

ia architect

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF AIA IOWA



Near and Far

Small Towns and Rural Landscapes

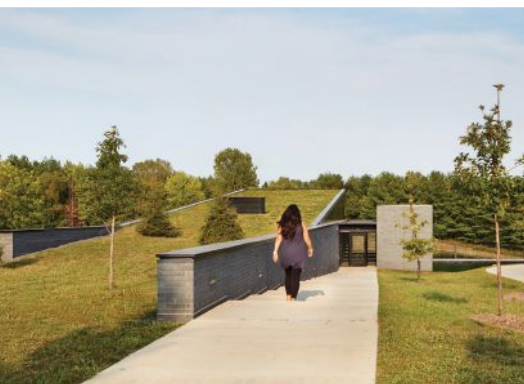


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contents

IOWA ARCHITECT MAGAZINE SUMMER 2022



^ Hotel Maytag, p. 14

Features

- 14 **Hotel Maytag**
A luxurious 1920s entertainment hub turned abandoned relic is revitalized.
- 18 **The Treehuis**
Business and family relaxation mix on a 65-acre former Christmas tree farm.
- 22 **South Main**
Historic town gets a modern design update to former elementary school site.
- 26 **Marion Fire Station No. 1**
Natural experiences support the psychological needs of firefighters.

- 30 **The Roosevelt School Apartments**
A school building in use for 120 years is preserved and adapted into affordable apartments.

Departments

- 10 **Collected**
The 2022 participants of the AIA Iowa Citizen Architect Advocacy Track; Lawrence County Library; six frequently asked questions about architects



ON THE COVER
Roosevelt School Apartments, p. 30

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Editor's letter



Andrew Ballard, AIA
Editor, *Iowa Architect*

Welcome!

Sylvan summers and close-knit communities instill pride, continuity, and a connection to the landscape. They blend humility into one's identity, in an oh-I'm-just-from-a-small-town-you've-probably-never-heard-of-it kind of way. When Iowans tell other Iowans where they're from, they often say, "[town name], Iowa." This reflexive pairing—which I love hearing, every time—anticipates the listener's unfamiliarity and subtly reinforces a shared larger identity.

Small communities are far from insular; they function within a broad network of communication, production, and consumption. Like John Mellencamp says, I got nothing against the big town.

William Cronon perhaps most thoroughly debunked the false dichotomies of urban/rural and nature/society in his seminal *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (1991), which illuminates the Midwest's entangled rural and urban condition by arguing that urban growth in Chicago depended on, and drove, the concurrent growth of regional agriculture and development. Iowa appears in that book more than once.

Our Summer 2022 issue turns its lens to small towns and rural outliers. Reflecting on the previous issue's focus on cities, we examine how the shift toward an increasingly dense and urban demographic impacts the rural condition. Architecture has a unique potential to help activate Main Street and cultivate community within the landscape. Some of this issue's projects revitalize critical social hubs, reinterpreting local identities in the process. Others strike new relationships with nature, a nuanced concept in this agrarian state. Amidst the many thoughtful solutions emerges a theme of architectural humility in the service of deeper experiences and greater missions.

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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
\$67.37 for 3 years (save 10%)

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 The American Institute of Architects, Iowa Chapter

Publisher

Innovative Publishing
10629 Henning Way, Suite 8
Louisville, KY 40241
(844) 423-7272

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Correction: A photo in the Spring 2022 issue's "Perspectives" column was misattributed. Ross Chapin Architects designed and provided the photo for the project featured on page 12, at the top of the article.

