



PA

PROGRESSIVE
ARCHITECTURE

12 : 90

Focal Point

To make a heart for a community of theology students, Scogin Elam & Bray create a whirlwind at Emory.



Emory University is not even remotely like Buckhead. Specifically, the Candler School of Theology at the northern edge of the expanding Emory campus is a drastically different environment for the design process from the conditions the Buckhead library confronted. And, the programs themselves couldn't be less alike.

The several-part program represented by the Turner Village/D. Abbott Turner Center project made a true hybrid of building functions into one multifaceted design challenge. One requirement was to renovate and upgrade student apartment buildings built in the early 1950s. The second, and more demanding, need was to create a heart and center for the school of theology, the focus of an intended community comprising all aspects of the school's mission. A master plan done by the architects determined the location for the new building and sites for planned Candler facilities.

The community center itself had a program that combined many requirements, presenting some subtle and not so subtle contradictory goals. It was to combine the functions of social center, conference center, and a small chapel. While not a major worship place or church, it was, paradoxically,

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From the front entry (1), the fascia sweeps in arcs, gesturing toward the housing. Offsets (3) allow daylight in the meeting rooms. From the west (2), living room and meeting room are visible. The path to the chapel begins at the glass 'nave' and the stair from the rear deck (4).



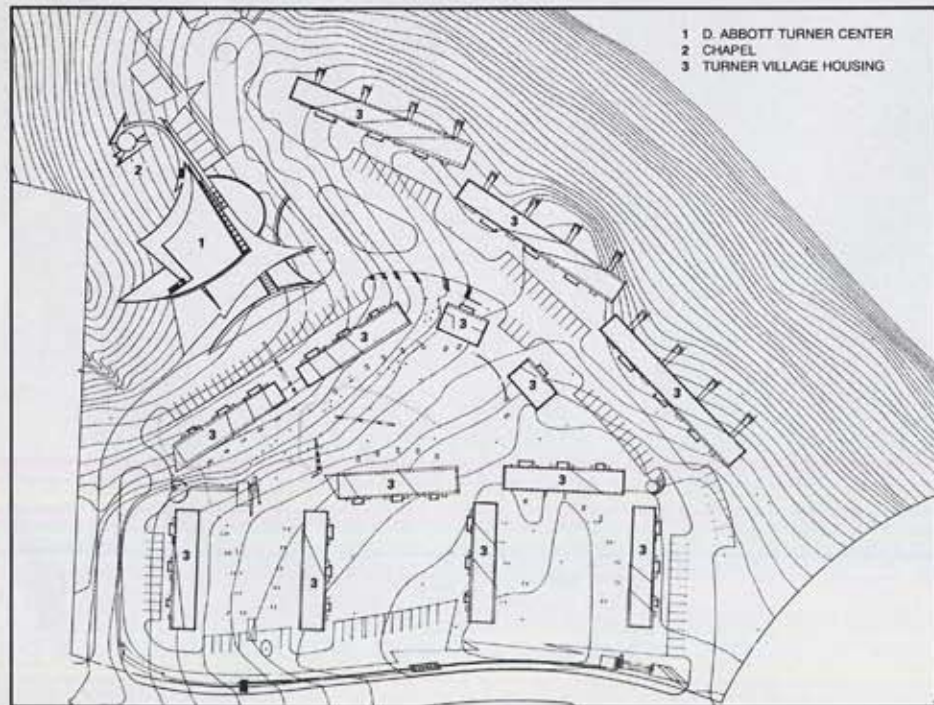


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68



- 1 D. ABBOTT TURNER CENTER
- 2 CHAPEL
- 3 TURNER VILLAGE HOUSING

SITE PLAN

N ↑ 100/30m

cally, not free of spiritual implications because of its connection with the theology school.

The housing was redone, as the architects point out, in a basically cosmetic manner, the budget eliminating some of the extras proposed in the early schemes. The client had requested that the existing low-pitched roofs be reconfigured, so shallow vaulted roofs – stepped up in several segments, diagonal to the orthogonal building perimeters – replaced the pitched version. Kitchens were brought up to date, as were the mechanical systems, the carpet, and the interior wall finishes. No wall configurations were changed on the interior, however, and the client did not accept the architects' proposals to make spatial use of the higher volumes under the new roofs, or for the porches and other amenities suggested. New front doors and stone side panels, and new front canopies were added. The panels comprise several varied types and hues of stone.

