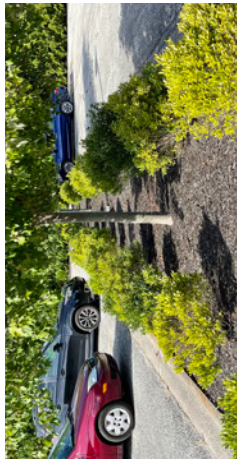
### 1 OPEN LAWN

- ☒ Allows for change in the views of church on-approach
- ☒ Lack of biodiversity and high maintenance; opportunity to respond to contemporary context with a grass meadow



### 3 PARKING LOT PLANTING

- ☒ Layout reflects original design
- ☒ Clear entry axis
- ☒ Loss of spatial "rooms" due to inkberry replacements which will not grow to fulfill the height and volume of the design intent



### 2 ENTRY DRIVE

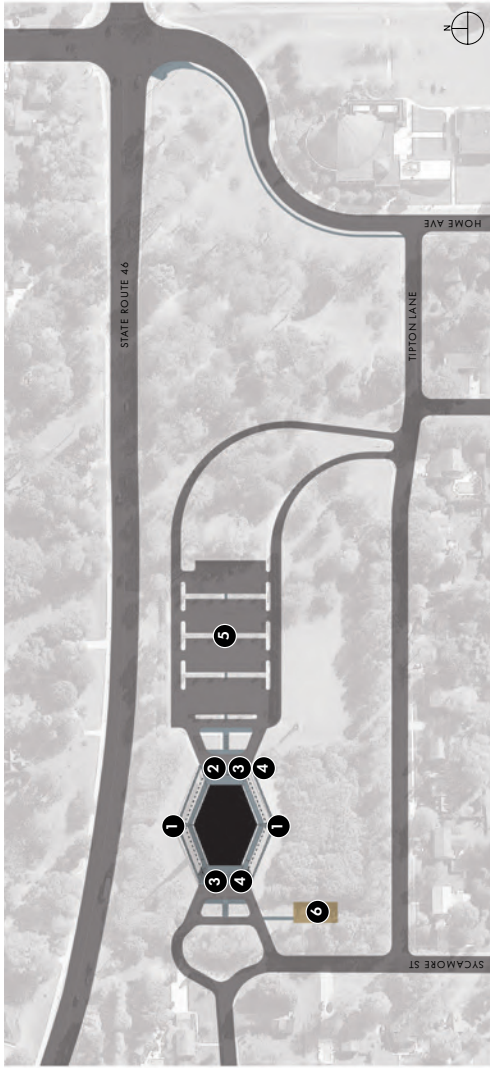
- ☒ Layout reflects original design
- ☒ Physical condition features wear-and-tear
- ☒ Missing trees





# EXISTING SITE CONDITIONS

## DEFINING LANDSCAPE FEATURES | INFRASTRUCTURE



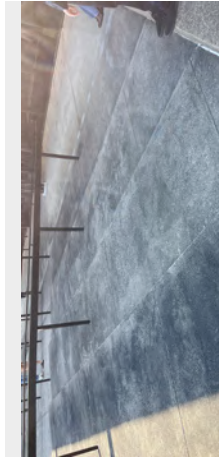
### 1 SUNKEN GARDENS

- ☒ Walls are unstable
- ☒ Uneven settlement



### 3 PAVING & STEPS

- ☒ Fair paving conditions for cast-in-place concrete entry steps, crushed stone paths in the basement perimeter, sidewalks, and asphalt road
- ☒ Poor condition: uneven surfaces, significant wear-and-tear



### 5 LIGHTING

- ☒ Historic elements retained though condition is poor
- ☒ Need additional lighting for safety at night
- ☒ Not energy efficient



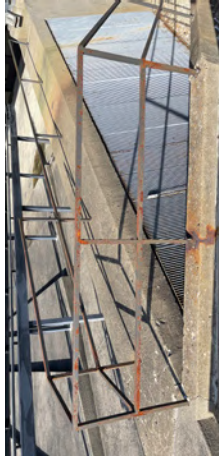
### 2 DRAINAGE

- ☒ Drainage functionality is poor even with interim solutions
- ☒ Trench drain at the east and west entrances
- ☒ Poor condition: fixtures have rust and significant wear-and-tear



### 4 RAILINGS

- ☒ Good character
- ☒ Poor condition: rust and significant wear-and-tear



### 6 PLAYGROUND

- ☒ Playground is in conflict with design intent
- ☒ Playground condition is poor and may not be to code





# Conservation Recommendations

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## RECOMMENDATIONS FRAMEWORK

*“Should not the role of design be to reconnect human beings with their space on their land?” - Dan Kiley*

The North Christian Church property is significant to Columbus, for it represents the final collaboration between the Miller Family, Eero Saarinen, Alexander Girard, and Dan Kiley. After Saarinen's death, Kiley continued to collaborate with another eminent architect office, Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo and Associates. The landscape makes up a notable portion of the overall site, extending the architectural design principles beyond the building.

Today, the structure and spatial organization of the site reflect Dan Kiley's design intent, though the mature planting is overgrown, and the hardscape elements have deteriorated past normal wear-and-tear.

Change is inevitable when engaging with landscapes over time. Trees and plants, as living organisms, have a natural life cycle, built elements weather with age, cultural experiences shift people's expectations and perceptions. Fundamental changes do occur over time as the landscape grows out, the plant material dies, and replacements are planted to start the cycle all over again. Adaptability is necessary when pursuing design intent in the preservation of landscapes.

This plan, in its recommendations, not only respects the design intent and offers ways to restore defining characteristics but also identifies opportunities to make a historic site relevant moving into the future as an example of growth and the innate evolution of landscapes.

### OVERALL GOALS FOR DEFINING LANDSCAPE FEATURES

- Gridded Trees**
  - Maintain the design intent of these significant landscape framework elements
  - Maximize tree health for longevity
  - Plan for future replacements
- Patterned Vegetation**
  - Balance design intent with maintenance capacity and future conditions
  - Maintain the health and appearance of shrubs and groundcovers
- Experiential Circulation**
  - Maintain the design intent of a dynamic sequence of views as visitors move through the site
  - Consider the contemporary visitor experience and the need for new accommodations as the use and occupancy of the site changes
- Infrastructure**
  - Update features to working conditions that also align with design intent
  - Prioritize safety
  - Modernize systems via an approach that does not alter the element's visible impact

### TREATMENT ZONES

In both zones, passive enjoyment of the site shall be emphasized. If future uses require new uses or events, then these will be implemented with occasional frequency and minimal physical interventions to the site.

#### Historic Core

- Protection, maintenance, restoration, and repair shall be prioritized. Replacements shall be minimized.

#### Flexible Use Zone

- This area shall be appropriate for exploring new additions or uses with minimal interventions that support the historic integrity of the site.

### ACTIONS

The recommendations are action-based and, at a high level, are organized into these general categories:

#### Remove

- Not original to the design or no longer contributing to the overall intent. The installation is possibly in a state of disrepair beyond what is salvageable or recoverable.

#### Retain

- The character and condition is good. Keep and protect; continue maintenance.

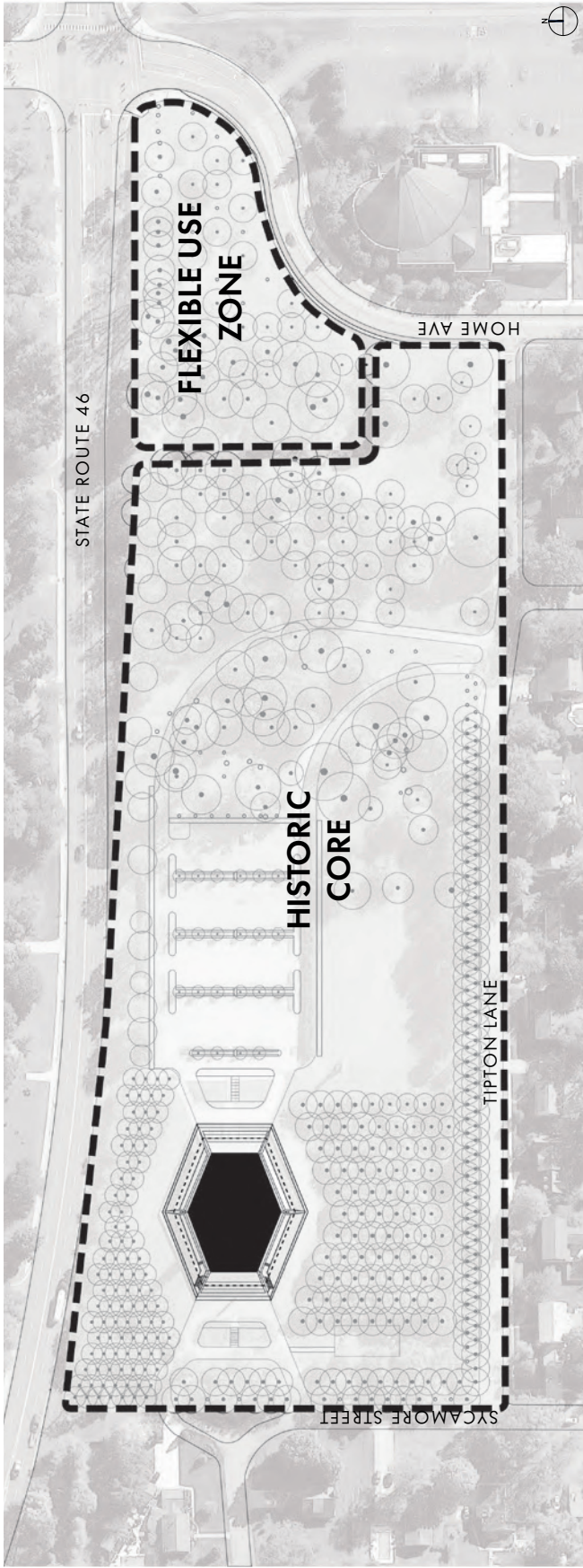
#### Restore

- The character and condition is fair or poor, so efforts should be made to replace or resolve damage due to time and wear-and-tear.

#### Refresh

- The element(s) are no longer appropriate to the site or location and should be reviewed for replacement by an alternate, more suitable option.

**TREATMENT ZONES**  
**NORTH CHRISTIAN CHURCH**



**USES**

- In both zones, passive enjoyment of the site shall be emphasized. If future uses require new uses or events, then these will be implemented with occasional frequency and minimal physical interventions to the site.

**HISTORIC CORE**

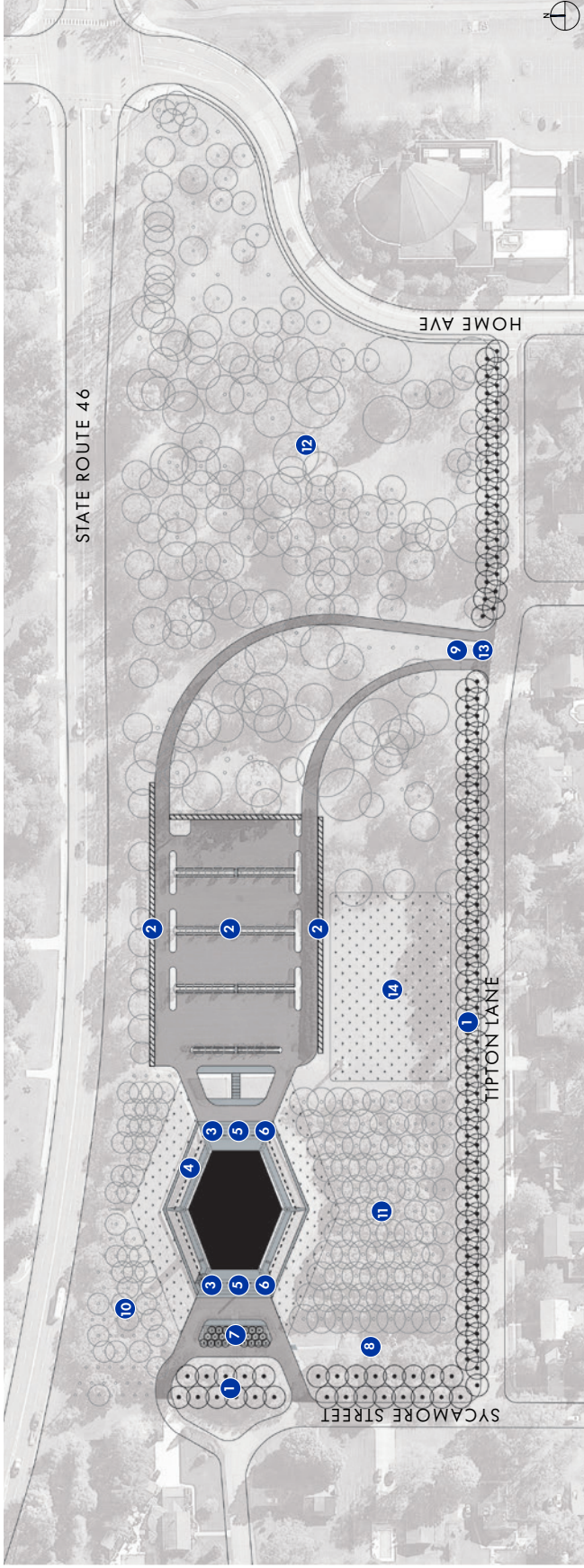
- In this area, new uses shall maximize the retention of historic characteristics, materials, elements, and spatial relationships that are aligned with the original intent. Past changes in this area that have garnered significance shall be retained and preserved. Protection, maintenance, restoration, and repair shall be prioritized. Replacements shall be minimized.

**FLEXIBLE USE ZONE**

- The principal recommendation for this area is that it remains a woodland for passive enjoyment of the site, but if there are future requirements for new uses and/or additions to the property, then this area shall be appropriate for exploring minimal interventions. New additions shall be compatible with the historic materials, scale, and features that support the overall visual integrity of the site.



## SHORT-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS BY PRIORITY



### HIGH PRIORITY

- 1 Maple Allées:** If more than 50% of the trees are compromised, remove all the trees and replant the entire formation; extend the allée along Tipton Lane.
- 2 Parking Lot Planting:** Replace trees and inkberry hedges to match the original design of the spatial "rooms"; remove the arborvitae hedges surrounding the parking lot and replant with a new arborvitae planting.
- 3 Drainage:** Improve drainage on-site; update drainage features.
- 4 Sunken Gardens:** Stabilize retaining walls.
- 5 Paving & Steps:** Fix and update the character and condition of paving and steps throughout site; re-pave and re-stripe the surface lot.
- 6 Railings:** Restore or replace existing railings.
- 7 West Grove:** Replace turf and bare areas in the West Grove with a combination of different shrubs for visual interest.
- 8 Playground:** Remove playground and plant groundcover.
- 9 Entry Drive:** Replant missing trees for visual and experiential impact.

### MEDIUM PRIORITY

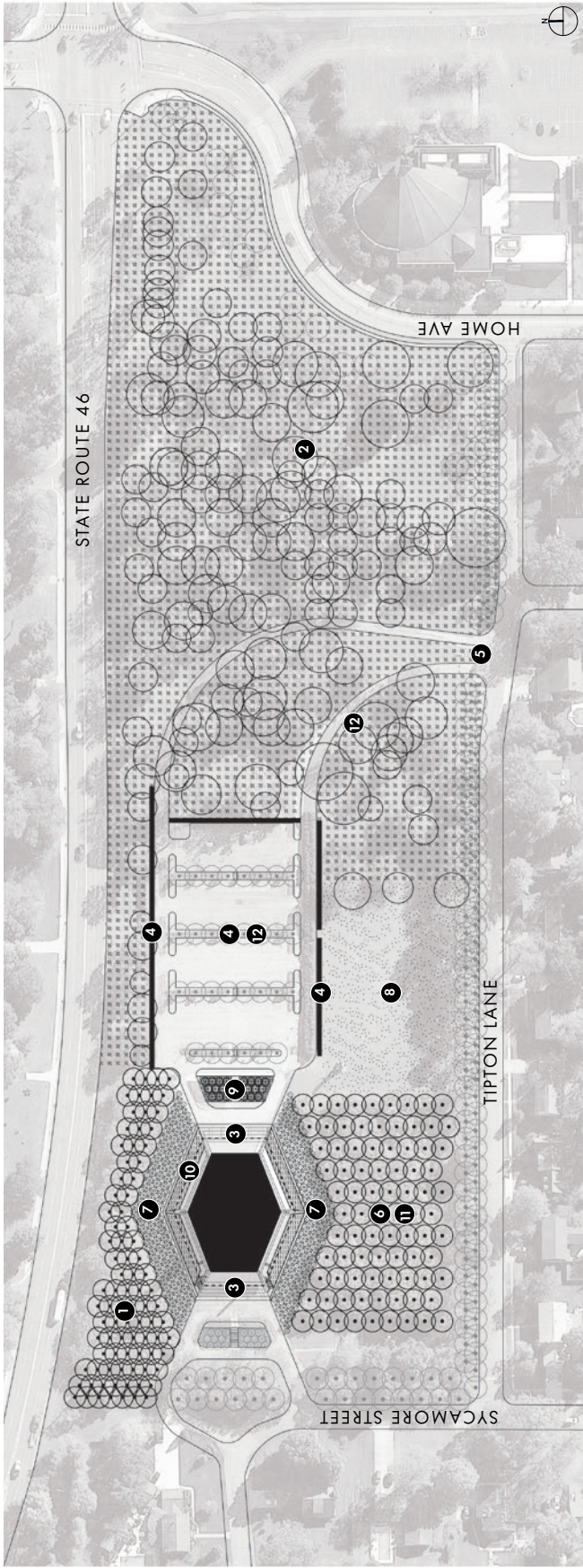
- 10 Magnolia Buffer:** Identify declining or hazardous trees and either treat or remove; do not replace individual trees until ready to replant the entire group of trees.
- 11 Magnolia Grove:** Identify declining or hazardous trees and either treat or remove; do not replace individual trees until ready to replant the entire group of trees.
- 12 Woods:** Identify and treat declining or hazardous trees. If removal is necessary, then replace the tree.
- 13 Entry Drive:** Re-pave to address wear-and-tear and restore physical condition.

### LOW PRIORITY

- 14 Open Lawn:** Maintain the lawn as a turf groundcover.



## LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS BY PRIORITY



### HIGH PRIORITY

- 1 Magnolia Buffer:** Remove all the trees and replant the entire formation; maintain visual buffer between State Route 46 and the church building.
- 2 Woods:** Explore replacing the lawn with a woodland meadow groundcover; maintain woods to its fullest extent.
- 3 Drainage:** Modernize subgrade drainage elements.
- 4 Parking Lot Planting:** Maintain planting that creates spatial "rooms."
- 5 Entry Drive:** Retain the separate entry and exit drives through a copse of hardwood trees.

### MEDIUM PRIORITY

- 6 Magnolia Grove:** If more than 50% of the trees are compromised, then remove all the trees and replant the entire formation.
- 7 Sloped Lawn:** Maintain the lawn groundcover.
- 8 Open Lawn:** Explore replacing the lawn with a grass meadow.
- 9 East Grove:** Replace planting with a combination of different shrubs for visual interest.
- 10 Sunken Gardens:** Retain periwinkle, or comparable, planting; maintain rows of bulbs.

### LOW PRIORITY

- 11 Magnolia Grove:** Time replanting of Magnolia Grove to coincide with replanting the Magnolia Buffer; this is preferred for continuity but not critical.
- 12 Lighting:** Replace lighting with fixtures that have historic character and energy efficiency; depending on future use, install additional lighting.

MAPLE ALLÉES

SHORT-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

High Priority: If more than 50% of the trees are compromised, remove all the trees and replant the entire formation.

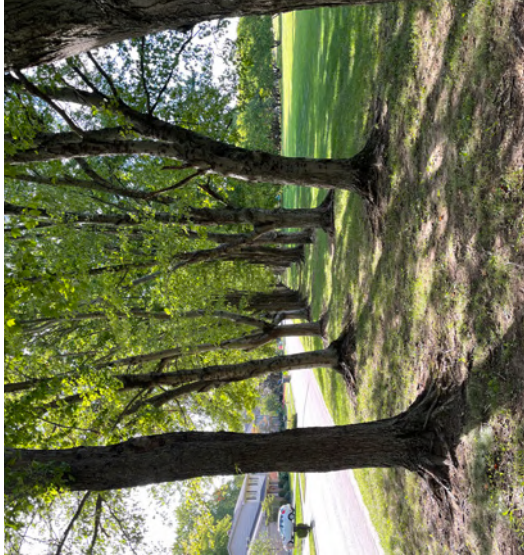
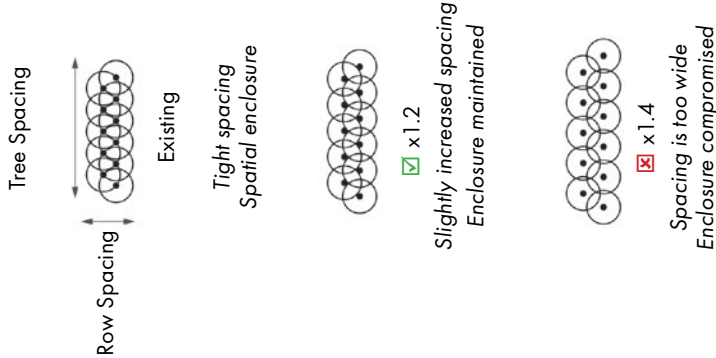
- Due to the poor character and condition of the mature maple allées, prioritizing this initiative is recommended.
- Removing and replanting the entire formation will re-establish the design intent. The grove of trees will be the same age and grow together at the same rate.
- Maintain tree species that align with historic intent: Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*) or comparable medium-sized oval to rounded canopy tree (approximately 40-50' tall and wide) with fall color.
- Maintain gridded quincunx tree formations, but explore increasing tree spacing by a factor of 1.2 to improve growing environment for longevity, while also maintaining spatial experience.

High Priority: Extend the allée along Tipton Lane to the eastern extent of the site to reflect design intent.

- When replanting the allée, this offers the opportunity to restore the design intent of the trees extending across the entire property to Home Avenue.

LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

N/A





## MAGNOLIA BUFFER

### SHORT-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

Medium Priority: Identify declining or hazardous trees and either treat or remove.

- Do not replace individual trees until ready to replant the entire group of trees.

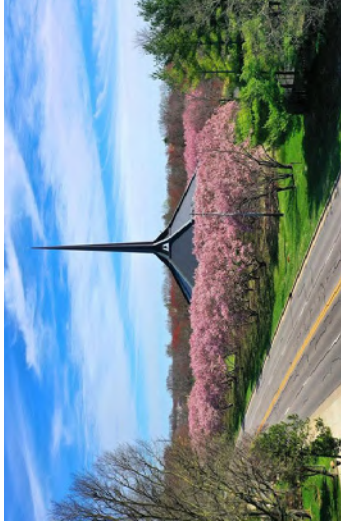
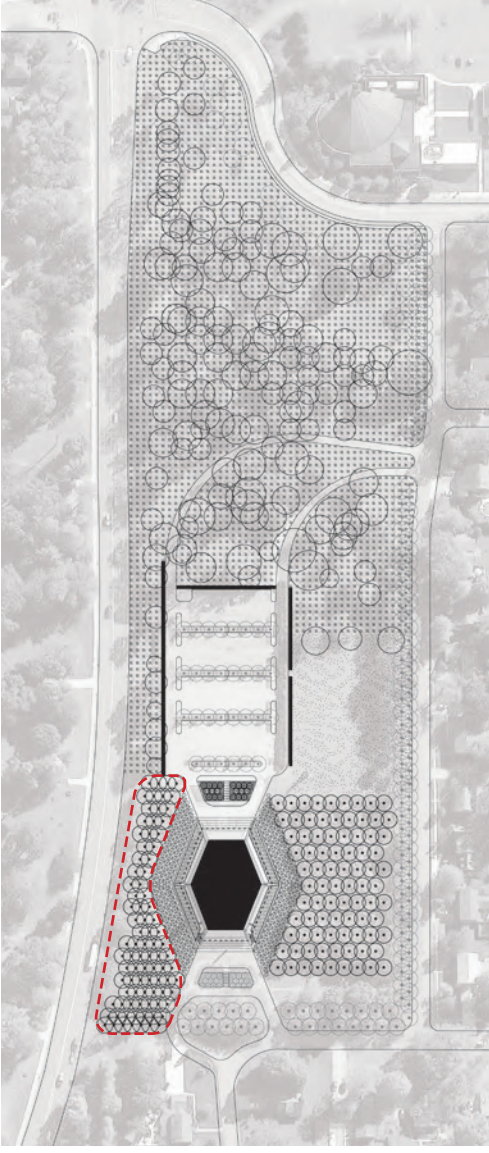
### LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

High Priority: Remove all the trees and replant the entire formation.

- If more than 50% of the trees are compromised, then replanting shall be the best strategy for maintaining design intent. Here, more than half the trees have already been removed over time, so removing and replanting the entire formation will re-establish the design intent. The grove of trees will be the same age and grow together at the same rate.
- Maintain tree species that align with historic intent: Saucer Magnolia (*Magnolia x soulangeana*) or comparable small, low-branched tree (approximately 20-30' tall and wide) with fall color and showy flowers in the spring, like Eastern Redbud (*Cercis canadensis*).
- Maintain gridded quincunx tree formations with the original plant spacing, but further explore a strategic selective removal process.

High Priority: Maintain visual buffer between State Route 46 and the church building.

- This grove of trees provides privacy, as well as fosters a landscape experience of enclosure. In the past, a road-widening project threatened this stand of trees. Its important role as a site perimeter planting must be conserved.