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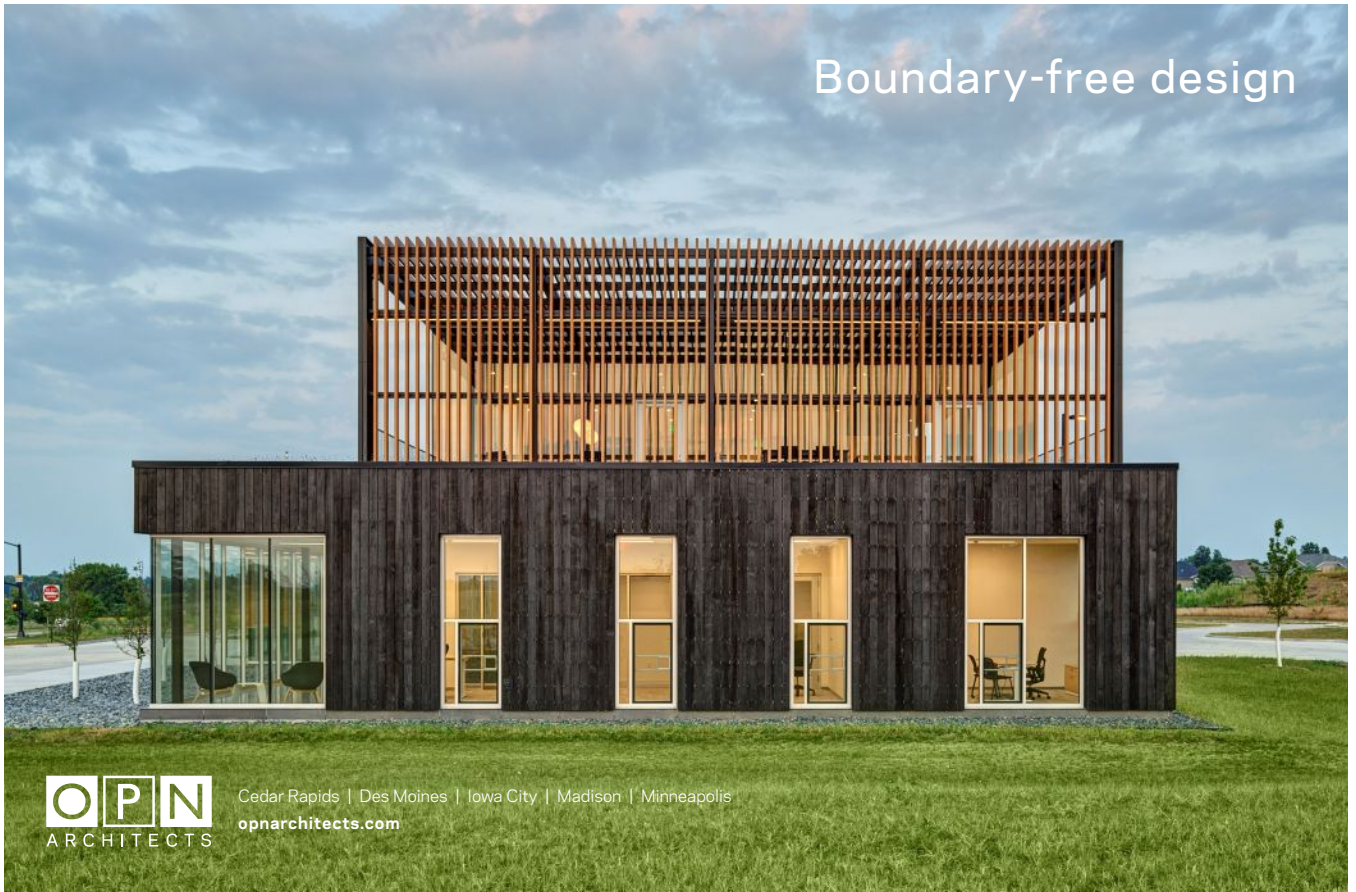
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AIA Iowa Citizen Architect Advocacy Track Participants 2022

The general public's view of architects and the American Institute of Architects, Iowa Chapter (AIA Iowa) is shaped first and foremost by how the individual AIA members interact with their clients and their communities. The AIA Iowa Public Relations Committee first introduced the AIA Iowa Citizen Architect participant (CAP) program in 2008 to recognize members who represent AIA's values to their communities through public service and advocacy. This program is a recognition program bestowed upon all members who meet qualification criteria and is intended to encourage all AIA Iowa members to actively engage in their communities and share in the AIA mission.

The Advocacy Track of the Citizen Architect Program was added to highlight the need for members to advocate for the profession in the legislative setting. CAP participants in the advocacy track are an AIA Iowa member: AIA, AIA-E, FAIA, FAIA-E, Assoc. AIA, Intl. Assoc. AIA, or Student Affiliate; have met with or had a one-on-one conversation with their individual state legislators at least once this year; and have made a monetary donation to their local legislators (or other state elected official of their choice) any time during a given year.

Thank you to all our AIA Iowa Citizen Architect Advocacy Track participants this year; your dedication to the profession helps us strongly advocate for the architecture profession.

