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Commemorating History

03.09.2007 | Campus and Community, Culture and Society The University of Dayton will not restore Building 26, following a study by ASC Group Inc. that finds the heavily altered building has lost its historical integrity and is ineligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

The decision paves the way for remediation of 11 acres of land fronting the Great Miami River, part of a \$2.54 million grant secured through the state's Clean Ohio Revitalization Fund program.

UD President Daniel J. Curran has established a historical stewardship group comprised of representatives from UD and the community to work with Burt Hill, UD's master planner, and explore options for commemorating historically significant activities that took place on the site. Options could include public art, a plaza or a museum-type display. Architectural elements salvaged from the building also could be incorporated into the memorial. UD officials have pledged to commemorate these activities in a manner consistent with the best practices for historic preservation nationwide.

Curran called the decision to demolish the building a hard one. "This was a difficult decision and one that we don't take lightly," he said. "We respect the passion of those who want to preserve the building. Ultimately, with the help of professionals, we concluded that there's not enough left of the original building to preserve and restore."

During World War II, the building served as the top-secret site for NCR engineer and UD alumnus Joseph Desch's development of a code-breaking machine credited with helping to bring the war to a close. The building has been extensively remodeled and has lost its historical integrity, according to Doug Terpstra, a certified architectural historian who completed the study.

To be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, a building must be both associated with an important historic event and retain its historic integrity. Building 26 is historically significant, but does not meet six out of the seven required criteria for integrity. ASC Group evaluated location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.

"Building 26 was substantially altered in the 1960s and later, primarily through the application of three large additions to the north, west and south walls. This building no longer resembles the original structure," according to the ASC Group report. "Other alterations included the replacement of the original glass block windows, the removal of much of the Art Deco ornament to accommodate the additions, and the remodeling of the interior, including changing the floor plan. While Building 26 remains in its original location (one of the required criteria), the additions and alterations have removed the building's integrity of design, materials and workmanship. The remainder of the National Cash Register factory's demolition has removed the building's integrity of setting. With its original appearance and setting gone, Building 26 does not retain integrity of feeling or association. Further, the physical alterations to Building 26 have removed the building's historic integrity."

The ASC Group's report is the second evaluation commissioned by UD to help officials determine the fate of the mothballed former NCR sales training center that sits on the corner of Stewart Street and Patterson Boulevard. In 2006, the University of Dayton also hired Martin-Beachler Architects Inc. to conduct an assessment, which included some investigatory demolition and an examination of drawings and photographs of the building. That study concluded that much of the original building, including the glass block limestone entry, wood windows and entry stairs, had been removed during remodeling. The cost to recreate the original Art Deco west façade, including demolition of the additions surrounding the original building, would run between \$2.8 and \$3.3 million, according to the firm.

UD officials also turned to the Miller-Valentine Group to assess the use and availability of historic tax credits. "We learned that historic tax credits are available only for certified historic structures either individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places or located in a registered historic district," said Richard Perales, University campus planning director. "Even if preservation of Building 26 did qualify for tax credits, the credits are minimal and would only marginally offset the significant costs of restoration."

The University of Dayton purchased 49 acres of land, which included Building 26, another building on Brown Street now known as the College Park Center, two parking lots and two soccer fields, for \$25 million from NCR in June 2005. In December 2005, the city of Dayton was awarded \$2.54 million from the state's Clean Ohio Revitalization Fund (CORF) to raze Building 26 and

remediate 11 acres of riverfront land. Although no date has been set for the building's demolition, UD officials say they must show progress on meeting that grant's requirements to increase the city's ability to compete competitively in the next round of CORF funding, which will be decided in October.

Most of NCR's manufacturing facilities on the site were demolished in the 1970s, and the property has remained largely unused since then. The site is considered a brownfield, but only a portion requires remediation, depending upon development plans. A draft of UD's new master plan for the entire 259-acre campus is expected to be completed in May, but UD had committed to constructing a mixed-use project on the 11-acre portion by the river when the city applied for the Clean Ohio Revitalization Fund grant.

"When UD purchased the property, we committed to using it to expand campus, spur development by the river and develop a gateway entrance to the University and the cities of Dayton, Kettering and Oakwood. As a community, we face an unparalleled opportunity to build UD's campus for the 21st century, while driving economic development in a region that needs new jobs," Curran said. "We also have an opportunity to keep an important story alive. I'm convinced that we can meet all of those objectives."

The historical stewardship group will be charged with considering a broad range of options for commemoration, raising money for the effort and advising Curran how best to honor the achievements of Desch and the Dayton codebreakers.

The historical stewardship group will be chaired by Vincent Russo, executive adviser in the office of the president at UD and former executive director of the Aeronautical Systems Center at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. Other members include: Brady Kress, president and CEO of Dayton History; David Bohardt, president of Preservation Dayton Inc.; Debbie Desch Anderson, UD graduate who produced a documentary about her father's achievements; Jeff Bruce, former editor of the Dayton Daily News; Bruce Langos, senior vice president of global operations at NCR; Richard Perales, University campus planning director; Ted Bucaro, director of government and regional relations at UD; Paul Morman, historian and former dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at UD; and Teri Rizvi, associate vice president for public relations at UD.

The ASC Group report is available here ([url: http://udcampusmasterplan.udayton.edu/architecture.pdf](http://udcampusmasterplan.udayton.edu/architecture.pdf)) . It was originally performed to meet federal funding requirements from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which awarded UD \$3.4 million for infrastructure improvements on the entire parcel of land. In a letter this week, the Corps announced that UD's project has been redefined as the Eastern part of the site bordered by Main, Brown, Stewart and Caldwell streets. The timing of the funding is uncertain.