

CTSFW CAMPUS MASTER PLAN

As Concordia Theological Seminary prepares to mark the fiftieth year back in Fort Wayne, plans are underway to enhance the campus for the formation of future generations of pastors and deaconesses.

By Lance Hoffman

On May 22, 2025, Lance Hoffman, Chief Operating Officer at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne (CTSFW), met with a group of visiting alumni. After introductory comments, he launched into a presentation on the seminary's new campus master plan.

"I'm going to be talking to you today about getting old, and I don't mean that to be a reflection on the audience," said Hoffman with a laugh. "We have a really odd situation here at CTSFW in that the entire campus was designed at one time, and now every building, except for the new part of the library, is basically retirement age."

The seminary's mid-century modern campus, designed by renowned architect Eero Saarinen in the mid-1950s for Concordia Senior College, has been home to CTSFW since 1976, when the seminary was relocated from Springfield, Illinois, to Fort Wayne. Saarinen's design—including the visually dominant Kramer Chapel at the heart of the campus, clusters of buildings radiating out from the center, a park-like setting, and "Concordia bricks" oriented vertically and horizontally—thoughtfully reinforces the mission of the seminary to form pastors and deaconesses for service to the church.

But the campus was designed for undergraduate men in the 1950s rather than the seminary students of today. CTSFW is now seizing an opportunity to build on the strengths of the past and create a modern campus environment that inspires and enhances the residential formation experience and the life of the entire Seminary community—one of its key strategic objectives.

Following are highlights from Hoffman's presentation, in which he addresses the current state of the campus, the master planning process, and the first projects CTSFW will tackle.

BUILDING USE LEGEND

■ ACADEMIC

■ CHAPEL

■ FACULTY & ADMINISTRATION

■ RESIDENTIAL

■ STUDENT HOUSING

■ FACULTY/STAFF HOUSING

An Aging Campus

Ground was broken on this campus, which was then Concordia Senior College, seventy years ago this year, in 1955. Construction moved ahead in earnest through 1956 and into the spring of 1957, then classes started in 1957. Outside of a few additions in the 1960s, including Loeh Hall and three dorms, and the library expansion a decade ago, every other building was really built at the same time.

On a typical campus, you're going to have the old original campus alongside newer buildings that were slowly added over the life of the school. You always have those key buildings that you need to focus on improving. Are they still functioning the way they were intended?



What issues are there to be addressed? But the majority of the campus is fine.

At CTSFW we have the reverse of that. So much of our campus, although it's been well maintained and well cared for, needs attention. A seventy-year-old furnace is still seventy. Seventy-year-old windows are still seventy, even though they're still working at some level of efficiency.

Next year will be the fiftieth anniversary of the seminary's move back to Fort Wayne. When the seminary arrived in 1976, the campus was young. It was still relatively new. The older buildings were only nineteen

years old, and the buildings added in the second phase were even younger yet—barely a dozen years old. Things like deferred maintenance weren't an issue.

In the mid-eighties, into the early and mid-nineties, there was a significant change in the Synod's stance in relation to the universities and seminaries. Prior to that, the Synod authorized and funded any new buildings on the seminary and university campuses. They also subsidized the operational costs of those institutions significantly.

When that model changed, we weren't equipped to raise a lot of money. Seminaries and universities hadn't been allowed to raise money for endowments, which

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made it a challenge to take on all those obligations at the drop of a hat.

Since that time, the one major building project on campus has been the library renovation and expansion. That was a big project that spanned the presidencies of Dr. Dean Wenthe and Dr. Lawrence Rast. We've done smaller projects, including replacing chillers on campus, renovating some classrooms, and adding an outdoor plaza outside Loehe Hall, but the library expansion has been the only significant addition to the CTSFW campus since the 1960s.

What was the last building funded by the Synod, built on a campus of Concordia Theological Seminary? It was the administration building in Springfield, which was constructed in 1970, fifty-five years ago. Although it had been approved in 1929, it took forty-one years to get it done. This campus in Fort Wayne was funded by the Synod, but it was built to be the senior college. It was not built for the seminary, not built for our use. The last building project funded here in Fort Wayne was the second-phase addition in the mid-sixties.

Facilities Assessment

As part of our previous strategic plan, CTSFW conducted a comprehensive facilities assessment during the fall of 2023 to help identify and prioritize the issues facing our aging structures. We hired Design Collaborative, an architectural and engineering firm based in Fort Wayne, to do this work. They inspected everything, from the exterior—the shell, the roof, the windows, the bricks—to the interior and the infrastructure. Electrical, plumbing, heating—they looked at everything.

