

COLUMNS

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RE-CREATION

AN INTERVIEW WITH HARLAN CROW ON OLD PARKLAND HOSPITAL, THE NEW HEADQUARTERS FOR CROW HOLDINGS

The original Parkland Hospital building, located at the corner of Oak Lawn and Maple Avenue, was built in 1913 and was a functioning hospital for the county until the current Parkland Hospital was built 41 years later. In the last 50 years since that move, the building has been several things—including derelict for most of recent memory. Good Fulton & Farrell had done several schemes for several developers before Crow Holdings began exploring the redevelopment of the historic structure. The protected Oak Grove and the original building façade prevented most developers from making any



Old Parkland Exterior, Front View, c. 1940s - Parkland Hospital

kind of development work. Seven or eight schemes were looked at, including low-rise/mid-rise residential, and even high-rise before the current campus plan was settled on.

The current master plan includes historic rehabilitation of the hospital building and the new glass addition on the west, and two levels of underground parking. The nurses' building has been rehabilitated and is leased offices and a campus dining hall, with the only new construction on that building being vertical circulation on the rear of the building. Recently constructed Woodlawn Hall mimics the style of the original building, but is capped by a copper cupola. The next building to be built will be Reagan Place. Like Woodlawn Hall, it will be all leased office space. The master plan also includes future phases with a large single tenant building and two smaller buildings on the north side of the campus, abutting the North Dallas Tollway.



Maple Facade, 2009 - John Davis, DVDesign Group

Columns' editor, Brian McLaren, and Columns' art director, Kerrie Sparks, recently met with Harlan Crow to discuss his vision for the space.

BM/KS: Why was Crow Holdings motivated to take on such a complex and costly project?

HC: Anybody that has been in this city very long has been aware of this structure and this property and has been hopeful that, in one way or another, it would be preserved. I have been one of those people that hoped it would happen, but I never really thought about it for us. I have been a downtown guy for most of my career.



Interior Hall, 2006 - Skeeter Haggler

BM/KS: Does this real estate opportunity relate to any new directions for Crow Holdings?

HC: There may be a little bit in the sense that there's a fair amount of vacant property here on which we plan to construct other buildings that are compatible with the architectural style and the property here. We've already built one next door that's a three-story building. It's a new building but it was designed to be in keeping with the architectural style that exists.

BM/KS: How important is keeping with the style? Is that your key focus in the beginning of any of the projects?

HC: I am a history nut. Everybody's got a hobby. I don't play golf or watch sports very much, but I really enjoy history. So historical rehabilitation is something I enjoy. I am actually re-doing historic houses in rural Maryland, in rural Virginia, and another property in rural Georgia right now.

BM/KS: Well, part of working with any rehabilitation project is the surprises. Were there any surprises when you started doing this or any that came about during the construction process?

HC: (laughter) Yeah, the construction guys could probably tell you more details. We found some interesting things. Mostly it was just cost problems. The project, as you can well imagine, would have been a lot cheaper to tear down and rebuild.

BM/KS: I assume that your design decisions were a little different than approaching it from a developer's point of view.

HC: Yes. We could have built tall buildings here. In the past, I've built several tall buildings downtown. I kind of felt like it was a good idea to have a different approach to offices—low density, low height, heavy trees, underground parking. The buildings are configured so that it's very easy to walk over to any of the other buildings or for the people that work here to have a lot of connectivity—as if you're on a campus and you can walk with a friend to another dorm or a classroom. We wanted that kind of atmosphere.



Interior Room, 2006 - Skeeter Haggler

BM/KS: Is that casual interaction important for business or is it just social?

HC: It's both. There are some social elements to it. We do business with some of the other companies that have their offices here. In all cases, we have personal friendships with the people that are here.

BM/KS: As a user, how has your life or daily routine changed—going from a worker in a high-rise to working in a very different environment?

HC: We had a very nice office in our previous location, but I've got to tell you that the morale of the people that work in this building, and on this campus, is really higher. People like coming to work.

BM/KS: Is it the nature? Is it the building? The lower density?

HC: I think it's the trees. I think it's the pretty buildings. I think it's the ease of access. In the parking garage, instead of going the usual seven feet, we built high ceilings.



Rear View, 2007 - Good Fulton & Farrell Architects



Great Room during construction, 2008 - Good Fulton & Farrell Architects

BM/KS: Do you think it's a respect for the architecture and the historical nature of the project?

HC: I think there is a lot of that. The feedback that I have gotten from the community has been very positive. I was traveling downtown earlier and I saw two old derelict buildings that ought to be restored and I hoped that somebody would do that—some business or organization would see what we've done here and do the same thing with other places.

BM/KS: Which buildings in particular?

HC: One of them was the Masonic Lodge and one was the old Dallas High School.

BM/KS: And one of the projects that is getting a lot of focus and attention among our members right now is the former Statler Hilton hotel.

HC: Yeah, and I disagree with that personally because I know a lot about hotels and I know that when it was built it had really low ceilings heights in it and, in my opinion, it's just not going to happen.

BM/KS: Since this interview is into the preservation issue of *Columns*, do you have any closing thoughts on preservation or a philosophy on highest and best use that kind of drives building right now?

HC: I am not sure about the highest and best use, but there is a rule about modifying old buildings. You're supposed to make any addition visibly different from the old building and I think that's a wrong-minded rule. It is a rule; we followed it. But, if we could have made the back of this building architecturally compatible with the rest of the building, which we could have, I think it would have been a more successful strategy. ■

Brian McLaren, AIA, is a founding partner of Ware Architecture and editor of *Columns*. Kerrie Sparks is communications coordinator at AIA Dallas and *Columns*' art director.



Small Executive Conference Room, 2009 - Mark Knight