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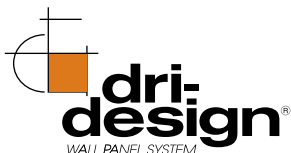
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Editor's letter



Andrew Ballard, AIA
Editor, *Iowa Architect*

Welcome!

I came to Iowa from California's Bay Area, an increasingly dense and ever-widening pocket of capital and good weather nestled among energetic surf and steep hillsides. That place has its pros. It also has some cons; notable enough that my family and I felt compelled to take our leave.

Iowa is not California. But it's also not the opposite. We fuel the same technology industries, tap the same distributed networks, ballast the same service economies, and share the same aspiration for identity and belonging. The winters just get a little nippier, that's all. I've deeply enjoyed my eyes adjusting to Iowa's tonal range, from mid-size city to unincorporated farmland. The false dichotomy of "urban" and "rural" belies our state's range of population densities.

This issue we focus on Iowa's most populous cores—the Des Moines metropolitan area, the Iowa City-Cedar Rapids Corridor, and the Quad Cities—to review outstanding architectural responses to increasing housing needs. The included projects demonstrate how to couple density with community as Iowa continues its gradual shift toward more diverse, urban demographics. Each project is wed to its site and location location. Some give a nod to the past and some repurpose it. Some reclaim territory. Some fill in gaps. All find a way to extend cities' continuity of purpose toward a bright and connected future.

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Iowa Architect, the official publication of the American Institute of Architects, Iowa Chapter

Iowa Center for Architecture
400 Locust Street, Suite 100
Des Moines, IA 50309
515-244-7502
www.AIAIowa.org / www.IowaArchitecture.org

Subscription Rates

\$7.25 per single issue
\$24.95 per year
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Innovative Publishing
10629 Henning Way, Suite 8
Louisville, KY 40241
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 INNOVATIVE PUBLISHING

Correction: In the Winter 2022 issue, OPN should have been credited as winning a 2021 Impact Award with the Dr. Percy and Lileah Harris Building.

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Celebrating Dedication to Community through the Citizen Architect Program

AIA Iowa recognizes our members who advocate for the profession through community leadership

WORDS: AMY SPIKE

Since 2008, The American Institute of Architects (AIA), Iowa Chapter has recognized the larger role that our members play in their individual communities across the state. The AIA Iowa Citizen Architect Program is an annual program that recognizes AIA Iowa members who represent AIA's values in their communities through public service. This program is a recognition bestowed upon all AIA Iowa members who serve as an appointed or elected member of a government committee, council, or body at the local, county, regional, or state level; or serve as a volunteer for a non-profit organization that seeks to benefit people in need, communities, or the state. Celebrating our members' dedication to community involvement helps spread the AIA mission to be the voice of the profession of architecture, promote the value of good design, and advocate for the health and safety of the public.

One of this year's Citizen Architect Community Track Participants is AIA Iowa member Saloni Sheth, AIA. Sheth has a long history of giving back to her community. Sheth currently serves as the Lead Architect (pro-bono) for the Anoopam Mission. Anoopam Mission is a socioeconomic nonprofit organization committed to the physical, social, cultural, and spiritual advancement of humanity. Anoopam Mission is actively engaged in humanitarian work globally in the fields of education, healthcare, social welfare, women's rights, and disaster relief. In this role, she is responsible for working with the organization's trustees, senior-level leaders, and building committee to design and document an addition for the existing Shree Swaminarayan Spiritual and Cultural Center, the headquarters of Anoopam Mission USA.

However, Anoopam Mission is not the only organization that benefits from Sheth's service. She has a long history of prioritizing volunteering. She says, "As architects we are uniquely positioned to use our experience and knowledge to benefit our communities. For example, I developed my passion for socially responsible architecture through volunteering with Habitat for Humanity. Working in the field and learning



construction methods make me a better architect when it comes to design, but even if the volunteering engagement we choose to participate in doesn't seem like it directly relates to architecture, the skills we gain from our profession apply across the board."

When asked what advice she would give to others who might want to get involved, Sheth recommended, “[To] find where your passions intersect, and transform these passions into purpose. I started by reaching out to organizations whose purposes interested me and I asked them how my strengths could be leveraged to fit their needs.

“Many individuals in my network often asked me to edit their cover letters, college application essays, résumés, and other professional content. I asked myself: How else can I turn this strength into service? I soon heard about Tapestry Farms, a nonprofit urban farm system that supports refugees. Their conventional volunteering opportunities included providing transportation and gardening. I truly wanted to support refugees, yet found my strength better aligned with providing editing services. I spoke with the Volunteer Coordinator and says, ‘I know how to edit, and I want to help. How can I help?’ Immediately, she told me that many of these refugees were seeking work and would absolutely benefit from vocational guidance. I am happy to share that I will now be assisting with writing and reviewing refugees’ cover letters and résumés—a creative intersection of my two passions. If the opportunity doesn’t yet



CAP Community Track participant Naura Heiman Godar, AIA, volunteers with the Des Moines Music Coalition, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and collaborative movement committed to building a stronger and more diverse music community in greater Des Moines.

exist but the need for it does, I think it is up to each of us to manifest it into existence.”





April Is Architecture Month in Iowa

WORDS: AMY SPIKE

Every April, members of the American Institute of Architects, Iowa Chapter spend the entire month celebrating the profession of architecture. Through social events, online campaigns, and networking events we come together to highlight the role that architects play in their communities. Iowa Architecture Month’s purpose is to celebrate the architecture profession in Iowa for its nationally known quality of design that promotes and celebrates the cultural heritage and values of the state while working to build a better future for our communities through well-planned, well-designed buildings that embrace the principals of livability and resiliency. This month-long celebration engages Iowa communities and the public in creating healthier, safer, and more dynamic places to live, work, and play.

Join us this year as we celebrate this annual tradition by following along with us on our social media channels!

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THANK YOU TO ALL WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE 2022 AIA IOWA CITIZEN ARCHITECT PROGRAM.

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INCREMENTAL TRANSFORMATION: ZONING REFORM

WORDS : GRANT NORDBY, AIA

With their focus on the design and construction of individual projects, architects often take zoning as an unchangeable given. But urgent environmental, social and financial forces are quietly reshaping zoning codes across the nation, creating new opportunities for architects to help repair the urban fabric.

