



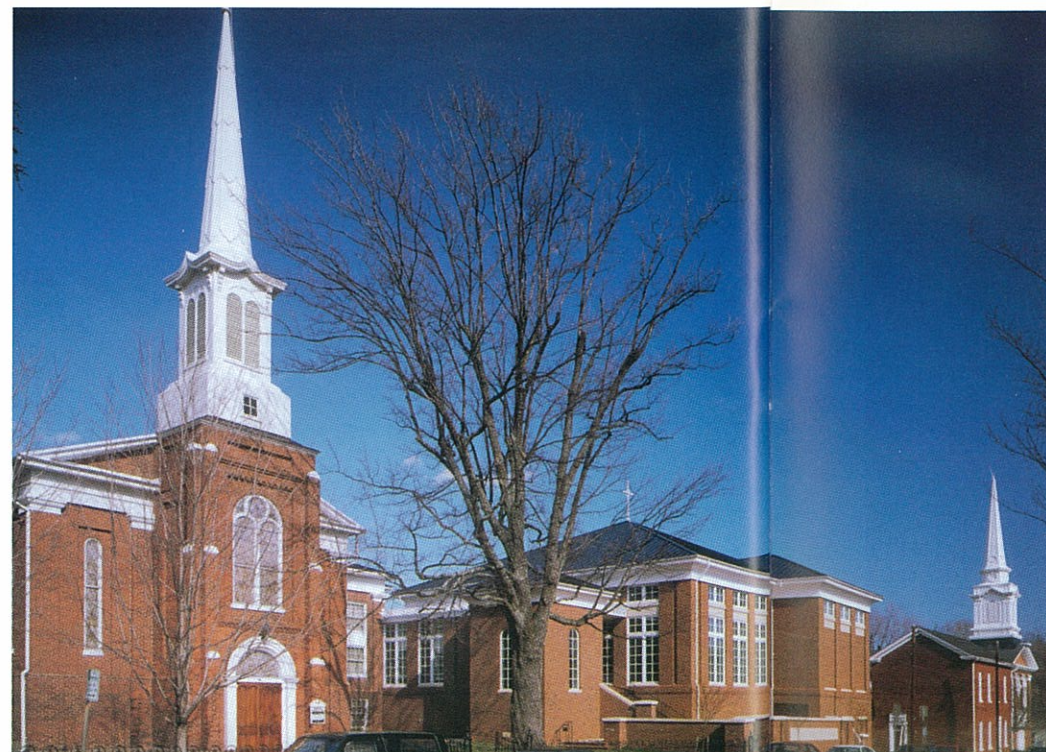
Street Smart

Warrenton Presbyterian Church • LeMay Erickson Architects

A few years ago, the congregation of Warrenton Presbyterian church would exit its historic 1857 chapel onto a prominent downtown street. There, church spires jutted skyward and civic buildings anchored avenues. Interrupting this cohesive streetscape, however, was an abandoned 1950s filling station that had been reconstituted as a flower shop.

Today, the filling station is gone, replaced by a sensitive expansion of the Warrenton Presbyterian Church complex that reclaims the urban streetscape while allowing the congregation room to grow. Designed by LeMay Erickson Architects, of Reston, the new adjoining structure houses a 350-seat sanctuary, fellowship hall, and commercial kitchen. “We started with the master plan, a long-range vision, that focused on phased construction,” says Paul R. Erickson, AIA, principal-in-charge of the project. “The first phase is a fellowship hall and sanctuary that is expandable to the rear of the property.”

Initially, church leaders wanted the new sanctuary to be set back from the street to align with the historic chapel, a Greek Revival structure topped with an Italianate tower. LeMay Erickson, however, saw an opportunity to bring the new building forward, asserting a street edge where none existed before. This way, if



the congregation wanted to expand the sanctuary seating to 500, it could do so rather unobtrusively toward the back of the complex.

“The congregation knew that it was dealing with a historic main street setting, but the mindset was initially pretty suburban,” says Neal Roseberry, AIA, the project manager. “Our challenge was to show that a building in old Warrenton would be different from a building on a 30-acre rural site – and that it would move through the town’s historic review process and be something we could be proud of.”

The design team deferred to the historic structure through the arrangement of windows and massing. The new building maintains a low roofline, while the piers and windows mimic the horizontal trabeation of the chapel. Other features include a central stairway that opens to a garden pavilion. It is connected to both the new sanctuary and the old chapel by the low roofs and glass walls of the narthex.

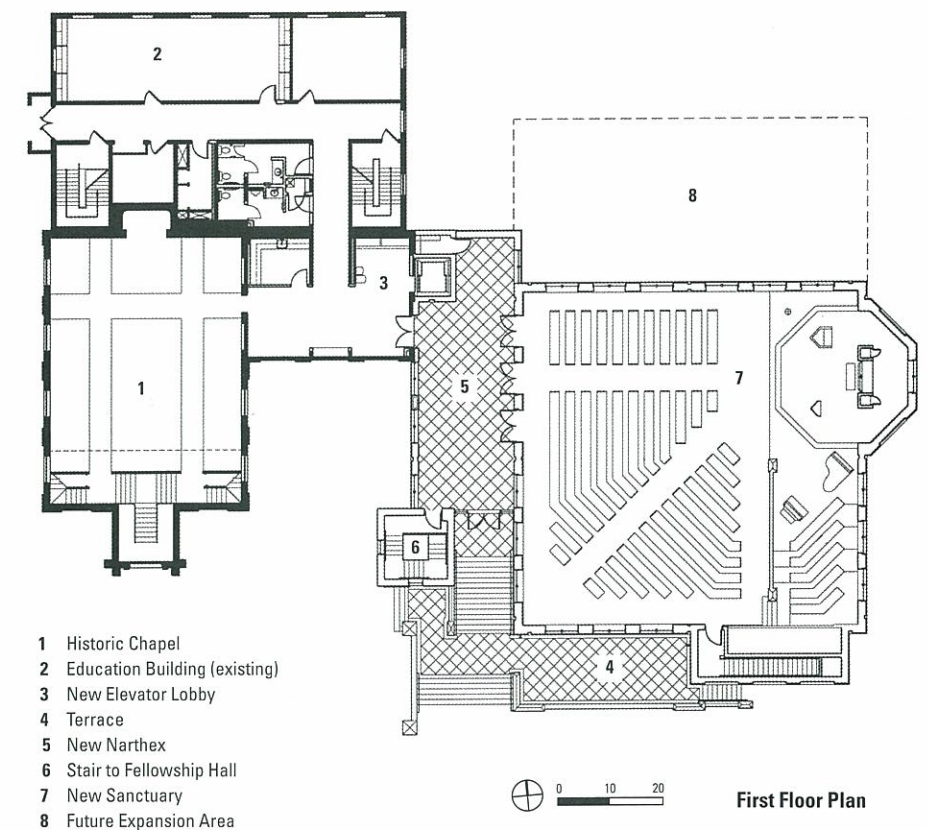
“This building is fairly modest and tries to play a supporting role,” Erickson explains. “The hipped roofs are probably softer than other roof forms as a way to blend with the old church.”

The architects did not want parishioners to forget about the historic church, either. Although its design holds the promise of future growth, the new sanctuary is oriented so that worshippers exit toward the old steeple, offering a visual reminder of their legacy. — Kim A. O’Connell

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A parking lot located on the south façade allows room for future expansion of the sanctuary on the upper level and the fellowship hall below.



The architects respected the town’s scale by minimizing the addition’s height (left). Inside, a dignified worship space accommodates the church’s growth (above left).