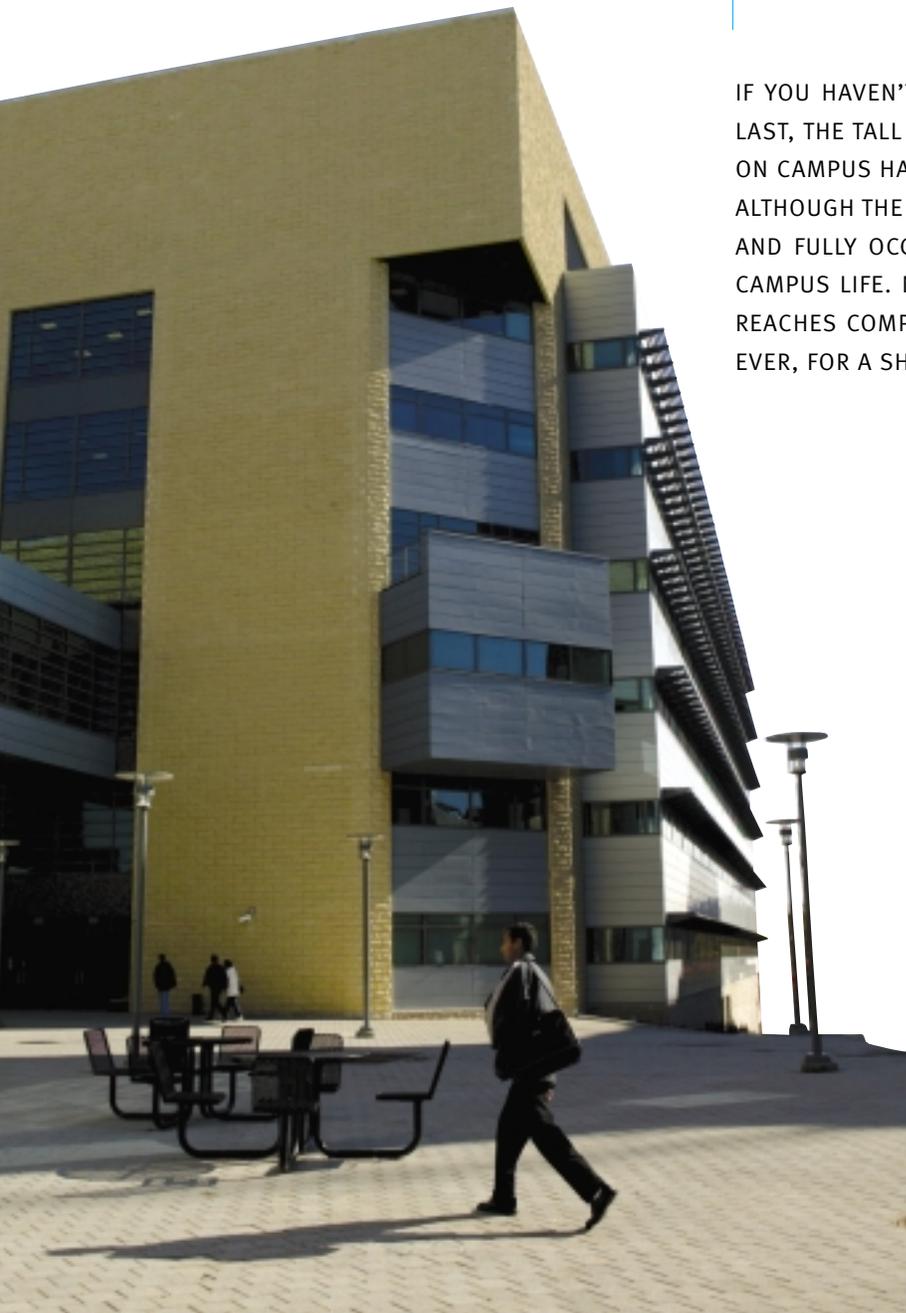


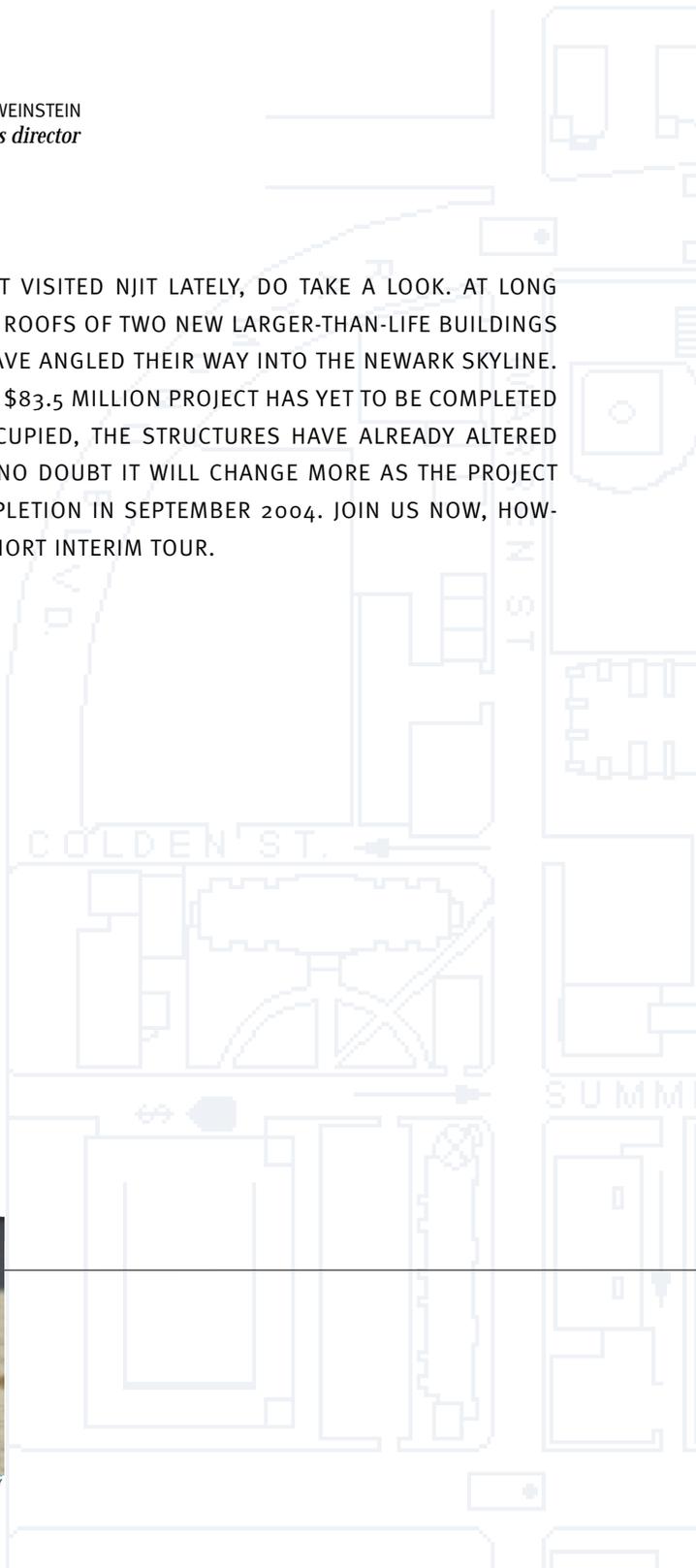
NJIT'S NE

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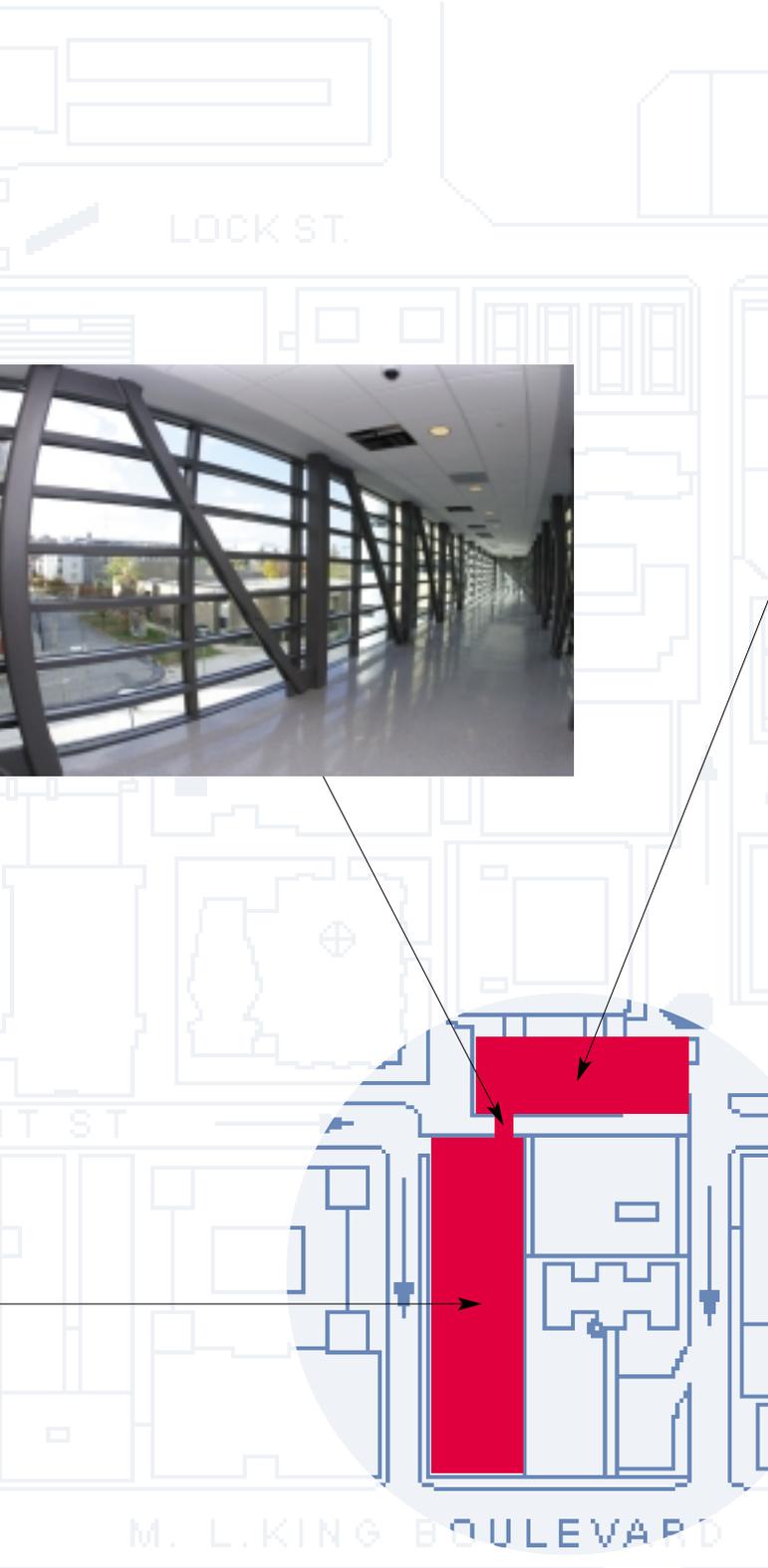
IF YOU HAVEN'T VISITED NJIT LATELY, DO TAKE A LOOK. AT LONG LAST, THE TALL ROOFS OF TWO NEW LARGER-THAN-LIFE BUILDINGS ON CAMPUS HAVE ANGLED THEIR WAY INTO THE NEWARK SKYLINE. ALTHOUGH THE \$83.5 MILLION PROJECT HAS YET TO BE COMPLETED AND FULLY OCCUPIED, THE STRUCTURES HAVE ALREADY ALTERED CAMPUS LIFE. NO DOUBT IT WILL CHANGE MORE AS THE PROJECT REACHES COMPLETION IN SEPTEMBER 2004. JOIN US NOW, HOWEVER, FOR A SHORT INTERIM TOUR.



PHOTOS: GINNY TWERSKY



W LOOK



A view from the bridge: NJIT's first sky bridge (center) connects the recently completed East Building (left) to the West Building (above).



Shown here are the new cafeteria and information center in the West Building and a computer facility for students in Albert Dorman Honors College, which is housed in the East Building.



The two buildings, with a total of 375,000 square feet of space, are the brainchild of internationally acclaimed architect Charles Gwathmey of Gwathmey Siegel & Associates (GS), New York City. The NJIT structures have a strong visual kinship with the firm's projects at Princeton, Cornell and Harvard universities.

The primary surprise for friends of NJIT who haven't been on campus for a while is that the two new buildings and a piazza have replaced a parking lot and small alumni building. The 12,000-square-foot piazza of gray, pre-cast concrete pavers, punctuated by tall gray-enamel modernist lamp posts, will feature by year's end trees, flowers, tables, settees and chairs.