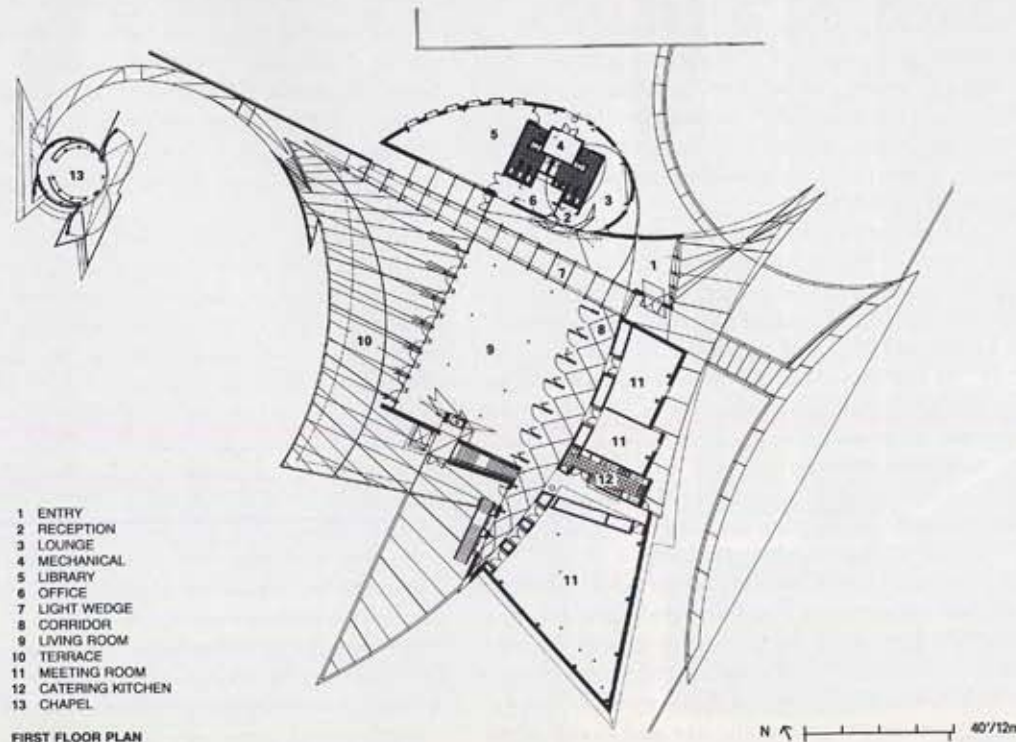
In the conference center building, the plan shape of the roof on the front echoes the site shape, and seems to be making welcoming and embracing gestures toward the street and the housing facilities. "The shape of the roof lifts up,"



7



69



- 1 ENTRY
- 2 RECEPTION
- 3 LOUNGE
- 4 MECHANICAL
- 5 LIBRARY
- 6 OFFICE
- 7 LIGHT WEDGE
- 8 CORRIDOR
- 9 LIVING ROOM
- 10 TERRACE
- 11 MEETING ROOM
- 12 CATERING KITCHEN
- 13 CHAPEL

FIRST FLOOR PLAN

N ↑ 40/12m

At the entry and office corridor (5), as well as in the living room (6), light is borrowed from the skylighted passage to the chapel. The main source of daylight in the living room, the glass northwest wall facing the chapel, is supplemented by metal halide lighting fixtures. These fixtures, designed by the architects, are mounted on columns rising above the paired swinging and bifold doors screening the large room from the passage beyond. Characterized by a fireplace and flexible, soft, comfortable furnishings, the room is meant to function as a space to promote interaction and exchanges between the theology students; as such, it is frequently reconfigured for various functions including conversation, dinners, or dances. The largest of three meeting rooms (7) will handle other gatherings and/or lectures.



