

Chapter News

between the 1936 Art Moderne collection of Texas Centennial Buildings at Fair Park, and the distinctly modernist 1955 Old Dallas Public Library, located just four blocks away. The Temple is in relatively good shape and is not immediately threatened. It was put up for sale in 2006 at a price of \$3.6 million, perhaps reflecting the decline in the fortunes and popularity of the Masonic fraternity. To date, the Temple remains in Freemasonry ownership, but that sector of downtown Dallas is attracting much new development. Concerned preservationists, including DOCOMOMO NTX, will be closely monitoring future developments in and around the Temple.

DOCOMOMO NTX's next event is a tour of mid-century modern religious churches and temples designed by several of North Texas' earliest modernists. The tour is planned for late winter or early spring of 2008.

—Robert Meckfessel

WEWA

DOCOMOMO WEWA's advocacy efforts in late 2007 culminated at an important meeting of the Seattle Landmarks Board on January 2, 2008 with the designation of the Norton Building and the nomination of the Manning's Cafeteria Building.

In 2007, parked by a zoning resolution to allow taller buildings in the commercial core, the City of Seattle released the results of a historic inventory of downtown buildings eligible for landmark status. One of the first buildings to be considered was one of the city's most prominent Modern aluminum and glass curtain-wall skyscrapers. The Norton Building, built in 1958, was designed by SOM and local architects Bindon & Wright and represents an important shift in the design of commercial real estate in Seattle. Acting on the support of DOCOMOMO WEWA, the board nominated the Norton Building in the autumn of 2007 and was unanimously designated on January 2nd.

Boston's Christian Science Center

In 1964, the First Church of Christ Scientist presented architects I.M. Pei and Araldo Cossutta with the challenge of providing space, amenity and an intangible presence for the expansion of their Mother Church complex, which had occupied a part of this same site since 1898. With the incipient completion of the adjacent Prudential Center complex, a commercial development that featured a 52-story tower and several apartment slab blocks set off from the street on a large raised plaza, the "High Spine" development concept promulgated by planner Kevin Lynch and the Boston Society of Architects seemed to be taking off. The Prudential was to be the first of a series of skyscrapers that would stretch along Boylston and Huntington Streets, defining Boston's skyline. It became apparent to Pei and Cossutta that the dome of the 1908 Mother Church would no longer be a commanding presence on the Boston skyline. They responded by persuading the Church to do something out of the financial reach of a commercial developer. They would "command the ground plane" and construct the great plaza around which the new Christian Science Center evolved.



Aerial view of Christian Science Center, Boston, MA.
(Photo courtesy of Alex MacLean, Landslides)

This great gesture was described by Cossutta as the "heart and soul" of the project. The quiet, dignified but unabashedly monumental urban complex of the Christian Science Center (CSC) stretches from Copley Square to Symphony Hall. Featuring a long reflecting pool at the center of the space and a planted terrace to the south, it creates a cohesive and dignified identity for the Christian Science Church, mitigates the insensitive urban boundary of the Prudential Center, and knits together older monumental structures such as the Christian Science Mother Church and Publishing House, and the adjacent Horticultural Hall. Through these moves, the CSC establishes a strong sense of place at the intricate complex urban juncture of the Fenway, Back Bay and South End. The buildings themselves are composed in a classic modernist dynamic asymmetry, with the strong vertical slab of the Administration Tower (the Center's own small contribution to the High Spine) serving as a counterpoint to the Library or Colonnade, inspired by LeCorbusier's



Boston's Christian Science Center, Boston, MA.
(Photo courtesy of Pei Cobb Freed and Partners, Architects)

High Court at Chandigarh, that defines the north side of the plaza. At the southwest corner, the sweeping curve of the Sunday School redirects the thrust of the space of the reflecting pool out into the reconfigured forecourt of the Mother Church as it is presented to the open space along Massachusetts Avenue. There, it is firmly bounded by the long slab of the Church Park Apartments, designed by The Architects Collaborative (TAC), which were also a component of the original Master Plan.

The CSC is one of the most striking and successful modernist urban complexes in the world. As the Church embarks on a new master plan for the adaptive use of some of the buildings and the development of the Plaza, it will be imperative that the character and dignity of this complex be properly maintained. The Church is well aware of the unique quality of this heritage and has come out in supporting of the proposed landmark designation of the complex. Still, it will be important that the City of Boston, advocacy organizations like DOCOMOMO, and everyone concerned with the future of one of Boston's most distinguished works of mid-twentieth century urbanism be alert to the unique and delicate qualities of this ensemble. With vigilance we can ensure it that it will remain a its future as a great urban complex and a link to the best of Boston's modernist heritage.

—David Fixler, AIA