“Public health, safety, morals, or general welfare...”

In the 100 years since *Ambler v Euclid* crystallized the practice of use-separated zoning, drawbacks of its overapplication have become conspicuous. Once driven

by legitimate concerns about sanitation and proximity to industrial facilities, residential zoning also came to justify segregation on an economic and racial basis, accompanied by an increased aversion to commercial uses as these became auto-oriented.

The postwar building boom literally cemented these changes into place. Fueled by federal policies and postwar wealth, the single-family homeownership rate jumped from a pre-WWII 45 percent to about 66 percent by 1960. It has remained high since, but is now declining as inflation prices

households out of homeownership. Still, fully 70 percent of households today live in a single-family home, and exclusively single-family home zones constitute about 70 percent of land area in most American cities—locking land wealth into a single nonproductive use and committing most Americans to automobile use.

Rigidly separated uses require cost-burdened residents to own at least one car in order to reach work, school, medical care and shopping. And cramming large apartment buildings into car-oriented commercial strips has perpetuated negative socio-economic stereotypes, discouraging reinvestment and trapping residents in poverty cycles. Use-separated zoning’s unintended costs to “public health, safety, morals, [and] general welfare” have been high—for households, communities, cities and the environment as a whole.

To what original or future condition would we instead turn? Prewar remnants of a “missing middle” scale between single-family homes and large apartments suggest the way. Duplexes, “mansion apartments,” cottage courts, row houses, live/work units, accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and accessory commercial units (ACUs) did—and do—yield resident owners supplemental income while affording renters private green space in neighborhoods less burdened by concentrated poverty. Recirculating local wealth, these building types once created a gentle gradient of household incomes and sizes within economically and use-mixed neighborhoods. They developed incrementally¹—that is, at a scale that could be financed by ordinary families. And even today these cozier neighborhoods make walking, biking and busing more practical than in postwar suburbs, lowering residents’ carbon footprint and their transportation budget.

Now financial, environmental and social pressures are leading many states and cities to soften single-family home zoning again, freeing households to adapt their property to changing needs without changing ZIP codes. Many jurisdictions—such as Cedar Rapids—now allow Accessory Dwelling Units or even Accessory Commercial Units “by right” in single-family zones, opening these neighborhoods to caregiving, Airbnb’s, home businesses and small-scale rentals—figuratively and literally enriching lives without resorting to taxpayer-funded subsidies.

To facilitate this transition, savvy jurisdictions use a light touch with minimum parking requirements, reducing such properties’ tendency to become “parking lots” as they approach densities that allow walking, biking and busing to replace cars outright.

Other jurisdictions expressly allow cottage courts (or “pocket neighborhoods”), in which 6-12 small dwellings cluster around a shared commons (see photo). These appeal strongly to young couples, single women and seniors, for whom there is no comparable housing product affording this mixture of safety, privacy, community and right-sized affordability.

Architect Ross Chapin, FAIA—who popularized and perfected the pocket neighborhood concept—reports that pocket neighborhoods’ unique cultivation of community has resonated especially during the pandemic, with its stressors and social isolation. Model zoning codes on his website² list essential elements of a pocket neighborhood development, offering shared amenities in exchange for slightly greater



Above: Walkable “missing middle” developments like Prairie Queen in Papillion, Nebraska bridge between single-family and large multifamily scales. Image credit: Omaha Drone Services.

Opposite: Pocket neighborhoods entice residents to pass through a shared commons, strengthening social bonds through frequent chance encounters. Image courtesy of Ross Chapin Architects

density, smaller lots and diverse unit types. Setback, footprint and height constraints ensure that homes remain in scale with one another and surrounding neighborhoods.

Some jurisdictions may find infill opportunities limited; these might instead create higher-density form-based codes for new greenfield developments. This was the approach taken by Papillion, Nebraska (pictured) and by Iowa City, Iowa. The latter’s new form-based code for its South District³, developed with Opticos Design⁴, attempts to create a traditional walkable neighborhood (or “15-minute city”⁵) from scratch. A dense mixture of building types and uses makes walking, biking and busing practical while affording residents a gradient of price points. Design standards transition gradually from house-scaled buildings abutting existing single-family homes neighborhoods to more urban forms at busy thoroughfares. The code illustrates and incentivizes desired “middle” building types in order to lower the learning curve for developers and neighbors.

Form-based codes are also working to transform former “central business districts” (emptied by COVID-accelerated work-from-home trends) into the lively mixed-use centers they once—or perhaps never—were. Here the goal is to rebuild blocks decimated by surface parking lots, to restrain the scale of any single building or use, and to promote especially those that add pedestrians and furnish them reasons to walk. Even more than in suburbs, urban infill underwrites existing amenities and infrastructure through property taxes, ensuring their sustained viability for future generations.⁶

Form-based codes mostly dictate form, leaving choice of use to the market. Right now the strongest market need is to house America’s large and growing fraction of 1- to 3-person households, for whom single-family houses may be ill-suited financially, spatially or socially. Consequently, demand for “middle” housing and urban-infill multifamily development



Above: Successful incremental development at "middle" scales requires designs sensitive to pedestrians' needs. Image courtesy of Ross Chapin Architects

is strong, motivating developers to reinvest in Midwest cities' cores and give young adults and empty nesters access to the lifestyle they want at prices they can afford.

How Can Architects Get Involved?

1. We can study and advocate for zoning codes that allow for the kinds of places that enrich community life—diverse, mixed-use, affordable, incremental, and walkable.
2. We can learn to design places that model the best this idea can offer, rewarding clients and community alike.
3. With help from a supportive community,⁷ we can practice what we preach by developing incrementally in our own

neighborhoods—perhaps by carving out an ADU on our own property, or by rebuilding on the vacant lot down the street. As architect/developer John Anderson teaches: “Find your ‘farm.’” Incremental transformation can start one neighborhood—or even one property—at a time.

