

- 2.....Get HORIZONS by email.
- 3.....The problem with windows.
- 4.....Scheduled *Lunch & Learns*.

## Historic Preservation — It's not just for downtown anymore

Motorists on I-70 just east of Wright City may have noticed the old but decorative, one-story brick building on the north side of the highway and wondered how it has survived so long. After all, the

**“Once the building is officially NRHP listed, it is eligible for HPTC which amount to a credit of 45% on all qualified rehabilitation work.”**

Reliance Automotive building sits directly in the path of new development pushing westward from the urban hub.

That well-preserved building was designed and built over 70 years ago in 1930 by Southwestern Bell as a telephone repeater station. It housed equipment that amplified audio signals carried by long-distance phone lines. Because that kind of hardware has not been needed for some time, the building has changed ownership several times and will have a new life soon as a suburban bank branch building.

The American Bank of Missouri is planning to remodel the structure with a community center in the basement and to use historic tax credits to help pay for it. The community is supportive. Mayor Eileen Klocke said, “This building is one of the first impressions of the city for

eastbound traffic and it's important that it's reused for a much-needed banking facility.” Wright City's Economic Development Director Karen Gironde added, “Any project that promises to create new jobs is a plus for the city.”

The structure has been approved for National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) listing by the Missouri State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the Missouri Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (MOACHP) and has recently been designated for official NRHP listing by the Keeper of the National Register in Washington, D. C.

“This building represents the first property to be listed in the National Register in Wright City and is undoubtedly the first historic tax credit project there,” said Steve Dasovich, Head, SCI Cultural Resource Services.

SCI prepared the NRHP nomination, provided historic consultation for the owner, performed the Federal Section 106 Review process, and is currently working on the Missouri state and Federal Historic Preservation Tax Credit Applications (HPTC) for the building's redevelopment.

“Once the building is officially NRHP listed, it is eligible for HPTC

which amount to a credit of 45% on all qualified rehabilitation work,” Dasovich explained. “Such tax credits have been driving redevelopment of historic buildings across the state and region, resulting in Missouri's nationwide lead for the past three years.”

It's also anticipated that, with the help of the combined tax credits, the success of this project could influence other historic property owners to seek assistance for the rehabilitation of additional buildings in Wright City as well as other smaller communities in the region.

“The real significance of this project is that it's happening at the very outer edges of the urban core —



The Reliance Building today retains much of the character reflected in this photo taken soon after its construction.

we're more than 50 miles from downtown St. Louis, where you usually hear about historic building redevelopment,” said Dasovich.

*[Cont. on page 2]*

- Geotechnical
- Construction
- Environmental
- Natural Resources
- Cultural Resources





## HORIZONS IS GOING ELECTRONIC

You probably received an **SCI FYI** email recently about *Lunch & Learns* we offered in July. If you haven't but you'd like to be on our email list to receive future issues of HORIZONS in addition to timely news from SCI, please sign up at [www.sciengineering.com](http://www.sciengineering.com).

[Historic Preservation – cont. from page 1]

In addition to historic preservation services, SCI is providing geotechnical and environmental services on the project.

### URBAN REDEVELOPMENT PICKS UP PACE THROUGHOUT REGION

As an example of a more typical redevelopment project, SCI is also providing historic preservation services for the 14th Street Mall in Old North St. Louis. The project involves the rehabilitation of 25 historic buildings located in one of the city's NRHP-listed historic districts.

A development partnership between the Regional Housing and Community Development Alliance (RHCA) and the Old North St. Louis Restoration Group will rehabilitate the majority of the vacant buildings on North 14th and adjacent streets for residential, commercial, and some mixed-use. Rosemann & Associates is providing the architectural design services, and SCI has provided all of the historic documentation and consultation.

A recently published report on downtown redevelopment shows that there are currently 7,400 residential units and a population of more than 10,000 people in downtown St. Louis. It also stated that current occupancy for downtown residential properties that have been open a full year is 85 percent.

Similar historic redevelopment projects are underway in numerous other St. Louis area municipalities, including Cottleville, Dardenne Prai-

rie, Augusta, and others even farther than 50 miles from downtown.

Hermann and Washington are good examples, representing two of 10 Missouri communities selected in the DREAM (*Downtown Revitalization and Economic Assistance for Missouri*) initiative announced last year.

A little closer to home, revitalization efforts are gaining momentum in Belleville, Illinois. With more than 700 properties, its National Historic District is one of the largest in the country. The downtown square is being repaved and landscaped, and more residents are moving back into the second and third floors of storefront buildings. In addition, plans are still being discussed for a townhome development near a MetroLink station that would connect residents easily to downtown St. Louis.

And the phenomenon is not limited to the St. Louis area. For example, Springfield, Missouri is undergoing a resurgence of interest in historic properties. Redevelopment of the Heer's building, one of the city's landmark structures on the downtown square, is moving forward. And the nearby City of Ozark is making progress on a massive plan to redevelop 47 acres of downtown.

