



October 14, 2023

Dr. Robert C. Robbins, President
University of Arizona
Old Main, Room 200
1200 E. University Boulevard
P.O. Box 210021
Tucson, AZ 85721-0021

John Arnold, Executive Director
Arizona Board of Regents
2700 N. Central Ave., Suite 400
Phoenix, AZ 85004

Subject: Urgent Preservation of the University of Arizona Cancer Center Chapel

Dear President Robbins and Esteemed Members of the Arizona Board of Regents:

I write today with a heartfelt appeal to preserve the University of Arizona Cancer Center Chapel, a site of immense cultural and architectural significance, designed by the celebrated Arizona modernist architect, Paolo Soleri.

The small Chapel, located within 1501 N. Campbell Avenue in Tucson, serves as a living testament to the visionary work and philosophical contributions of Paolo Soleri. This remarkable space, although not accessible to the public, holds profound value in showcasing Soleri's innovative concepts in architecture and urban design. Recent developments have come to our attention, that the University of Arizona intends to reconfigure elements of the chapel destroying the design, intent, and masterpiece.

We respectfully express our profound concerns and urgently request that the University of Arizona reconsider the proposed reconfiguration. We sincerely believe that a collaborative dialogue with concerned stakeholders could yield alternative solutions that would honor the chapel's historical and architectural value.

Soleri's illustrious career as an architect, urban designer, artist, craftsman, and philosopher, centered around exploring innovative possibilities for human living environments in harmony with nature. His iconic creation, "Arcosanti," located in the Arizona high desert, exemplifies his vision of "arcology," an integration of architecture and ecology striving for a balance between urban aesthetics, equality, and environmental stewardship.

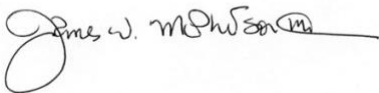
Soleri's profound influence on the fields of architecture and urban design transcends conventional boundaries. His philosophy of "arcology" seeks to create living environments rooted in sustainability, human connection, and coexistence with the natural world. The University of Arizona Cancer Center Chapel, a hidden jewel within Soleri's extensive body of work, is the only example of his work in Southern Arizona and provides a unique opportunity to celebrate and preserve this architectural legacy.

The Soleri Chapel's design is distinguished by its distinctive cast-in-place barrel-vaulted concrete ceilings, a testament to Soleri's commitment to harmonizing with the natural environment. The concrete, cast within a bed of silt, bears a unique texture and color reflective of the desert's character. This is further underscored by the embedded botanical graphics, a design approach presented throughout Arcosanti, signifying Soleri's profound connection to the local landscape. It is these elements combined into a unified space that make this chapel remarkable. Dismantling these elements and using them as decorative ornamentation on a new building necessarily destroys an architectural landmark.

We kindly request your reconsideration of the reconfiguration plan and your commitment to fostering an open dialogue with all concerned stakeholders. Such an endeavor would serve as a beacon of responsible preservation and uphold Paolo Soleri's enduring legacy.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



James W. McPherson III
President, Board of Directors
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