They produced a 160-page report detailing their findings. The recurring theme with every building was, "Things are working. It's kind of a miracle." Each building has its own chapter in the report, and when you read about one building, you pretty much know the content of the rest.

The campus is functioning. Lights are on, but this was a call to action to say, "Hey, we need to be much more intentional about this." It's maybe been one of those Lutheran things, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it," but as I mentioned earlier, the seminary wasn't really in a position to address campus buildings. Survival was a priority early on, then we worked on raising money for the full tuition coverage guarantee, eliminating our debt, and building our endowment. At this point, we can now focus on infrastructure.

We've engaged more intentionally in fundraising in the past couple of decades and have been very blessed by the generosity of our supporters, which has helped. And we're now in the midst of the largest wealth transfer in the

history of our country, with trillions of dollars expected to pass from baby boomers to their beneficiaries. In recent years we've received some of the largest donations in seminary history as bequests from wonderful, faithful Lutheran members. It's an opportune time to be visionary and prayerfully plan for the future.

Creating a Campus Master Plan

If we're going to invest time, effort, money, and resources into renovating an aging campus, what changes and improvements need to be made? Which buildings are operating well but just need a refresh and update? And which buildings really aren't? Should we think about replacing some of the older buildings that were designed and built when Eisenhower was president and Sputnik was launched with modern buildings that are designed for twenty-first-century students?

Those are the kinds of questions we've been asking—and will keep asking—as we've worked on our campus master plan. It's that classic "think big, dream big" idea. At the end of the day, it's all about how we can best fulfill our mission, which is to advance Christ's Church now and into the future.

Eventually, you've got to narrow down the options and make decisions. Our Board of Regents has approved our campus master plan, as has the LCMS Board of Directors. Nothing is written in stone. It's a living document that's simply a record of what we'd like to do once we have the funding and the timing is right.

Our campus master plan has everything in it from married housing on campus, which we've never had, to building new dorms to possibly replacing the outdated existing dorms, to space for a retreat center. That's a much lower priority, but we're thinking about all the possibilities.

The chapel will continue to be the heart and center of our campus. But there are issues that need to be addressed, including the windows, which have yellowed over the years. What about an elevator? What about access to the bathrooms?

As for the design, we want to ensure that any new buildings will blend seamlessly with the Saarinen design. We'll want to be very intentional about everything from the 23.5 degree pitch of the roof to the Concordia bricks to the east-west ridge line of every roof on campus. The library addition is a good example. They did a good job of blending different materials while maintaining that Saarinen-esque architectural style.

I'll say this jokingly, but in a modern 2025 dorm building, your ratio of thirty-four students to four showers is no longer considered a good idea. If you look at the dorms, you've usually got clusters of four dorms that sit together. They're relatively small in size, but if you add