Author's note:

This article is intended for general education and does not include all code and design nuances essential for successful infill development. Those interested in learning more may find their way to further resources via the links above, or they may contact the author at: gnordby@shive-hattery.com

References:

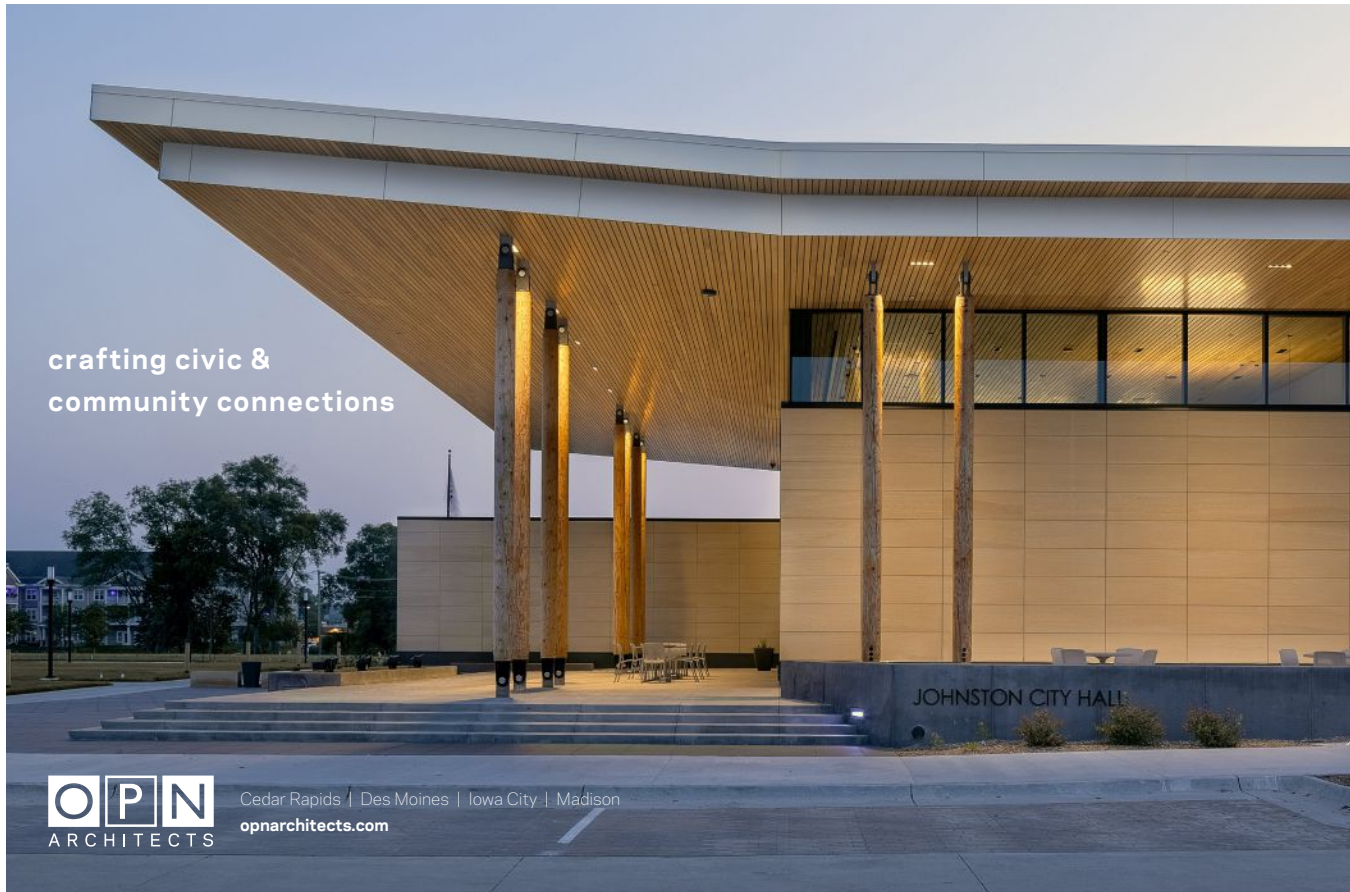
- ¹ <https://www.incrementaldevelopment.org>
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⁴ <https://opticosdesign.com>

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/15-minute_city

⁶ <https://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2021/8/4/the-question-every-city-should-be-asking>

⁷ <https://neighborhood-development.mn.co>



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FROM SHAPING POTS TO SHAPING A PAVILION

Renowned artist and Iowa State alumnus Theaster Gates tapped to design Serpentine Pavilion

WORDS: JUSTIN BURNHAM, ASSOC. AIA IMAGES: THEASTER GATES STUDIO

Serpentine has invited a world-renowned architect to design a summer pavilion in London's Kensington Gardens every year since 2000. The commission's primary stipulation is that the designer has yet to complete a building in England. Roughly half of the architects selected were current or eventual recipients of the Pritzker Prize, architecture's nearest equivalent to a Nobel Prize.

Theaster Gates—an Iowa State University alumnus with degrees in urban planning and ceramics—will lead the 2022 Serpentine Pavilion. He becomes the first artist to singularly lead the pavilion design. Olafur Eliasson collaborated in 2007 and Ai Weiwei collaborated in 2011.

Based in Chicago, Gates is the founder and director of the nonprofit Rebuild Foundation as well as a professor at the University of Chicago. In both pursuits, he uplifts Black objects and cultural artifacts from the past by giving them contemporary social platforms, and he reactivates buildings and communities that others have written off. Such acts have changed the narrative and physical fabric of entire neighborhoods.

"Gates' work is personal and often borrows from the built environment. His father tarred roofs, and later they made a series of paintings together exploring tar as a medium. Gates possesses curiosity, skillful hands, and the know-how to shape intriguing narratives that elevate artifacts to art."

All of this is in addition to having exhibitions at distinguished art museums in cities including Minneapolis, London, and Basel. The Walker Art Center commissioned his first permanent outdoor piece, *Black Vessel for a Saint* (2017), for the public Minneapolis Sculpture Garden. Des Moines Art Center acquired another work, *Vessel #20* (2020), in 2021.

Known for his versatility—as a potter, artist, performer, urban planner, and preservationist—he started as an arts

planner with Chicago Transit Authority. Soon after, he bought his first property on Dorchester Avenue and began to invite people into his artistic world. The house was used for dinners, lectures and workshops. Gates turned to performance art—he broomed the spaces for others to watch—to fund his desire to “trick out” the building.

Ultimately, he reclad and renovated his house. Once transformed, the property became Archive House, its neighbor became Listening House, and



Theaster Gates's Black Chapel concept of the Serpentine Pavilion 2022. Design render, interior view. © 2022 Theaster Gates Studio.

another became Black Cinema House. These works began to challenge the zoning status quo, that a house's use should stay residential.