Focal point of the entire complex and generator of most of the plan moves, Scogin says, is the upright of the cross on the small chapel, which is located beyond the living room side of the building. Glazed with translucent glass between steel supporting legs, the chapel space is truncated and skylighted with clear glass (10). Only the center front support is vertical, pairs of the others have different configurations to align with the two tangent circles of the plan. Its capacity of 10 to 12 on the interior (8) is to be augmented by the ability to open two curved doors to the hillside and living room deck (9), allowing some activities to include those spaces as well. The steel tower supports seem to echo the wooded backdrop (11).

Mack Scogin explains, "and it is trying to sculpt a kind of space that has a quality of lightness, of a spiritual nature, to it. The building is a mixed breed, it's not a church; you don't feel like it is. But then again, the way the light enters it and in other ways, it implies a religious connection, it has a spiritual quality to it."

The chapel, even though it is one of the smallest pieces of the program, and not stressed as a major function of the center, is nevertheless seen as "the heart and soul of the conference center," says Scogin, "if not of the entire School of Theology. So the initial move was to take this smallest program element and somehow make it the most prominent and significant architectural element."

Intended to hold only 10 to 12 people, the chapel can serve as a backdrop for larger assemblies seated on the back deck and the hill leading down to it. The architects decided to pull the chapel out of the main body of the center so that it became the symbolic piece, the sculptural piece, as well as a functional piece. It is set toward the back of the site, against the natural woods. Its position is a conscious effort to reconcile its symbolic importance with its programmatic size and to deempha-



10

size its function relative to the entire building. "It's not as if this were a church camp, or a retreat," Scogin explains. "The chapel is not put forward because it would have too much power, too much prominence. Again, this is an attempt to deal with this delicate balance between the intentions of the building."

In plan, the chapel is not one circle but two, tangent at the vertical centerline of the pair of curved front doors and the cross atop the structure. Once the decision was made to make the cross the focal and generative point, says Scogin, "Everything literally began to spiral off of the chapel. The circulation to it, the shapes of the building, the radiating lines that flow all the way through the plan, if not literally, then psychologically, come from the chapel itself."

The relationship of the chapel to the conference center design effectively extends its role. Approaching the entry to the main building, a visitor is looking down a long glass "wedge" between the living room and the office-to-library corridor. The resulting forced perspective of the passage makes the most dramatic use of this skylighted space, which also contributes daylight to

11





12

Project: D. Abbott Turner Center, Candler School of Theology, Emory University, Atlanta.

Architects: Scogin Elam & Bray, Atlanta (Mack Scogin with Merrill Elam and Lloyd Bray; Susan Desko, Jeff Atwood, John Lauer, Leslee Hare, Frank Venning, Criss Mills, Carlos Tardio, Denise Dumais, Monica Solana, Jane Seville, Roy Farley, Christine Gorby, Sean McLendon, team).

Client: Candler School of Theology; Dean, Jim L. Waits.

Site: on the northern edge of an expanding Emory University campus, sloping downward toward the northeast, north, and west.

Program: along with renovating 13 student apartment buildings, the requirement was for a multi-function community/conference center and small chapel.

Structure: steel frame with metal roof decking on steel bar joists, masonry veneer walls, composite concrete floor slab on steel framing, and concrete spread footings.

Major materials: manganese iron spot brick, aluminum windows, steel fascias, and standing seam steel roofing; for chapel, steel trusses, translucent laminated or sandblasted glass and clear glass skylights. (see *Building Materials*, p. 110)

Mechanical system: gas-fired boiler, direct expansion air cooling.

Consultants: Browder + Leguizamón & Associates, structural; Jones, Nall & Davis, mechanical; Travis Pruitt & Associates, civil; Doug Allen, ASLA, landscape; Williamson & Associates, specifications; Ramon Luminance Design, lighting; Costing Services Group, costing.

Photos: Timothy Hursley.



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Most changes on the existing Turner Village student housing (14) were purely cosmetic. Responding to the client's request for a change away from the shallow-pitched roof, the architects designed a telescoping shallow vault form (13), rising higher than the original. New entry canopies and doors with flanking side panels of varied stone comprised the main elements of change (12, 13).

the adjoining rooms. Linking the building and the approach to the chapel, the "wedge" is seen by Scogin as "part of the chapel experience, but also part of the building, reinforcing the importance of the chapel. It is, in effect, the nave, the processional piece, of the chapel."

