

FROM THE OFFICES

Today, nearly three-quarters of a century after the beginning of the Modern Movement, the traditional vocabulary of building and town planning has moved from outsider status and reasserted itself into the mainstream of professional practice. No longer popularly dismissed as arcane and conservative, classicism has reemerged as a humane and timeless approach to design.

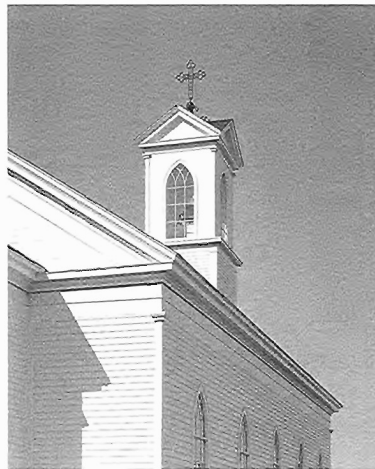
In fact, the United States seems to be enjoying an architectural assurance last seen prior to the First World War, when stone-clad skyscrapers married the ancient temple form to revolutionary new metal frame construction, and architects such as McKim Mead & White drew upon historical models for civic and residential projects alike.

Just as architects of that era adapted classical forms to new building types, today's practitioners continue to expand the language to reflect their own age and programmatic challenges. In New York City, Kevin Roche's recent expansion to the Jewish Museum managed to double the square footage of that institution while still respecting the character of architect C. P. H. Gilbert's Warburg Mansion, in which it is housed. Also in the civic arena, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has recognized the demand for walkable, small-scale neighborhoods and is concentrating millions of dollars on existing inner city neighborhoods, not only by building new housing using traditional models, but also adding street trees and public greens, narrowing roadways, and in one case publishing a pattern book of traditional architectural details. Likewise, more academic institutions in the United States and throughout the world are teaching and supporting classical architecture than at any time during the last fifty years.

In the following pages, THE CLASSICIST presents examples of contemporary work ranging from an urban master plan to a highly ornamented apartment interior. The largest in scale, the proposed South Bend, Indiana, Urban Plan, employs traditional arrangements of street, square, and block to achieve a sense of place while promoting economic and cultural development in the city's commercial center. Another significant public project, Curtis & Windham's Immaculate Conception Church in Jefferson, Texas, accommodates congregational desires for a conventional church plan in opposition to the modernist voices that have dominated modern liturgy and sacred architecture for decades. In the private sector, Michael Dwyer's project for a historic Hudson River estate is

testament to a commitment on the part of the patron not only to restore the property, but to further develop it in the spirit of the original and subsequent architects, Robert Mills and Alexander Jackson Davis. The country houses by Julian Bicknell, Ken Tate, and Norman Askins show various inventive ways of integrating modern house requirements within traditional regional vocabularies, and the renovation of a Manhattan apartment by David Anthony Easton illustrates a refined French interior architecture of a quality not seen in America since the great houses of Ogden Codman and Horace Trumbauer.

Although rightly encouraged by today's growing support for their work, patrons and practitioners of classical architecture must now address the question of how to re-educate the architectural profession at large in the classical language, not only to meet current demand, but also to ensure that those skills are passed down to succeeding generations of architects. —S.C., C.C., J.L., D.N.



*Steeple, Immaculate Conception Church, Curtis & Windham, Architects.
Photograph by Hester + Hardaway.*