Gates' work is personal and often borrows from the built environment.

His father tarred roofs, and later they made a series of paintings together exploring tar as a medium. Gates possesses curiosity, skillful hands, and the know-how to shape intriguing narratives that elevate artifacts to art.

For those who wish to travel to the pavilion abroad, consider booking a flight between June to October and check for official dates. We reached out to Gates for this article, but he was unavailable for comment. He was busy shaping our world.

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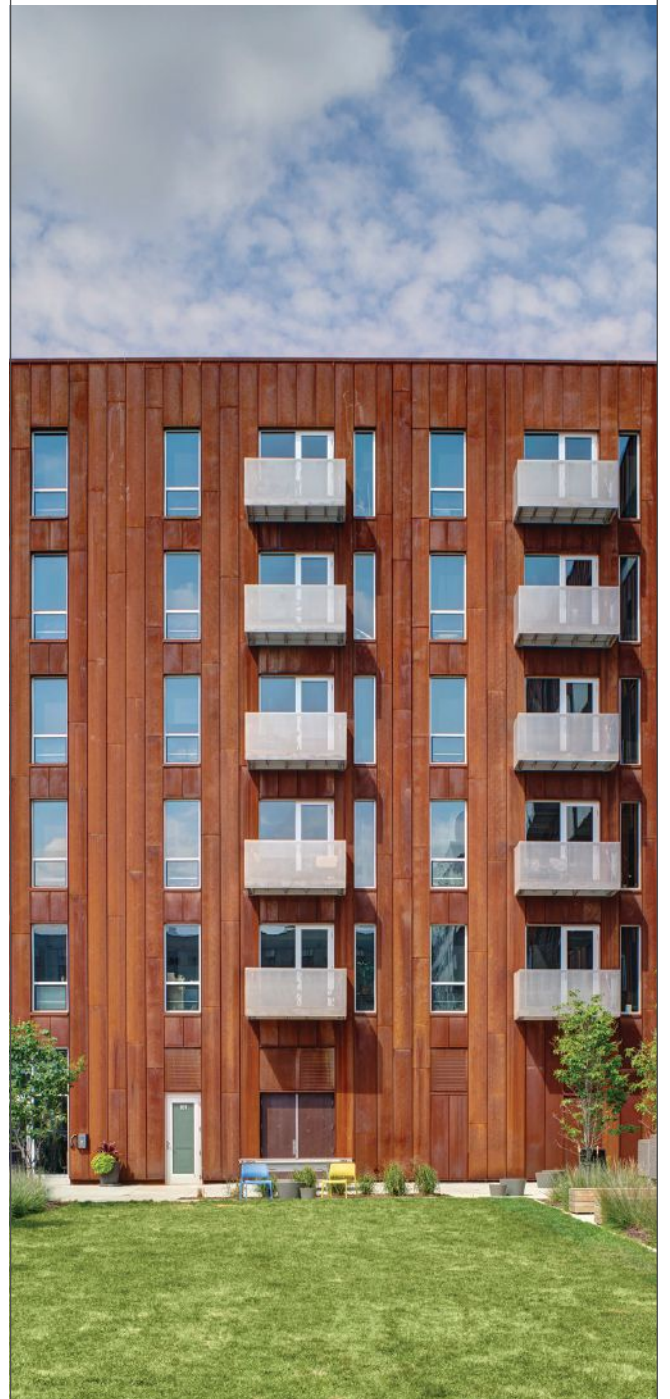
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EAST VILLAGE EASY LIVING



219 E. Grand is a mixed-use six-story building in Des Moines' East Village neighborhood.



INNOVATING URBAN LIVING

WORDS : BREANNA BRUENING

IMAGES : CAMERON CAMPBELL, AIA, INTEGRATED STUDIO

ARCHITECT : NEUMANN MONSON ARCHITECTS

Iowa's architects are well-versed in mid-sized cities' nuanced dynamics and respond to the growing need for urban housing with a variety of mixed-use and multi-family approaches. Logistics of site and local economics infuse more than just the pro forma; when properly tuned to residents' and neighbors' aspirations, these projects can bring a breath of fresh air to their communities. Completed in 2017 and 2018 respectively, 219 E. Grand and 7 S. Linn (7) achieve vibrancy in markedly different ways, though both boast striking exterior design, thoughtful resident-centric interiors, and an emphasis on a sustainable, walkable urban lifestyle.

Set in Iowa's two largest urban centers—219 E. Grand in Des Moines and 7 in Iowa City—the projects both primarily house young professionals. This key demographic contributes to cities' economies and culture when easy access to restaurants, stores, and event centers invites participation with a thriving, desirable, more walkable downtown community. Both buildings are in close proximity to historical sites and emphasize sustainable building and living in their cities. Khalid Khan, Assoc. AIA, principal for Neumann Monson, says the firm took a similar approach to both projects in “how the firm applied the fundamentals of good design” to streamline solutions to the projects' unique challenges. In other words, “the refinement and clarity of the [design plan], maximizing efficiency, and the choice of natural materials used that speaks to durability, beauty and sustainability.”

Both projects posed their own opportunities and challenges—the 219 team collaborated with city representatives to create solutions for resident parking, but they were also able to “finish a block” with the introduction of 219 into the neighborhood. Additionally, the 7 project required creative solutions to the space constraints of the apartment units, and to coexist with historical surroundings. In both instances, Neumann Monson architects

utilized stellar space management and creative thinking to ensure that each project would become a thriving establishment.

“Neumann Monson responded to each project’s unique constraints and opportunities with their typical Midwestern ethos of pragmatism, refinement, and innovation,” says Khan.

219 E. Grand

219 E. Grand is a mixed-use six-story building in Des Moines’ East Village neighborhood. It completes a quarter-block site along the primary arterial of Grand Avenue that was previously a surface parking lot. The development team had recently completed another building, 350 E. Locust on the southeast corner of the same block. 219 is somewhat of a sister building to 350 E. Locust, and this opportunity to “complete the block,” as Khan says, helped them build continuity throughout. The two buildings share similar brick and weathering steel exteriors and add a sense of completeness to the block as they densify the East Village. Khan attributes the overall incremental process to helping the team grow as designers. The block is a clear example of how one project’s lessons can influence the next project’s outcomes.