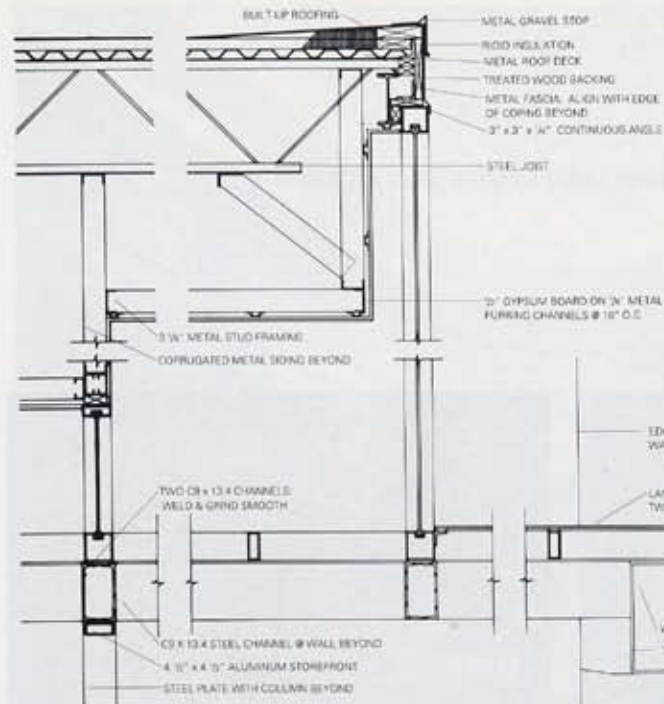
Along with the sweeping roof overhangs, one of the other idiosyncracies of the exterior of the building is the outward cant of the brick in the southwest corner. It is described by Scogin as "an intuitive move that destabilizes the building, a subtle thing to make you wonder about the building's nature." The pitch of the roof at the west wall is played off against, and "floats" above, the horizontal top of the brick, the glazing along that wall forming an angled wedge. Ornamental diagonal steel angles add another level of complexity at a number of locations on the southeast and northwest walls, running between the steel roof members and steel pipe columns.

Inside, the entry foyer connects the office on one side with the corridor to the living and meeting rooms on the other. The 2270-square-foot living room is the activity center; if it weren't for the comfortable and movable lounge furniture

and the fireplace, the room could be mistaken for a worship hall, with its high spaces and plentiful natural light. It is used, Scogin reports, "for everything you can imagine. The furniture changes almost daily," and the room has been used for informal lounging, dinners, and dances.

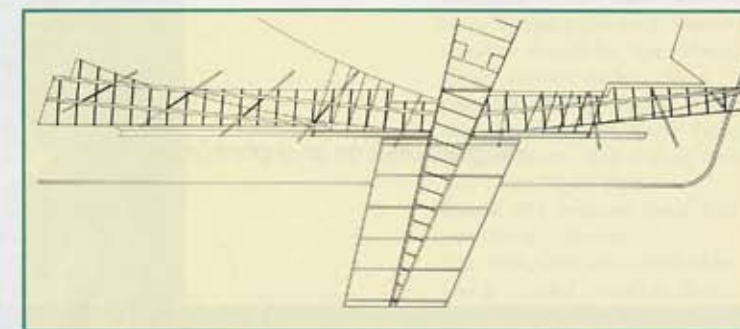
Three meeting rooms of varying sizes and a small catering kitchen line the other side of a corridor defined by the curving line of their walls and a multiple row of pairs of swinging and bifold doors. Lighting fixtures designed by the architects are mounted above the line of these doors, providing night and supplementary lighting for the living room. The largest meeting room also could be used as a chapel, because of its height and lighting. Being larger than the detached chapel, it may well be put to such use for mid-size services. The only other large space is the library, really more a quiet study space than one for books.