Source: Flickr





## MAGNOLIA GROVE

### SHORT-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

**Medium Priority:** Identify declining or hazardous trees and either treat or remove, as needed.

- The plant spacing in the Magnolia Grove is not as tight as the Magnolia Buffer, so the trees have had more space to grow and their character is still in good condition despite a few missing trees.

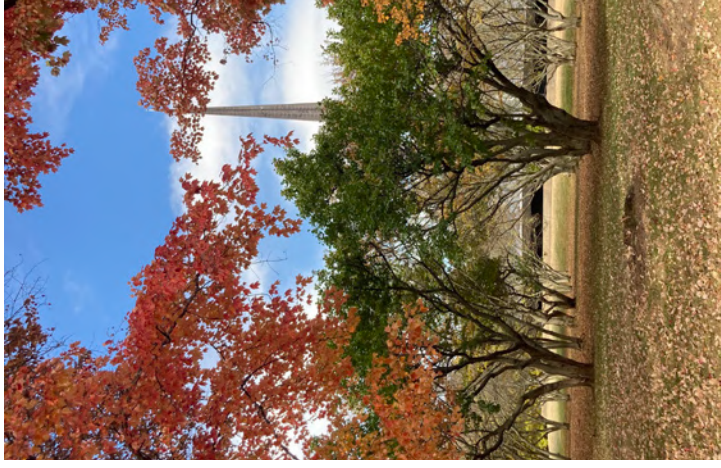
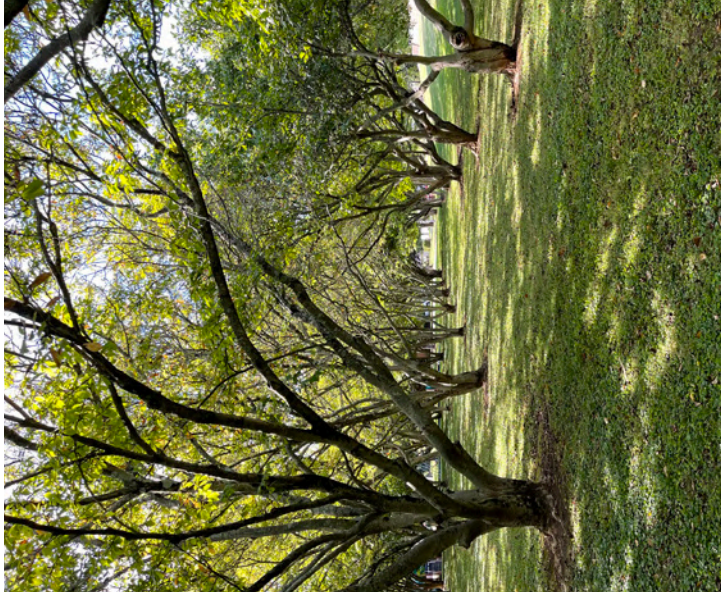
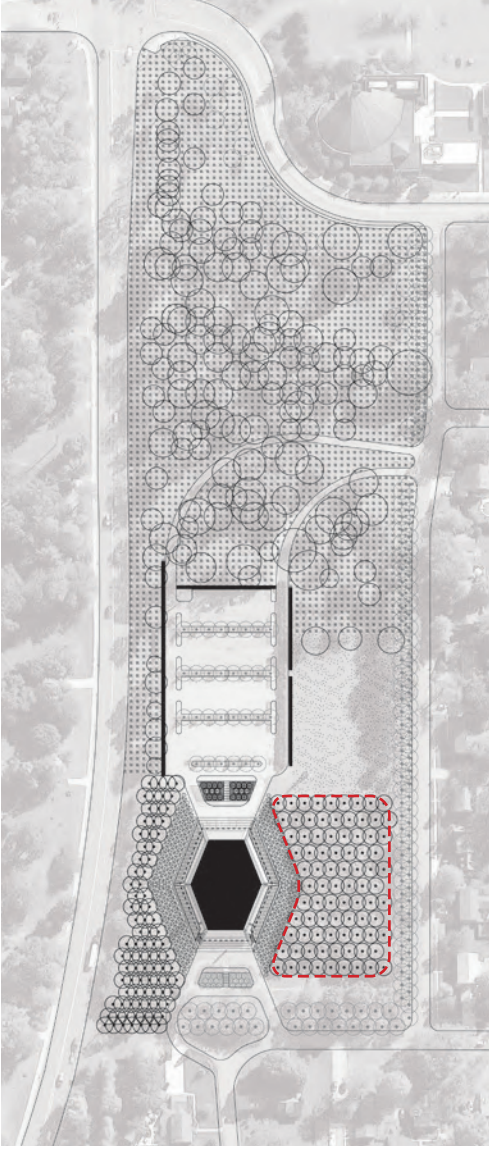
### LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

**Medium Priority:** If more than 50% of the trees are compromised, then remove all the trees and replant the entire formation.

- If more than 50% of the trees are compromised, then removing and replanting the entire formation will re-establish the design intent. The grove of trees will be the same age and grow together at the same rate.
- Maintain tree species that align with historic intent: Saucer Magnolia (*Magnolia x soulangeana*) or comparable small, low-branched tree (approximately 20-30' tall and wide) with fall color and showy flowers in the spring, like Eastern Redbud (*Cercis canadensis*).
- Maintain gridded quincunx tree formations with the original plant spacing.

**Low Priority:** Time replanting of Magnolia Grove to coincide with replanting the Magnolia Buffer.

- Replanting both the Grove and the Buffer at the same time is preferred for continuity, but not critical since the physical distance between the two site elements already creates a distinction in experience.





## WOODS

### SHORT-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

**Medium Priority:** Identify and treat declining or hazardous trees. If removal is necessary, then replace the tree.

- A woodland condition can be achieved with trees of varying ages, so a tree replanting strategy in this area can replace individual trees as the situation arises. This approach balances alignment with design intent and maintenance of tree health for visitor safety.
- Tree replacements must maintain the gridded on-center plant spacing and tree species that align with historic intent of native hardwoods. Review planting and consider alternatives that respond to a changing climate. If replacing a beech tree, replant with beech (*Fagus grandifolia*) or comparable dense, rounded canopy woodland tree (approx. 50-70' tall and wide).

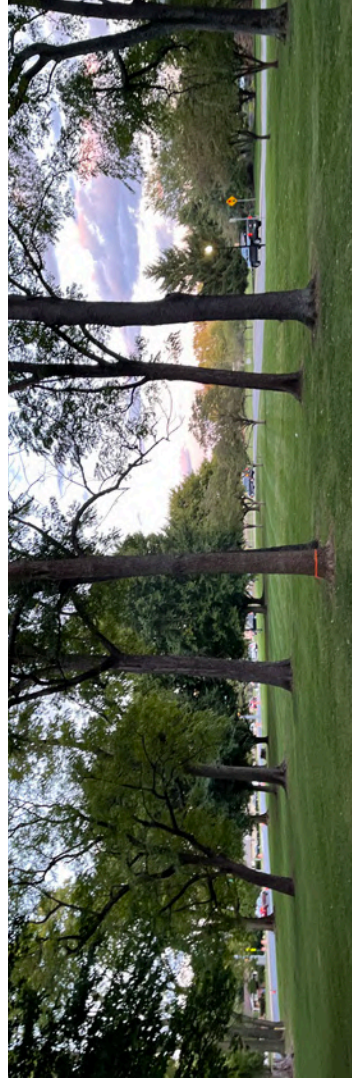
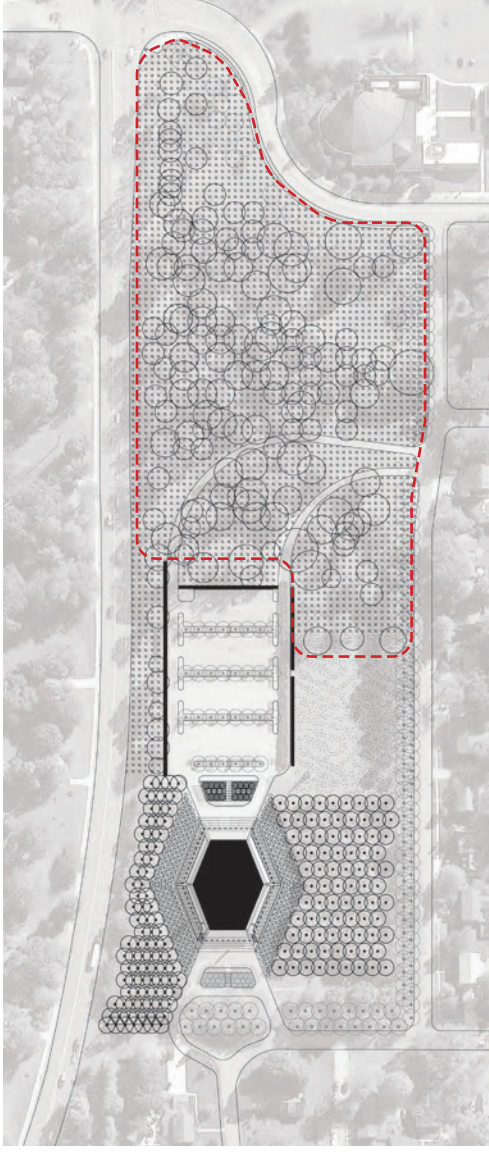
### LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

**High Priority:** Explore replacing the lawn with a woodland meadow groundcover.

- The lawn in the woods contains bare patches, lacks biodiversity, and requires frequent maintenance. Improving the appearance, responding to contemporary expectations of ecological integrity, and lowering maintenance while also retaining design intent can be accomplished with a transition to a woodland meadow groundcover of a low-height mix of shade-tolerant species, perennials, and sedges. Mown paths could provide access and circulation.

**High Priority:** Maintain full extents of the woods.

- The scale counterbalances the granularity of spaces around the church. The woods in its entirety must be conserved.





## EAST & WEST GROVES

### SHORT-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

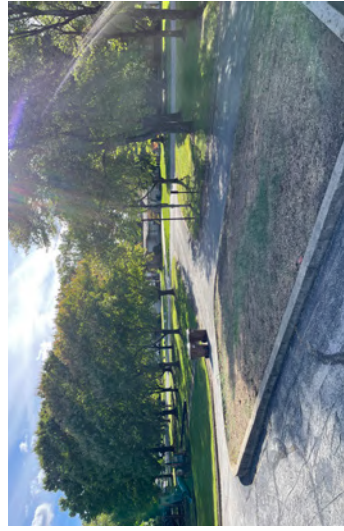
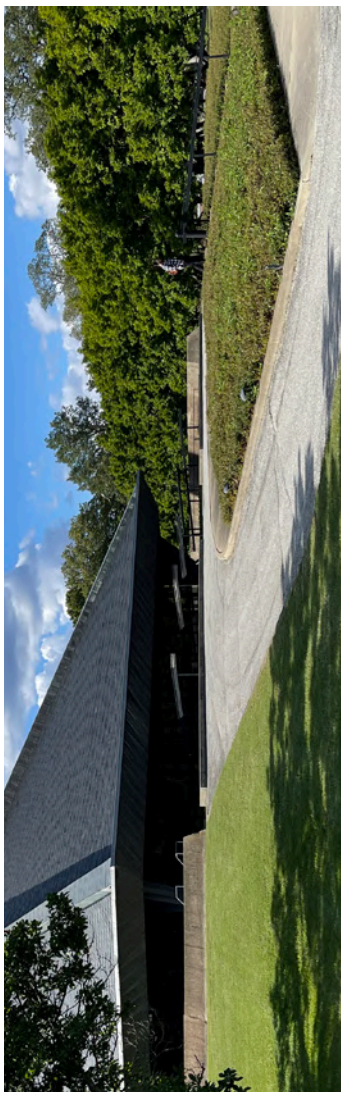
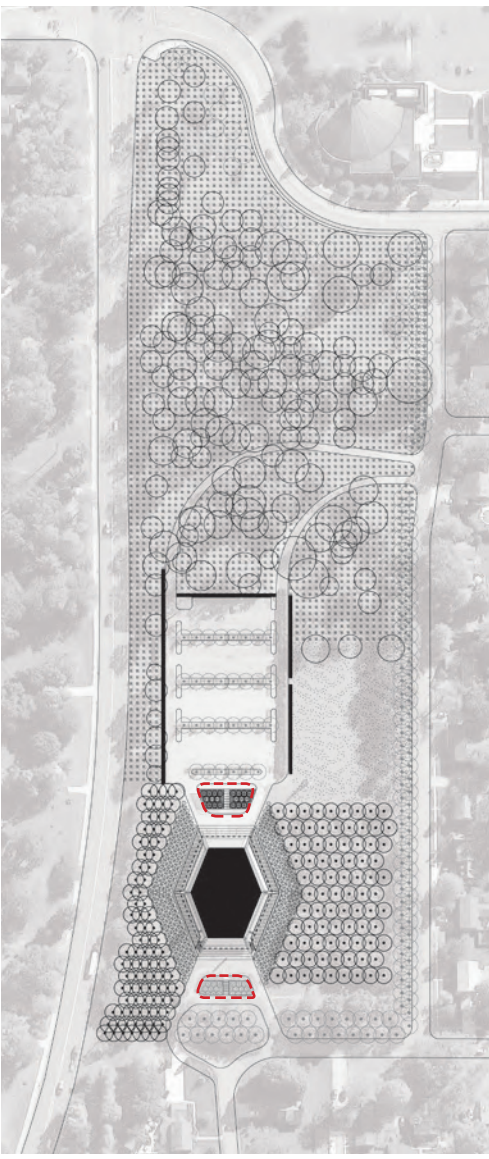
**High Priority:** Replace turf and bare areas in the West Grove with a combination of different shrubs for visual interest.

- The turf lawn in its current condition is neglected with dry and bare patches. A transition to shrub plantings will improve the appearance and perception of the space, enhance biodiversity, and provide an opportunity to restore design intent.
- The original design intent was to create visual interest with form and color upon arrival, using a combination of Dwarf Japanese Yew and Sargent Crabapple.

### LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

**Medium Priority:** Replace planting in the East Grove with a combination of different shrubs for visual interest.

- Today's uniform, low-growing plant massing lacks the character of prior plantings. Introducing a combination of shrubs will improve the aesthetics of the space and provide an opportunity to restore design intent.
- The original design intent was to create visual interest with form and color upon arrival, using a combination of Dwarf Japanese Yew and Sargent Crabapple.





## SLOPED LAWN

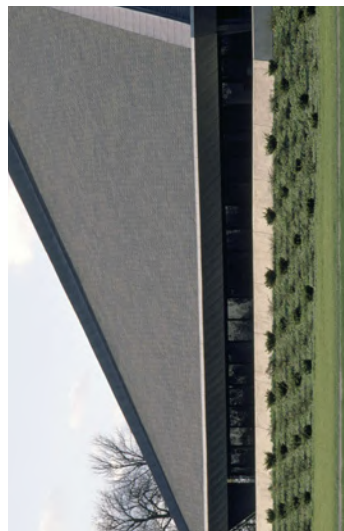
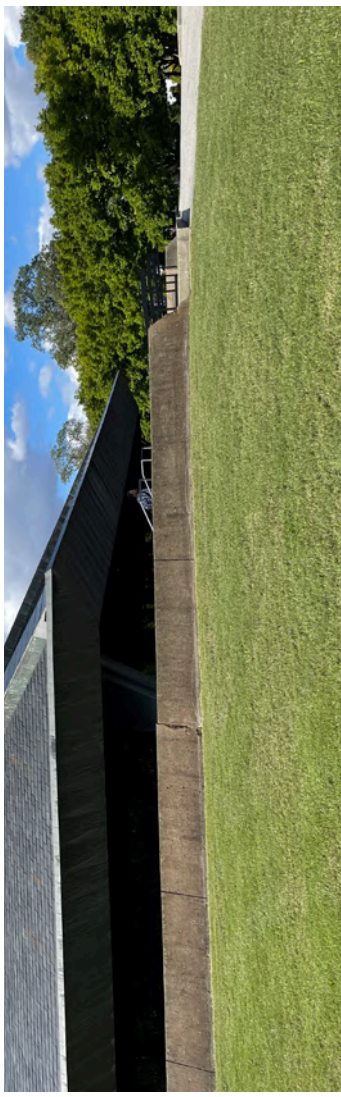
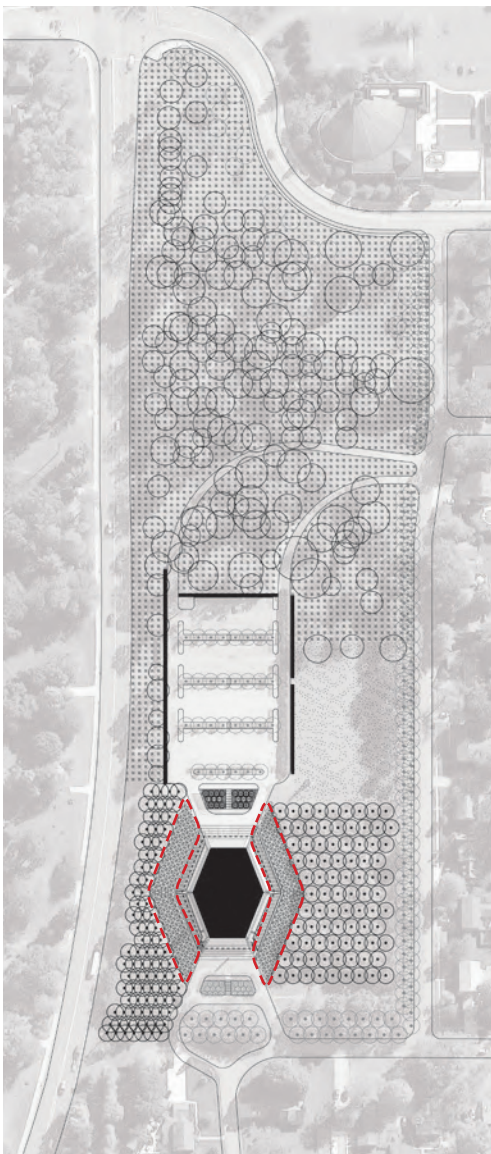
### SHORT-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

N/A

### LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

**Medium Priority: Maintain the lawn groundcover.**

- The original Kiley design called for a dense layer of low-growing, evergreen and flowering plants encircling the structure. The flanking slopes were planted with a combination of Dwarf Japanese Yew, Cotoneaster, and Periwinkle.
- By the 1970s, the slopes were replanted with lawn, which is how they present today. Given the timing of the replacement, it is assumed that Kiley was consulted regarding the substitution.
- A dense mat of woody plants, as originally specified, could have increased stormwater infiltration at the adjacent site walls, increased hydrostatic pressure, increased maintenance, and/or supported populations of undesirable vermin. With lawn, the clarity of the slope is also and its relationship to the architecture is more legible. Due to the ongoing benefits of this change, it is recommended that the slopes remain lawn.



Source: MIT Libraries, G. E. Kidder Smith Image Collection  
MERRITT CHASE



## OPEN LAWN

### SHORT-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

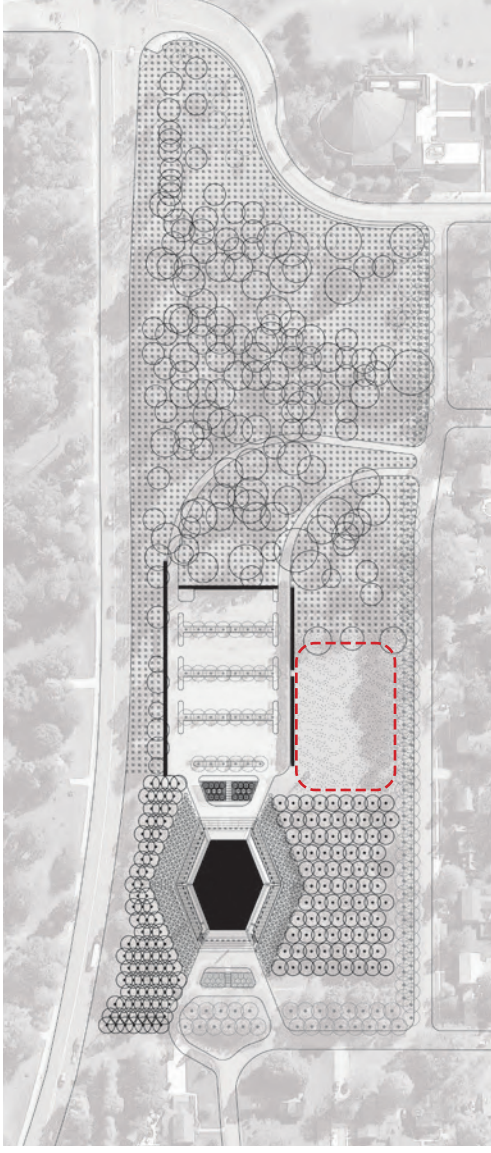
**Low Priority:** Maintain the lawn as a turf groundcover.

- The turf has good character but is in fair condition, so this area does not require as much attention in the short-term beyond regular mowing and seasonal maintenance. Long-term recommendations would address this area's condition through its health and maintenance.

### LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

**Medium Priority:** Explore replacing the turf lawn with a grass meadow.

- Responding to contemporary expectations that landscapes be both aesthetically pleasing and ecologically sound, a transition from turf to a grass meadow would improve this area's appearance, enhance its biodiversity, reduce chemical use, and lower maintenance. There are ways to manage this change with respect to views and design intent by using a low-growing, warm-season grass mix. Mown edges could provide access and pedestrian circulation.
- A no-mow grass meadow will be able to accommodate occasional events and foot traffic and reduced maintenance, once established.



Source: The Cultural Landscape Foundation  
MERRITT CHASE



## ENTRY DRIVE

### SHORT-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

**High Priority:** Replant missing trees for visual and experiential impact.

- Considering the visitor experience on-site begins at the entry drive, replacing the missing trees will affect the appearance and experience of arrival.

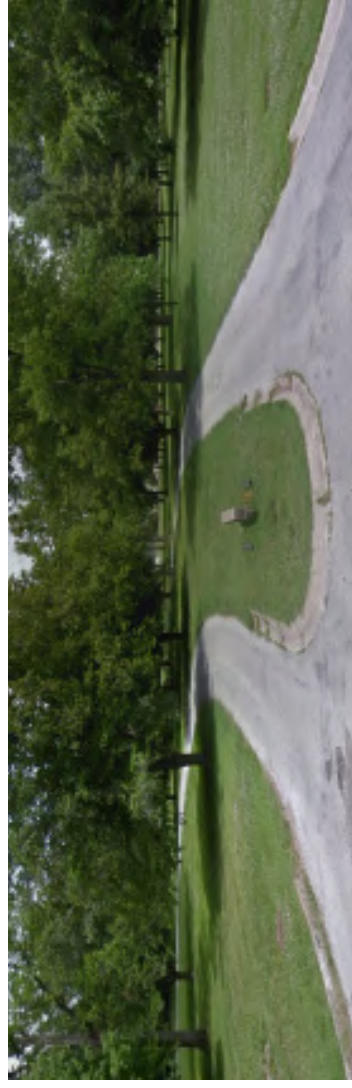
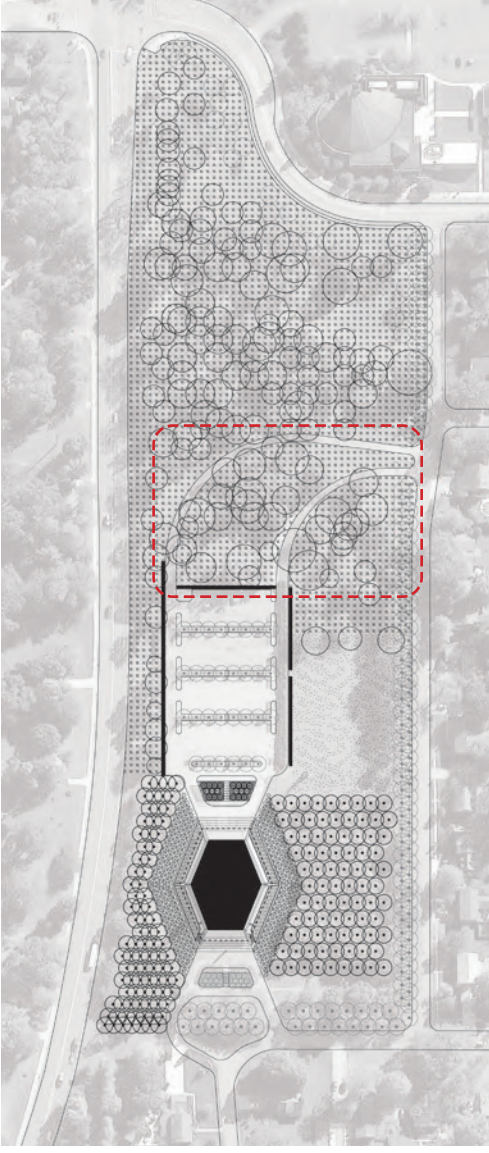
**Medium Priority:** Re-pave to address wear-and-tear and restore physical condition.

- The entrance is in good character, so this strategy addresses its condition. Long-term recommendations would address this area's character.

### LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

**High Priority:** Retain the separate entry and exit drives through a copse of hardwood trees.

- This is a defining feature of the experiential circulation and must be conserved.