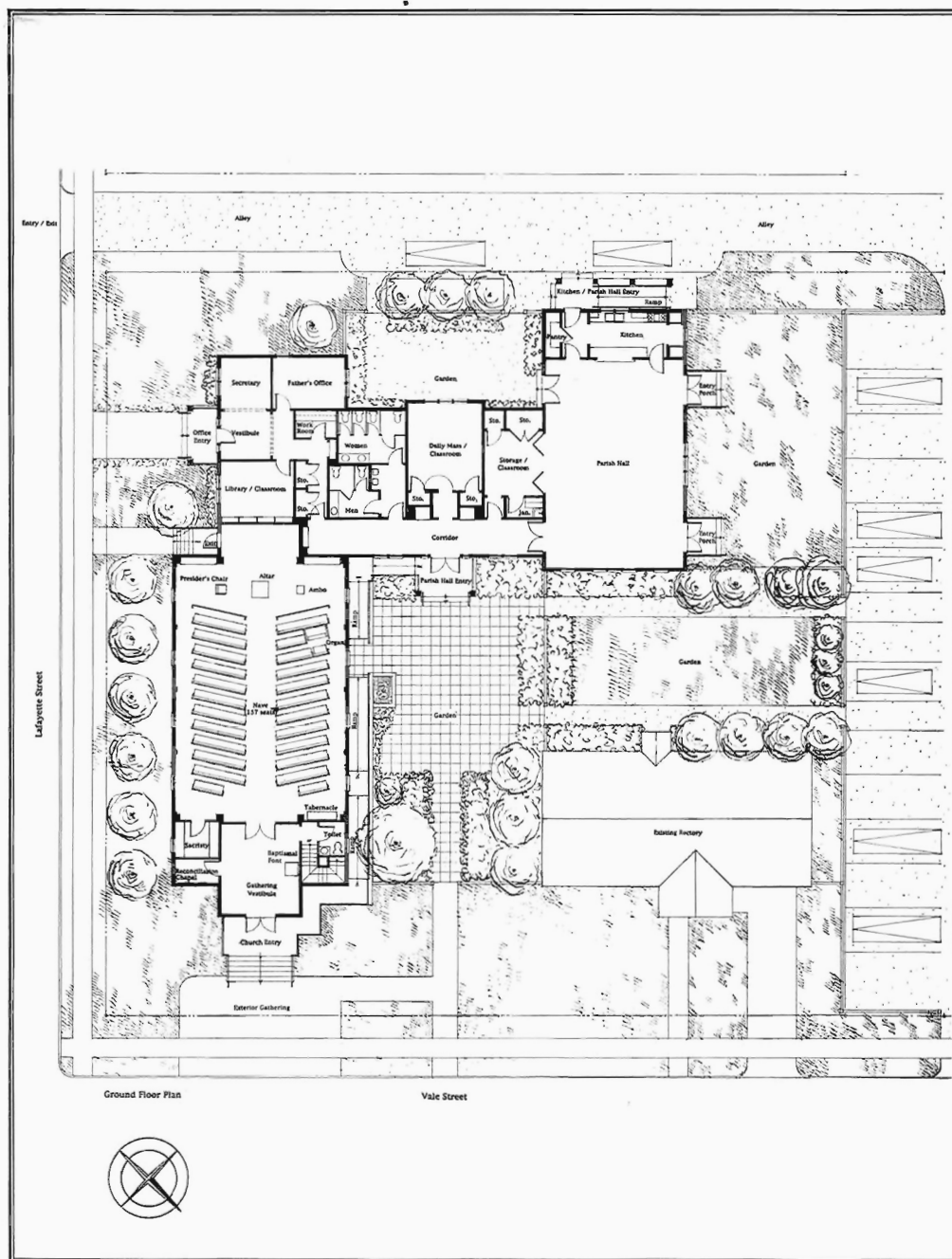
IMMACULATE CONCEPTION CHURCH, JEFFERSON, TEXAS

CURTIS & WINDHAM
HOUSTON, TEXAS

PROJECT TEAM:
WILLIAM CURTIS, RUSSELL WINDHAM,
DAVID BUCEK

Jefferson, Texas, is a small community in north-east Texas. The town boasts many large commercial brick structures, among them a typical domed Texas courthouse and a Carnegie Library. Jefferson's most remarkable feature, however, is its eclectic Greek Revival residential structures. These buildings occupy the town alongside its civic and institutional structures, often separated by a necklace of painted picket fences.

The new church building is sited along the northern edge of the gazebo-dominated town square, and replaces an older structure which burned five years ago. The congregation, wishing to replace its building as soon as possible, found that the liturgy had changed significantly since the Civil War. Contemporary Catholic liturgy often renders church architecture in the round, a condition which presented a seemingly irreconcilable difference between religious requirements and the client's desires. Curtis & Windham's solution retained the architectural language of the previous structure and the neighboring buildings while accommodating the physical changes to the Catholic worship service in as simple a way possible. Differing from the traditional Latin cross plan, inflected pews allow for visual contact with other parishioners during the service. In addition, the apse is spatial rather than occupied, since the altar must now be among the congregation. The sacristy is located at the beginning of the procession rather than at its typical position adjacent to the apse. The result is a balance of the client's wish for a pre-Vatican II church and the new requirements in Catholic religious architecture.



ABOVE: Site plan. Drawing by Curtis & Windham Architects.

FOLLOWING PAGE:

ABOVE LEFT: Side elevation seen from town common. ABOVE RIGHT: Street view. BELOW LEFT: View of nave and sanctuary. BELOW RIGHT: Door head detail.

Photographs by Hester + Hardaway.