“Each [building] is designed for a particular site, client, and use, and we use them as learning opportunities and continue to build off projects and let them inform future progress,” he says. “It’s a process of continual refinement.”

Because providing parking for 219’s residents was essential to the project, the design and developer team collaborated with the City of Des Moines to plan a parking facility that would benefit residents and non-residents alike.



Residents at 219 can enjoy the upper-level terrace, game room, fitness center, an entry lounge area, a dog washing room, bicycle parking and the urban garden that lines the building’s alley, a rarity in the neighborhood.

“The 219 project team proposed a development strategy to the City of Des Moines that envisioned taking the existing city surface parking block sandwiched between the 219 project and the City Hall building for city staff and guests of the adjacent hotel, and proposed a master plan for the site that included a parking structure that accommodated the existing users of the site, the residential tenants of the 219 project, and future buildings that could be developed on that block,” says Khan. “Therefore, the 219 project was in part responsible for initiating the development of another city block of surface lot parking and helped enhance the urban density and vibrancy in the East Village.”

The building’s 98 apartments consist of studio, one-bedroom and two-bedroom unit types, including an optional loft configuration for the fifth and sixth floors that feature private terraces to the north. Lower units feature perforated galvanized steel balconies that face streetside, as well as the urban garden on the south. Providing a desirable outdoor garden for the residents was important to further nurture a sense of community. Along with outdoor spaces and roomy units, residents can enjoy communal amenities such as the upper-level terrace, game room, fitness center, an entry lounge area, a dog washing room, bicycle parking and the urban garden that lines the building’s alley, a rarity in the neighborhood.

The goal for 219 E. Grand was to address the need for housing and provide affordable living opportunities for young professionals in an urban setting, says Khan. Project Architect Cheung Chan, AIA, adds that 219 provides modern living spaces in a building that blends modern design into a historic context.

“[The team was] able to think outside the box—specifically regarding the two-story units,” says Chan. “We could have easily gone with typical one-story units and filled up the two floors, and easily ended up with the same number of units. But, it takes that bit of out-of-box thinking to help develop a unique solution. The two-story units ended up being very desirable unit types among the potential tenants.”

7 South Linn

To the east, in Iowa City, Neumann Monson transformed the site of a scorched historical building into a hub of intimate and affordable housing in the city’s lively, but expensive, downtown market with the completion of 7 South Linn. Because 7 was built on the lot of a well-loved historical building that was tragically lost in a fire, project principal Kevin Monson, AIA, says of the building’s unique, reflective exterior, “the concept of the changing tile finishes expresses the sense of the building rising from the ashes of the previous home.”

According to Monson, the goal for the project was simple: to provide small but efficient living and working spaces for single adults in Iowa City, whether they’re graduate students, young professionals, temporary workers, etc. The “micro apartment” layout for units allows dwellers to live with a “small carbon footprint” while taking advantage of all the city has to offer. Its close proximity to city amenities allows residents to walk nearly anywhere they’d need to go.

The small apartment units within 7 were designed to be multi-use and flexible, and the building as a whole promotes environmentally friendly living. The units are augmented by a rooftop patio for tenants’ enjoyment, as well as garden containers for their use in growing their own food. Common laundry facilities are on-site, as well as a movie room and community space. Secure bicycle storage promotes the use of alternative transportation. And to top everything off (literally), a rooftop photovoltaic array supplements power for the building.

Every effort was made to maximize the small lot size, which



7 Linn is situated next door to another historic building from the 1800s. The interior features a "micro apartment" layout for units.

was 45 feet by 95 feet, says Monson. The seven-story structure includes six stories of apartments over a commercial ground floor space. There are a total of 12 one-bedroom units and 24 studio units with Murphy beds. Full-height operable windows are in every unit to provide light-filled, airy living spaces, making each space feel larger than actual size.

On 7's exterior, Neumann Monson utilized ever-changing, naturally weathering zinc shingles in two finishes: one natural and the other slightly pre-weathered. The pre-weathered shingles were used primarily on the bottom levels of the building, and as the eye moves up, the natural, unfinished shingles transition in—a vibrant exterior that draws the eyes upward as the shingles reflect their surroundings. The building is situated next door to another historic building from the 1800s. Building 7 to its extreme width up to the property line would have required the team to cut off part of the neighboring building's eave, as it was projecting over the side of the building and over the property line, but the designers decided that the best way to respect the area's history while still moving forward with 7's modern design was to give their neighbor as much "breathing room" as possible so they could both shine.



"In 219 and 7 Linn, and in all of Neumann Monson's work, it's ultimately about the people who inhabit these buildings."

**-CHEUNG CHAN, AIA, ARCHITECT
FOR NEUMANN MONSON**

"We felt the best way to respect it was to give it as much room as we could," says Kevin Monson, AIA. "Allowing the historic building to breathe, and to show its entire facade and its corner was the best way we could imagine celebrating that we are next to a historic building, yet, we're never going to duplicate it or replicate it."

All in all, these two buildings bring their respective cities a fresh take on what it means to live in an urban Iowa community. And as important as constructing these projects on time and within budget was, the designers' priority was the people for which the buildings would serve, who would in turn help their neighborhoods grow and thrive.

"Both projects [had] similar goals to provide affordable housing in an urban setting, maximizing the opportunities for the tenants to enjoy the community and be a part of it," says Monson. "Adding people to the urban setting who are involved and active in making the city a vibrant place is contagious; it adds readily available customers to the retail, restaurants, and entertainment businesses to make them more successful. It builds on the sense of community and opportunity to live in a flourishing neighborhood."

Fitting into History

WORDS : VALLEN GLOVER

IMAGES : CAMERON CAMPBELL, AIA, INTEGRATED STUDIO

ARCHITECT : ASK STUDIO



Some challenges are too good to pass up, like designing 25 units of market-rate housing for two residential, church-owned lots in an affluent historic district. Add to the list a peace park and a few 100-year-old oak trees.

ASK Studio welcomed this ambitious task of 4000 Ingersoll as an opportunity to work a little closer to home. Project architect Kurtis Wolgast, AIA, acknowledged that “the location of this project is right up the street from our

office. The idea of getting to work on buildings in your own neighborhood is certainly intriguing. Designing the environment around us is definitely a challenge we were looking forward to.”