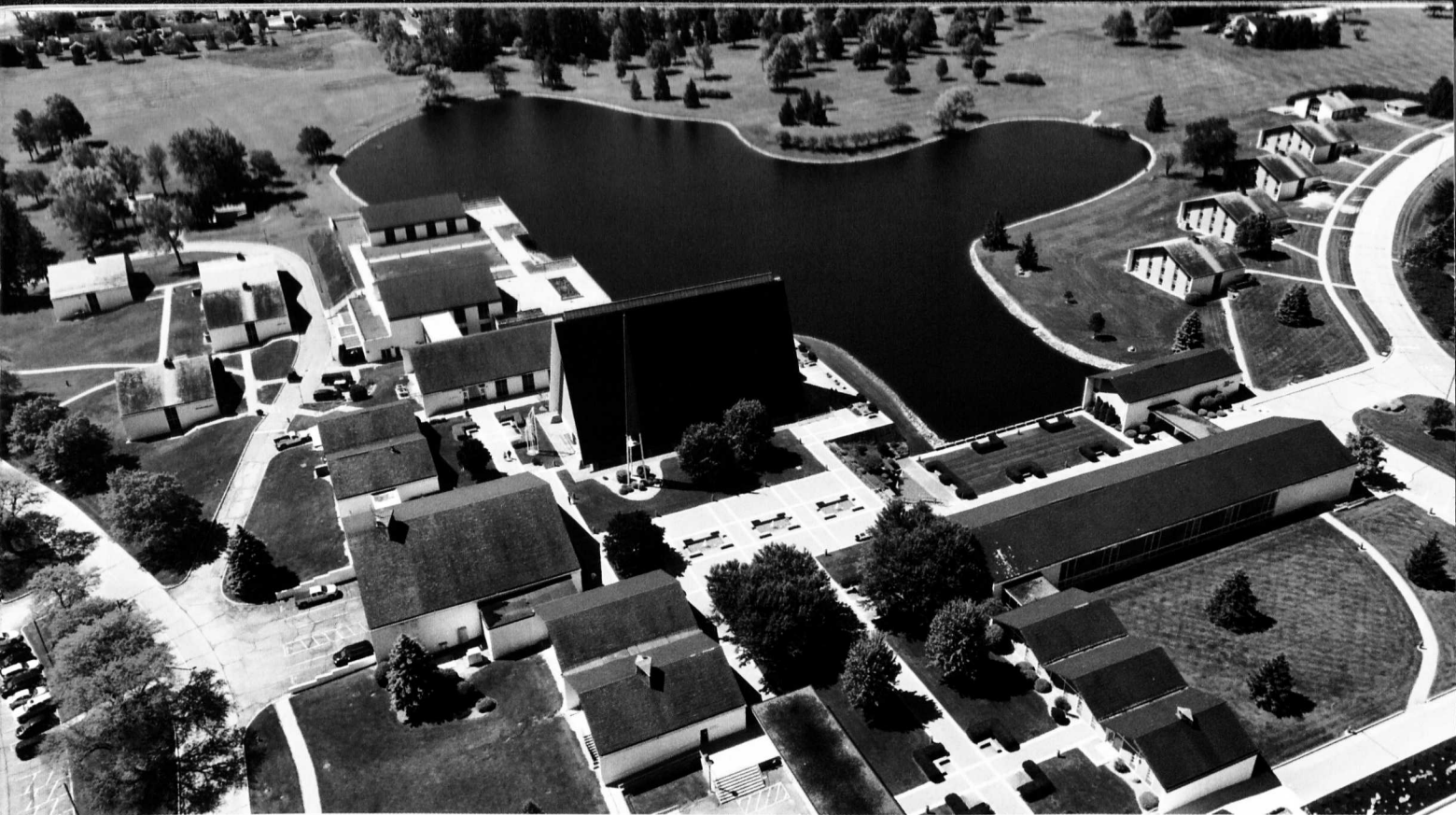


Photo: Design Collaborative

them all up, you've got sixty to seventy dorm rooms there. We plan to consolidate those using a "long house" design as opposed to smaller dorms.

Larger buildings save money on mechanicals, heating, and air conditioning and allow for easier access for anybody with ambulatory issues. One elevator can service a significant number of rooms as opposed to having to put four elevators into four smaller buildings. That's one example of what we would amend with respect to design.

First Projects

One project that's relatively modest in size but very important is the chapel, specifically the windows on the chapel, which I mentioned before. The whole bank of windows on the south face that runs from the bottom all the way to the top is yellow.

They were actually replaced once before. The product that was installed has about a thirty-year life expectancy, and over time, it yellows in the sun. All the ridge lights along the entire top ridge of the chapel and all the south-facing windows need to be replaced. We want to start that work next summer, and it will take three to four months to complete.

At the same time, we're going to take care of some other issues with the exterior of the chapel. For example, there's some spalling on the concrete piers at the base of the roof from rain that has been shedding for seventy years.

The other thing that we want to do is build a new Food and Clothing Co-op. Our current co-ops are very important for the students, but they're really not in great locations. There are challenges as far as ingress and egress. To get to the Food Co-op, you have to go through the loading dock, up the steps, down several hallways through storage lockers. It's just not good. Across campus in the Clothing Co-op, you have to navigate a lot of stairs and cramped rooms.

We think we've found a good spot for a new co-op building that will meet the need for easy access. We haven't set a specific start date and completion date for the project yet, but we're ready to let people know about our plans.

Moving Forward

Every institution has a dream of no debt. CTSFW currently has no debt. Zero. It's a nice place to be.

We want to be very prudent in moving forward at a pace that will allow us to maintain our operations in the long term. If we need to take out what we call a little bridge loan, that's one thing, you know, forty-eight months or even seventy-two months. But we want to stay away from a thirty-year mortgage. That's going to be a huge factor in what we do, when we do it, and how we do it. 🏠



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