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Years of Membership

Long-standing AIA Iowa members recognized for commitment to the Chapter

Every year at the Chapter's annual Spring Conference, the American Institute of Architects, Iowa Chapter (AIA Iowa) recognizes licensed members who have shown their long-standing commitment to the Chapter and the profession through years of continuous membership. Members receive recognition certificates starting at 25 years of membership, followed by 35, and every five years in subsequence. This annual observance is special to AIA Iowa members and inspires others to achieve a similar commitment; 2022 was no different. Chapter leaders were thrilled to recognize 25 long-term members with Years of Membership Certificates and acknowledgement at our virtual Spring Conference on April 7.

Congratulations and thank you to each recipient for their continued membership with the Chapter!

2022 YEARS OF MEMBERSHIP RECIPIENTS:

25 Years

Ron S. Danner, AIA
Peter Goche, AIA
Kevin J. Godwin, AIA
David M. Johanson, AIA
Matthew D. Keller, AIA
Rod P. Lehnertz, AIA
Michael S. Lewis, AIA

35 Years

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Bruce A. Hamous, AIA
Thomas R. Hurd, AIA
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40 Years

Randall S. Cram, AIA
Charles E. Janson, AIA
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45 Years

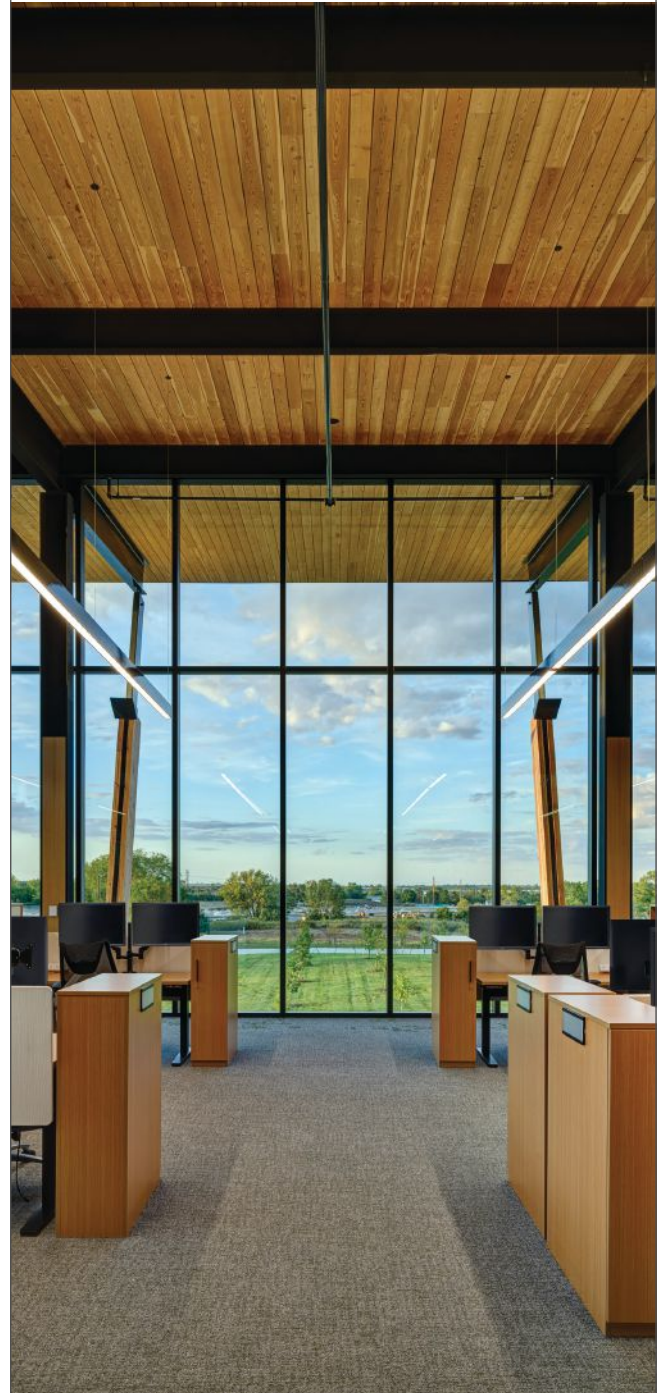
Timothy W. Downing, AIA
Morris E. Mikkelsen, AIA
J. Mark Schmidt, AIA
Douglas R. Sires, AIA

50 Years

Lawrence L. Ericsson, AIA
Edward L. Soenke, AIA
H. Ronald Walker, AIA

55 Years

Wayne J. Snyder, AIA



SMALL TOWN SUCCESS STORY

I collected



Originally built in the 1960s, the Lawrence County Library had undergone several renovations before the team at OPN Architects stepped in.