Overall, it took ASK Studio’s office about three years to get started on construction. “The project started in 2014; that included an extended design process that required collaboration with several entities who all were invested—the city council members, the adjacent church, neighborhood

groups, and even prospective tenants.” Construction started in 2017 and completed in 2019.

With so much to consider on this project, it’s no surprise that it took so much time to break ground. Plymouth Congregational Church is one of the oldest historic churches in the Des Moines area and has been in its current location on Ingersoll Avenue since the mid-1900s. The church owns much of the surrounding properties, including one house that had to be



painstakingly moved 2 miles to Sherman Hill, another historic district. There were also 100-year-old oak trees on the northeast corner of the property that had to be saved and maintained. ASK was able to complete these arduous tasks, leaving the plot rich in history and possibility.

There was a lot to contemplate regarding the structure that would become 4000 Ingersoll. Wolgast said that the community was vocal about wanting the new building to be “complementary and fit into the rest



Opposite: Hundred-year-old oak trees add to the peaceful feeling of the ambitious 4000 Ingersoll project. **Top right:** Kitchen interior. **Bottom right:** The community’s input “started to influence palettes and the idea behind art moderne and trying to emphasize the horizontal aspects of it,” Wolgast says.



of the neighborhood,” making sure it was “part of that fabric.” It would need to be rooted in historical references, but not mimic nearby structures. Wolgast confirms that “it was good to hear the perspectives of all parties involved and any concerns needed to be addressed if this was going to be a successful project, at all scales.” Despite the modern concrete towers only a few blocks away, this new building would merge the feeling of a traditional historic neighborhood with amenities of the modern era.

ASK reached into a deep toolkit of themes and style to address the neighborhood’s interests. The design team’s neighborhood evaluation found that the most recent successful interventions were modern, but discussions with the current neighborhood residents pointed to a style more “moderne” than modern.

Wolgast says that the community pointed to one building in particular that was “an art deco style building that had masonry

elements to it, so we definitely knew we wanted to have that influence [while] providing some mainstream elements.”

With a definitive line of inspiration in place, ASK could begin looking at the specifics of what 4000 Ingersoll would become. The community’s input “started to influence palettes and the idea behind art moderne and trying to emphasize the horizontal aspects of it,” Wolgast says. “I think it also helped bring down the scale of the building to help emphasize that we were fitting in with the neighborhood context.”

The late art deco phase occurred concurrently with art moderne. Both eras emphasized horizontal features, details the design team gladly embraced. Wolgast pointed out that you can see the application of this with the “window fenestration patterns and the lines that we drew across by framing out some of those windows with white brick.” ASK also made use of some custom-made detail for the balconies. Wolgast says that, on all the

6- to 8-foot-deep balconies, ASK applied “horizontal balustrades, versus what you typically see with vertical pickets, to help add to the language that we were creating here.” In addition to the horizontal siding, moderne tropes such as nautical references and extended roof edges grace the building.

Although art deco is a large influence on the design of the structure, Wolgast says that it was “more about forms and material and less about the over-decoratization of certain elements.” The many art deco gestures, such as window groupings with masonry frames and the use of shingles to create a machine-made, repetitive pattern form a cohesive design but, Wolgast continued, “it is very much pared down and not as over-stylized as the art deco form.” The building makes a statement enough with its own unique alchemy of style. 4000 Ingersoll now stands as a distillation of the neighborhood character, an ode to the moderne, and a sign of respect for the past, present and future.



Opposite: The new building merges the feeling of a historic neighborhood with amenities of the modern era. **Top left and right:** Wolgast says that, on all the 6- to 8-foot-deep balconies, ASK applied "horizontal balustrades, versus what you typically see with vertical pickets, to help add to the language that we were creating here." **Bottom:** In addition to the horizontal siding, moderne tropes such as nautical references and extended roof edges grace the building.



Simple, Elegant Downtown Revitalization

Rowat Lofts Encourage Des Moines Market District Living

WORDS : REAGAN COFIELD IMAGES : KELLY CALLEWAERT ARCHITECT : BNIM





The project includes 162 apartment units and “hoteling” units for residents’ guests. **Opposite:** Material selections—such as brick and metal exterior cladding and cedar plan paneling throughout entries, circulation areas, and balconies—complement the surrounding historic warehouse structures.

The Rowat Lofts encourage an emerging center for urban living and a pedestrian corridor within Des Moines’ “Market District.” Introducing 162 apartment units, numerous tenant amenities, and green space, the Rowat Lofts help rebuild and bring renewed purpose to this formerly industrial district of the East Village.

The Rowat Lofts are located on a century-old site of the former Rowat Cut Stone & Marble, a manufacturer that provided stone for some of the city’s most recognizable sites, including the Des Moines Capitol building. In addition, Rowat Lofts are in close proximity to the existing railway and the recently restored 1909 East Des Moines Union Depot, now home to the Des Moines Heritage Center. The design of Rowat Lofts aims to acknowledge the site’s unique historical identity while growing the residential presence in this downtown area.

“The project was really trying to balance a few things,” says Jeff Shaffer, AIA, who managed the project as an associate principal with BNIM. “First was trying to maintain more of an urban-edge condition on the east and west edges of the project. Those edges sat on more major north and south arterial roads while the south edge is up against this pedestrian plaza. So, this project was trying to create a balance of experiences.”

A challenge, Shaffer says, was providing these varied experiences for both residents and the public “while still maintaining a holistic aesthetic and design solution. Each side of the project has its different parameters and constraints” that needed to be addressed harmoniously and with a clear design.

Material selections—such as brick and metal exterior cladding and cedar plan paneling throughout entries, circulation areas, and balconies—complement the surrounding historic warehouse structures. As another nod to the site’s history, the crane derrick that moved large pieces of stone for Rowat Cut Stone & Marble now serves as a sculptural courtyard presence for the lofts and adjacent public plaza. One of the more recognizable features, the 100-year-old crane derrick resembles a large tripod. “The owner wanted to invest in saving that,” says Shaffer. “So, it was disassembled and towards the end of the project was cleaned up, refurbished and reinstalled.”