## PARKING LOT PLANTING

### SHORT-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

**High Priority:** Replace trees and hedges to match the original design of the spatial “rooms.”

- Prior treatments within the parking lot have changed the spatial experience. Replanting with the appropriate species of Arborvitae for the hedges will better support the arrival experience.
- The trees as they exist may remain in place if they appear healthy, but if more than 50% of the trees’ health is compromised, then remove and replant to match the original number of trees, the species of Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*), and spacing.

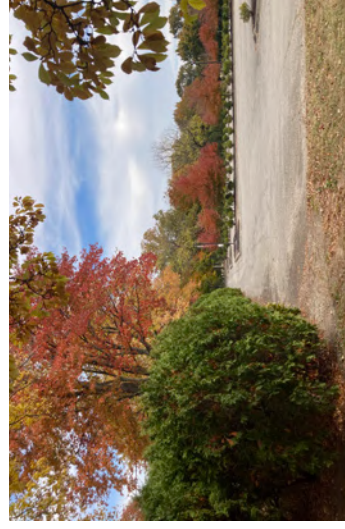
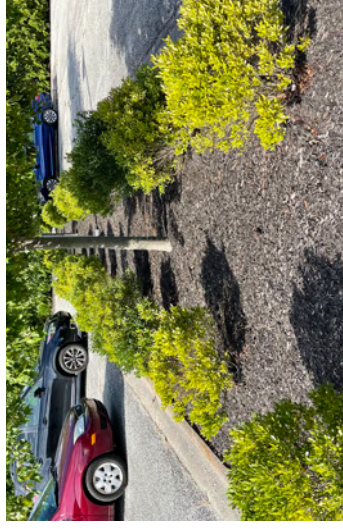
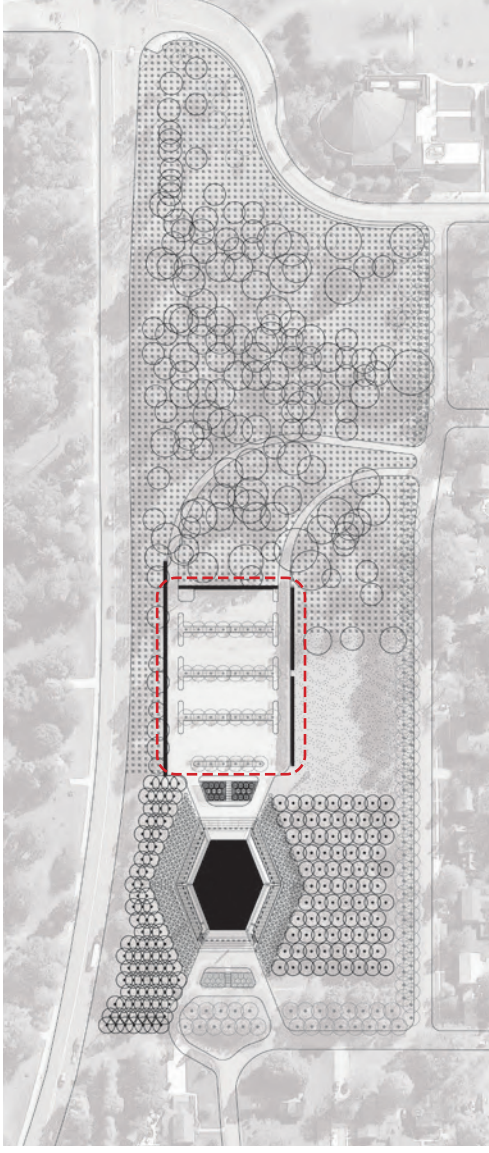
**High Priority:** Remove the arborvitae hedges surrounding the parking lot and replant with a new arborvitae planting.

- Since more than 50% of the hedges’ health is compromised and in decline, it is recommended that the entire formation is removed and replanted.

### LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

**High Priority:** Maintain planting that creates spatial “rooms.”

- This is a defining feature of the parking lot and must be conserved.





## SUNKEN GARDENS

### SHORT-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

#### High Priority: Stabilize retaining walls.

- Uneven settlement is affecting the walls' structural integrity and overall longevity, so this strategy addresses its condition. Long-term recommendations would address this element's character.

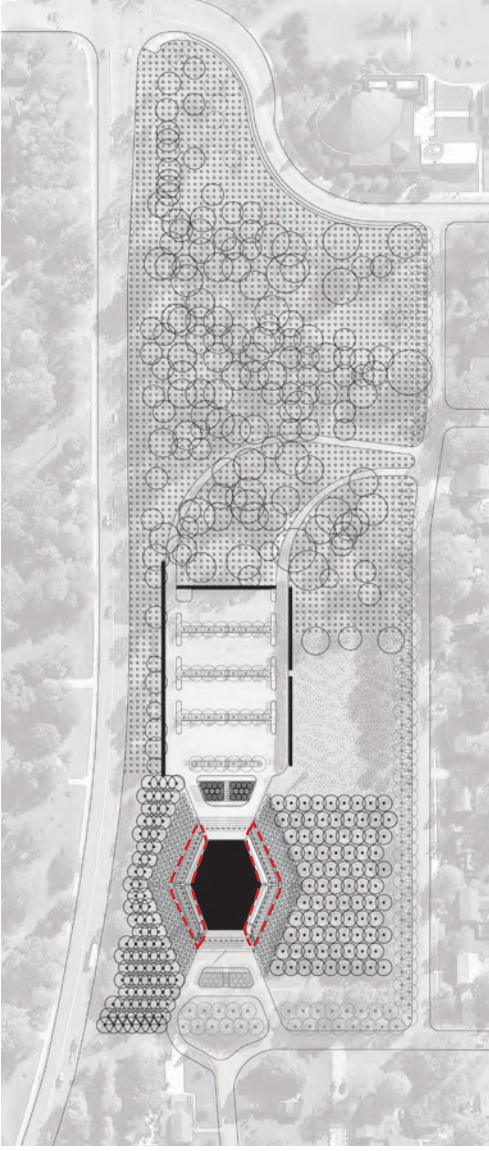
### LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Medium Priority: Retain periwinkle, or comparable, planting.

- The original design intent was to provide color as a contrast to the building. Periwinkle was the original plant specified, but today it is a known invasive. Given its isolated condition, maintaining this is acceptable, or replacing it with a comparable low-growing evergreen perennial that is non-invasive.

#### Medium Priority: Maintain rows of bulbs.

- To add even more color to the sunken gardens, Kiley included rows of spring bulbs such as Crocus, Siberian Squill, Grape Hyacinth, and Snowdrop. Continuing to do this will enhance the appearance of the landscape area immediately outside the church building.





## DRAINAGE

### SHORT-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

#### High Priority: Improve drainage on-site.

- Interim solutions to fix drainage have negatively affected the retaining walls' appearance and original form. Resolving drainage issues will support the retaining walls' longevity and prevent further damage.
- Remove, clean-out, and reset the trench drain at the eastern entrance.
- Due to the poor condition and ineffective functioning of the drainage, prioritizing this initiative is recommended.
- Interim solutions to fix drainage have negatively affected the perimeter walls' appearance and original form. Resolving drainage issues will support the walls' longevity and prevent further damage.

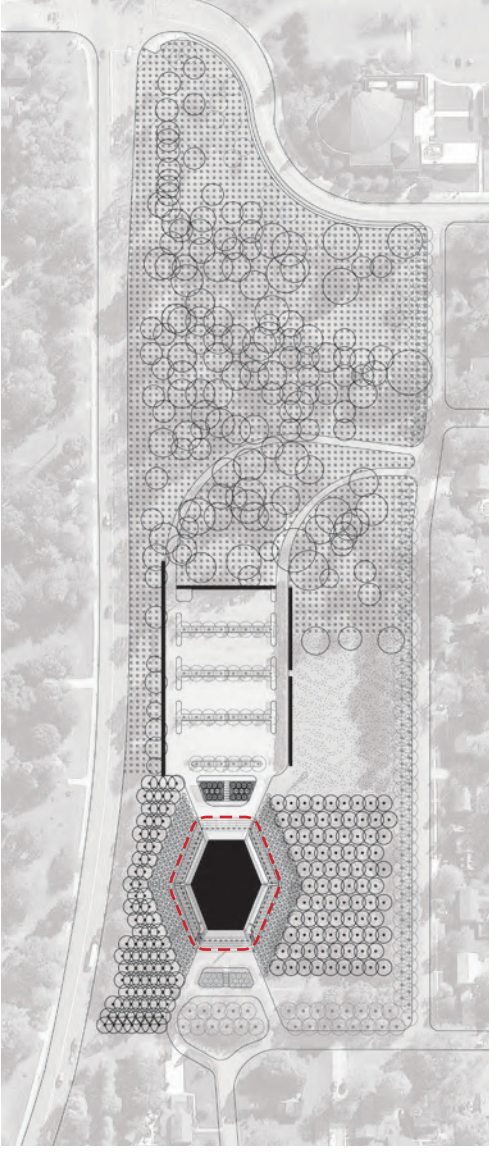
#### High Priority: Update drainage features: trench drain, gutters, pipes, and grates.

- Due to the poor condition and ineffective functioning of the drainage, prioritizing this initiative is recommended.

### LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

#### High Priority: Modernize subgrade drainage elements.

- Further coordination is required to update subgrade drainage elements, but will be critical for improving site-wide drainage in the long-term.



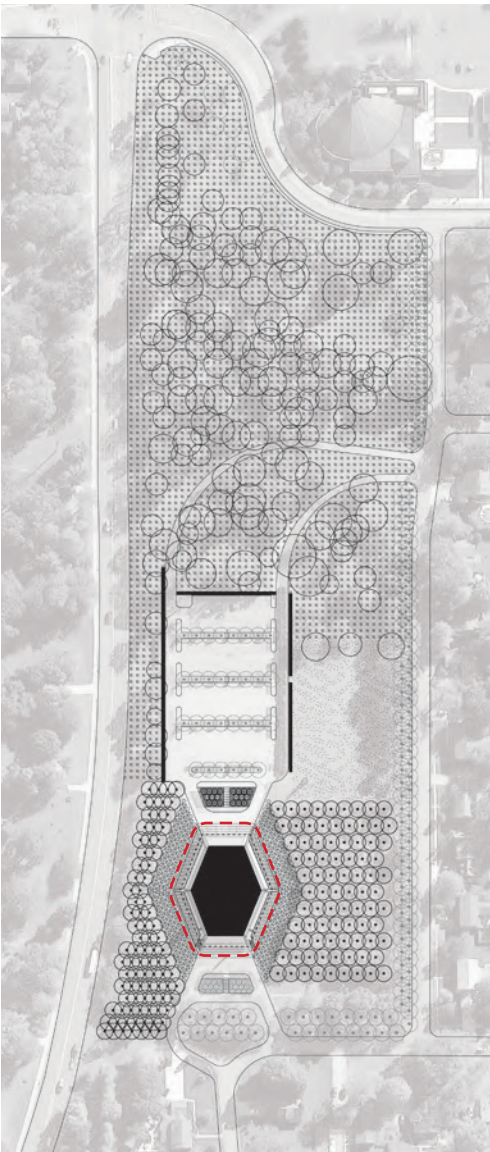


PAVING & STEPS

SHORT-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

High Priority: Due to deteriorating conditions, repair or replace the paving and steps throughout the site.

- Due to the poor condition of the drainage, prioritizing this initiative is recommended.
- Fix uneven settlement or update wear-and-tear of cast-in-place concrete steps and sidewalks. If necessary, recast.
- Restore and repair the crushed stone paths. If necessary, replenish.
- Patch asphalt roads and parking lot surface. If necessary, re-pave. In the parking lot, re-pave and re-stripe the surface.



LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

N/A





RAILINGS

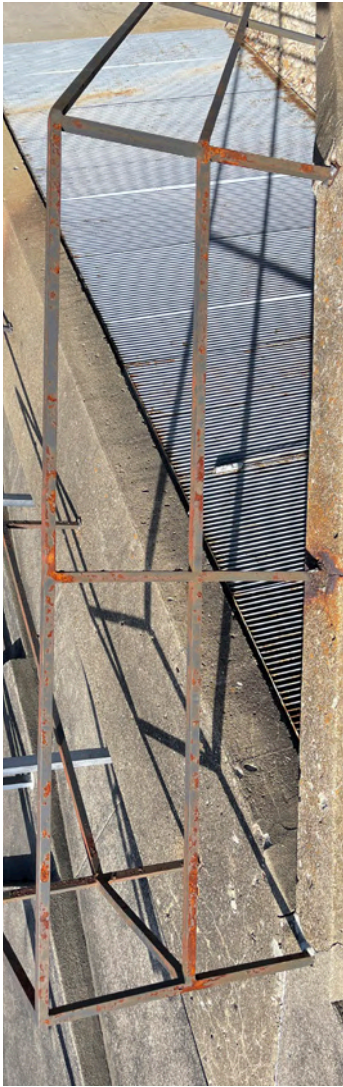
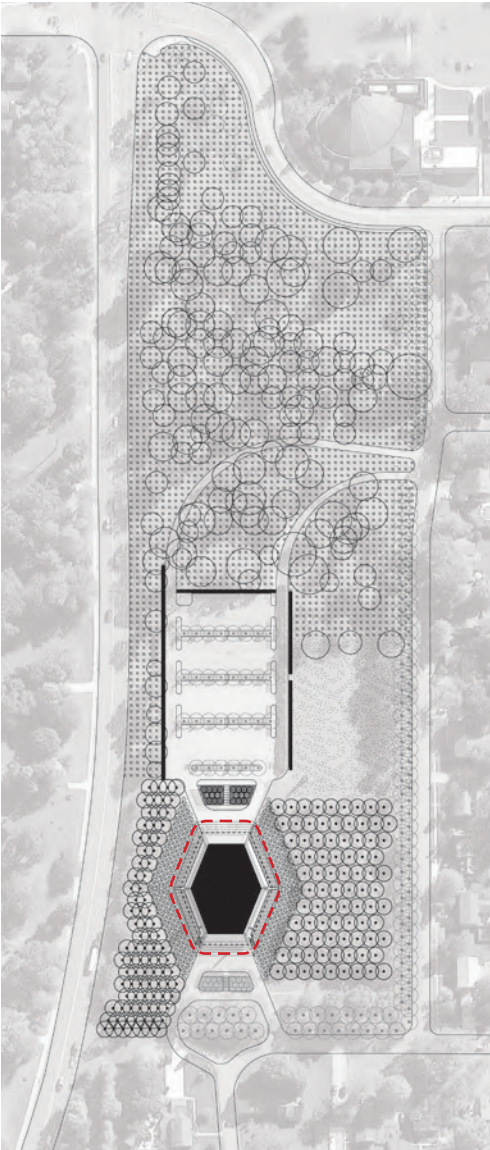
SHORT-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

High Priority: Restore or replace existing railings.

- Due to the deteriorating condition of the railings and attachments, the restoration or replacement in kind of the railings is a priority.
- If replaced, the updated railings must align with design intent.

LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

N/A





## LIGHTING

### SHORT-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

N/A

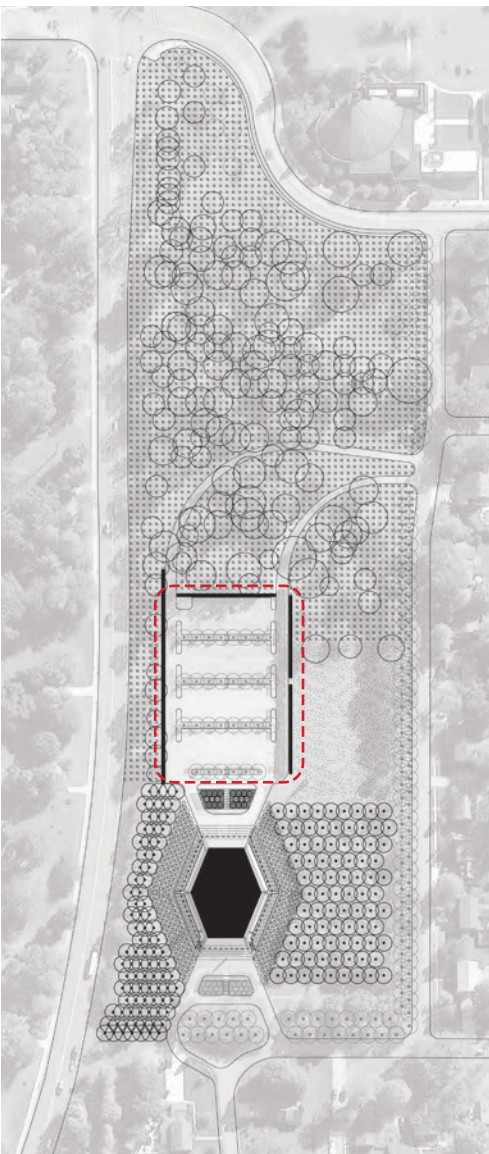
### LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

**Low Priority: Replace lighting fixtures with historic character and energy efficiency.**

- It is recommended that the existing fixtures, if determined to be suitable for reuse, be rewired and fitted with LED fixtures.
- If the existing assemblies are not suitable for re-use, install contemporary fixtures that best match the existing fixtures and poles.

**Low Priority: Depending on future use, install additional lighting.**

- For safety, additional lighting could be installed from the parking lot to the building. Adapting the site in this way would respond to a contemporary condition and also offer an opportunity to add lighting fixtures with historic character and energy efficiency.



Source: E. Bennett, Flickr



Source: MIT Libraries, G. E. Kidder Smith Image Collection



Source: MIT Libraries, G. E. Kidder Smith Image Collection  
MERRITT CHASE

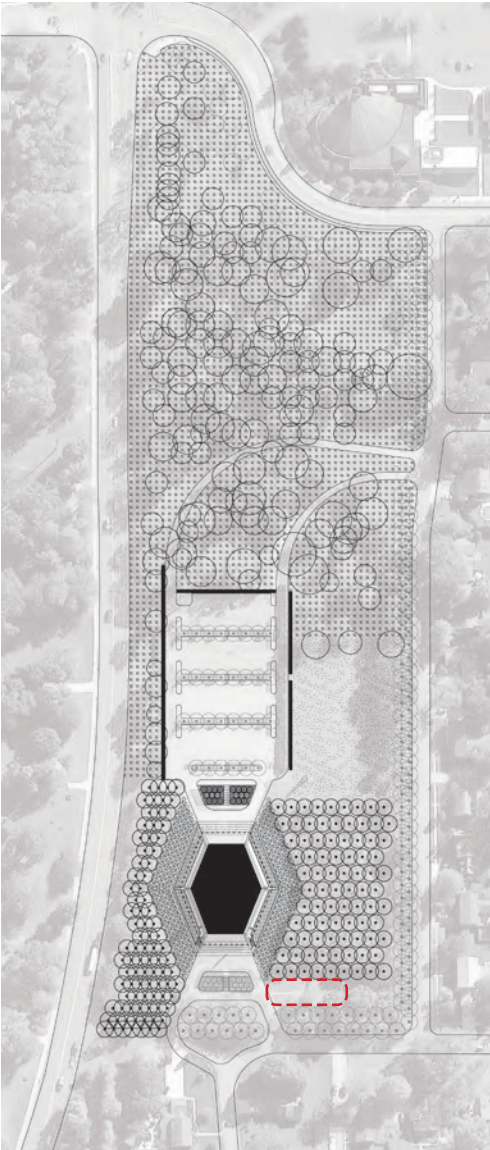


PLAYGROUND

SHORT-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

High Priority: Remove playground and plant groundcover.

- Considering the character of the playground, it is incongruent with not only the original design, but also the visitor experience. It distracts from views towards the church and is anachronistic with the period of significance.
- The condition of the playground surfacing materials and accessible routes is not compliant with code.



LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

N/A



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## C. Sociocultural analysis

# **Sociocultural Analysis of North Christian Church**

**Final Report for Conservation Management Plan  
Keeping it Modern Program, Getty Foundation**

**February 2021**

**Bryony Roberts Studio**

# Sociocultural Analysis of North Christian Church

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## **1. Introduction**



## 1. Introduction

The following report examines the sociocultural significance of North Christian Church (NCC) in the context of Columbus, Indiana and proposes strategies for sustaining that significance into the future. North Christian Church is a unique institution, having emerged from the religious and political leadership of J. Irwin and Xenia S. Miller in the 1950s to become a force in progressive activism from its founding to the present. Innovative modern architecture by Eero Saarinen and landscape design by Dan Kiley have supported and enabled the egalitarian mission of the church, creating a remarkable alignment between worship, community, and design. Despite the uniqueness of this institution and its history, however, the church now faces similar challenges to many other religious institutions in the 21st century: declining membership and funds. These challenges have prompted the church to consider alternative options for institutional organization and stewardship of their site. In response to these conditions, this Sociocultural Analysis component of the Conservation Management Plan aims to articulate and document the sociocultural importance of North Christian Church, to clarify the current strengths and difficulties of the institution, and to strategize options for sustaining the church and its communities into the future.

In addressing the past, present, and possible future of NCC, this report takes a contextual approach: framing the specific conditions of the church in relation to the larger social, religious, and political changes of Columbus, Indiana. To address the past significance of the church, this analysis is informed by historical research on the institution and interviews with members of the congregation, as well as research into the religious and political history of Columbus, Indiana. This combination of institutional history and contextual research reveals the significance of the church as a unique religious institution and leader in political activism during the civil rights era. To assess the present strengths of the institution and its challenges, this report is informed by interviews with church leadership, members, and stakeholders, as well as analysis of broader challenges facing religious institutions in the 21st century.

A contextual approach is particularly important in strategizing future options for North Christian Church. As the church leadership has already recognized, the continued vitality of the institution requires responsiveness to its changing sociocultural context. Columbus, Indiana has changed noticeably since the time when the church was founded. When J. Irwin and Xenia S. Miller and over forty other members first split from First Christian Church in 1955 and began holding services in private houses, Columbus was a primarily white, Christian town buoyed by postwar optimism and expansion. Unlike many other small towns in the U.S., Columbus has continued to grow economically due to the presence of many large manufacturing companies, while many other small Midwestern

## 1. Introduction

towns have contracted. College graduates now tend to flock to larger cities and coastal regions, and this, along with increasing globalization, has led employers in Columbus to recruit internationally. A much greater diversity of cultures, languages, and religions now animates Columbus than in previous decades, and population growth is being driven by communities of color. The future of any institution in Columbus must therefore respond to this changing cultural context and to the shifting priorities for community programming. To address the future possibilities of NCC, therefore, this report assesses the changing social, political, and religious context of Columbus through data analysis, compilations of recent community-based studies, and extensive interviews with stakeholders. In addition, the report examines local initiatives and institutions that are responding to this changing context to identify potential partnerships that would align with the values of North Christian Church.

Overall, this “Sociocultural Analysis of North Christian Church” deploys a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to address the past, present, and future possibilities of North Christian Church. The report aims to articulate distinguishing characteristics of this institution and to contextualize its significance within its larger social, religious, and political contexts. The goal of this work is to develop methods for supporting the significance of this institution and continuing its legacy as a connector across sectors and communities in Columbus, Indiana.

## **2. Past social and religious value**

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<b>b.</b>	<b>The Irwin-Sweeney-Miller Legacy</b>	<b>5</b>
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## 2. Past social and religious value

### **The Changing Roles of North Christian Church**

Although Columbus, Indiana is home to over three dozen houses of worship, North Christian Church is a unique social and religious organization in this cultural landscape. Even within its denomination of Disciples of Christ, which emphasizes egalitarian organization and ecumenical collaboration, North Christian is notable for its commitment to social justice. Founded in 1955, as J. Irwin and Xenia S. Miller and over forty other members split from First Christian Church, NCC has emphasized from its founding the values of gender equity in leadership and racial integration. From the 1960s to the 1990s, under the leadership of Reverend John Bean and with assistance from J. Irwin Miller, the church was a key participant in cross-sector collaborations between religious, commercial, and public organizations to further civil rights and to provide resources to underserved populations. The religious, social, and architectural significance of North Christian Church are inextricably connected as its religious tenets of egalitarianism and interfaith unity support its social outreach and partnerships in Columbus and guided the centralized, non-hierarchical organization of the building designed by Eero Saarinen.

From the 1990s to the present, North Christian Church has undergone several phases of internal change that have transformed its social and religious role in Columbus. Moments of internal conflict in the late 1990s and early 2000s triggered losses in membership. In the last decade, the church has expanded its social justice mission to address the needs of the LGBTQ community, which has brought in some new members while also coinciding with the loss of others. Under the leadership of pastor Lanny Lawler, the church became an “Open and Affirming” congregation with the Disciples of Christ in 2014, enabling LGBTQ members to become church leaders, and the current pastor Tonja Gerardy continues to expand outreach to this community. There are only a few houses of worship in Columbus that openly support gender equity and LGBTQ leadership, and North Christian Church alone combines these progressive social agendas with Christian worship centered around weekly communion.

This assessment of the past social and religious value of North Christian Church reveals that its uniqueness stems precisely from the intertwining of religious worship and social engagement. The church has consistently been led by pastors who defined their mission as serving both their congregation and their larger communities, and who carried out ambitious social justice goals through advocacy, cross-sector collaborations, and interfaith partnerships. While this mission was initiated by J. Irwin Miller and Xenia S. Miller in connection with the Irwin-Sweeney-Miller legacy of institution-building in



## 2. Past social and religious value

the Disciples of Christ denomination, this legacy has also been carried forward and updated by the subsequent generations of pastors and members of the church.