Lawrence County Library: A Jewel in Appalachia

WORDS : JESSICA SEARS **IMAGES :** ALEX MICHL, ASSOC. AIA **ARCHITECT :** OPN ARCHITECTS

Libraries are more than just a spot to find your next read—they're a vital resource for many communities. A modern and efficient library space can be a lifeline. For Lawrence County, the transformation of their local library has helped the county thrive.

OPN documented Lawrence County Library's success for the American Institute of Architects Film challenge, a competition of three-minute short films that exemplify something extraordinary about a project or a process that speaks about architecture. Rooted in the assertion that design has the power to solve some of the biggest issues facing cities today, the film contest amplifies stories of architecture projects that are transforming communities through design and collaboration. Entries share stories of architects working with civic leaders to design sustainable and/or equitable communities.

OPN Architects centered their documentary on the power of libraries.

"We boiled it down to this idea that the public library is the greatest act of love you can give a community," says Toby Olsen, AIA, OPN Architects. "It was a story about how [you can] create something transformative for a community, create a community hub, and a community focus on a tight budget. And it's



A spacious children's area sports unique lighting fixtures, plenty of seating, and shelves of books.

also a story about rural America. ... How can we tell that story that rural America is still worth fighting for and caring about, and that we're actually more alike than different?"

The team was able to capture these messages (and more) in a mere three minutes. Eventually, they would join a group of 10 finalists and be chosen as the People's Choice winner.

Originally built in the 1960s, the Lawrence County Library had already undergone several renovations before the team at OPN Architects stepped in. Prior to that, the most recent work was completed in 2008.

That renovation ultimately didn't perform as well as the community had hoped, so OPN Architects focused on experience and functionality with Lawrence County in mind. The goal was to not only modernize the library, but to also make sure it would benefit county residents.

A session with the library directors helped give OPN Architects a vision for the finished product. "One of the first goals that the library director gave us was that they wanted this building and the experience in this building to feel radically different than anything else in their county. We want it

to be something that actually transports someone out of Louisa,” says Olsen. This particular area of Kentucky deals with a lot of socioeconomic stressors. Those involved with the library and its renovation wanted the space to become a community haven and a welcoming resource for Louisa residents.

The library’s \$4.5 million budget pales in comparison to comparably transformative projects in urban areas. The team adapted by prioritizing and problem-solving creatively, including phased construction to allow the vital community hub to function continually. While one-half of the building underwent demolition and reconstruction, the other remained in service. Demolition and construction spanned from April 2019 to October 2020. Due to the pandemic, the grand opening ceremony took the form of a “drive-through circus” per social distancing protocol.

Accessibility was a major design focus, ensuring that elderly or disabled patrons can easily enter the library and access its features. An open area with a marble floor greets those who enter. From there, patrons can choose to peruse the shelves, chat in front of a fireplace, reserve a meeting room, or stroll past walls filled with artwork. Areas throughout the library include more secluded spots to sit by a window and read. Technology hubs offer patrons the chance to access computers and the internet. A spacious children’s area sports unique lighting fixtures, plenty of seating, and shelves of books.

Throughout the building, a white, gray, and light blue palette emphasizes openness, calm, and light. The building offers community members a space to just “be,” while also supplying resources to which they might lack access.

“The biggest accomplishment was creating something for this community that meant something, that actually did the things that they wanted to do and also set them up for a future where they can be in greater control of what they want to be and how they want to do it,” says Olsen.

Designing with joy is OPN Architects’ motto, explains Olsen. “These buildings are important buildings. They’re great equalizers, and they’re a great defender of democracy and a great place to have conversation and gather as a community. ... Joy is a big part of why these spaces are so important.”

6 Frequently Asked Questions About Architects

Courtesy of TopicA, where the topic is always architecture.