The design focuses on simplicity and elegance, drawing inspiration from Bauhaus forms, while maintaining long-term durability and cost efficiency. Through this careful balance of materials and contemporary overall design, the Rowat Lofts showcases a holistic composition that is both contextually respectful and a source for downtown’s revitalization.



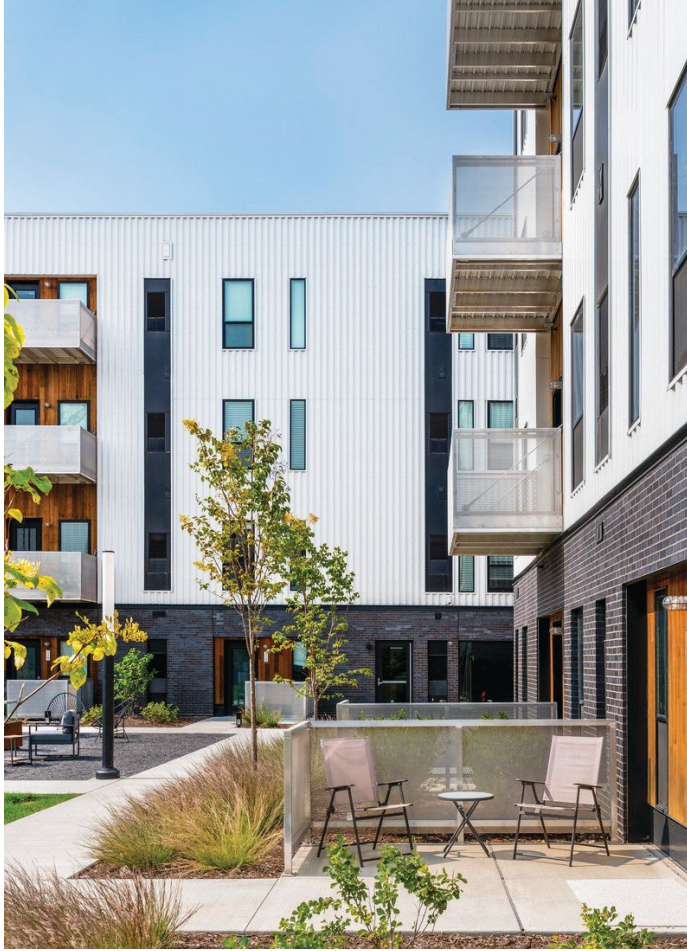
Rowat Lofts introduces a variety of options for residential living, maximizing value and space within its urban setting. Residents can choose from micro, studio, alcove (hybrid), one-bedroom, and two-bedroom apartments to accommodate a range of living and space needs. “Hoteling” units are also available for residents’ guests. Multiple tenant amenities include a social commons area, craft room, conference room, theater, fitness area, bike wash station, pet spa, and demonstration kitchen. Rowat Lofts also establishes connections to nature and access to green space for residents through a courtyard, a terrace, and personal balconies for nearly half of the apartments.

“There’s currently not a lot of green space in downtown Des Moines, so the owner really wanted to provide some open, flexible green space for residents to enjoy,” says Shaffer. “There’s a couple of fire pits, as well as group seating areas with BBQ grills for entertaining and space to throw a frisbee or play games.”

While the Rowat Lofts contains nods to its past while simultaneously living in the present, the project has a bright future as well.

“With this project, we tried to provide something that has a timeless quality to it in terms of aesthetic and function,” says Shaffer. BNIM reimagined existing materials like metal cladding and masonry and modernized them. “We [created] a clean aesthetic and added warmth into some of the main public interfaces with some wood and cedar siding. Our hope is that it’s a project that 20 years from now—or even longer—can still feel relevant and fresh while engaging with the public and residents.”





Opposite, top: The crane derrick that moved large pieces of stone for Rowat Cut Stone & Marble now serves as a sculptural courtyard presence for the lofts and adjacent public plaza. **Opposite, bottom:** Rowat Lofts establishes connections to nature and access to green space for residents through a courtyard, a terrace, and personal balconies for nearly half of the apartments. **Above:** “With this project, we tried to provide something that has a timeless quality to it in terms of aesthetic and function,” says Shaffer. BNIM reimaged existing materials like metal cladding and masonry and modernized them.

Banking on a New Life

WORDS : VALLEN GLOVER IMAGES : CAMERON CAMPBELL, AIA, INTEGRATED STUDIO ARCHITECT: ASK STUDIO





Mid-century modern structures have only recently become eligible for historic renovation. Architects and historians alike face the challenge of defining what this process entails and what it reveals in a finished product. The Brenton Lofts in Davenport, Iowa, offer an endearing preview of how the past and present architectural landscapes can shape the future of restorative projects.

The Brenton was originally a bank built in 1967. The building was completed in the new formalism style, which emerged in the 1960s as a rejection of modernism's more restrictive strains. After the bank discontinued operations, the Davenport Community School District briefly took over the building until the summer of 2018. Over the course of about a year and a half, architects at ASK Studio worked to merge this gridded layout into a residential arrangement that complements the original architecture and maintains its historic character. The project was completed in February 2020 and cost just over \$4 million.

Retrofitting the space left by the former bank's lobby presented a rare challenge. The new dwelling units above required a ten-fold increase of plumbing fixtures, along with ventilation piping and mechanical systems. Kurtis Wolgast, AIA, project architect at ASK Studio, explains that, despite the challenges, ASK was able to "come up with a creative solution to maintain the open volume and route the residential services." The clean, open layout now graces the apartment building as a comfortable common space for residents, while maintaining the space's historic character.

The original office bays of The Brenton were easily adapted to one-bedroom units with minimal plan adjustments for modern services. There are now 38 residences within the building, some of which include dramatically high ceilings and private patios. Many of these unique dwelling units feature floor-to-ceiling windows or a repeating pattern of several narrow openings—an amenity made possible by the fenestration composition of these formerly commercial spaces. However, Brent Schipper, AIA, principal at ASK, thinks that these distinctive spaces and features work because of what the studio didn't do: "We put very



little inside. I think that's what's important and what makes it successful is the minimal insertion because stylistically we didn't do anything; we just tried to be quiet." Even the recently introduced wall elements were kept to a subdued color palette so that the original elements of the structure—terrazzo, aluminum framing and wood doors—could remain the prime focus within this minimalist composition. In this case, the walls can speak for themselves.