### The Irwin-Sweeney-Miller Legacy

The founding of North Christian Church continued a long tradition in the Irwin-Sweeney-Miller family of leadership and institution-building in the Disciples of Christ. Both of J. Irwin Miller's grandfathers - Zachary Taylor (Z.T.) Sweeney and John Chapman Miller - were prominent ministers with the Disciples of Christ (also known as Christian Church).<sup>1</sup> The Disciples of Christ is a Protestant denomination that emerged in the U.S. in the early 1800s in response to sectarian divisions among Christian denominations. Seeking greater ecumenical unity between branches of Christianity, the early founders called for a return to simple New Testament worship.<sup>2</sup> Inspired by the writings of Scottish Common Sense Realism, the Disciples of Christ also emphasized egalitarian and non-hierarchical organization in which all worshipers could be guided by their common sense.<sup>3</sup> The Irwin-Sweeney-Miller families were influential in supporting and growing the denomination in Indiana, helping to initiate and fund the College of Religion at Butler University in Indianapolis, which later became the Christian Theological Seminary, associated with the Disciples of Christ. The ecumenical school, affiliated with a university founded by abolitionists, was notable for inviting women and people of color to attend from its founding in 1928, and for including on its diverse faculty the Jewish Rabbi Morris Feuerlicht, Shinto-trained Toyozo Nakarai, and a female professor Allena Grafton.<sup>4</sup> This institutional project reflects the inclusive values that would later guide J. Irwin Miller's projects, and he expanded this legacy by constructing a new building for the school designed by Edward Larrabee Barnes in 1966.

The Irwin-Sweeney-Miller family had roots in Columbus Indiana since the early 1800s and over two centuries helped to grow a series of churches in the city. In 1823, Joseph Irwin and his family helped found the New Hope Church and three decades later in 1855, they left along with sixty members to form the Christian Congregation in Columbus, a Disciples of Christ congregation.<sup>5</sup> J. Irwin Miller's grandfather, Z.T. Sweeney, arrived in Columbus to be the pastor of the Christian Congregation and under his leadership it grew, took on the name of Tabernacle Church of Christ, and moved to a new building, located where the Cleo Rogers Memorial Library stands today.<sup>6</sup> Z.T. Sweeney was pivotal in maintaining unity between liberal and conservative elements within the church.<sup>7</sup> Beginning in 1930, however, T.K. Smith became the minister and led the church for 35

1. Henry K. Shaw, *Hoosier Disciples: A Comprehensive History of the Christian Churches* (Disciples of Christ) in Indiana (Bloomington: Bethany Press, 1966) p. 200.

2. Ibid, 36.

3. Interview with Scott Seay, Professor of History at Christian Theological Seminary, Indianapolis, May 6, 2020.

4. Henry K. Shaw, *Hoosier Disciples: A Comprehensive History of the Christian Churches* (Disciples of Christ) in Indiana (Bloomington: Bethany Press, 1966) p. 211.

5. Nancy Kriplen, *J. Irwin Miller: The Shaping of an American Town* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019) p. 17.

6. Ibid, 19.

7. Interview with Will Miller, April 29, 2020

## 2. Past social and religious value (continued)

years,<sup>8</sup> steering it in a more conservative direction. During that time, the congregation also decided to construct a new building and the architectural committee, which included several members of the Miller family, hired modernist Finnish architect Eliel Saarinen, himself the son of a Lutheran minister.<sup>9</sup> Through the construction of what became First Christian Church, Miller befriended Eliel's son Eero Saarinen, who would become a lifelong friend and collaborator on architectural projects.

### A New Institution

In 1955, J. Irwin Miller and Xenia S. Miller, along with over forty members, left the congregation of First Christian Church over theological and interpersonal differences. In particular, the Millers believed that women should be able to hold leadership positions in the church.<sup>10</sup> In forming a new church affiliated with the liberal wing of the Disciples of Christ, which explicitly supported women and social inclusion, the Millers continued the Irwin-Sweeney-Miller legacy of leadership with the denomination.

From 1955 to 1964, the new church met in temporary quarters and began working with Eero Saarinen to create a building that would reflect their egalitarian values. The church congregation first met in private houses, led by the pastor Dr. Beauford Norris from Butler University, before purchasing Caldwell Mansion in 1955 and constructing a prefabricated church addition in 1956. By the first worship service in the new addition, the congregation had more than doubled from the original 43 members to 96, and had appointed its first full-time minister, James L. Stoner.<sup>11</sup> Five months later, the church congregation had grown to 168 members. J. Irwin Miller, a deeply religious individual, became committed to building a new structure to house the congregation that would reflect the principles of the Disciples of Christ. The architectural committee selected Eero Saarinen, and although the architect's office was overwhelmed with projects at the time, Saarinen conducted many conversations with the congregation to understand their vision for the church, asking probing theological and philosophical questions. Linda Duncan, one of the original members of the church who was in high school at the time, remembers Saarinen asking for input from every member of the congregation, including the children, saying, "I want to hear from everyone."<sup>12</sup> This inclusive design process led to a building that not only met the operational needs of the church - with a kitchen, nursery, choir room, youth room, and classrooms tailored to the congregation - but also a sanctuary specific to the Disciples of Christ theology. The hexagonal shape created a sanctuary "in the round," in which every member could see each other as well as the communion table in the center, since communion is a central tenet of worship in the Disciples of Christ. In contrast to

8. Obituary for Dr. Thomas Kennerd "T.K." Smith, *The Republic*, Columbus, Indiana, Friday, March 21, 1969

9. Nancy Kriplen, *J. Irwin Miller: The Shaping of an American Town* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019) p. 55.

10. Interview with Will Miller, April 29, 2020

11. Keith Moore, "North Christian Church: History, Architectural Planning, Symbols, Communion, Construction," (Lecture, North Christian Church, September 12, 19, 26, 1971).

12. Interview with Linda Duncan at North Christian Church, February 28, 2020.

## 2. Past social and religious value (continued)

Latin cross or basilica churches, this centralized plan erased hierarchies: every member could see the ceremony equally, and their attention was given as much to the clergy as to the rest of the congregation. The custom organ in the sanctuary enabled a vibrant music program, which has been central to the church since its founding. The building also includes a baptistry inside the west entrance that enables baptism by immersion, and serves as a secondary worship space sometimes used for weddings.

### Social Impact

After the first service in the new building on March 8, 1964,<sup>13</sup> North Christian Church became a thriving center of worship, social activity, and community outreach. In 1967, John R. Bean began his twenty-five year tenure as senior minister for the church, building an intergenerational community.<sup>14</sup> During his period of leadership from 1967-1992, the church continued to grow and to attract families, becoming a hub of activity for both adults and children. Members recall that in addition to the choir, youth groups, women's groups, quilting groups, and book groups, members organized supper clubs, camping trips, square dancing, festivals on the grounds, and group excursions, such as a picnic for 75 people at Spring Mill State Park.<sup>15</sup> The church also hosted vibrant outdoor activities such as an annual reconstruction of a Jewish marketplace from 29AD in the landscape around North Christian Church, which took place in the 1980s. Members from three churches - Fairlawn Presbyterian, St. Paul's Episcopal, and North Christian Church - dressed in historical costumes and taught children ancient crafts from Judeo-Christian history such as stone-carving, basket-weaving, dredyl-making, and bread-making in market tents pitched on the large field for the five-day festival.<sup>16</sup> This and other public activities contributed to North Christian's ecumenical mission of connecting to different Christian congregations and to the larger community of Columbus.

In addition to these elements of a thriving congregation, North Christian Church was distinct for its political dimensions. The church and its leadership were part of public-private coalitions in Columbus that remade the urban landscape in the service of social equity. John Bean was the founding president of the Ecumenical Assembly of Bartholomew County Churches (known as "Love Chapel"), which brought together diverse denominations around Columbus to address humanitarian issues.<sup>17</sup> Under Bean's leadership, the organization pooled resources from area churches to create a Mobile Health Care Clinic that offered medical care to low-income families and raised money for direct aid. In addition, both Bean and J. Irwin Miller actively supported civil rights issues. Bean was instrumental in founding the Columbus Human

13. Keith Moore, "North Christian Church: History, Architectural Planning, Symbols, Communion, Construction," (Lecture, North Christian Church, September 12, 19, 26, 1971).

14. "John R. Bean Obituary," *The Indianapolis Star*, May 21, 2013

<https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/indystar/obituary.aspx?n=john-r-bean&pid=164904103>

15. Interview with Linda Duncan, North Christian Church, February 28, 2020; Interview with Terry Shaw, North Christian Church, February 28, 2020; Interview with Debbie Burnett at North Christian Church on February 29, 2020.

16. Carol Sullivan, "Time Machine: Children Visit Marketplace," *The Republic*, Saturday, June 8, 1985. p. 8

17. Harry McCawley, "Civil rights leader, local pastor dies at 84," *The Republic*, May 21, 2013. p. 1

## 2. Past social and religious value (continued)

Rights Commission, a public agency that addressed a range of issues including racial integration, and applied pressure to local businesses to serve African Americans.<sup>18</sup> Bean was also active in the leadership of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Indiana and chaired a committee to integrate the church leadership, requiring gender and racial diversity on the national board.<sup>19</sup> In his own words, Bean stated, “some doctrines say that the church should stay separate from the community, but a central part of my ministry involves service to those unable to compete, those who are marginalized by society.”<sup>20</sup> Through extensive collaborations with other religious institutions and the city government, Bean set the tone for North Christian Church’s involvement in efforts to shape public resources and social inclusion in Columbus.

While the Millers emphasized egalitarianism in the church, their role cannot be underestimated in defining the ambition, visibility, and economic vitality of the institution. J. Irwin Miller occupied prominent positions of leadership in national financial, political, and religious circles, from his role as president of the National Council of Churches to his participation in President Kennedy’s special Commission on Religion and Race.<sup>21</sup> In the words of Dick Hamm, former General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), “Irwin Miller was a mid-century man. That was a generation given to large-scale organization. Everything was larger than life, and everything was going to continue to be better into the future. They were building the ‘Christian Century.’”<sup>22</sup> During Miller’s active years, this vision of continuous growth was realized. Miller’s active involvement in the church not only enabled ambitious public-private collaborations but also bolstered the social status and economic viability of the institution. The presence of Miller as well as other Cummins employees in the congregation inadvertently produced an image of North Christian as the “Cummins Church,” which helped to attract new members, particularly Cummins employees and their young families, thereby sustaining a large congregation and a steady source of donations. The church’s affiliation with this national figure was a strength but also became a vulnerability as the Millers retired from public life. J. Irwin and Xenia Miller began to experience declining health in the late 1990s and early 2000s and became less involved with the church, although they secured endowments to support the future maintenance of the institution. The waning of their presence in the church had profound effects on its social and economic vitality.

### Institutional Changes

From the end of the 20th to the beginning of the 21st century, internal changes shifted the leadership and direction of the church. Through the 1990s, the church maintained an active

18. Interview with William Miller, April 29, 2020

19. Harry McCawley, “Civil rights leader, local pastor dies at 84,” *The Republic*, May 21, 2013. p. 1

20. Nancy Kriplen, *J. Irwin Miller: The Shaping of an American Town* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019) p. 91.

21. Interview with Dick Hamm, Rick Spleth, and Scott Seay, May 7, 2020.

22. Ibid.



## 2. Past social and religious value (continued)

congregation with many member-organized activities and vibrant music programming. David Shirey became minister of North Christian Church in 1998 and worked to engage the young people of the congregation through music, bible study, and mission trips to other states. During his tenure, however, there were conflicts between original members and new members over the leadership and tone of the church. As a result of these conflicts, many members departed and David Shirey left the congregation in 2001. A subsequent minister of North Christian Church, Lanny Lawler, led the congregation in the process of becoming an “Open and Affirming” congregation of the Disciples of Christ, meaning overtly supporting LGBTQ individuals both as members and leaders in the church. Beginning in 2011, this three-year process involved an in-depth series of meetings and discussions reconsidering scriptures and re-framing the mission of the church. The “Open and Affirming” process continued to evolve the social justice mission of the church but also resulted in some members leaving the congregation. Each moment of leadership change has prompted changes in membership - both the loss of members and the arrival of new congregants. In recent years, however, the number of new members has not been surpassing those lost.

In the 21st century, the church shifted to being a small, progressive congregation with particular focus on empowering women and LGBTQ individuals. Tonja Gerardy was originally brought in as a transitional minister in 2016 and then installed as the settled minister in December of 2018. Under her leadership, the church has continued to support the LGBTQ community through participation in Pride Fest in Columbus and in Bloomington. In addition, the church participates in political protests and gatherings around social justice issues, such as supporting the DACA program for immigrant children, often collaborating with Bartholomew County Indivisible. The political affiliations of the church have attracted some new members in recent years, while the size of this progressive audience is limited in the context of relatively conservative region of Central Indiana.

## Conclusion

The history of North Christian Church reveals an institution with interconnected religious, social, and architectural significance. The Disciples of Christ denomination is already distinct from other faiths for its combination of non-hierarchical organization and attention to New Testament worship. Within the denomination, North Christian Church has forged a particularly progressive position, combining faith with social justice activism to address the intersecting inequities of gender, race, and sexuality. From the 1960s to

## 2. Past social and religious value (continued)

90s, this church, enabled by the ambitions of J. Irwin Miller, Rev. John Bean, and an active congregation, pursued this social agenda at a large scale - combining local, regional, and national action. While the size of the congregation and the scope of its activities have diminished in the 21st century, the core values of collaboration and inclusion remain intrinsic to the religious and social purpose of the church. The building designed by Eero Saarinen, and particularly its sanctuary, offer a constant reminder of those core values by staging a non-hierarchical gathering place. These core values offer guidance for maintaining its social and religious significance through future processes of change.

### **3. Current social, religious, and economic value**

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### 3. Current social, religious, and economic value

Between its founding in 1955 and the present day, North Christian Church has transitioned from a growing, intergenerational church with plentiful funding to a smaller congregation with financial challenges, a trajectory that mirrors that of many U.S. churches. As of 2019, the congregation had only 47 active members and an average of 30 people attending weekly worship. Given the small size of the congregation, the institution is not able to cover its operating costs based on congregational donations, and also has limited capacity for outreach and service in the community. J. Irwin Miller's presence and fundraising at North Christian Church helped to sustain the building and its congregation during his lifetime, but fundraising since his passing has decreased and the endowment he left behind is now greatly reduced. Despite these challenges, North Christian has a meaningful social mission and significant spatial assets that can be leveraged to create a more sustainable and expansive future for the church.

#### **Distinct Mission**

In the context of Columbus and of Central Indiana, North Christian Church's emphasis on social justice, gender equity, and LGBTQ issues has made it a beacon for progressive inclusion. Only two other institutions in Columbus - the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Columbus, Indiana (UUCI) and First Presbyterian - overtly support members of the LGBTQ community. North Christian Church is unique among them in combining a progressive mission of social justice with weekly communion. The members of North Christian Church emphasize that this combination of social justice and weekly communion is important to their loyalty to the institution. In addition, NCC has continued to evolve its focus on ecumenical exchange, collaborating not only with other Christian congregations but also fostering interfaith connections. NCC is an active member of Columbus Interfaith, which also includes the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Columbus Indiana (UUCI); the Sri Ganesh Mandir (formerly Hindu Society of Southern Indiana); the Islamic Society of Columbus, Indiana; Sha'arei Shalom Reform Judaism Congregation of Columbus, Indiana; and Fairlawn Presbyterian Church. NCC also hosts events such as One Cup of Tea, which fosters connections between the Muslim, Hindu, and Christian communities in Columbus, and Cooking Across Cultures, which cultivates cultural exchange through food. The church also continues to be involved in the Love Chapel, the ecumenical assembly of Columbus that initiates projects addressing homelessness and food insecurity.<sup>23</sup>

The distinctive social and religious mission of the church, as well as its music program, continues to attract new members, albeit in smaller numbers than in previous decades. Several members spoke of joining North Christian Church after discovering that their

23. Interview with Nancy Hoover, North Christian Church, February 28, 2020.



### 3. Current social, religious, and economic value (continued)

home church would not allow them to be open about their sexual orientation and also hold leadership positions. In contrast, they spoke of the warm welcome they received at North Christian and the opportunities to be leaders within the church.

#### **Social Challenges**

The church therefore retains social and religious value to its members, but the small size and advancing age of the congregation are limiting engagement with the larger community. For the year 2019, the church had 71 members with 49 active members, an average of 30 people in weekly worship attendance, and 2 transfers.<sup>24</sup> These numbers are slightly lower than in 2018, in which there were 74 members, 57 active members, 33 in weekly worship, and 7 transfers, and are part of a longer ten-year decline. The diminishing size is partly a result of the shifting social and theological agendas outlined above, as a result of which some members left the church, but also the general aging of the congregation. The generation that founded the church has passed away, and the current congregation consists primarily of elderly retired persons, some of whom face health challenges. The aging of the population makes it difficult to attract and retain younger members, as young families often seek congregations with robust programming for children.

Due to these conditions, the congregation also has limited capacity to organize and implement outreach programs to connect with other communities in Columbus. As a result, the congregation is a small, close-knit community that offers support for its members but it not easily able to grow in size. Most of the members associated with Cummins and the Miller family are gone, but the remaining members are closely connected and express a commitment to supporting each other.

The declining size of the congregation also reflects larger trends in church membership nationally, and foregrounds the need to tackle themes of loss and change in addressing the social role of the church. Both Protestant and Catholic churches in the United States have seen declines in membership in recent years, with younger generations less likely to declare religious affiliation or to attend church than previous generations. Additionally, the Disciples of Christ - a space of egalitarian freethinking - also faces particular challenges for attracting new members. Members describe Disciples of Christ as a denomination that cultivates critical thinking, offering further questioning rather than easy answers in the face of life's problems.

24. Congregation Information Entry for North Christian Church, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Year Book 2020, reported by Tonja Gerardy on March 11, 2020.

### 3. Current social, religious, and economic value (continued)

As a result, churches in general and the Disciples of Christ specifically are no longer facing a condition of continuous expansion, as anticipated in the mid-20th century. As articulated by historian Scott Seay, the Disciples of Christ face the challenge of shaping a narrative of loss, both by acknowledging the passing of an era and being open to the possibilities of a new future. At North Christian Church, current members use the words “loss” and “grief” to describe the challenges facing the church, and recall the loss of particular treasured members who left the congregation. These issues make clear the need to acknowledge and process grief and change in order to move forward.

The declining membership of North Christian Church has produced a disconnect between the social and religious function of the building and the scale of its architecture. With a capacity of 450 people, the sanctuary is now hosting an average of 30 people for weekly Sunday worship. The dramatic architectural interior and its organization in-the-round unfortunately makes the small congregation size more palpable as worshipers face rows of empty pews. While many members speak passionately about the building and its meaningful connection to the theology of the Disciples of Christ, several find that the scale exacerbates the experience of a small congregation and makes it difficult to feel “warmth” in the space. Others noted that alternative configurations for worship, such as services held in the smaller baptistry space or in the downstairs auditorium, or special candlelit services in the main sanctuary that focus attention on the members, felt better for the scale of the congregation. In addition to the sanctuary, the other spaces of the North Christian Church building are currently under-occupied. The spaces for childcare and youth activities are not currently used, given the primarily elderly congregation, and many classroom and meeting spaces are rarely used (Figures 1,2).

#### **Economic Challenges**

As a result of the social changes outlined above, the congregation is no longer able to cover the operational costs of North Christian Church through congregational offerings. In the New Beginnings study, Hope Partnership of the Disciples of Christ recommended that a church should rely on congregational offerings to cover at least 70% of its costs.<sup>25</sup> But the current size of the North Christian congregation greatly limits the amount of possible donations. For 2019, the congregational donations reached \$60,924<sup>26</sup>, which represents only 16% of the operating costs for 2020, which are anticipated to be \$377,224.86<sup>27</sup>. Maintenance costs for the building and grounds for 2020 alone are anticipated to be \$141,408.10. In order to cover the difference between donations and operating expenses, the church has been drawing on the limited endowments established by the Miller family. Without additional funding, the remaining balances of the endowments determine the operational lifespan of the church.

25. Hope Partnership, *New Beginnings Assessment of North Christian Church*, 2012, p. 32

26. Congregation Information Entry for North Christian Church, *Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Year Book 2020*, reported by Tonja Gerardy on March 11, 2020.


27. Annual budget for North Christian Church, 2020

### 3. Current social, religious, and economic value (continued)

Additional avenues for fundraising have diminished after the passing of J. Irwin Miller. As articulated by Scott Seay: “without Irwin Miller making introductions, it makes fundraising a much more difficult task.”<sup>28</sup> Minister Tonja Gerardy has actively sought funding through grant programs, such as through Partners for Sacred Places, which helped to fund repairs to the air conditioning system, and this Getty Foundation Keeping It Modern grant, but these grants do not contribute to operating expenses.

Figure 1: Schedule of current space usage

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Sanctuary	Worship	Architecture Tour	Architecture Tour	Architecture Tour	Architecture Tour	Architecture Tour	Architecture Tour
Baptistry							
UL 1		Office Administrator	Comm. Ambassador		Office Administrator Comm. Ambassador		
UL 2							
UL 3							
UL 4				Music Director			
UL 5		Senior Minister	Senior Minister	Senior Minister	Senior Minister		
UL 6	Sunday School				Interfaith Fiber Arts***		
UL 7							
UL 8							
UL 9							
UL 10							
UL 11		Trustees Meeting***					
Auditorium	Youth Orchesra (PYO) The Art of Living						
Kitchen		Granny Connection**	Low Carb Revolution	Low Carb Revolution	Cosmo Club* Cooking Across Cultures*	Low Carb Revolution	
Lounge	Coffee Fellowship				Cosmo Club*		
LL 1							
LL 2							
LL 3							
LL 4							
LL 5						Tamil Class	
LL 6						Centering Prayer	
LL 7							
LL 8				Choir Rehearsal	Diversity Choir		
LL 9							
LL 10							
LL 11							
LL 12							

 Space without programming

\*occurs once a month

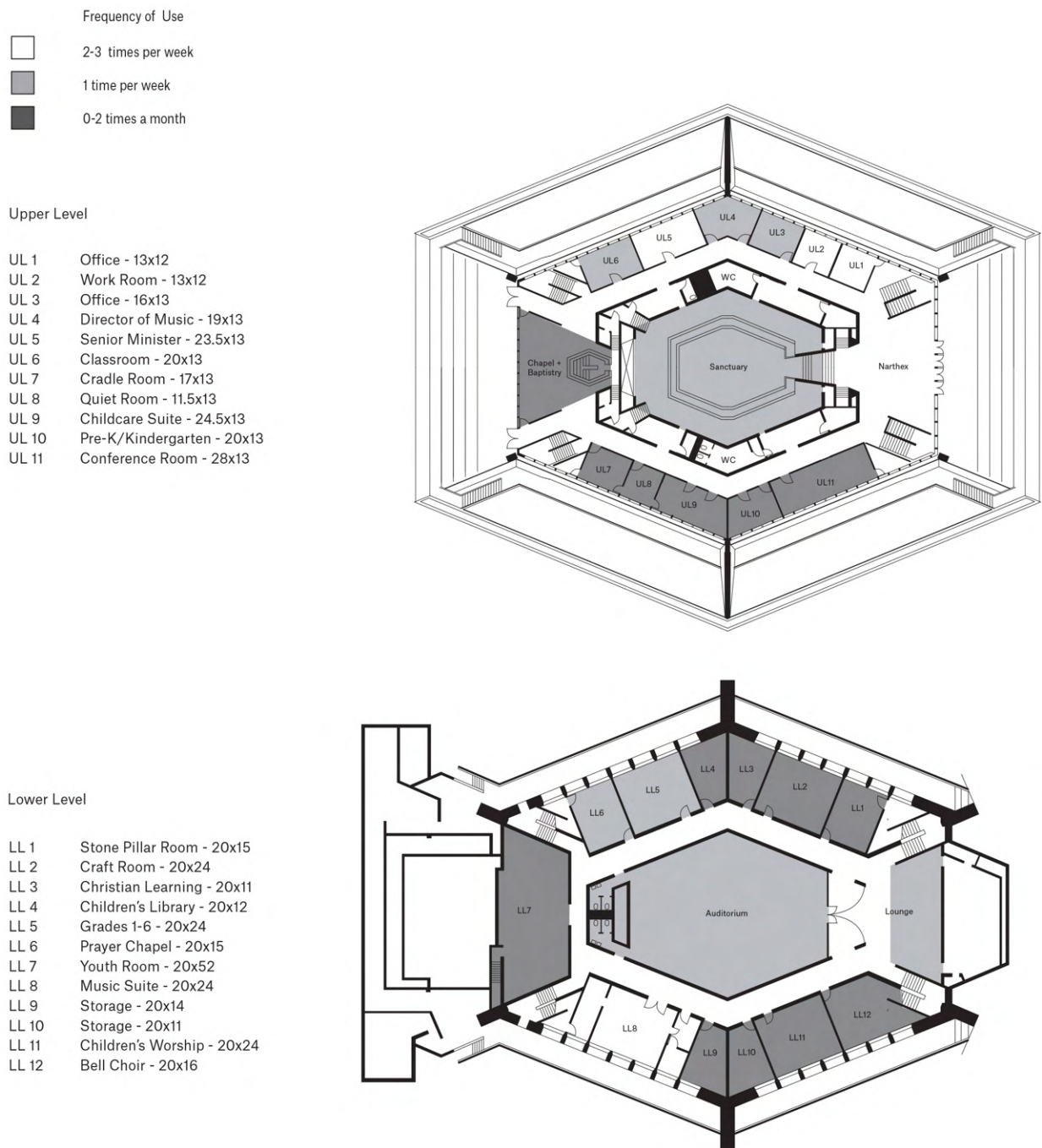
\*\*occurs twice a month

\*\*\*occurs once every other month

28. Interview with Dick Hamm, Rick Spleth, and Scott Seay, May 7, 2020.

### 3. Current social, religious, and economic value (continued)

Figure 2: Plan of current space usage





### 3. Current social, religious, and economic value (continued)

#### Rethinking the Institution

The leadership and congregation are fully aware of these challenges and have undergone several processes to rethink the organizational structure of the church and the stewardship of their property. In 2012, the church worked with Hope Partnership on a “New Beginnings” process, a planning process associated with the Disciples of Christ “for the congregation that knows it can’t continue ‘as is’ but doesn’t yet know what to do.”<sup>29</sup> The process flagged key problem areas, and laid out future options including relocation, closure, or expanding programming. The leadership has been active in seeking out funding and was selected in 2016 to participate in a funding program through Partners for Sacred Places. This funding required the congregation to commit to stewardship of the building, which led to their current resolution to remain in place. The congregation had considered other options for stewardship, such as Indiana University taking over the building as an archive and educational space, or the creation of an interfaith campus through collaboration with the other members of Columbus Interfaith. These groups considered building a new space for the Hindu Society on the grounds of NCC, but concerns about costs and delays in decision-making led to that project continuing instead in the vicinity of UUCI. North Christian Church’s current plan is to maintain stewardship of the site but generate activity and revenue through increased programming as a community hub, as described in more detail in the following section.