"It can still be economically feasible and very cost-effective to reuse these historic structures, no matter where they are," Dasovich said. "Especially if they can help the particular community feel a sense of pride in its history." ■■■

## In the News.....

- **James Lee** and **Jason Mitchell** have both passed the ICC exam to be certified as Structural Masonry Special Inspectors.
- Two employees have passed the Professional Engineer license examination: **Michelle Eaton, P.E.** and **Sarah Stock, P.E.**
- **Julie Carroll, P.E.** has been named *Young Engineer of the Year* by the St. Clair Chapter of the Illinois Society of Professional Engineers (ISPE). The award is given to a member who has made outstanding contributions to the engineering profession and their communities during the early years of their careers.
- SCI Chairman **Bill Green, P.E.** has been elected to serve as President of the Board of Directors of *Bridgeway Counseling Services*.

### Old Post Office development team receives award

The Downtown St. Louis Partnership recognized the team that renovated the Old Post Office with an award at the group's annual meeting.

On June 27, *The John H. Poelker Levee Stone Award* for 2007 was presented to DESCO Group and DFC Group Inc., the primary developers on the \$35 million project, in addition to all the major participants.

SCI was listed and recognized as a contributor for historic preservation services.

## Rehabbing Historic Buildings:

### *The problem with windows (that doesn't involve Microsoft)*

by Matthew Bivens, Assoc. AIA, Historic Preservation Specialist  
and Glen Grissom, Project Scientist, Environmental Services

One of the biggest potential concerns in rehabbing an historic building is often the State and/or Federal stipulation that original or early windows must first be retained and restored rather than replaced. This can make or break some potential rehabilitation deals, especially since the cost of reusing historic windows can often exceed new replacement costs.

Re-using the original windows is only an issue however when the developer is utilizing Historic Preservation Tax Credits (HPTC). But it can also be a consideration if the building is listed as a local landmark or included in a local district with strict design review guidelines. Some help is available to sort out the various issues at: <http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/briefs/presbhom.htm>.



A window from the Reliance Building in Wright City shows the level of detail that was typical with construction in the 1930s.

The National Park Service (NPS) has written a long series of Preservation Briefs which address most if not all issues concerning the redevelopment of historic buildings and consultants follow those documents closely. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and local historic commissions also fol-

low these same guidelines when assessing the effects of proposed rehab work on historic buildings.

But windows in historic buildings always seem to be one of the biggest issues. Windows contribute heavily to a building's architectural character, its identity, and its overall integrity. For that reason, the NPS encourages the retention and repair of original or early windows and has even conducted various studies that show repair and weatherization of existing windows is more practical than most people realize.

Although the retention of original or existing windows is always the first option, there is a point when the condition of a window may clearly indicate replacement. This leads to a process of thoroughly documenting the historic window details, functions, and designs. Replacement windows in historic tax credit projects should match, as closely as possible, the windows being removed. A few negotiations with NPS and SHPO staff usually result in approved replacement windows that retain the building's integrity and satisfy all parties involved.

SCI's Historic Preservation Specialists will consult with a developer

on-site to discuss issues regarding windows as well as other building elements. We will conduct research to find out if windows are original or within the period of significance of a building. We might also assess if the windows are examples of a specific design that could add additional significance to the building.

Then, depending on the physical condition of the windows, SCI can advise on options or paths to pursue.

**A few negotiations with NPS and SHPO staff usually result in approved replacement windows that retain the building's integrity and satisfy all parties involved.**

If the decision is made to reuse the existing windows, environmental issues often need to be addressed, the most commonly encountered being lead-based paint and asbestos. Lead-based paint can be found on most

window components that were installed before the mid-1970s. Removal of lead-based paint from windows can be expensive and time consuming, and it's often cheaper to replace the window. However, the lead-based paint does not always have to be removed to reuse the window.

Asbestos is commonly found in caulking and glazing compounds used on windows installed well into the 1980s. It is not unusual to find many different types of caulk or glaze on the same window unit because of multiple repair and maintenance cycles over the years. Special training is usually required to disturb or remove asbestos-containing materials, and they will likely be disturbed to some degree whether the windows are removed and replaced or repaired and re-used.

If you have a project where you think asbestos or lead may be an issue, you can get additional information by contacting someone with SCI's Environmental Services group at 636-949-8200. ≡



*"Due Diligence in New Construction"*

**NOON - 1:00 PM**

**Tuesday, October 30..... St. Charles, MO**

**Tuesday, November 6..... O'Fallon, IL**

This fall, we will again be offering the popular *Lunch & Learn* presentation on **"Due Diligence in New Construction."** It covers concerns regarding the environmental, geotechnical, natural resources, and cultural resources on a new development project.

The October 30 presentation will be held in our St. Charles office, and our O'Fallon, IL office will host the November 6 Lunch & Learn. Lunch starts at 11:45 and the presentations begin at 12 noon.

You will be receiving an **SCI FYI** email reminder a little closer to the dates. (If you want to be sure you're

on the list to receive future emails, sign up at [www.sciengineering.com](http://www.sciengineering.com).)

We offer these as a value-added service to our clients. There is no charge, but seating is limited. To make a reservation, please email [cpalmer@sciengineering.com](mailto:cpalmer@sciengineering.com).

**ATTENDEES HAVE SAID:**

“ **Very helpful for Big Picture thinking.** ”

“ **I learned more in an hour than I did in my first year on the job.** ”



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