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Architect put stamp on city

He championed progressive designs

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January 20, 2007

BY JOHN GALLAGHER
FREE PRESS BUSINESS WRITER

In a career spanning more than four decades, architect Ken Neumann put his mark on metro Detroit with numerous important designs, including the New Detroit Science Center and the Holocaust Memorial Center in Farmington Hills.

Neumann, 67, died Friday of cancer. His wife of 45 years, Beverly; his son, Scott; his daughter, Sydney, and many other family members survive.

"He loved Detroit and never lost that feel for the city," said Steve Vogel, dean of architecture at the University of Detroit Mercy. "Perhaps like no other architect in my memory, he will be sorely missed."

Founder and head of the Southfield-based Neumann/Smith architecture firm, Neumann recently designed the new One Kennedy Square office building near Campus Martius in Detroit. The angular, green-tinted building marked a bold departure for the downtown skyline.

Explaining it in a 2005 interview, Neumann championed progressive architecture.

"In their cell phones and other gadgets, people want the very latest thing, from their TV sets to their toaster, and yet they still want to build like they did in the 11th Century," he said.

"It doesn't make sense."

Among his more notable works was the colorful and playful National Corvette Museum in Bowling Green, Ky. He also produced several important buildings for Wayne State University's campus.

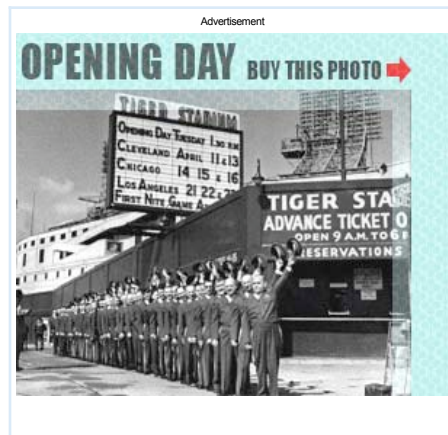
A native of Chicago, Neumann attended the University of Illinois and Harvard University and then came to Detroit to work for the city's famed director of planning, Charles Blessing, before starting his own firm in 1968.

The funeral will be at 3 p.m. Sunday at Temple Shir Shalom, 3999 Walnut Lake Road, West Bloomfield.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that contributions be made to the Michigan Architectural Foundation or the Beaumont Foundation.

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