The challenges of sustaining a small congregation in a monumental building also expose the difficulties of decision-making for this congregation. The Disciples of Christ was founded on principles of egalitarian organization and bottom-up leadership, values that nonetheless produce, in the words of Dick Hamm (former General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)), individuals that “fear tyranny and resist leadership.”<sup>30</sup> This organizational structure produces an inherent challenge in balancing democratic participation with the decisiveness necessary to seize opportunities. The difficulty of reaching decisions is a recurring theme in conversations with both members of the congregation and leadership. In addition, many members express frustrations that their voices are not heard or that the decision-making is no longer congregation-led. The difficulty of past decision-making processes and the latent frustrations about democratic representation make clear the necessity to develop effective, inclusive, and transparent decision-making processes before undertaking future decisions about the church.

29. Hope Partnership, New Beginnings Assessment of North Christian Church, 2012, p. 9

30. Interview with Dick Hamm, Rick Spleth, and Scott Seay, May 7, 2020.

### 3. Current social, religious, and economic value (continued)

#### **Spatial Assets**

The building and grounds of North Christian Church, however, hold great cultural value and significant economic value as built resources. The church is appreciated both by its congregation and by the larger community as one of the most iconic structures of Columbus, Indiana, frequently reproduced in promotional materials for the city and its architectural heritage. Visitors regularly tour the site and people outside of the congregation request use of the site for weddings and events.

Beyond its iconicity, the church building and its grounds offer tangible spatial assets that can be programmed to bring revenue to the church and to expand its connections to the wider community. The building has approximately 29,000 square feet of programmable space and the insured value of the building and its contents was \$5,874,000 as of 2012. The New Beginnings study from 2012 estimated that NCC is only using 10.42 % of its current space,<sup>31</sup> since the majority of spaces within the building are used only once or twice a week (Figures 1, 2). Revenue from more active space sharing is therefore a potential option for bridging the gap between the operational expenses and available funds. The following section outlines the spatial assets of the building.

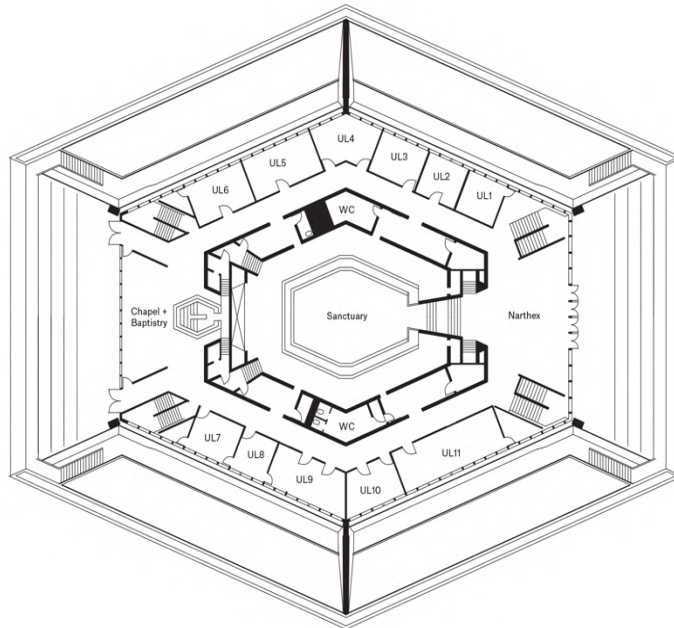
31. Hope Partnership, New Beginnings Assessment of North Christian Church, 2012, p. 20

### 3. Current social, religious, and economic value (continued)

#### Spatial Assets (continued)

Figure 3: Spatial Assets - Building

#### Upper Level



##### Sanctuary

good acoustics for music and performances  
seating capacity for 450, wheelchair accessible  
suitable for weddings, performances, conferences

##### Narthex

informal gathering space for receptions  
visible and easily accessible from parking  
suitable for receptions alongside events in sanctuary

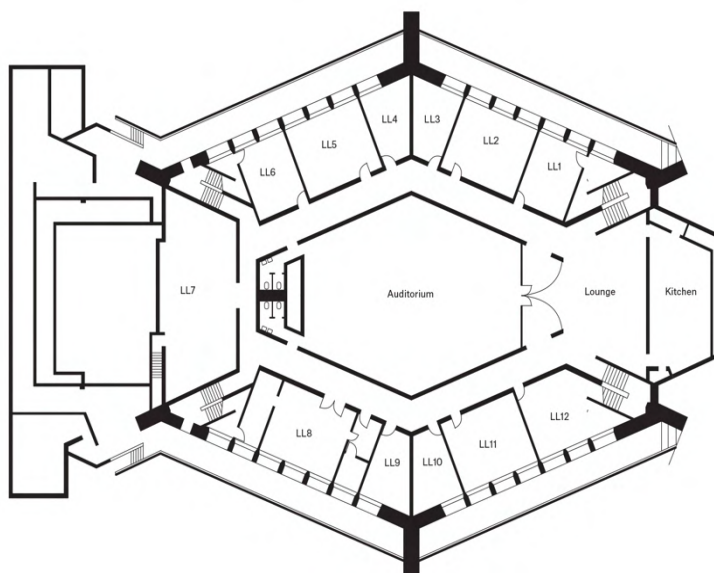
##### Chapel + Baptistry

smaller, more private event space  
seating capacity for 44 people  
suitable for weddings, events, performances

##### Offices and Classrooms

UL 1-11 - private rooms with views of landscape  
easily combined or subdivided with temporary walls  
easy access to event spaces and parking

#### Lower Level



##### Auditorium

large, easily adaptable gathering space  
scaffolding infrastructure for mounting lighting  
suitable for receptions, rehearsals, conferences, lectures

##### Lounge

medium-sized flexible gathering space  
easily configured for group tables and food service  
suitable for receptions alongside events in auditorium

##### Offices and Classrooms

LL1-12 - private rooms with high windows to street level  
good acoustic insulation from surrounding spaces  
suitable for offices, classrooms, rehearsal spaces, studios

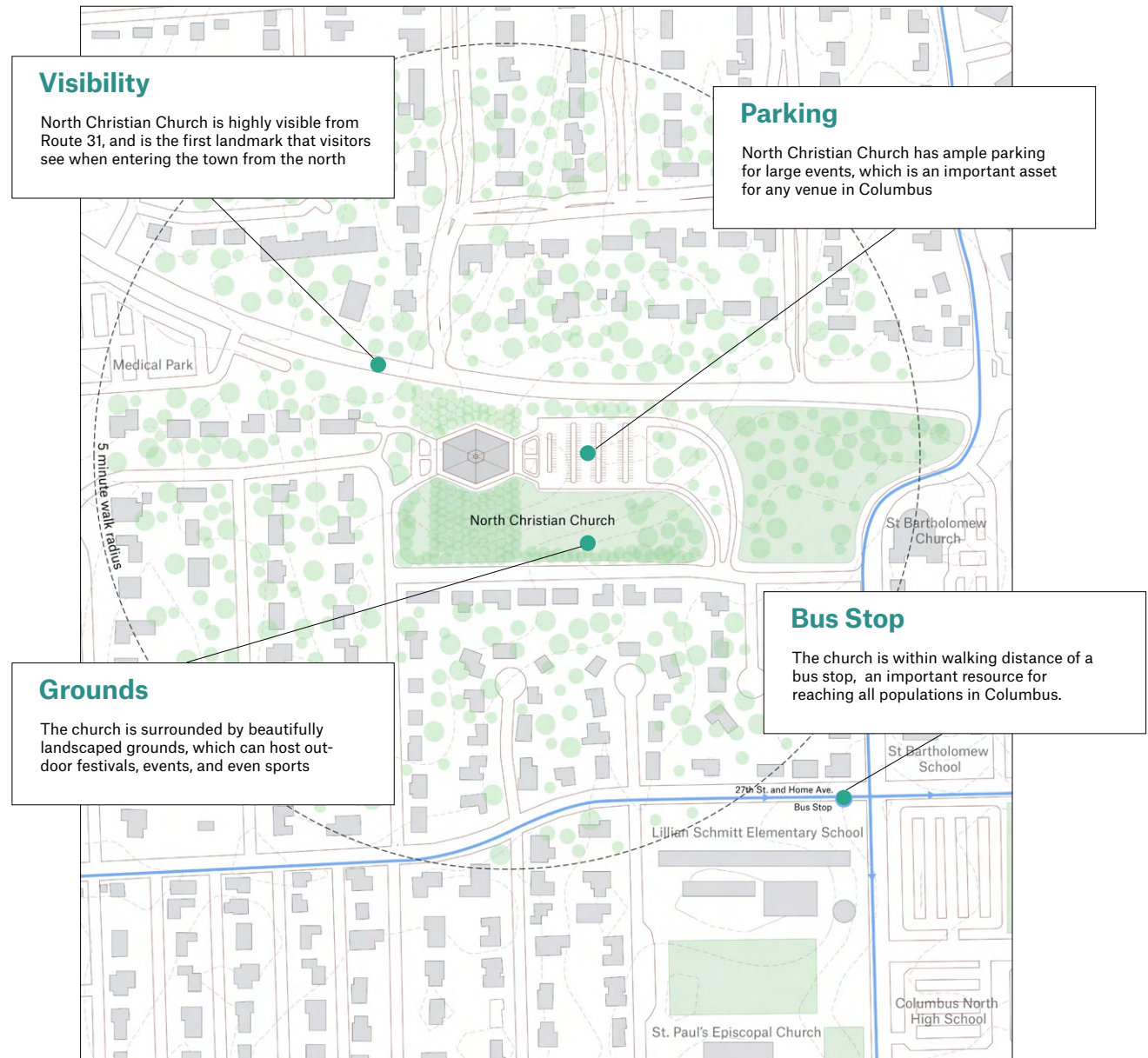
##### Kitchen

commercial kitchen with large capacity  
suitable for catering events, group cooking instruction

### 3. Current social, religious, and economic value (continued)

#### Spatial Assets (continued)

Figure 4: Spatial Assets - Grounds and Infrastructure



Data source: Google Maps, prepared by Bryony Roberts Studio



### 3. Current social, religious, and economic value (continued)

#### Conclusion

North Christian Church therefore continues to carry forward many of the core social and religious values that motivated its founding, but the institution occupies a diminished role in the larger community of Columbus and faces tensions between the needs of the congregation and the scale of its building and grounds. Internal challenges of decision-making have also added to the difficulty of rethinking the institution and establishing sustainable models of stewardship.

The building and grounds of NCC, however, are significant spatial and cultural assets not only to the church but also to the larger community of Columbus. The indoor and outdoor spaces are currently under-used, but they consist of a range of types and sizes of venues — from small classrooms to large event spaces and expansive grounds — that could support dynamic new programming on the site. Finding alignments between the spatial assets of NCC and the programmatic needs of surrounding communities could therefore offer possibilities for reviving the social role of NCC and supporting its built heritage.

## 4. Future Opportunities

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## 4. Future Opportunities

As outlined in the previous sections, the challenges facing North Christian Church necessitate creative thinking about the institutional model of stewardship for the site. The church has already considered options of space sharing, additional programming, and institutional partnership. In order to conceptualize and pursue a sustainable new future for the institution, however, it is necessary to consider North Christian Church in relation to the changing cultural context of Columbus, Indiana. The current challenges facing the church have emerged in part due to factors beyond the institution, such as changes in religious worship and demographics. Understanding possible solutions therefore requires consideration of the shifting cultural framework of the city and attentiveness to emerging patterns of growth. This analysis outlined in this report deploys systems thinking to understand the cultural landscape of Columbus, Indiana, using both quantitative and qualitative methods to examine changing relationships between communities and institutions and to find viable programming possibilities for North Christian Church.

To understand larger patterns of cultural and economic change in Columbus, this report combines quantitative analysis of demographic and economic data<sup>32</sup> with qualitative insight from conversations with stakeholders. Together, these findings show that Columbus is in a moment of demographic and cultural transition. As the manufacturing companies in Columbus recruit abroad, the population of the city becomes increasingly diverse in cultures, languages, and religions. The population growth of the city is now driven by communities of color. The ethos of the Columbus Way has promoted inclusion in corporate workplaces, but this ethos has not permeated all aspects of the city, resulting in “pockets of inclusion” but also experiences of discrimination and inequity. There is growing momentum among private, public, and nonprofit sectors to foster a better environment of equity and inclusion in the city, both for community well-being and to ensure economic growth through the recruitment and retention of talented employees. While there are many independent organizations and initiatives organizing programming on these themes, they remain disconnected and dispersed across different locations and institutions. Communities of color remain somewhat segregated geographically at the periphery of the city, and although many are thriving and growing independently, they are lacking spaces to connect with other communities and to host cultural events.

North Christian Church is uniquely positioned to fill needs for cross-cultural connections in Columbus and to align with growing momentum among disparate organizations and institutions around equity and inclusion. The history and mission of North Christian Church has foregrounded social justice work, first with activism on racial justice and gender equity, and more recently in advocating for LGBTQ rights and inclusion. Since its founding, NCC has also been overtly ecumenical, cultivating connections not only across

32. The quantitative assessment of demographic and economic change in Columbus and Bartholomew county is based on U.S. Census and American Community Survey data accessed through Social Explorer, as well as recent research and reports on Columbus including: Envision Columbus, the 2020 Report on Equity and Inclusion by Imagine Columbus, and the Visualizing Equity presentation by CivicLab for the Equity Works! Series.

#### 4. Future Opportunities (continued)

denominations but also between different faiths through the Love Chapel and Columbus Interfaith. Given this legacy of progressive activism, the monumental but underused building and grounds, and the accessibility of the site to northern neighborhoods, North Christian Church is perfectly poised to become a home for cross-cultural exchange and equity work. The church is already pursuing the idea of a cultural hub on its site, and a cross-cultural center would be a more targeted version of this concept, as outlined in the following section.

This current moment of transition offers Columbus an opportunity to be a model for change, redefining the Columbus Way for the 21st century. Columbus is a highly unusual small city. The city is a tight community bound together with an ethos of investment in the collective good, which guides both community-based initiatives and support for cultural assets. At the same time, Columbus is economically tied to a globalized economy and the city is a crossroads of international cultures. Columbus has the opportunity to be a leader in one of the defining cultural questions of the 21st century in the U.S. – how American cities that are facing transformative change can healthily transition to more diverse and inclusive communities. This current moment is an opportunity for Columbus and its institutions to approach difference in an appreciative way, to see the value that diversity and international cultures bring to its communities. Given the cross-sector engagement with this topic in Columbus and its significance for both the economic and cultural health of the city, North Christian Church could develop meaningful partnerships to work on these topics through its cross-cultural center. Aligning with larger momentum for change in Columbus will help North Christian Church to develop a more sustainable and supported institutional model.



## 4. Future Opportunities:

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iii.	Community Challenges and Needs	34

## 4. Future Opportunities (continued)

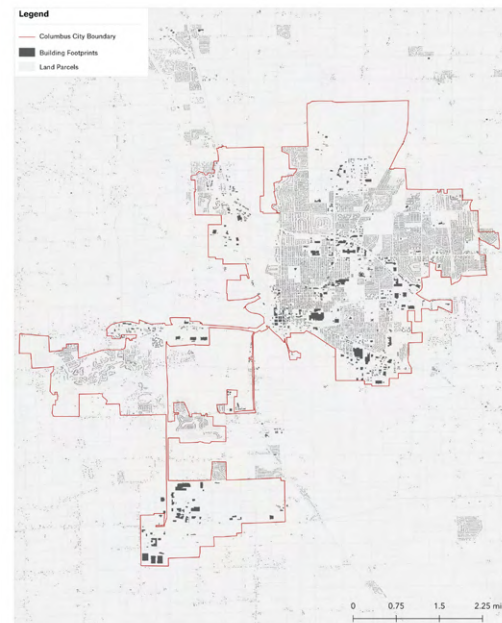
### Socioeconomic Context

By all quantitative and qualitative measures, Columbus, Indiana is unique for a city of its size. While many small cities in the U.S. have struggled with declining populations and unemployment in recent decades, Columbus boasts continuous growth due to the presence of several thriving technology and manufacturing companies. As the companies recruit internationally and domestically for skilled employees, the population of Columbus has also become increasingly diverse. The legacy of Irwin and Xenia Miller and the philosophy of the “Columbus Way” has encouraged cross-sector partnerships, investment in the social and cultural life of the city, and an ethos of inclusion. Recent studies, however, have revealed that vision of inclusion and of quality of life are not a reality for many residents of Columbus, and that limitations of cultural tolerance and vibrancy pose issues for the city’s capacity to attract and retain residents into the future.

### Population Growth and Diversity

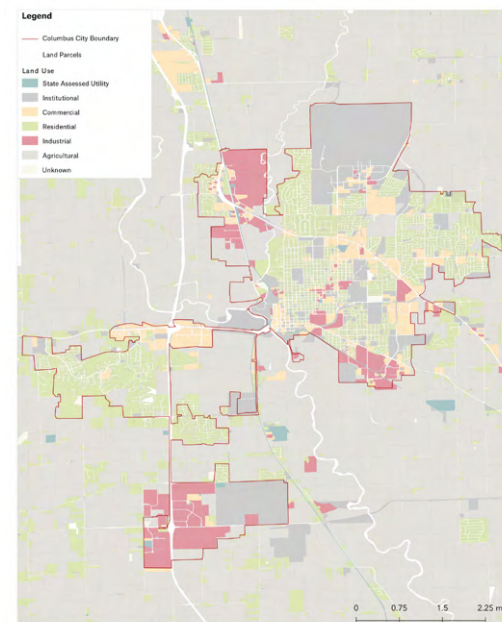
Several significant technology and manufacturing companies have locations in Columbus – including Fortune 500 company Cummins Inc as well as Fuel Systems Cummins, Faurecia Gladstone, Ntn Driveshaft Inc, Enkei America Inc, and Toyota Industrial Equipment Manufacturing Inc. As a result, the town consists of not only a small downtown area and many residential neighborhoods, but also several manufacturing areas (Figure 6) as well as a municipal airport. The area beyond the city, in contrast, is primarily agricultural land. These companies, as well as numerous other businesses, have drawn both office workers and industrial workers of all backgrounds.

Figure 5: Columbus, Indiana



Data: IndianaMap, prepared by Bryony Roberts Studio

Figure 6: Land Use, Columbus



Data: IndianaMap, prepared by Bryony Roberts Studio

## 4. Future Opportunities (continued)

### Socioeconomic Context (continued)

Both the populations of Columbus and of the larger Bartholomew County show continuous growth and steadily increasing diversity. Columbus, Indiana, a low-density city with a population of 47,543 people and 18,716 households in 2018. The population of the city has continued to grow since its founding and increased at a rate of 7.8% between 2010 and 2018. As of July 1, 2018, the population was 77.7% white, but also 11.7% Asian, 5.8% Hispanic or Latino, and 2.5% Black or African American.<sup>33</sup> Bartholomew County, where the population was 81,893 in 2018, has seen 9.1% population growth between 2010 and 2018, which was driven primarily by people of color. While the white population grew only by 611 people (.9%), the population of people of color grew by 6,287 people (69.1%). In the Bartholomew County School District, currently 30% of the students are people of color – with Hispanic/Latino 15.9%, Asian 7%, Black 2.4%.<sup>34</sup> These changes reflect both diverse populations moving into Columbus for employment, but also the “out-migration” of people from Indiana to other states. In 2014, for example, Indiana experienced a net domestic out-migration of 5,000 households, with the top four destinations being Florida, Texas, California, and Colorado.<sup>35</sup> As a result, communities of color are becoming increasingly central to life in Columbus. This reflects broader population trends across the country, with census population projections showing that youthful people of color are the primary engine of demographic growth and the U.S. will become “minority white” in 2045.<sup>36</sup>

### Issues of Inclusion and Equity

Despite the increasing overall diversity of populations in Columbus and Bartholomew County, immigrant populations tend to be concentrated in distinct neighborhoods. Asian communities are concentrated in census tracts that ring the periphery of downtown Columbus. In Census Tract 109, to the southwest of downtown, the Asian population is almost 23% and in Census Tract 107 to the east, it is 20%, while in downtown itself it is only 3%. In contrast, the Hispanic or Latino populations are concentrated in the downtown area, where they make up 10% of the population, or at the further northwest periphery of the city along US Hwy 31 where they are 20% of the population. The geographic separation of different communities of color prevents contact and exchange with each other and white populations in Columbus.

The geographic distribution of communities of color overlaps with stark differences in economic prosperity. For example, Census Tract 109 on the southwestern edge of the city has a median income of \$104,542, while the tract immediately adjacent to it that spans downtown, Census Tract 101, has a median income of \$34,670, and

33. United States Census Bureau, Quick Facts: Columbus, Indiana. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/columbuscityindiana>

34. 2020 Report on Equity and Inclusion, Imagine Columbus: An Initiative of United Way of Bartholomew County. November 2020. Accessed: [https://www.uwbarthco.org/sites/uwbarthco.org/files/2020-11/Equity%20Report\\_Final%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.uwbarthco.org/sites/uwbarthco.org/files/2020-11/Equity%20Report_Final%20(1).pdf)

35. Rachel Strange, “Short haul or long haul: Migration flows to and from Indiana,” InContext, A publication of the Indiana Business Research Center, Indiana University Kelley School of Business, Nov-Dec 2016, vol. 17, no.6 <http://www.incontext.indiana.edu/2016/nov-dec/article2.asp>

36. William H. Frey, “The US will become ‘minority white’ in 2045, Census project,” The Avenue, Brookings Institute, March 14, 2018 <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2018/03/14/the-us-will-become-minority-white-in-2045-census-projects/>

## 4. Future Opportunities (continued)

### Socioeconomic Context (continued)

north of downtown, Census Tract 102 has a median income of \$57,244.<sup>37</sup> These vast differences in median income point to greater prosperity in predominately white and sometimes Asian neighborhoods and paint a picture of neighboring communities with dramatically different resources and opportunities. CivicLab has conducted extensive research on issues of equity in Columbus and Bartholomew County and has identified how vast disparities in income between neighborhoods produce significantly different opportunities for children and therefore impact equity for future generations.<sup>38</sup> In addition to disparities in economic conditions, there are also issues of cultural inclusion and tolerance. Due to the legacy of the Columbus Way and the ethos of many employers of Columbus, there are efforts to create atmospheres of welcoming and inclusion in local workplaces, but these intentions have not fully transformed the living conditions of communities in Columbus. Several non-profit groups have led initiatives to both evaluate and address social inclusion and equity in Columbus and Bartholomew County. The Heritage Fund of Columbus has been conducting Welcoming Community surveys to understand the experiences of diverse populations in Columbus and their latest survey from 2018 revealed that 25% of survey responders have experienced some discrimination in Columbus. For those who had experienced discrimination, the percentage based on Race was 37%, on National origin 24%, on Religion 22%, on Sex 34%, on Age 27%, and on Sexual Orientation 13%.<sup>39</sup> The United Way of Bartholomew County has initiated the Imagine Columbus campaign to gather data on equity and inclusion and to conduct an extensive listening campaign to record personal experiences. Their 2020 Report on Equity and Inclusion revealed vast disparities in opportunities and well-being between communities of color and white populations in Bartholomew County.<sup>40</sup>

### Conclusion

These conditions reveal how Columbus and Bartholomew County are in a significant phase of transition. Due to shifting economic and cultural conditions, the population is changing — becoming more diverse, international, and multilingual. While there are many initiatives to create an inclusive and supportive environment for diversity in Columbus, carrying out the historic legacy of the Columbus Way, there are still persistent disparities in quality of life between communities of color and white populations. These inequities pose significant problems for Columbus' future. As many public, private, and nonprofit organizations in Columbus have identified, communities of color are the source of population growth and yet they still face barriers to economic and social equity. If these issues are not addressed in profound and systemic ways, the city will not be able

37. American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year Estimates, 2018, accessed through Social Explorer

38. Civic Lab, "Visualizing Equity" Presentation from Equity Works! Event, November 11, 2020

39. Welcoming Community Survey Results, Heritage Fund, 2018. Accessed: <https://www.heritagefundbc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Survey-Responses.pdf>

40. 2020 Report on Equity and Inclusion, Imagine Columbus: An Initiative of United Way of Bartholomew County. November 2020. Accessed: [https://www.uwbarthco.org/sites/uwbarthco.org/files/2020-11/Equity%20Report\\_Final%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.uwbarthco.org/sites/uwbarthco.org/files/2020-11/Equity%20Report_Final%20(1).pdf)



## 4. Future Opportunities (continued)

### **Socioeconomic Context** (continued)

to continue attracting new residents or retain new employees. But Columbus has a special legacy of leadership in building healthy communities through progressive, cross-sector collaborations. Given the ethos of Columbus, it has the capacity to address these problems and become a model for its context — a place to incubate innovative ideas about what small cities can be in a shifting cultural landscape.