WORDS: CHARLES HULTSTRAND, AIA

If you haven’t worked with an architect before, these answers should help with your most pressing questions.

1. What services do architects provide?

Architects see the big picture when it comes to your project. They help you explore what appeals to you aesthetically and what you require functionally. They coordinate teams of design, engineering, and construction professionals; they sort through the maze of building codes and zoning requirements; and they provide design leadership so that your project is built the way it was intended.

2. At what point in my project should I involve an architect?

As soon as you decide you want to begin planning your project, you should start looking for an architect. Architects provide important pre-design services including site evaluation and can help you explore options you may not have considered. Involving an architect early in the process can help avoid costly missteps and increase the likelihood of your satisfaction with the project.

3. How do I find the right architect for my project?

It is critical to find an architect who makes you feel comfortable and with whom you can have open communication. It’s also important to find an architect with experience in your project type. AIA Iowa has a directory where you can search that can serve as an important first step in your search; you should also seek recommendations from those you know who’ve worked with an architect previously.

4. Don’t architects add substantial cost to a project?

While it’s true that architects’ fees are a project cost, hiring an architect can actually save you money in many ways. Architects can monitor your budget and negotiate to get the best materials and workmanship at a good price. An architect’s design can reduce energy and maintenance costs and provide an efficient layout so that you don’t overbuild what you really need. They can turn a difficult lot into a successful building site. And they spend time planning and fully developing your ideas to avoid changes once construction is underway.

5. How are architects compensated?

An architect’s compensation can be based on time, a stipulated sum, a percentage of the cost of the work, the project’s square footage, unit cost (based on number of rooms/apartments, etc.), or royalty in which compensation is a share of the profit derived from the project. Time-based compensation and stipulated sums are most common.

6. What’s my role in the design process?

Your architect will depend on you to communicate about your design preferences, functional requirements, and budget. Your timely response to questions and design submissions will help keep the project on track. It is also important for you to raise any concerns you have as the project proceeds so they can be addressed in the earliest stages. Working in partnership with your architect will help achieve a successful outcome for your project.

Want to work with an architect? Visit AIA Iowa’s Firm Directory and find the best match near you.



HOTEL MAYTAG

A Revitalized Community Asset

WORDS : BREANNA BRUENING **IMAGES :** JACOB SHARP, IRIS22 PRODUCTION **ARCHITECT :** RDG PLANNING & DESIGN

Newton's Hotel Maytag has been on a long and dramatic journey since its not-so-humble beginning as a lively entertainment hub in the 1920s. The resilience and collaborative spirit of a strong community—paired with a creative design team—have revived the building, transforming it from an abandoned relic back into a bustling cultural and residential haven.

Designed in 1926 by Chicago architect Henry Raeder for the owner of the Maytag Corporation, Frederick Louis Maytag, Hotel Maytag was innovative and luxurious for its time. According to the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs, the new five-story brick and terra-cotta hotel comprised 100 rooms—each with the luxury of its own radio—and included a café, the Capitol Theatre, a fifth floor of apartments, and a grand

banquet hall accommodating up to 366 diners. Many believe it to be the first building west of the Mississippi River with air conditioning—another rare comfort of the time. With its enviable amenities and elegant design, the Maytag was a pillar of Midwest grace, sophistication, and entertainment.

For 40 years after its construction, the Maytag served as Newton's main event hub for weddings, dances, graduations, and music. The town had local industrial giant Maytag Corporation to thank for its delightful place to eat, relax, and party. The company had become ingrained in civic identity.

Unfortunately, not all good things last. The 1960s ushered in a decades-long trend of frequent management turnover. As the hotel transferred from one pair of hands to the next, it steadily