Realizing the potential of a building's key elements is only a small portion of the potential challenges that can occur when working with an existing structure such as The Brenton. Wolgast mentions that this project specifically brought up a lot of obstacles in terms of what one can and cannot touch from a historic preservation standpoint. "You try to do as much forensic investigation as you can on the building to understand all the potential issues you might run into," Wolgast says. "With older buildings, you have the potential for asbestos, lead paint, among other things, including how to bring an older, existing building in compliance with modern codes." Fortunately, ASK didn't encounter any large-scale issues on this project.

"It's definitely seen as harder from the historic preservation standpoint. You want to do right by the architecture and give credence to that and make sure what you're doing is complementary to the overall project, and I think we did all right there."

— KURTIS WOLGAST, AIA,
PROJECT ARCHITECT AT ASK STUDIO

Wolgast is quick to mention that unknowns can encourage creative muscles to stretch because "it's a challenge that you want to take on and these are just variables that you have to deal with, fitting all the pieces together." A lot of those pieces are already in place, Wolgast says. "You've got an existing building to work with; you're halfway there and that makes things a little easier."



The original office bays of The Brenton were easily adapted to one-bedroom units with minimal plan adjustments for modern services. There are now 38 residences within the building, some of which include dramatically high ceilings and private patios.



Working off of an existing structure also brings environmental benefits. ASK Studio estimates the embodied energy saved from maintaining the existing building is equivalent to 600 tons. That amount of coal could power a single-family home for more than 400 years.

Breathing new life into an existing, underutilized building is a big positive. “It’s definitely seen as harder from the historic preservation standpoint,” Wolgast comments. “You want to do right by the architecture and give credence to that and make sure what you’re doing is complementary to the overall project, and I think we did all right there.”

Preserving the old bank vault was a special challenge. The ASK team spent a good amount of time pondering the best way to utilize it. The original occupants of Brenton Bank likely never would have imagined the outcome, but the vault eventually found its purpose as a residential game room. As to their thought process, Wolgast mentions that “some of it is dictated by code, what you can and can’t do with a large space that’s a single point of entry,” but they decided upon the game room because “it’s something that could create a unique environment that people would enjoy going in and it’s a talking point for those who live in that space.”

Wolgast, Schipper, and their project team have created a one-of-a-kind environment for The Brenton’s new residents while keeping integral elements of the architectural structure intact. It’s safe to say the Brenton has a new lease on life.



Top: The clean, open layout creates a comfortable common space for residents, while maintaining the space’s historic character. **At right:** The project was completed in February 2020 and cost just over \$4 million.



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project credits

Rowat Lofts

Location: Des Moines, Iowa
Architect: BNIM Architects
Civil Engineer: Synder & Associates
Contractor: Nelson Construction & Development Architects
Landscape Architect: Genus Landscape Architects
M/E/P Engineer: KCL Engineering
Structural Engineer: Raker Rhodes Engineering
Photographer: Kelly Callewaert

219 E. Grand Ave.

Location: Des Moines, Iowa
Architect: Neumann Monson Architects
Contractor: Ryan Companies
Structural Engineer: Raker Rhodes Engineering

Landscape Architect: Genus Landscape Architects
M/E/P Engineer: Modus Engineering
Photographer: Cameron Campbell, AIA, Integrated Studio

7 Linn

Location: Iowa City, Iowa
Architect: Neumann Monson Architects
Civil Engineer: MMS Consultants
Contractor: McComas Lacina Construction
M/E/P Engineer: Modus Engineering
Structural Engineer: Saul Engineering
Photographer: Cameron Campbell, AIA, Integrated Studio

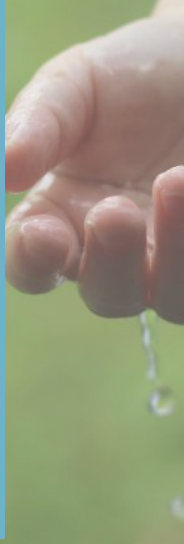
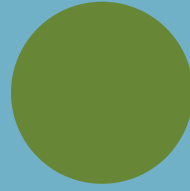
The Brenton

Location: Davenport, Iowa
Architect: ASK Studio
Contractor: Build To Suit
Historic Consultant: AKAY Consulting, Alexa McDowell
Photographer: Cameron Campbell, AIA, Integrated Studio

4000 Ingersoll

Location: Des Moines, Iowa
Architect: ASK Studio
Contractor: Nelson Construction
Engineer: Raker Rhodes Engineering
Photographer: Cameron Campbell, AIA, Integrated Studio





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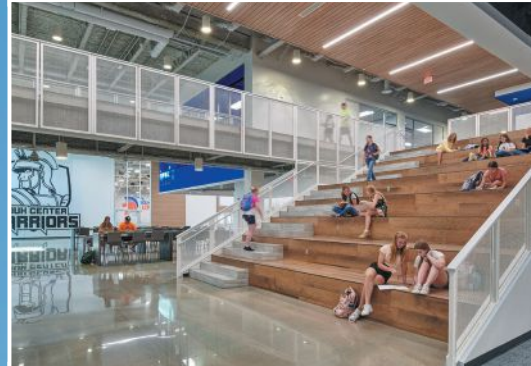
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PRECAST CONCRETE PUTS LEARNING ON DISPLAY

The new 179,000 square foot, two-story Sioux Center High School was designed with future expansions in mind including a performing arts center and additional classrooms. Lee Beukelman, a Sioux Center High School alumnus who also just happened to be the architect on the project, spoke to community members saying “You have done something different and so unique that people around the state and in the tri-state area are going to want to see what Sioux Center has done. They’re going to want to learn about your educational facility, about your curriculum, about your partnerships, about your teachers, your students, your families, your community, your city. It’s because of what you have done that you truly put learning on display in Iowa and the surrounding area.”



Architect: CMBA Architects (Sioux City, IA)
Owner: Sioux Center Community Schools (Sioux Center, IA)
Structural Engineer: Raker Rhodes Engineering (Sioux Falls, SD)
Civil Engineer: DGR (Rock Rapids, IA)
Construction Manager: Carl A. Nelson & Company (Cedar Falls, IA)
General Contractor: Schelling Construction, Inc (Sioux Center, IA)
Precast Concrete Producer: Gage Brothers (Sioux Falls, SD)
Photography Credit: Cameron Campbell