## 4. Future Opportunities (continued)

### Stakeholders

To understand the shifting cultural landscape of Columbus and the future possibilities for North Christian Church, this study has identified and interviewed stakeholders invested in the future of the city and of NCC. The process of speaking with stakeholders clarifies the community needs of Columbus alongside the interests of North Christian Church and reveals moments of overlap and intersection – where NCC is poised to align with growing momentum within the city.

The identification of stakeholders aims to represent the breadth of community life in Columbus and the full range of populations and organizations who could be connected to North Christian Church. As identified in Figure 9, there are eight main groups of stakeholders: North Christian Church, the Disciples of Christ, the Miller Family, Other Religious Institutions in Columbus, Local Government, Local Schools, Community Organizations, and Analysts and Advisors.

The process of engaging stakeholders included identifying individuals or groups, then conducting 30-60 minute interviews with each individual or group representative, and then summarizing the findings of these interviews as a series of key issues, outlined in the following section.

#### North Christian Church and Other Religious Institutions

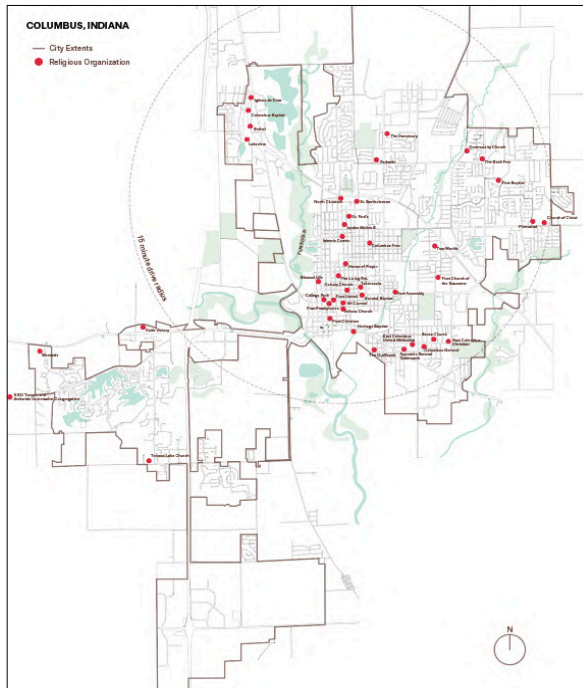
Conversations with the leadership and membership of North Christian Church, the leadership of the Disciples of Christ, and members of the Miller Family occurred early in this process to clarify the continuing mission of the church, the social and economic challenges that it faces, and the parallel challenges facing other churches within the Disciples of Christ.

Conversations with leadership of other religious institutions in Columbus revealed changing patterns of worship and interfaith partnerships in the area. There is a large number of religious institutions in Columbus, with over three dozen houses of worship, most of them churches, for a population of 47,543. Within this landscape, Columbus Interfaith is a growing coalition of institutions focused on increasing connections between denominations. Members of Columbus Interfaith include Sri Ganesh Mandir (formerly the Hindu Society), Sha'arei Shalom Reform Jewish Congregation of Columbus, the Islamic Society of Columbus, Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Columbus Indiana (UUCI), First Presbyterian Church, Fairlawn Presbyterian Church, and North Christian

## 4. Future Opportunities (continued)

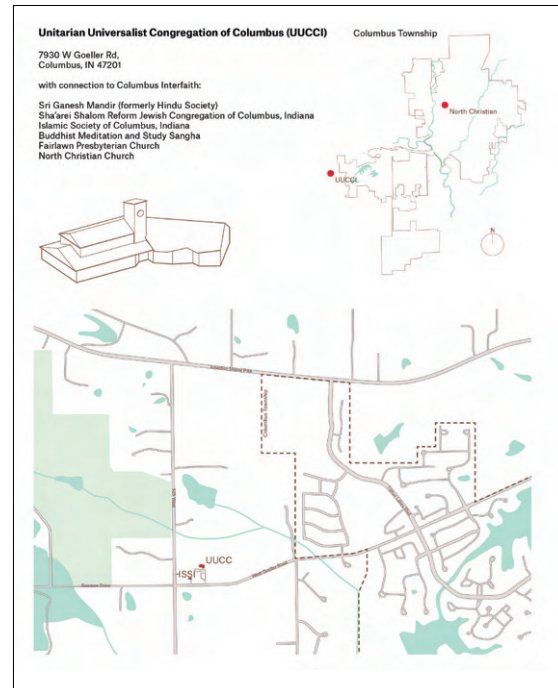
### Stakeholders (continued)

Figure 7: Religious Institutions in Columbus



Data source: Google Maps, prepared by Bryony Roberts Studio

Figure 8: UUCI and Interfaith Columbus



Data source: Google Maps, prepared by Bryony Roberts Studio

Church. Throughout its history, North Christian Church has always prioritized inter-denominational collaboration—having previously partnered more informally with many of the member institutions—and is now continuing that mission more formally through the Columbus Interfaith coalition. The interfaith activities are primarily centered on the campus of UUCI in southwest Columbus, although some events take place at North Christian Church. There was discussion of expanding the presence of Columbus Interfaith at NCC through the construction of a new temple for Sri Ganesh Mandir, however, that temple is now proceeding near the UUCI campus. Conversations with leaders of these churches were essential to understanding the direction of progressive congregations within Columbus and possibilities for expanded collaborations.

In addition to understanding religious institutions in Columbus, conversations with representatives from Partners for Sacred Places and Sacred Design Lab pointed to the larger themes facing religious institutions in the 21st century.

## 4. Future Opportunities (continued)

### **Stakeholders** (continued)

#### Local Leaders and Community Organizations

Since North Christian Church is looking to revitalize and expand its role in the larger Columbus community, conversations with local leaders and community organizations were essential for identifying current needs and potential partnerships. This outreach process identified a wide range of community stakeholders representing the cultural diversity of Columbus. Stakeholders range from organizations and initiatives serving Columbus as large, such as the United Way, Community Education Coalition, CivicLab, and Council for Youth Development, to groups supporting specific cultural communities or cross-cultural exchange, such as Su Casa, Latino Education Outreach, Cameo Columbus, and the Columbus African-American Organization. These conversations illuminated significant crossover needs and interests among a wide range of populations, as outlined in the following section.

In addition, stakeholder engagement included conversations with the city government about the current social needs facing the city and the ongoing projects to revitalize downtown and the Fair Oaks Mall area. Alongside the city government, the institutions devoted to heritage in Columbus—the Heritage Fund, Landmark Columbus, and the Visitors Center—are active players in working holistically to support both the built heritage and the local communities. Conversations with leaders of these organizations pointed to connections between sustaining the tangible and intangible heritage of Columbus.

#### Researchers and Analysts

In addition to interviewing individuals and groups with a vested interest in North Christian Church, this research also included interviews with expert researchers and analysts that study patterns of social, religious, and economic change in the region. Conversations with these experts offered perspective on regional changes in demographics, employment, and religious worship, which complimented the quantitative analysis of data outlined in the previous section.



## 4. Future Opportunities (continued)

### Stakeholders (continued)

Figure 9: Stakeholders of North Christian Church

#### North Christian Church

- Rev. Tonja Gerardy, Minister
- Nancy Hoover, Community Ambassador
- Kim Wadholm, Office Administrator
- Travis Whaley, Music Director
- Members of the congregation: Nancy Aurand-Humpf, John and Debbie Burnett, Jim Byrd, Linda Duncan, Trudi Ellison-Kendall, Sheryl Elston, Anna Jacobson, Carol and Claire Jones, Joy Lawler, Mark Matheny, Sharron Overby, Terry Shaw, Marty Winslow, Barry Beeker, Harold Ross

#### Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

- Rick Spleth, Regional Minister of the Christian Church in Indiana (Disciples of Christ)
- Dick Hamm, former General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
- Scott Seay, History Professor at Christian Theological Seminary

#### Religious Institutions in Interfaith Columbus

- Nebil Baqhum, Islamic Society of Columbus, Indiana
- Paula Brummett, Sha'arei Shalom Reform Jewish Congregation of Columbus, Indiana
- Rev. Nic Cable, Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Columbus, Indiana
- Vijay Gopal, Sri Ganesh Mandir (formerly Hindu Society)
- Rev. Felipe Martinez, First Presbyterian Church

#### Miller Family

- William Miller
- Elizabeth Miller

#### Community Groups

- Whitney Amuchastegui, Su Casa
- Kathryn Armstrong, Columbus Area Arts Council
- Rachida Bahar, Columbus Indiana Accueil
- Stephanie Carmer, NAACP
- Heather Carson, Center for Youth Development
- Hui Liu, Columbus Chinese Association

- Tom Harmon, Cameo Columbus / Columbus African-American Association
- Jack Hess, CivicLab
- Annette Howell, Columbus Newcomers Club
- Cate Hyatt, Bartholomew County Indivisible
- Sarla Kalsi, Indian Association of Columbus
- Tracy Martinez, Thrive Alliance
- Luz Elena Michel, Latino Education & Outreach Program Manager, Community Education Coalition
- Mark Stewart, United Way of Bartholomew County

#### Local Heritage Organizations

- Tracy Souza, Heritage Fund
- Richard McCoy, Landmark Columbus Foundation
- Karen Niverson, Executive Director of Columbus Area Visitors Center
- Bob Jaeger, Partners for Sacred Places
- David Frederick, Partners for Sacred Places

#### Local Government

- Mayor Jim Lienhoop, City of Columbus
- Mary Ferdon, Executive Director of Administration and Community Development, City of Columbus
- Aida Ramirez, Human Rights Commission, City of Columbus

#### Local Institutions

- Columbus North High School
- Northside Middle School
- Lillian Schmitt Elementary School

#### Analysts and Researchers:

- Drew Klacik, Policy Analyst, IU Public Policy Institute
- Sue Phillips, Sacred Design Lab, Harvard University
- Aaron Renn, Urban Analyst, consultant for Indiana Chamber of Commerce
- David Rubin, Land Collective, author of Envision Columbus Plan

■ Reached for Interview

■ Not Reached for Interview

## 4. Future Opportunities (continued)

### Community Challenges and Needs

Conversations with stakeholders across a range of backgrounds and interests revealed surprising alignment on key community challenges and needs in Columbus. Stakeholders repeatedly emphasized needs for greater equity and inclusion to sustain the social and economic health of the city. Calls for equity and inclusion came not only from those representing diverse religious groups or immigrant communities, but also from those analyzing the economic interests of local businesses. Since communities of color are driving population growth in Bartholomew County, as outlined above, the future of Columbus depends on its capacity to support people of different backgrounds, languages, and religions. Stakeholders repeatedly communicated the need for cross-cultural exchange that will cultivate tolerance and understanding. Similarly, there is a general need for more cultural activities and amenities in Columbus to attract and retain all employees, whether arriving from other regions in the U.S. or from abroad.

Columbus has a rich legacy of leadership in building healthy communities that offers a foundation for this moment: the personal mission of J. Irwin Miller, the leadership of Cummins Inc, the cross-sector collaborations in Columbus, the work of North Christian Church, and the ongoing ethic of the Columbus Way. While this legacy offers a strong foundation, the contemporary moment also poses unique challenges that require creative rethinking of existing methods: the political polarization both across the nation and in central Indiana that sharpens cultural divides, and the ethical questioning of existing community-based organizing and philanthropy. As a result, this moment presents Columbus with both a challenge and an opportunity to be a thought leader in enabling contemporary equitable communities.

### Challenges for Diverse Communities

As described in previous sections, the large manufacturing and service companies in Columbus draw a diverse workforce, both from other locations within the U.S. and from abroad. Columbus is currently home to a significant number of immigrants from East Asia, Southeast Asia, and Central and South America, as well as Europe and Africa. These groups bring great diversity in languages as well as religions. According to Vijay Gopal of Sri Ganesh Mandir (formerly the Hindu Society), there are 22 different languages spoken among their membership, with close to 1000 people attending the annual Diwali festival. Similarly, the Islamic Center has a vibrant membership with 200 people regularly attending services and celebrations.

## 4. Future Opportunities (continued)

### Community Challenges and Needs (continued)

The companies that recruit international employees make concerted efforts to create atmospheres of inclusion in the workplace, and stakeholders communicated appreciation for the efforts that Cummins Inc and other companies make to initiate and support initiatives for equity and inclusion. Despite support at the workplace, however, many diverse communities encounter discrimination and occasionally hostility in other environments. As the president of the United Way of Bartholomew County, Mark Stewart, summarized at a recent event titled “Unveiling the Bias”: “After engaging in equity work for the past few years, it is now my viewpoint that Columbus is not as welcoming as I have always believed that it is. There are definitely parts and pieces of our community that are welcoming. However, there are significant parts of our community that are not at all inclusive. Some have described this phenomenon as the ‘Columbus bubbles of inclusivity.’”<sup>41</sup> The Welcoming Community Survey run by the Heritage Fund gathered input from local residents and found that Columbus was “unevenly welcoming” with “lower socioeconomic classes, racial and ethnic minorities, and the LGBTQIA population” facing the greatest discrimination.<sup>42</sup> Interviews conducted with stakeholders for this report confirmed this data, with some stakeholders having experienced racial slurs after dark on the street or their children being teased in school. The Islamic Center receives threats through phone calls and letters and works closely with the police department on safety. Stakeholders spoke of the need for in-depth antiracist work such as educational programming and workshops to address implicit bias. In addition to this ongoing educational work, many stakeholders spoke warmly of the events such as international cooking classes, One Cup of Tea, and Ethnic Expo that helped to foster connections between people of different backgrounds.

In addition to these issues of cultural inclusion, there are also measurable disparities in equity across different populations. As outlined in the previous section, income levels vary significantly across the different census tracts within Columbus. Some immigrant communities thrive economically and report little to no experiences of discrimination, while others face more limited opportunities and regular experiences of prejudice. For lower income families, the lack of affordable housing, public transportation, and affordable childcare in Columbus compounds their economic challenges. Multiple stakeholders spoke to the issues of housing affordability and food insecurity as key challenges. Even for families with higher incomes, there are significantly different opportunities for recruited employees than for “trailing spouses.” For many employees recruited to work in Columbus, their spouses, typically women, are not able to work in the U.S. due to differences in licensure or certification, even if they have earned advanced

41. Jana Wiersema, “Lead by Design: Revealing implicit and explicit bias in Columbus,” *The Republic*, October 15, 2020. [http://www.therepublic.com/2020/10/16/lead\\_by\\_design\\_revealing\\_implicit\\_and\\_explicit\\_bias\\_in\\_columbus/](http://www.therepublic.com/2020/10/16/lead_by_design_revealing_implicit_and_explicit_bias_in_columbus/)

42. “Welcoming Community Survey Results,” Heritage Fund, 2018. Accessed: <https://www.heritagefundbc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Survey-Responses.pdf>

## 4. Future Opportunities (continued)

### Community Challenges and Needs (continued)

degrees and are highly skilled professionals. As a result, stakeholders describe a glut of highly educated professional women who are not able to advance their careers and have few opportunities for involvement in activities outside of the home.

In response to these conditions, stakeholders explained the need for ambitious initiatives addressing the economic, political, and social dimensions of equity and inclusion. The challenge of transitioning to a more diverse and international community requires addressing both tangible and intangible barriers.

#### Challenges for Community Organizations

There are many community organizations in Columbus already leading initiatives on equity and inclusion, although many initiatives happen independently without significant coordination. Columbus is notable for having an unusually high number of non-profit organizations for a small city of 47,543 people. United Way coordinates among 100 different non-profit organizations, mobilizes 11,000 volunteers, and has the highest per capita giving rate for all of Indiana.<sup>43</sup> Among the local organizations, there are several spearheading initiatives on equity and inclusion, either in general or in support of specific communities. The United Way is leading a campaign titled “Imagine Columbus,” which involved three years of listening sessions with local residents on race relations and was summarized in their recent 2020 Report on Equity and Inclusion. The Heritage Fund runs the Welcoming Community program, which has included surveys on experiences of inclusion and grants to pair community organizations in cross-cultural exchanges. CivicLab, part of the Community Education Coalition, has been leading workshops and public events on the topic of Equity with the goal of making Columbus the most equitable community for children in the nation. Local educational institutions are active leaders as well, from IUPUC’s Office for Women and Center for business and Economic Development organizing the Lead by Design series to Dr. Jim Roberts of the Bartholomew County School District introducing antiracist education into the school system. Cameo, the Newcomers Club, and Columbus Indiana Accueil organize cross-cultural programming to foster relationships between diverse communities, and affinity groups such as Su Casa, the African American Fund, and the NAACP advocate for systemic change. The Interfaith Columbus coalition has been a recent force for interfaith exchange, fostering connections between Christian, Hindu, Muslim, Jewish, and Buddhist members of the Columbus community. This extensive list of initiatives, which is not even exhaustive, indicates the striking amount of attention and effort giving to these issues for a city of this size.

43. Interview with Mark Stewart, Wednesday, November 11, 2020



## 4. Future Opportunities (continued)

### Community Challenges and Needs (continued)

These organizations face challenges, however, in effectively addressing equity and inclusion. Since the initiatives described above are run by different non-profits, schools, or religious institutions, they lack the benefits of coordination and shared resources. Many stakeholders spoke of the need for an umbrella organization that could coordinate between different initiatives and organize programming, events, and information that would be useful to all. Stakeholders suggested a digital platform that could be the go-to source for recordings of lectures, readings, information, and a calendar of events. In addition, a physical institution would be helpful as a destination for lectures, workshops, events, and celebrations. Stakeholders repeatedly spoke of the lack of a physical space that could make connections possible—a third space outside of work or home that could host cross-cultural exchange. There are few suitable venues for mid-sized events in Columbus and the main choice is the Commons. Representatives of local non-profits repeatedly voice that the rental rates for the Commons are too high, but they would be willing to pay half or two-thirds of those rates for fundraisers or conferences. There is also a need for more venues outside of the downtown area, as many diverse populations live on the north side of town, as do residents who want to be nearer to the amenities of Indianapolis.

Additionally, the work on equity and inclusion has prompted greater questioning of the leadership of community initiatives in Columbus. As explored in the event “Unveiling the Bias,” organized by IUPUC’s Center for business and Economic Development, implicit and explicit bias have played a role in maintaining primarily white, male leadership in the non-profits, corporations, and government of Bartholomew County. Attendees of the event were asked “Of the Boards of Directors of which you are familiar, does the board composition reflect our community? Our community is 50% female and at least 18% people of color” – 100% of respondents answered No.<sup>44</sup> Stakeholders repeatedly raised the problem of primarily white, male leadership determining programs for communities of color, and thereby unconsciously imposing a perspective of privilege that doesn’t align with the lived experiences of the people being served.

### Challenges for Employers

The issues of equity and inclusion are pressing for both the non-profit and business sectors in Columbus. As described above, local companies must ensure that Columbus is appealing place to both live and work in order to recruit employees both nationally and internationally, which requires sustaining a vibrant cultural atmosphere. In the 21st

44. Jana Wiersema, “Lead by Design: Revealing implicit and explicit bias in Columbus,” *The Republic*, October 15, 2020. [http://www.therepublic.com/2020/10/16/lead\\_by\\_design\\_revealing\\_implicit\\_and\\_explicit\\_bias\\_in\\_columbus/](http://www.therepublic.com/2020/10/16/lead_by_design_revealing_implicit_and_explicit_bias_in_columbus/)

## 4. Future Opportunities (continued)

### Community Challenges and Needs (continued)

century, the amenities expected by employees are different than in the previous centuries when Columbus was established. Workers expect not only reasonably priced housing and quality schools, but also great restaurants, coffee shops, music clubs, and quality markets. Columbus has fewer such amenities than would be expected given the affluence of the town, and it can't compete in terms of cultural programming with nearby Bloomington or Indianapolis. The Envision Columbus report gathered data from local residents about the types of amenities that they would like to see in Downtown, and the most popular answers were "seasonal festivals and programming" 59% and "performance venues" 54%.<sup>45</sup> When asked about specific types of programming, the top choices were Theater Venues, Street Festivals, Performances, Beer Gardens, and Public Films.<sup>46</sup>

In addition to the amenities need to retain 21st century workers, Columbus companies also need to ensure a welcoming atmosphere for diverse international populations. As described by Drew Klacik, an urban researcher working on central Indiana; since "the Midwest loses the out-migration game," Columbus "need to start thinking about embracing and creating opportunity for diverse populations. Because Indiana tends to export its talent."<sup>47</sup> For international populations, it is not only necessary to have cultural amenities, but also an atmosphere of tolerance and inclusion, as well as diverse religious institutions. While Columbus has attracted diverse new employees for decades, it is unclear if it can continue to do so. Cummins recently acquired a 4-acre plot in downtown Indianapolis and built a new Distribution Headquarters there, hiring Deborah Berke for the project in an extension of the Architecture Program in Columbus. This monumental new project points to an interest in the benefits offered by Indianapolis, for both the company and its employees.

### Community Needs

Across the diverse residents, local businesses, and non-profit community organizations of Columbus there is a set of interconnected needs. First, there is the need for inclusion: to create a supportive and welcoming atmosphere for recruited employees, new residents, and existing communities of color. The work of inclusion is long-term and multi-layered, including both educational and cultural initiatives. Creating a cultural shift towards inclusiveness can be helped by educational work on antiracism through workshops and reading discussions, as well as celebratory moments of cross-cultural exchange such as food festivals and performances. Second, there is the need for greater social, economic,

45. *Envision Columbus: Downtown Strategic Development Plan*, The Heritage Fund – The Community Foundation of Bartholomew County, p. 144. Accessed: <https://envisioncolumbus.org/the-plan/>

46. *Ibid*, p. 149

47. Interview with Drew Klacik, Monday, November 2, 2020

## 4. Future Opportunities (continued)

### **Community Challenges and Needs** (continued)

and political equity. Although Columbus is an affluent city boasting continuous growth, the affluence and opportunities are not evenly distributed. There are significant pockets of poverty and challenges to affordability in terms of available housing and transportation. There is also an invisible ceiling to leadership in business, government, and non-profits for women and communities of color. There are currently many initiatives advancing both inclusion and equity in Columbus, but they are operating independently and could benefit from greater coordination, a concentration of information and resources, and a shared space. Third, there is a need for greater cultural amenities: to enhance the cultural life of Columbus as a place to live and to foster cultural exchange between communities. Columbus lacks the quality of amenities expected for a city of its affluence and has difficulty competing with nearby Bloomington and Indianapolis. Increasing the amount of cultural programming, such as theater, music performances, street festivals, and public films, would serve the double purpose of enlivening the public life of Columbus and fostering greater cross-cultural exchange.

## 4. Future Opportunities:

<b>b.</b>	<b>Actions needed to sustain significance</b>	<b>40</b>
i.	Programming Proposal: Cross-Cultural Center	41
ii.	Case Studies for Institutional Organization	46
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v.	Next Steps	54



## 4. Future Opportunities

### Programming Proposal: Cross-Cultural Center

In order to support both the architectural resources and the community of North Christian Church, the congregation and leadership have been pursuing the idea of a “cultural hub.” Like many churches with small congregations and steep operating expenses, North Christian Church has considered myriad options for the stewardship of its grounds and the continuation of its worship, from sharing its space with other congregations or institutions to vacating the property and continuing its worship elsewhere. The congregation and leadership have recently reaffirmed their commitment to staying in the building, but are seeking ways to support the institution financially. With the “cultural hub” concept, the congregation would worship in the sanctuary and use some of the gathering spaces in the lower level, but would lease out the many classrooms, offices, rehearsal spaces, and kitchen to other tenants and would actively program the sanctuary and auditorium with events. The benefits of this model include the continued connection between the congregation and its building, as well as new methods of reaching the larger communities of Columbus. The challenges of this model include securing enough tenants and programming to bring in sufficient revenue to match the operating expenses of the church. These challenges have become more daunting during the COVID-19 pandemic, which has reduced demand for office space and event venues, at least in the short term.

To increase the viability of the cultural hub model, this report proposes a more targeted identity as a center for cross-cultural exchange. North Christian Church will face challenges securing enough programming and tenant rental on its own to cover its operating costs. However, by building on growing momentum for collaboration, fundraising, and programming around issues of equity and inclusion within the larger Columbus community, NCC could create a lasting and sustainable new institutional model as a cross-cultural hub. As outlined in the previous section, there is a growing cross-sector interest in issues of equity and inclusion in Columbus, which has prompted companies, non-profits, affinity groups, educational institutions, and religious institutions to organize numerous events, programs, and educational campaigns. These programs are currently isolated and independent, but could greatly benefit from more coordination and shared resources. In addition, there are growing international communities in Columbus that need environments for cross-cultural exchange and venues for their own cultural celebrations. Given North Christian Church’s history of activism for social justice, its leadership in interfaith collaboration, and its stunning building and grounds, the institution is perfectly poised to become a new destination for cross-cultural exchange and for collaboration on equity and inclusion. J. Irwin Miller’s presence in North

## 4. Future Opportunities

### **Programming Proposal: Cross-Cultural Center** (continued)

Christian Church and his leadership in antiracism and interfaith collaboration provide a strong historical foundation for this work, and the identity of the center could articulate that link, for example through the name 'The Miller Center for Equity and Inclusion.'