The new 190,000-square-foot Campus Center, also referred to as the West Building for the time being, has been about half occupied since September of 2003. Although still under construction, the building already accommodates university dining facilities, student services, student club offices and the NJIT Women's Center, along with housing the heating and cooling units that serve both additions.

The center includes the project's interior tour de force: a striking stainless-steel, cafeteria-style serving area occupying most of the first floor. About quadruple the size of its predecessors, it features shiny high-tech counters, sparkling glass cases featuring mouth-watering fresh entrees and ceilings bathed in light from high-hat fixtures covered by red glass shields. "We thought the red worked decoratively because it not only incorporated the university's color but is also a symbol of technology," says Thomas Levering, the Gwathmey Siegel architect working most closely with NJIT on the project.

Next September, a new student dining area will open. It will occupy a remodeled first-floor space in the former Hazell Student Center, which connects with the West Building. When complete, the amply windowed space will face freshly landscaped grounds. Eventually, the interconnected structures will also house the university's new ballroom.

Sitting ingeniously above the renovated Hazell Center's flat roof will be a spacious outdoor terrace measuring 164 by 166 feet. A wide outdoor staircase running alongside the building will connect

the terrace to the landscaped campus green below.

The wide and dramatic stairs leading down from the terrace will be an important architectural element. Not only will it tie the two levels together on a functional level, but on a visual level as well, making the project even more memorable and vibrant. Similar stairs adorn a famous addition that Gwathmey Siegel designed for the Fogg Art Museum at Harvard University.

For building aficionados, such a staircase might also evoke associations with architectural landmarks like the great stairs leading to the Piazza del Campidoglio of Rome, says Levering. The great Italian artist and sculptor Michaelangelo designed the piazza, including the stairs. Initiated in 1538, the project was completed in the 17th century.

Across the piazza from the Campus Center is a massive 185,000-square-foot six-story structure known for now as the East Building. Almost fully occupied, the building contains classrooms and academic and administrative offices. Among its more notable architectural features is the building's size. It not only looms at viewers, but also stands just 15 feet from neighboring Eberhardt and Cullimore halls.

Such proximity creates what Levering calls "forced" perspective, a dramatic effect this firm loves. "The buildings are scaled to create the feel of an outdoor room and provide a spatial definition to the campus," says Levering. Visitors to the physics building at Princeton University and the engineering college at Cornell University, both of which were designed by GS, notice a similar visual theme.

NJIT's first sky bridge, which spans the piazza to connect the twin buildings at the third-floor level, contributes to a new soaring sense of height. For these architects, bringing height to the campus and modulating the way people walk around it were key. They wanted to change how people behave on campus, even how they perceive their environment.

"This was a campus with too many rectangular structures, particularly around the main green," says Levering. "We wanted to change that as well as add height." The result has been structures designed to jut into the ground and space at unexpected, visually dramatic angles. Even roofs are angled, all with the idea of imparting a different, more exciting feel to the campus.

"We see the piazza encouraging people to move through spaces, not around them," says Levering. "Encouraging people to see more of each other may also encourage them to stop and chat, perhaps move from outdoors to inside the adjacent Campus Center."

Notice the oversized, rough-hewn yellow sandstone masonry facade, another Gwathmey Siegel insignia. It adds warmth to the campus. "The facade resembles the buildings of Oxford University in England," says Levering. "Nothing looks quite as beautiful as when a setting sun illuminates that color."

Accenting the warm-hued facade are long horizontal panels of cool, satin-finish gray zinc. The zinc is a visual reminder of the university's mission: technological education and research. "Zinc siding is one of the newest, sustainable green building materials on today's market," says Levering.

What you probably won't notice on a brief visit to NJIT is something that has been very important

The primary surprise for friends of NJIT who haven't been on campus for a while is that the two new buildings and a piazza have replaced a parking lot and small alumni building.

to people on campus every day — that this project, which began in July 2001, has not caused too much displacement and inconvenience. "The project has been so well organized that it has moved along faster than any other project I have ever worked on," says Levering, a veteran architect with two decades of experience. "I estimate that a building project of this scope would usually take twice as long to design and build."

The strong working relationship among the architects, Turner Construction Company, the builders, and the NJIT administrators involved has certainly helped. Thanks to their forward thinking and the minimal disruption of daily life on campus, the response to the work has been very positive, and the end results are eagerly anticipated. Do drop on by and see for yourself. ■