

THE FILSON HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S EXPANSION- INTEGRATING INTO THE OLD LOUISVILLE NEIGHBORHOOD

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This article is the second in a series centered on The Filson Historical Society's expansion.

The project is an expansion for The Filson on its current site located within "Old Louisville," a historic neighborhood first developed between 1883-1887 in conjunction with the Southern Exposition. The construction plan involves a new 18,735 square foot building addition and the renovation of the existing Ferguson Mansion and its adjacent carriage house. Programmatically, the new building will more than double its archival storage capacity and provide a new oration-quality lecture hall, as well as new flexible-use event spaces that will incorporate changing exhibits.

In contrast to the formality and inward-looking character of its existing facility (the Ferguson Mansion), The Filson wanted to dispel its reputation as an exclusive organization. Specifically, with this expansion, they sought to develop a facility that integrated with its historic neighborhood fabric but also projected a welcoming image for the community - that this is an amenity to be enjoyed by all Louisvillians and the Ohio Valley region.

Over a one-year Schematic Design period, the architecture firm De Leon & Primmer Architecture Workshop worked closely and collaboratively with The Filson's Board of Directors and staff, city approval agencies, and community groups to foster a design dialogue that encouraged city-wide "ownership" of the project. The Schematic Design proposal was passed through the Louisville Landmark process with a 100% approval consensus by city commissioners and neighborhood groups. At the same time that these collaborative design workshops were being held, De Leon & Primmer's research and analysis of the historic fabric and its cultural context framed potential strategies for site development, building massing, and a material palette.

The new campus master plan proposes a new public mall - a physical green space - that provides a visually porous urban boundary on the corner site, while at the same time grounding the buildings. Centered on axial alignments with neighboring houses, this civic-scaled outdoor courtyard allows for the re-integration of the historic fabric from the original circa-1890 Southern Expansion development - a unique feature that has since been eroded from urban renewal efforts during the late 1960's.

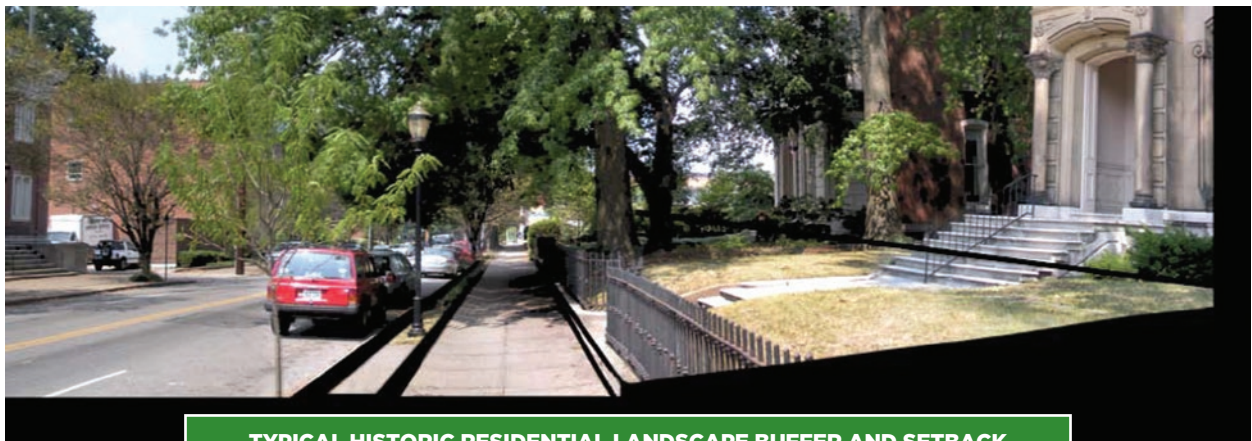
Fronting this flexible-use outdoor community space, a new building for public lectures, events, exhibits, and archival storage is proportioned to relate to both residential & civic scales. Materials common to the neighborhood mansions are deliberately expressed as non-load-bearing veneers, allowing the activities and contents within the new addition to be clearly visible from the street. Through movable display cases and interior partitions visible from large-scale windows, the building façade becomes a constantly changing element through activity and use.



TYPICAL HISTORIC RESIDENTIAL MODULE AND PROPORTION



EXISTING NEIGHBORHOOD FABRIC



TYPICAL HISTORIC RESIDENTIAL LANDSCAPE BUFFER AND SETBACK