As outlined in the following section on case studies, other churches have found financial stability by establishing a nonprofit foundation that operates in parallel with the church. This foundation would be secular, in order to enable broader fundraising, and would manage the logistics of programming, space sharing, and fundraising campaigns. As a separate, parallel organization that is accountable to the church, the foundation eases the burden on church leadership to manage operations. For example, First Christian Church in Columbus has recently partnered with Landmark Columbus and the Heritage Fund to form Friends of First Christian Church Architecture to fundraise for architectural repairs. At a larger scale, Calvary United Methodist Church and St. Mark's in the Bowery have pursued this successfully to manage both fundraising and space sharing to cover the operating costs of their churches.

The financial viability of this cross-cultural center would depend on a combination of active programming, space sharing, and fundraising. Creating a vibrant cross-cultural center would require lively community-based programming to activate the site, as well as steady revenue-generating rentals and events to sustain the space financially. The non-profits and religious organizations described above hold an enormous range of celebrations, performances, conferences, fundraisers, educational programming, and classes that could easily take place at North Christian Church. The grounds of the church can support big festivals and celebrations, the sanctuary is ideal for large events and performances, the classrooms can host classes and educational programming, and the offices can be rented out by local organizations and businesses. With programming and space sharing with community organizations, revenue would realistically not come through high fees but rather through the steady frequency of programming and rentals, which becomes more feasible when a range of different local communities converge on the space. The nonprofit and religious organizations outlined in the previous section hold many activities that are currently dispersed and lacking appropriate spaces. At the largest scale, celebrations such as the Diwali festival and Day of the Dead events could activate the grounds, while the Chinese New Year Gala or performances of Latinx and Indian dance groups could animate the sanctuary. The many conferences and fundraisers organized by nonprofits that typically occur at the Commons could easily happen in the sanctuary. As many nonprofits have articulated, the rental prices for Commons are

## 4. Future Opportunities

### **Programming Proposal: Cross-Cultural Center** (continued)

too high for them, but paying even half the amount (approx. \$500 per event) would be manageable for conferences, fundraisers or performances. In addition, there is an active roster of language classes for adults and children, music classes, and dance classes run by different affinity organizations that are dispersed around the city but could take place in the classrooms and rehearsal spaces at NCC. Bringing all of these activities together into the same space would have a compounding effect, drawing more activity into the space.

To complement the work of programming and space sharing, the nonprofit foundation of the cross-cultural center would also need to actively fundraise to support the space. As articulated in the previous section, there is a widespread desire for greater equity and inclusion in Columbus that cuts across private and public sectors. There is also a lack of an institutional umbrella for this work or a physical space that could host cross-cultural exchange. North Christian Church is in a position to offer both -- to become a meaningful destination for work on equity and inclusion as a natural continuation of its legacy of activism for social justice. This new institutional model could be supported by national and local grants for equity and inclusion, by donations from private companies that benefit from enhanced conditions for recruiting and retaining employees, and the nonprofits already invested in this mission, such as Landmark Columbus and the Heritage Fund. In addition, the local communities that would benefit from this work have shown that they are willing and able to fundraise substantially to support similar causes. The Hindu Society raised significant funds to build their new temple as part of the interfaith campus at UUCCI, which is currently under construction, and the African-American Fund has been supporting scholarships and programming from funding raised from local African-American families. Many of the diverse communities in Columbus are prosperous but are operating separately from each other and from the culture of philanthropy in the city. Bringing different communities together would enable them to share resources to meet their common needs and have a greater presence in the cultural leadership of Columbus.

## 4. Future Opportunities

### Programming Proposal: Cross-Cultural Center (continued)

The Cross-Cultural Center would build on the existing efforts of many organizations and institutions in Columbus, offering a place for shared resources and programming. The following chart shows how many groups in Columbus are converging on this topic, although this is not an exhaustive list.

Figure 10: Community Stakeholders Working Towards Equity and Inclusion





## 4. Future Opportunities

### Programming Proposal: Cross-Cultural Center (continued)

Figure 11: Programming Components of Cross-Cultural Center



## 4. Future Opportunities

### Case Studies for Institutional Organization

The following case studies offer models of shared stewardship between a church and a nonprofit organization that manages programming, fundraising, and repairs.

#### Calvary United Methodist Church

Philadelphia, PA

- Advocates formed Friends of Calvary (FoC), including Bob Jaeger from Partners for Sacred Places
- FoC held conversations with stakeholders and found surprising consensus: “the neighborhood noted that public space for community activities was scarce, and wanted to see space developed for community activities. Many felt that Calvary could serve this purpose.”<sup>49</sup>
- Three elements to the new identity of the space:
  - a building that would support secular activities
  - a building that would serve as a venue for performance
  - a building that would remain a sacred space
- A new nonprofit was formed: Calvary Center for Culture and Community
- Governance: the church Trustees appointed a “majority of one” to the board of directors who would vote with the church if any decision was seen as detrimental to the church
- Community residents would make up the remaining members of the board
- Calvary’s trustees were given power to veto any decision that could not be legally supported by the United Methodist Church
- Three advantages of nonprofit foundation
  - Organizational help in fundraising, managing capital campaign, managing repairs
  - Separate foundation enables non-church members to participate in the planning process
  - Secular foundation enables fundraising from those who would not support the congregation directly
- Raised over 1 million dollars for repairs, renovation, and restoration.
- The building was once mostly empty and is now a lively community center, including the University City Historical Society, Prometheus Radio Project, Literacy Center, Mariposa Food Co-op, as well as active Programming from performing arts groups.

Source:

“Reviving Calvary: A Twenty-Year Partnership Helps Revitalize a Community and Save a Neighborhood Beacon,” Partners for Sacred Places

## 4. Future Opportunities

### Case Studies for Institutional Organization (continued)

#### St Mark's in the Bowery

Manhattan, NY

- Built in the 1650s as a Dutch Reform Chapel, and landmarked in 1966 because of its diverse architectural character and community significance.<sup>50</sup>
- In 1960s, the church was in a state of disrepair, but still being used by local community organizations.
- 1967 - Friends of St. Mark's was formed
- 1968 - Friends of St. Mark's became St. Mark's Historic Landmark Fund. The Fund began a nine-year project to restore St. Mark's, carried out by the Preservation Youth Project (PYP).
- The theater space was used widely by the artist community at the time, including by The Poetry Project
- 1997 - St. Mark's Historic Landmark Fund was given money by Lu Esther T. Mertz Charitable Trust to fund interior restoration on the condition that it was developed in to a mission-related, financially sustainable adaptive re-use for the building. This led to the church becoming a home for organizations related to preservation and cultural history.
- The Neighborhood Preservation Center was formed in 1999, one decade after a fire destroyed the Ernest Flagg Rectory, and was housed in a coworking situation alongside the Historic Districts Council, and the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation in the restored rectory.
- Current Partners in Residence are Danspace Project, The Poetry Project, and the New York Theatre Ballet, which animate the space with regularly scheduled performances and cultural events

#### Sources:

"History," St. Mark's Church-in-the-Bowery website <https://stmarksbowery.org/history>  
"St. Marks Church-in-the-Bowery," New York Preservation Archive Project  
<https://www.nypap.org/preservation-history/saint-marks-church-in-the-bowery/>

## 4. Future Opportunities

### Case Studies for Institutional Organization (continued)

#### St. Ann and the Holy Trinity Church

Brooklyn, NY

- St Ann's parish moved into the Holy Trinity Church in 1969 and it was landmarked in 1987.<sup>51</sup>
- From 1983-2013 St Ann's leased space in the Parish Hall to nonprofits, including the St. Ann's Center for Restoration and the Arts, but stopped having full time tenants because of building issues.
- Now the Sanctuary, Parish Hall, and Community Room are available for rent for events.
- The Forum @ St. Ann's started in 2012 and hosts a variety of cultural community events
- The First Tuesday of every month features an Organ concert by various leading organists from NYC to showcase St. Ann's Peabody Memorial Organ built in 1925. Donations go toward building and organ restoration.

#### First Christian Church

Columbus, IN

- Designed in 1942 by Eliel Saarinen, and featuring interior details designed by Eero Saarinen and Charles Eames, it was landmarked in 2001.<sup>52</sup>
- Friends of First Christian Church Architecture (FFCCA) was formed with Landmark Columbus and the Heritage Fund.
- The Heritage Fund is the fiscal agent
- FFCCA has an advisory board with 7 members: four from the church, and three from the community.
- The Sanctuary Skylight Rehabilitation project included a public program that was held in 2017 at the church. It included an historical overview of the building, a discussion about the effectiveness of "friends organizations," and an explanation of the Rehabilitation project.

Sources: Forum @St. Ann's, <https://www.stannholyltrinity.org/forum-st-anns/>; Landmark Columbus Foundation <https://landmarkcolumbusfoundation.org/news/ffccalaunched>



## 4. Future Opportunities

### Case Studies for Institutional Organization - Membership Option

The following case studies offer examples of space-sharing in community-based institutions that operate through a membership model, in which members gain access to different types of spaces and programs for a membership fee.

#### **The Gowanus Studio Space** Brooklyn, NY

- Space, equipment, community, and support to emerging artists and designers
- Members participate in workshops, exhibitions, and other public events
- All members have 24/7 access to the woodshop, metalshop, printshop, machine shop, and communal workspace
- For additional money per month members can have storage space and/or private studio space

#### **Detroit Parents Collective** Detroit, MI

- Co-working space with on-site childcare programs called Free Thinker School and Detroit Play Garden
- Workspace includes private and communal spaces, coffee and tea, and wifi
- Families purchase either two or four day weeks and their membership is priced per household, not per individual
- Membership covers cost of preschool, childcare, and coworking space
- Parents/caregivers must stay onsite.

#### **Recess Collective** San Francisco, CA

- An indoor playspace with co-working option, prenatal education, and wellness workshops
- Membership includes access to playspace, co-working, childcare, discounted workshops, and discounted rental space for private events
- Parents/caregivers must stay on site and on-call for diaper changes and bathroom trips
- scholarships and subsidized memberships are offered

Sources: Gowanus Studio Space, <https://www.gowanusstudio.org/>; Detroit Parents Collective, <https://www.detroitparentcollective.com/>; Recess Collective, <https://www.recesscollective.org>

## 4. Future Opportunities (continued)

### Proposed Space Sharing

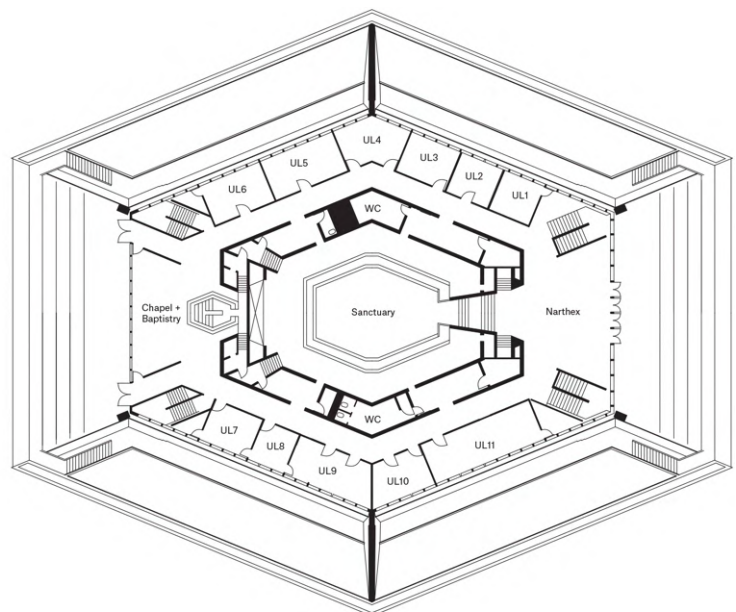
#### Space Configuration

The following plans outline the potential new uses for the existing spaces of NCC. The proposed layout represents a significant downsizing of administrative and storage spaces currently used by the church in order to maximize income from new office spaces.

Figure 12: Plan of space usage in Cross-Cultural Center

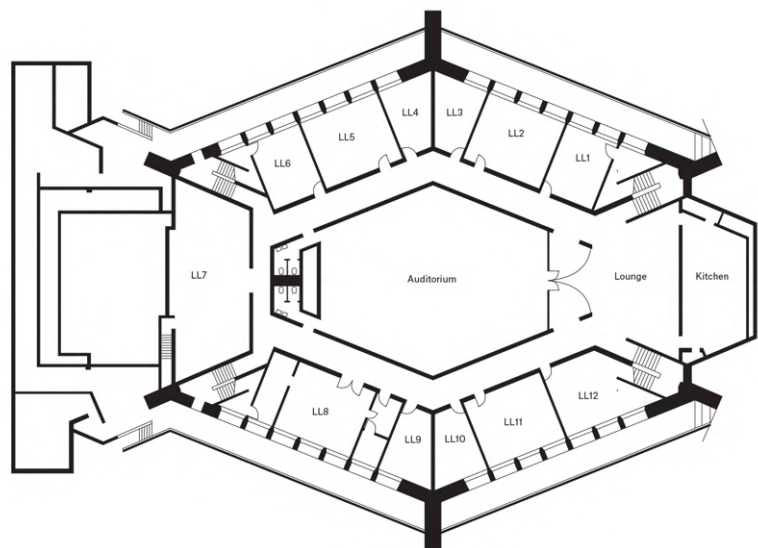
#### Upper Level

Sanctuary	Worship space, Event space
Narthex	Reception area
Baptistry	Small worship space, event space
UL 1	Church Office - 13x12
UL 2	Rental Office - 13x12
UL 3	Rental Office - 16x13
UL 4	Rental Office - 19x13
UL 5	Senior Minister - 23.5x13
UL 6	Rental Office - 20x13
UL 7	Rental Office - 17x13
UL 8	Rental Office - 11.5x13
UL 9	Classroom - 24.5x13
UL 10	Rental Office - 20x13
UL 11	Classroom, Conference Room - 28x13



#### Lower Level

Auditorium	Event space, rehearsal space
Lounge	Reception area
Kitchen	Cooking facilities
LL 1	Rental Office - 20x15
LL 2	Classroom - 20x24
LL 3	Rental Office - 20x11
LL 4	Rental Office - 20x12
LL 5	Classroom - 20x24
LL 6	Rental Office - 20x15
LL 7	Rental Office - 20x52
LL 8	Music Suite - 20x24
LL 9	Rental Office - 20x14
LL 10	Rental Office - 20x11
LL 11	Classroom - 20x24
LL 12	Church Storage - 20x16



## 4. Future Opportunities (continued)


### Proposed Space Sharing

#### Space configuration (continued)

The following table outlines a sample schedule for uses of the spaces in NCC, maintaining but adjusting locations of existing programming to minimize the amount of unprogrammed space throughout the week.

Figure 13: Schedule of space usage in Cross-Cultural Center

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Sanctuary	Worship	Events / Tours	Events / Tours	Events / Tours	Events / Tours	Events / Tours	Events / Tours
Baptistry	Small services					Centering Prayer	
UL 1		Office Administrator	Comm. Ambassador	Music Director	Office Administrator Comm. Ambassador		
UL 2		Office Rental	Office Rental	Office Rental	Office Rental	Office Rental	
UL 3		Office Rental	Office Rental	Office Rental	Office Rental	Office Rental	
UL 4		Office Rental	Office Rental	Office Rental	Office Rental	Office Rental	
UL 5	Sunday School	Senior Minister	Senior Minister	Senior Minister	Senior Minister		
UL 6		Office Rental	Office Rental	Office Rental	Office Rental	Office Rental	
UL 7		Office Rental	Office Rental	Office Rental	Office Rental	Office Rental	
UL 8		Office Rental	Office Rental	Office Rental	Office Rental	Office Rental	
UL 9	Classroom	Classroom	Classroom	Classroom	Classroom	Classroom	Classroom
UL 10		Office Rental	Office Rental	Office Rental	Office Rental	Office Rental	
UL 11	Classroom	Trustees Meeting***	Classroom	Classroom	Interfaith Fiber Arts***	Tamil Class	Classroom
Auditorium	Youth Orchesra (PYO) The Art of Living	Events / Rehearsals	Events / Rehearsals	Events / Rehearsals	Events / Rehearsals	Events / Rehearsals	Events / Rehearsals
Kitchen		Granny Connection**	Low Carb Revolution	Low Carb Revolution	Cosmo Club* Cooking Across Cultures*	Low Carb Revolution	
Lounge	Coffee Fellowship	Shared Lounge	Shared Lounge	Shared Lounge	Cosmo Club*	Shared Lounge	
LL 1		Office Rental	Office Rental	Office Rental	Office Rental	Office Rental	
LL 2	Classroom	Classroom	Classroom	Classroom	Classroom	Classroom	Classroom
LL 3		Office Rental	Office Rental	Office Rental	Office Rental	Office Rental	
LL 4		Office Rental	Office Rental	Office Rental	Office Rental	Office Rental	
LL 5	Classroom	Classroom	Classroom	Classroom	Classroom	Classroom	Classroom
LL 6		Office Rental	Office Rental	Office Rental	Office Rental	Office Rental	
LL 7		Office Rental	Office Rental	Office Rental	Office Rental	Office Rental	
LL 8	Music lessons	Music lessons	Music lessons	Choir Rehearsal	Diversity Choir	Music lessons	Music lessons
LL 9		Office Rental	Office Rental	Office Rental	Office Rental	Office Rental	
LL 10		Office Rental	Office Rental	Office Rental	Office Rental	Office Rental	
LL 11		Office Rental	Office Rental	Office Rental	Office Rental	Office Rental	
LL 12		Church Storage	Church Storage	Church Storage	Church Storage	Church Storage	

 Space without programming

\*occurs once a month

\*\*occurs twice a month

\*\*\*occurs once every other month

## 4. Future Opportunities (continued)

### Alternative Programming Scenarios

As outlined above, North Christian Church has previously considered many different paths for spacesharing and stewardship of their site, from an interfaith campus to an educational facility to a performing arts-based cultural hub. While aspects of these scenarios remain appealing, they are less viable given the current availability of institutional partners and the demands for performing arts programming. Aspects of each of these ideas, however, can be integrated into the Cross-Cultural Center.

The interfaith campus option emerged when Sri Ganesh Mandir (formerly Hindu Society) was seeking a site for its new temple. The idea of an interfaith campus aligns well with the mission of North Christian Church and its history of interdenominational collaborations. Due to logistical reasons, the Hindu temple is not being constructed at NCC but rather near UUCI, but there is still potential for NCC to be a place of interfaith exchange. Events such as One Cup of Tea and international cooking classes, which foster exchange between Muslim, Hindu, and Christian communities, already take place at NCC. The Cross-Cultural Center could expand such programming to enable exchange and connection between people of different religious communities in Columbus. The grounds of the church also offer an untapped resource for large scale festivals and gatherings such as Diwali celebrations.

North Christian Church has also long considered partnership with an educational institution to share stewardship of its building and grounds. The architectural significance of the building has inspired ideas of a design-themed partnership, and efforts were made to connect with Indiana University to form a partnership but an arrangement could not be reached. The idea remains compelling, and there are other design programs in the area that could benefit from an outpost in Columbus, such as Ball State University's Department of Architecture, but efforts to pursue such options have not yet gained enough traction.

Finally, as articulated in the previous "cultural hub" model, there is an interest in hosting a greater number of performing arts events at North Christian Church. As evidenced in the Envision Columbus report, there is a significant local need for cultural amenities, including performing art events such as music concerts and theater performances. When asked which cultural events they most want to see in Columbus, attendees of a public meeting for Envision Columbus ranked 'Theater Venue' as their first choice, followed by 'Street Festivals' and 'Performances.' In addition to assessing the amenities needed downtown, Envision Columbus was assessing the viability of a restored Crump Theater



## 4. Future Opportunities (continued)

### **Alternative Programming Scenarios**

as a performance venue. Several market challenges were identified, such as the new Maple Leaf Performing Arts Center in Nashville, Indiana, as well as other theaters in Bloomington and Nashville with 400-700 seat capacities. If the Crump is restored, it would become the natural destination for performance in Columbus and North Christian Church could not rely on that programming alone for revenue. As a Cross-Cultural Center, however NCC could be a unique destination for culturally focused performances, such as celebrations of Latin music or Indian dance. In addition, the classrooms and rehearsal spaces within NCC are perfect for supporting a full roster of music and dance classes, which can bring both steady activity and revenue.

In the absence of a single institution or program to sustain North Christian Church, it is essential to build collaborations and partnerships with local organizations that share the same values and ambitions for Columbus. By moving with the momentum of change in Columbus, NCC can be part of a larger process of growth and transformation in the city.

## 4. Future Opportunities (continued)

### Next Steps

The following are suggested steps for developing the Cross-Cultural Center, or Miller Center for Equity and Inclusion, to sustain the social and religious significance of the church and to enhance its economic viability:

#### Mission Redefinition

Church leadership and members should collaboratively redefine the mission of the church in response to its contemporary context and the new Cross-Cultural Center. Mission redefinition could emerge from workshops and conversations with the congregation, either mediated by an outside facilitator or by church leadership. New decision-making methods also need to be developed to address frustrations among members and repeated indecision that thwarts plans for growth. Use of an outside trained facilitator could be helpful in introducing new methods. The goal is to reach collective decisions in a timely manner to be able to seize opportunities as they arise.

#### Outreach and Conceptualization

Before establishing the new Cross-Cultural Center, it will be essential to hold discussions with stakeholders to determine the mission of the new institution. The success of the Cross-Cultural Hub depends on active collaboration between community groups, religious institutions, local businesses, and private individuals to build a collective celebration of cross-cultural exchange on the site. For the institution to meaningfully engage equity and inclusion, it must reflect the diverse voices in Columbus and not be entirely shaped by North Christian Church alone. Extensive conversations and brainstorming sessions with local community groups will be essential in shaping the identify of this institution.

#### Establishing Nonprofit Foundation

The first step in creating a new institutional model for the site will be to establish a nonprofit foundation that can manage the daily operations and the fundraising for the Cross-Cultural Center. This foundation will be accountable to the church, but will be a secular organization that can fundraise more broadly. In addition to setting up the financial and legal structure of the nonprofit, the church will oversee the selection of a board for the foundation. The foundation will need to hire an employee to manage the marketing, scheduling, outreach, and fundraising for the organization. It will be essential to find someone who is genuinely engaged with the mission of equity and inclusion and who has ease interfacing with diverse communities in Columbus. North Christian currently employees a Community Ambassador, who manages outreach and programming, and an Office Administrator, who manages not only office administration

## 4. Future Opportunities (continued)

### Next Steps (continued)

but also marketing. The new position would combine responsibilities from these two roles as well as fundraising and grant-writing responsibilities. The steps of Marketing, Programming, and Fundraising outlined below could be carried out by this individual. The initial salary for this position could be supported by a fundraising campaign to the larger Columbus community.

#### Rental Policies and Memberships

North Christian Church has already begun to establish policies for space sharing on their site. This process will need to continue and to address the possibilities available through the new Cross Cultural Center. For example, in addition to individual monthly or hourly rental policies, the Center could consider offering membership packages for various cultural groups and organizations depending on their level of use. A sliding scale could reflect the size of the organization and frequency of use, ranging from those that only hold occasional events to those that often use several different types of spaces, such as: events in the sanctuary, events on the grounds, language or music classes in the classrooms, and some storage space. The concentration of activities on one site is a benefit for members, for example combining the activities of different members of a family on the same site. Therefore thinking through combinations of rental options that serve the same community would benefit those communities as well as the Center, which would gain more steady rental commitments through memberships rather than single events.

#### Marketing

Marketing will be essential for creating the identity of the new Cross-Cultural Center and for spreading the word about its mission and its facilities. The identity of the Cross-Cultural Center should be disseminated through various media: website, social media, printed materials, and signage at the entrance. Effective marketing would help to reach potential members within the area, as well as to connect to allied institutions and potential donors on a national scale.

#### Programming

Meeting the projected gains of this model to fully cover the operating costs of the church requires aggressive efforts to secure community partners for space sharing and to pursue interested parties for special events, weddings, film shoots, etc.

## 4. Future Opportunities (continued)

### Next Steps (continued)

#### Fundraising

Fundraising for the Cross-Cultural Center will be essential to meeting operational costs and complimenting the revenue raised from space sharing. The employee should be adept in grant-writing and should actively seek funding related to the mission of equity and inclusion as well as the preservation of historical structures. In addition, the communities that participate in the Cross-Cultural Center should be contacted directly for fundraising, which can be organized in partnership with existing cultural organizations.

#### Spatial Adjustments

Other sections of the Conservation Management Plan will address necessary physical repairs or upgrades to the building. To meet the needs of space sharing and special events, the church should ensure that all mechanical systems are fully functional. In addition, converting the existing offices and classrooms into rentable office spaces and classrooms would require some adjustments to the furnishings as well as possible insertions of new partitions to subdivide larger rooms.

For use of the sanctuary as an event space, it may sometime be necessary to remove the markers of religious worship. The church will need to determine the degree to which they are comfortable with removing such features temporarily. Multiple stakeholders expressed that having a more neutral space would help to make the space more welcoming for a wider range of activities.