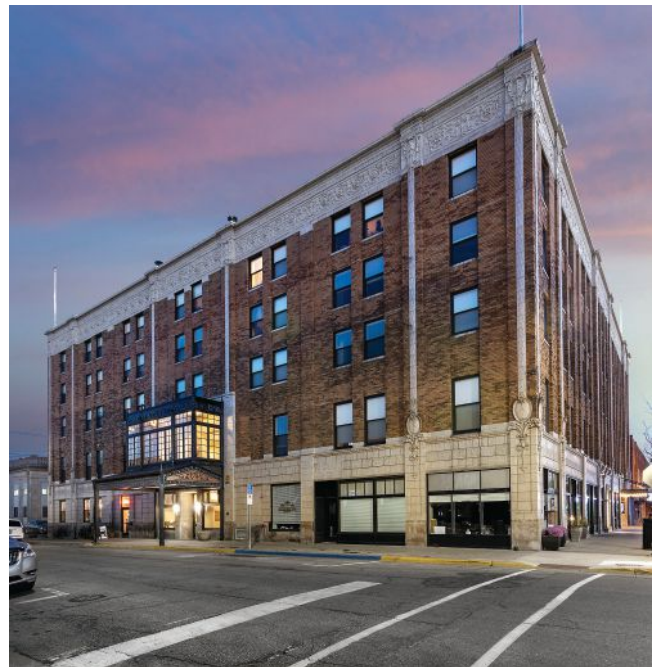
The community is once again utilizing the space for weddings, classes, and gatherings of all kinds. **Opposite:** The renovated building includes 45 new workforce and market-rate apartments, a rehabilitated Capitol Theatre, Midtown Cafe, and several new retail shops.

became underutilized and undervalued. The iconic ballroom closed its doors, trapping countless memories within. Grand spaces were spliced into apartments, offices and commercial spaces. The building still stood, but—bit by bit—it was chipped away and ignored until finally being abandoned for about 30 years. Only the Capitol Theatre remained functioning.

Whirlpool bought out Maytag in 2007 and closed the Newton factory’s doors. Municipal leaders knew that to protect the city’s legacy from the unrelenting sands of time, they would need to put real effort and resources into preserving and uplifting its historical buildings and assets. The idea of renovating and revitalizing the once grand hotel didn’t take hold until 2015, but the wheels began turning when the City of Newton purchased the building for \$412,000 a year after Maytag’s corporate demise.

In 2017, the city sold the property to former Iowa Sen. Jack Hatch. His company, Hatch Development Group, pursued funding opportunities and invested in the building’s programming to ensure future restoration and adaptive reuse would qualify it for historic tax credits.

Once funding was secured—a total of \$16 million, including support from the City of Newton, a \$75,000 challenge grant from Main Street Iowa, state and federal historic preservation tax credits, low-income tax credits, and Hatch’s personal investment—the design and development team devised a plan to repair, replace, and restore every piece of the historic Hotel Maytag.



The hotel was originally designed in 1926 by Chicago architect Henry Raeder for the owner of the Maytag Corporation, Frederick Louis Maytag.



“The reality of these projects is they often take years before any hammers are slung,” says Matt Coen, AIA, senior partner and architect at RDG Planning & Design, the architectural firm tasked with the hotel’s makeover. “It was many years before the actual project got underway and under construction. [It was about] navigating and being patient through that process of pre-development.”

The 81,979-square-foot structure bore the marks of its trials and tribulations. A dropped ceiling capped the once grand ballroom that had been divided into offices, concealing the skylight and intricate plaster relief details above. Rooms throughout the building had deteriorated nearly beyond recognition. Pipes were bursting, rotting, and leaking into the movie theater.

The hotel was a far cry from its glamorous ’20s debut, but the project’s faithful contributors were determined to turn back the clock. They stripped the hotel of its added layers, rediscovered what lay beneath all the plaster and decay, and adapted spaces to fit modern needs while maintaining historical integrity.

“With the help of the Main Street Iowa challenge grants, we were able to retain the ballroom,” says Coen. “When we walked into that space, you would not have known that it was this gracious, beautiful, ornate ballroom—it had been divided into dozens of small offices with really no reference to the past. We were able to peel those layers back and show what was originally there.”

Less visible improvements included replacing building systems, adding life safety features, addressing accessibility needs,



installing low-VOC materials, and working creatively within the limited areas of upper-floor apartments.

“You’ve got to ride that fine line of honoring the past and retaining that historic detail with providing a modern solution that folks are going to want and that’s marketable. Folks are going to want to live in [a place] with all the comforts that we expect today,” Coen says.

After years of preparation, planning, and funding; scraping, peeling, and pulling; and rebuilding, re-creating, and restoring; the Hotel Maytag project reached completion in summer 2019. It



now brings to life 45 new workforce and market-rate apartments, a rehabilitated Capitol Theatre, Midtown Cafe, and several new retail shops. With vision and commitment, the community of Newton not only saved the Hotel Maytag as a foundational historic and iconic building, but turned it back into an attraction that can energize the community through its affordable housing, entertainment, and retail offerings.