The entire complex — the conference center, the chapel, and the renovated housing — is an extremely skilled composition of unlike programmatic parts. Each is handled with invention, design excellence, care and imagination in its details, and more than a little daring. **Jim Murphy**

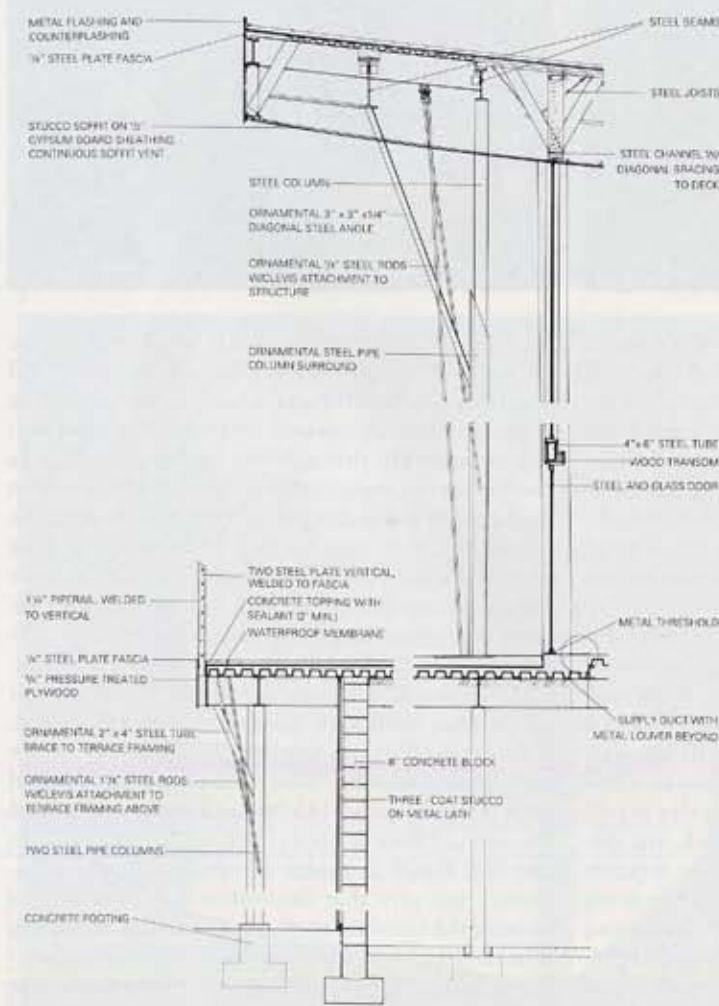


FRONT ELEVATION, PORTE-COCHÈRE/SCREEN WALL/ CANOPY, BUCKHEAD LIBRARY

Selected Detail



PLAN, PORTE-COCHÈRE/SCREEN WALL, BUCKHEAD LIBRARY



SECTION FROM LIVING ROOM WALL, TURNER CENTER

Details on this page, representing both the Buckhead Library and the D. Abbott Turner Center, are only a minor indication of the thought process that goes into the work of Scogin Elam & Bray. The Living Room wall section of the Turner Center, relatively straightforward and unremarkable at a glance, embodies the upward turn of the roof and the diagonal non-structural angles at the columns, both enriching the expression of the overall to a great degree.

Probably the first thing a visitor notices at the Buckhead Library, the complicated canopy/porte-cochère/screen wall assembly at the entry required a large number of details for the understanding of the client, the builder, and probably the architects as well. It is a masterful collage of pieces that pull together to make a very functional design element and association with pedestrian scale.

The very high level of design quality in both the Buckhead library and the Turner Center and Village is hardly surprising, coming from the same group of principals that created the Clayton County, Georgia, library (P/A, November 1988, p.82), the unbuilt ra-

dio station for Atlanta's WQXI (P/A, January 1988, p.99), and the Atlanta Herman Miller showroom, not to mention the downtown branch of the High Museum in the Georgia Pacific Building, and the small bridge/ folly for an office building grouping near the perimeter. All of these projects involved clients willing to take the risk of building unorthodox and brilliant designs, to one degree or another. They represent the further development of a talent evident in much of the work the principals had begun while Mack Scogin was president and head of design at Heery & Heery Architects. Their design for the new Coca Cola headquarters in Atlanta, while not completed entirely as Scogin intended, is a clear forerunner of the Buckhead and Emory projects, a level of skill that ranks the work among the best being done anywhere. The challenge, now that Scogin is chairman at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, is clearly to keep the work flowing, a condition of which he, Merrill Elam, and Lloyd Bray are quite aware.