Given the comments from the congregation about the discrepancy between the scale of the sanctuary and the number of members, it is worth considering how temporary or lightweight adjustments to the sanctuary space could alter the perception of scale. Changes to lighting, location of flower arrangements, and positioning of textiles could define a more intimate worship area while respecting the architectural integrity of the space.



## **D. Site and plan layouts as of February 26, 2020**

The drawings on the following pages, prepared by Prudon and Partners, were created based on a survey of existing conditions, and on original drawings which were located at North Christian Church. Upon the the dissolution of the church, all records were transferred to the Columbus Indiana Architectural Archives (CIAA), which is part of the Bartholomew County Public Library (BCPL), also known as the Cleo Rogers Memorial Library, in Columbus, Indiana.

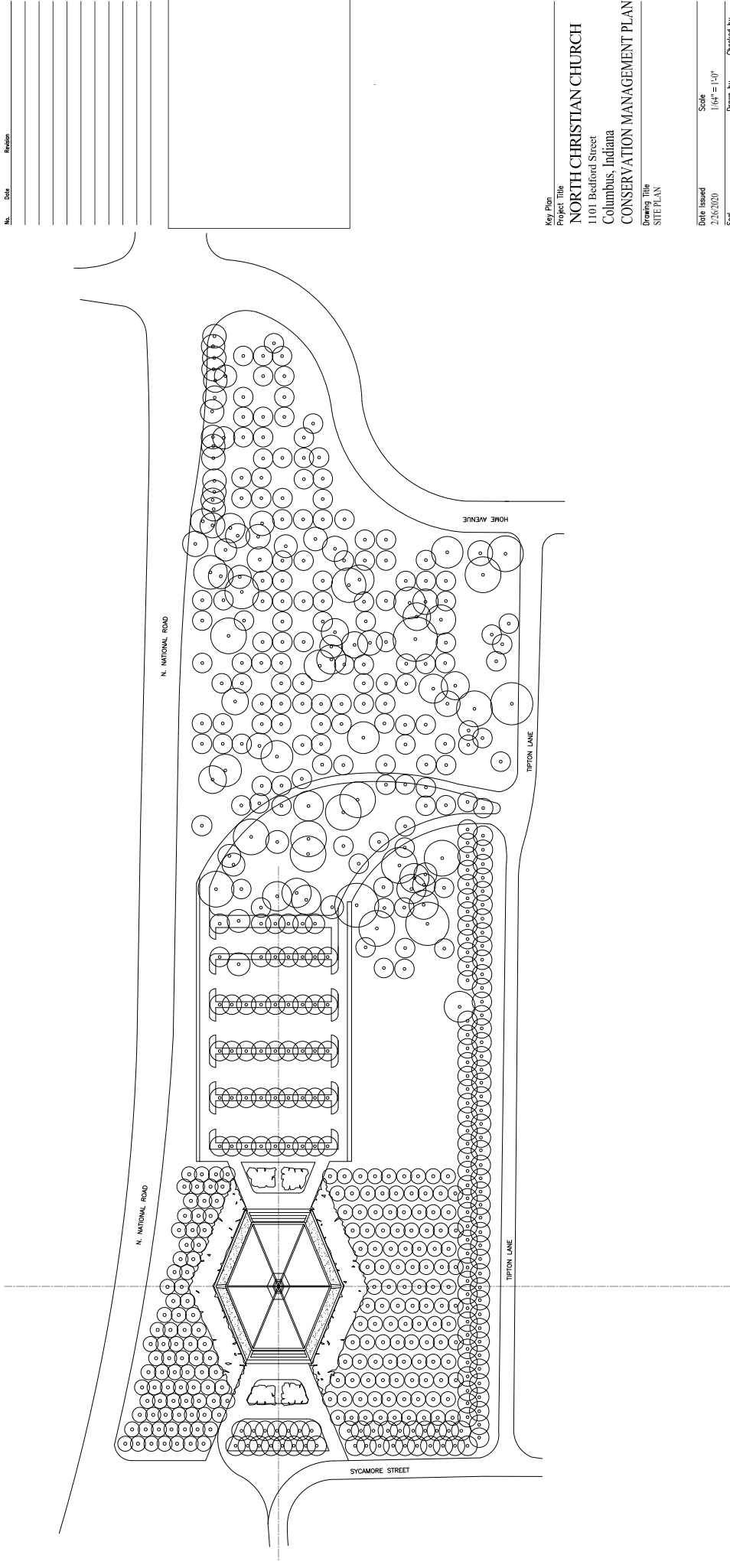
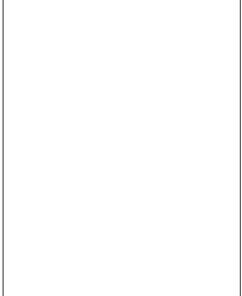
For additional information, including original architectural, structural, mechanical, plumbing and electrical drawings, refer to North Cristian Church's records at CIAA.

PRUDON & PARTNERS  
Architecture Design Preservation

Prudon & Partners, LLP  
135 West 70th Street  
New York, New York 10023

T: 212.721.9502  
F: 212.721.9504

No.	Date	Revision



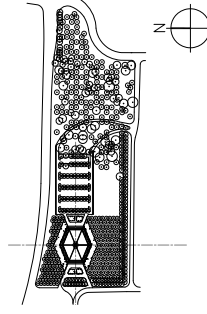
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Project Title  
NORTH CHRISTIAN CHURCH  
1101 Bedford Street  
Columbus, Indiana  
CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN  
Drawing Title  
SITE PLAN

Date Issued	Scale
2/26/2020	1/8" = 1'-0"
Seal	Drawn by
	D.Z.
	Checked by
	T.P.
	Project No.
	180020
	Tracing No.

A-100.00

Prudon & Partners, LLP  
135 West 70th Street  
New York, New York 10023

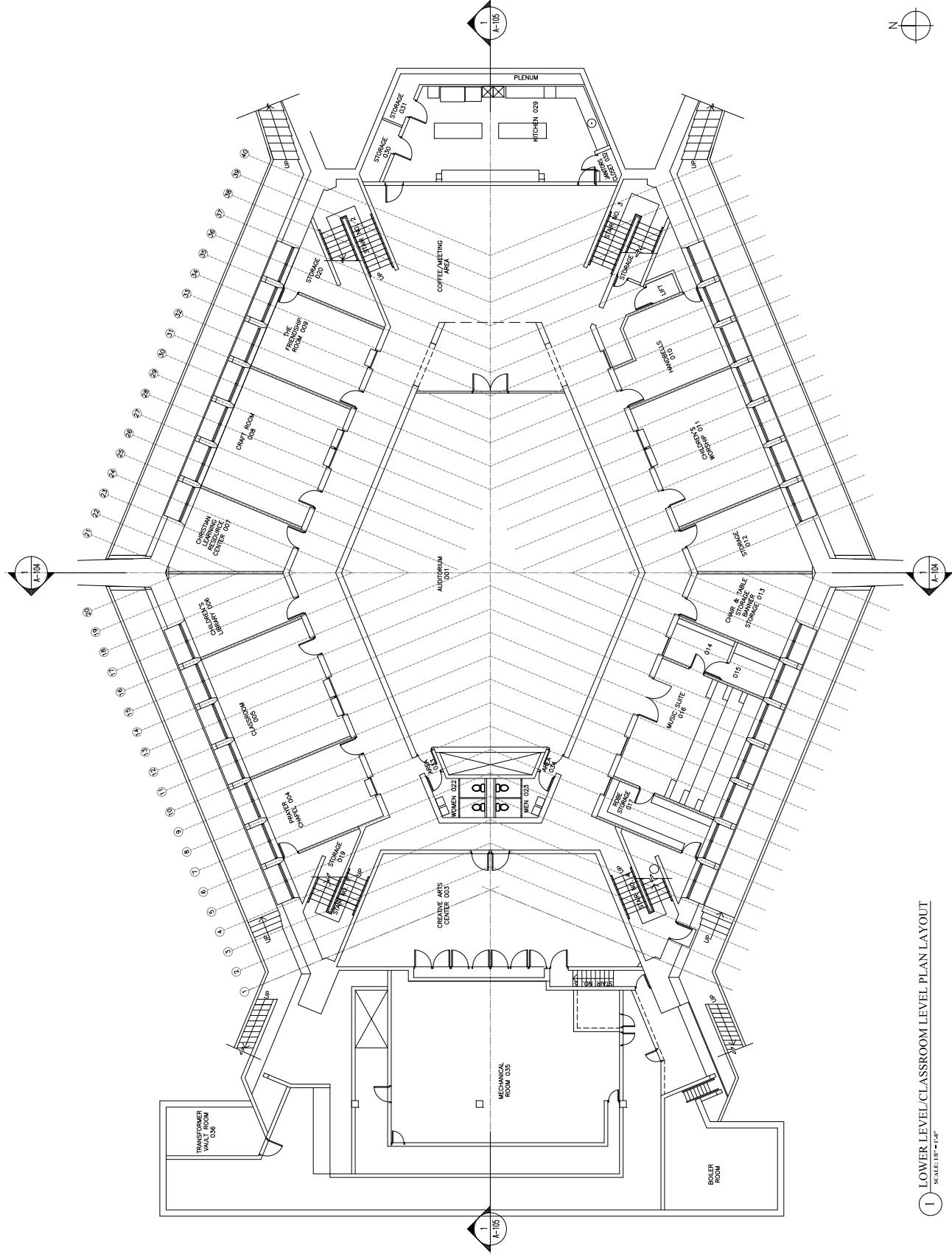
T. 212.721.9502  
F. 212.721.9504

[illegible]

<b>Key Plan</b>	<b>Project Title</b>
	<b>NORTH CHRISTIAN CHURCH</b>
	1101 Bedford Street Columbus, Indiana
	<b>CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN</b>
<b>Drawing Title</b>	
	LOWER LEVEL CLASSROOM LEVEL PLAN LAYOUT

Date Issued	Scale
2/26/2020	1/8" = 1'-0"
Seal	Down by
	D.Z.
	Checked by
	T.P.
	Project No.
	180020
	Drawing No.

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1 LOWER LEVEL/CLASSROOM LEVEL PLAN LAYOUT  
SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"

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[illegible]

1 TRANSVERSE SECTION  
SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"







## **E. Specifications and later additions**

## Appendix E – Specifications and later additions.

### Archival Material Review – Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo and Associates

As mentioned in the Historical Assessment included as appendix in this Conservation Management Plan, after Eero's passing, Saarinen's office completed the design and oversaw the construction of North Christian Church. The completion was managed by Kevin Roche, and when he, along with John Dinkeloo, established Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo and Associates (KRJDA), all related documentation was transferred to the new practice.

KRJDA maintained their relationship with the Millers and with the church through to the mid 1990s. Most notably, in the 1990s, the firm was involved in a campaign to make the church more accessible. As part of this effort, KRJDA designed and oversaw the installation of two lifts, one between the lower level and the narthex, and another between the narthex and the top level of the sanctuary. Additionally, KRJDA were responsible for replacing the entry doors with new aluminum and ADA-compliant doors. Other changes mentioned as part of this campaign, were the installation of the entry ramps, ADA-compliant exterior handrails, and various improvements to the exterior lighting. Documents related to these latter changes were not fully available to us for review.

All North Cristian Church related documentation was donated by KRJDA to the Manuscripts Collections at Yale University Library. Three boxes are part of the Archive's Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo and Associates records, while drawing sets and other documents were added to the Eero Saarinen Collection. Beyond their significance in providing a historical record, these documents are important in that they include material information and specifications.

Most of the collections donated by KRJDA were surveyed in preparation for the writing of this CMP. One box (no. 566) from the Eero Saarinen collection could not be surveyed, as it was being processed offsite for digitization.

We are grateful to Linda Scinto, Archivist for KRJDA, for the information she provided.

Below is a summary of the findings in the church-related collections donated by Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo and Associates to the Yale University Library:

1. Yale University Library  
Manuscripts Collections  
Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo and Associates records  
MS 1884  
Box 706, file 10

This file includes mostly correspondence and notes related to furnishings from 1978 to 1989, more specifically:

- a. Fabric for the Narthex cushions: Correlation Intrex #16 Oatmeal (May, 1989)
- b. Notes regarding the carpet selection for the top level of the sanctuary and lower level
- c. Correspondence regarding a replacement stainless steel screen for the baptistry (sample and specs missing from file)
- d. Letter from Xenia Miller to Kevin Roche, dated 1983, requesting an estimate for the following repairs:
  - recurring leaks in the kitchen, youth activities room, west stairwell, and oculus
  - soundproofing in the minister's and secretary's offices

- inconspicuous locking of the sanctuary
- adding cushions to the sanctuary pews
- updated audio technology
- refurbishing the lower level
- widening the parking area for buses
- replacement of handrails (due to damage caused by vandalism)
- replacement of sprinklers
- e. Various correspondence from 1978 regarding the pew cushions. A dark color was requested and leather was being considered, but rejected for cost. A fabric specification for the existing was not found.

## 2. Yale University Library

### Manuscript Collections

Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo and Associates records

Box 631/files 1,2,3,4, and 5

This box includes drawings, notes and correspondence related to the accessibility campaign.

File 1 includes finish samples for carpet and millwork from 1994

File 2 includes meeting notes, sketches, and correspondence from 1990 to 1995

File 3 includes relevant plan drawings from 1962 to 1994

File 4 includes reference and renovation information from 1994

File 5 includes millwork drawings and correspondence from 1994 to 1995

Some information included in this box:

- a. A specification package, dated 8/31/1990, including:
  - Concrete – Finishes: troweled (uniformly smooth); broom finished (at ramp)
  - Masonry: concrete blocks
  - Steel: pipes, tubing, finish
  - Wood:
    - Plastic laminates
    - Wood doors: 7-ply flush veneer hollow doors to match existing flush doors; face veneer – plain sliced red oak (later changed to African mahogany);
    - Finish – Cabot’s heavy-bodied shingle stain no. 37 to match existing (other finishes mentioned elsewhere)
  - Gypsum board
  - Ceramic mosaic tile: unglazed, impervious, cushion edge porcelain type, 2”x2” face to match existing; in sheets with pre-spaced uniform joint widths
  - Slate flooring: no. 1 clear, unfading black slate, ¼” thick to match existing; Bangor, Pennsylvania or Buckingham, Virginia to match existing
- b. Comparison table for contractor proposals (Repp & Mundt was selected for this job)
- c. Revised lower-level plan, dated 8/31/1990, includes: new lift with structural details; proposed accessible toilet.
- d. Narthex level revised drawing showing lifts.
- e. Nave revised drawing: includes details of entry doors, lift, handrails.
- f. Lifts are most likely Concord Pro-lifts.
- g. Laminate samples for the lifts: Melamine white 213 for the ceiling; Melamine 920 almond for the walls.
- h. Vinyl sample for the lift doors – Rattan two-tone textured vinyl by Woodfold.

- i. Correspondence and sketches to and from the structural engineers (Tor, Smolen, Calini, and Anastos out of New Haven, CT) about creating a depression in the floor slab for the lifts.
  - j. Sketches included for: lower-level lift; shaft sizes and locations; railing at lift location in sanctuary; lighting and electrical locations at lifts; door stop at lift gate; replacement rails at sanctuary.
  - k. Architect field notes for lift installation (9/5/1995).
  - l. Structural drawings of new lifts.
  - m. Shop drawings for Concord elevators (12/16/1994) with color charts and samples
  - n. Sketches by local architect Todd Williams, locating call buttons, dimming, and switching (four-zone preset station located at lectern)
  - o. Letter dated 1/25/1995 from KRJDA mentions three pairs of manually operated doors. (The drawings show only one pair at the south side of the east elevation.)
  - p. Various samples and specifications related to the new exterior doors, manufactured by Kawneer, including:
    - o Door colors: outside black to match sample, inside – color sample K105 (black). Finish either fluoropolymer resin or anodized
    - o Hardware package
  - q. Shop drawings for entry doors (12/6/1994), with comments by Kevin Roche + approved shop drawings for automated door (1/19/1995)
  - r. Architect field notes about door installation (8/4/1995).
  - s. Carpet sample for the top level in the sanctuary: Eurotek/Jutland 2 Heathers #3211.
  - t. Wood veneer sample, approved for wood grain.
  - u. Meeting notes and estimates from July 14, 1994 include proposal budget estimate of \$67,611. Estimate includes new lighting in parking lot, new spire cross-lighting, parking island walkway lighting, and seven illuminated handrails.
  - v. Images showing then-existing exterior railings (different from current). Profile is very thin and “does not meet handicapped code”.
  - w. Handwritten responses from Kevin Roche on letter from 1/10/1990: considers converting one existing bathroom stall in each bathroom to accessible; expresses concern about installing ramp at west entrance, over mechanical room.
  - x. Cut sheets included for: Woodmaster oil wood stain by Glidden; Cabot stains O.V.T. solid color oil stains #0500 series; Concord Pro-lift.
  - y. Specification for Weyerhaeuser Architectural Doors: (face veneer) species: Mahogany, African, cut – flat (10/26/1994).
  - z. Millwork shop drawings (12/1/1994): wood doors – particle board + Mahogany face veneer, stained
  - aa. Sanctuary handrail submittal by Hinton Metal Fabrication (2/6/1995)
3. Yale University Library  
 Manuscript Collections  
 Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo and Associates records  
 2013-M-003  
 Group no. 1884  
 Box no. 489

This box includes correspondence from 1974 to 1980, including:

- a. Letter from Kevin Roche to Xenia Miller which had enclosed the latest landscape plan from Kiley (4/4/1980)



- b. Letter from E. Keith Moore, Chairman of Facility Development Committee, to Kevin Roche with a list of suggestions for improvement/repairs (12/30/1977):
    - Cushions for the pews
    - Improve interior lighting (gloomy)
    - Installation of ramp and chair lift
    - Baptistry curtain breaks easily, is difficult to remove, and difficult to repair
    - Oculus leaks
    - Addition of directional signs
  - c. Plans for concrete entry sign (4/3/1974)
4. Yale University Library  
Manuscript Collections  
Eero Saarinen Papers  
Series Accession 2009-M-025. Additional  
Group No. 593  
Box No. 1

This box includes architectural, structural, and mechanical drawings from 1959 to 1964.

Drawings are original mylar and copies.

Some of the drawings are revised versions of those found at the church, and often include bubbled details.

Diversions from the drawing set found at the church are listed below:

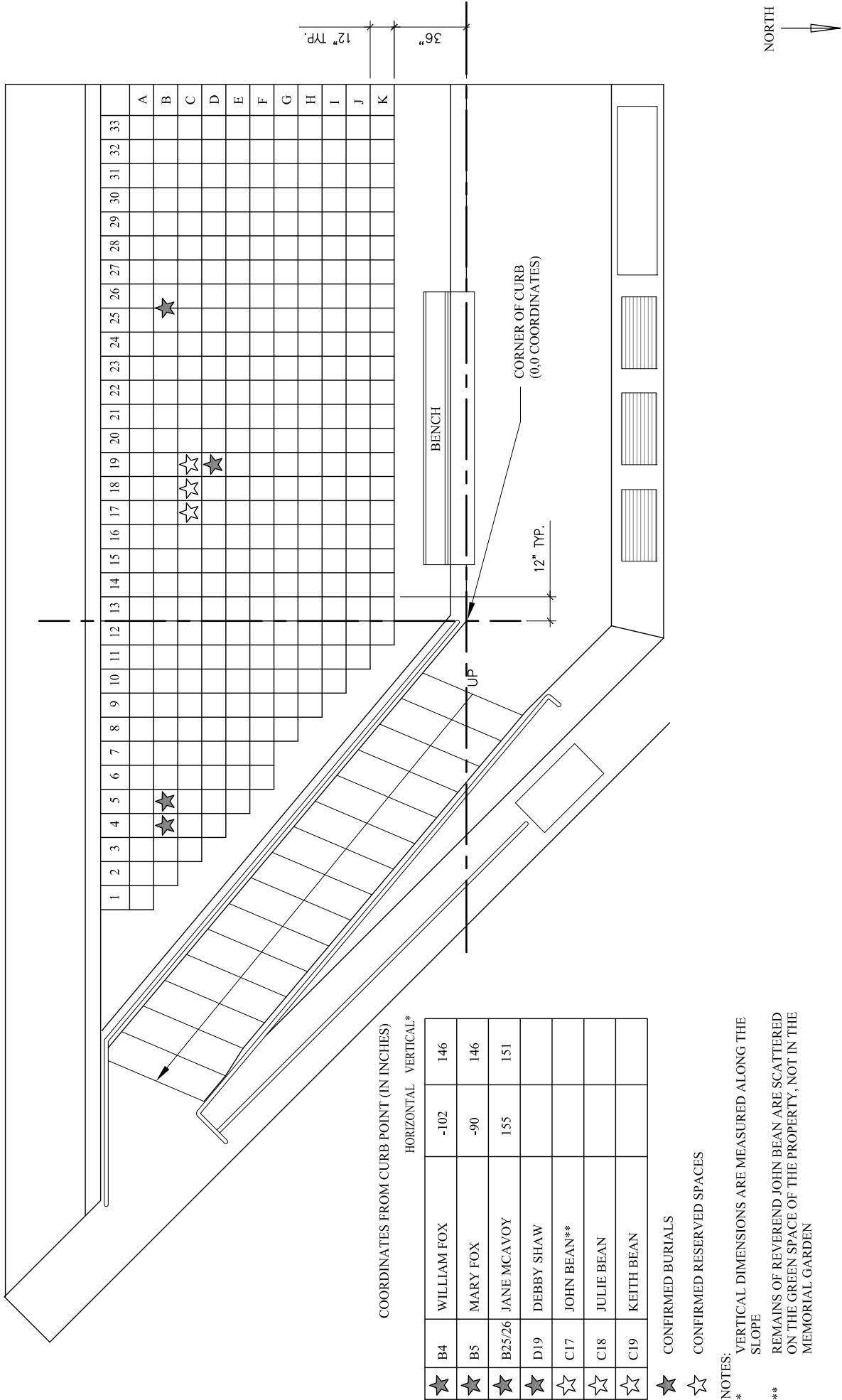
- a. Drawing A1, Site Plan, was revised to include boiler stack cover details, and a spire cross-light detail. It also includes Tipton Lane's course change and a note on access to parking. (Issued 8/9/63)
- b. Drawing A2, Classroom Level Plan, Mylar, from before the lift addition, includes additional notes. Notes and issue date are not clear
- c. Drawing A2, Classroom Level Plan, with added lift and related details (permit issue 12/9/94), includes different details from the drawing held by the church, which was issued August 31, 1990. The earlier revision includes structural details of cuts through the floor slab. These details are eliminated from the later revision and replaced with a detailed plan and wall section.
- d. Drawing A3, revised Narthex/Office Level Plan, showing added lifts, replaced east entry doors, and lift-related details (permit issue 12/9/1994). (this revised drawing is missing from the church set)
- e. Drawing A4, Nave Level Plan showing two alternatives for lift location, one in the southeast and one in the west, north of the organ (1/25/94). Correspondence shows that J. Irwin Miller rejected the west location for the lift.
- f. Drawing A4, Nave Level Plan, with lift, new handrails, and related details (permit issue 12/9/1994)
- g. Drawing A8, exterior wall sections – details, includes revised downspout and drain detail at steel "buttresses"
- h. Drawing A9, curtain wall details, includes a revised free-standing wall detail
- i. Drawing A10, Interior Details, includes a detail a revised detail for the kitchen entry and janitor's closet
- j. Drawing A11, Interior Details, with additional details for the lower-level storage wall, and the baptismal pool, and the schedule voided (issued 8/9/1963)

- k. Drawing A12, Interior Details, with additional details for the wood and glass doors to the sanctuary (issued 8/9/1963)
- l. Drawing S1, Mechanical Room and Foundation Plan, was reissued with revisions (11/12/62?)
- m. Drawing S2, Classroom Level, was reissued with revisions (11/12/62)
- n. Drawing S3, Narthex & Office Framing Plan, was reissued with revisions (11/12/62)
- o. Drawing S4, Nave Framing Plan, was reissued with revisions (11/12/62)
- p. Drawing S6, Skylight Framing Plan & Sections, was reissued with revisions (11/12/62)
- q. Drawing S7, Arch Frames & Details, was reissued with revisions (11/12/62)
- r. Drawing S8, Sections and Details of Spire, was reissued with revisions (11/12/62)
- s. Drawings S9, S10, S11 and S12, Concrete Sections, were reissued with revisions and notes (11/12/62)
- t. Drawing S13, Concrete Sections & Details, was issued with revisions (11/12/62)
- u. Drawing P2, Plumbing Narthex level, was issued with revisions (8/9/1963). Contains handwritten comments on downspouts
- v. Additional drawing SK13(?) with baptistry pool details, including stainless steel grille and pump cylinder (2/19/1964)

## F. Memorial Garden Plan

The plan on the following page, showing the location of buried remains in the Memorial Garden, was created based on information contained in North Christian Church records. The records were transferred to the Columbus Indiana Architectural Archives (CIAA), which is part of the Bartholomew County Public Library (BCPL), also known as the Cleo Rogers Memorial Library, in Columbus, Indiana.

For additional information on the Memorial Garden, and for the Donation Agreement which relates also to the Garden and buried remains, refer to North Cristian Church's records at CIAA.



★ CONFIRMED BURIALS

☆ CONFIRMED RESERVED SPACES

NOTES:  
\* VERTICAL DIMENSIONS ARE MEASURED ALONG THE SLOPE

\*\* REMAINS OF REVEREND JOHN BEAN ARE SCATTERED ON THE GREEN SPACE OF THE PROPERTY, NOT IN THE MEMORIAL GARDEN