The iconic Hotel Maytag Ballroom is up and running, offering a striking, glamorous trip in time. The community is once again utilizing the space for weddings, classes, and gatherings of all kinds. The Capitol Theatre (now the Capitol II Theatre) has reclaimed its original grandeur for Newton moviegoers' viewing pleasure. Though the theater stayed open for much of the building's renovation, it too was warmly received with its reopening in 2018.

"The movie theater is a very important element for the quality of life and amenity for the community, so having that remaining in business and in service as much as we could during construction was key," Coen says.

These core elements of the Hotel Maytag, paired with the new retail additions to the main floor, create an invigorating space for residents and visitors to gather and have fun.

The city's residents aren't the only ones who have received the hotel well. In 2020, the Maytag received two awards for its collection of affordable, modern apartment homes: the Preservation at Its Best Award in the Multi-Family Residential category from Preservation Iowa; and the Charles L. Edson Tax Credit Excellence Award in the Historic Preservation category from the Affordable Housing Tax Credit Coalition.

Coen says his greatest takeaway from the project was its culture of cooperation and community, fueled by the myriad organizations and individuals who made revamping this Newton landmark a reality.

"The collaboration and the collaborative spirit between all the parties that worked on [Hotel Maytag] was extremely high, in terms of the design team, construction team, Hatch Development Group, their investors, the city and all the organizations that helped fund the tax credit program. It was just a really great example of cross-border collaboration to get something like this done," says Coen.



Opposite: The building was abandoned for about 30 years, with only the Capitol Theatre still functioning. **Opposite right:** The apartments make creative use of limited upper-floor space. **Above left:** Exterior signage. **Top right:** The Muse Wine Bar. **Above:** Before the renovations, the ornate ballroom had been divided into dozens of small offices, "with really no reference to the past," Coen says, and so they were able to restore that space.



THE TREEHUIS

A Legacy Revealed

WORDS : MEGHAN KENNEDY IMAGES : COREY GAFFER ARCHITECT : SUBSTANCE

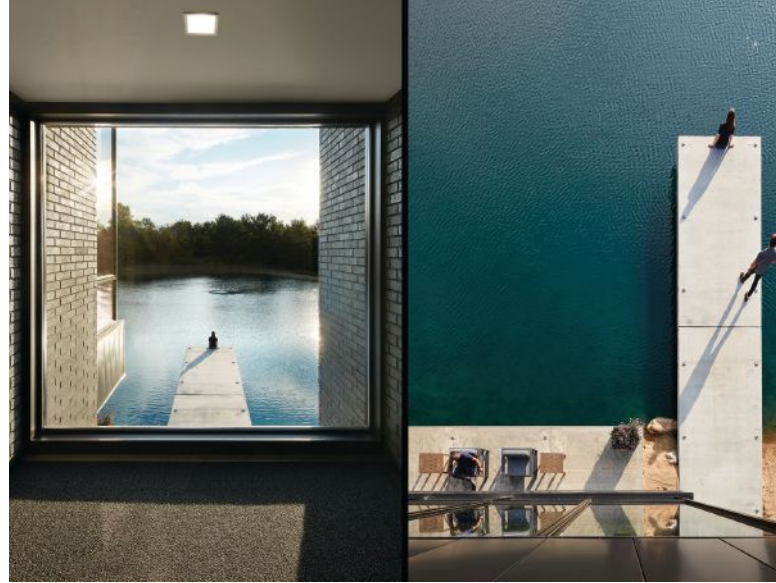
When thinking about the classic Iowan landscape, acres of pine forest do not usually spring to mind. When thinking about striking architecture, the first thought is not a building that almost eschews existence. Yet these scenarios are exactly the case with the Treehuis project in southeast Iowa, led by Substance.

The client, an Iowa-based company now in its fifth generation of family ownership, needed a place to meet, rest, and make memories. The Treehuis was envisioned as a family gathering hub where business and pleasure could mix. The multigenerational family knew they wanted to feature the site, a 65-acre former

Christmas tree farm, as a key component of the project for its beauty and its plentiful recreation opportunities.

The team at Substance, a collaborative design practice in Des Moines, understood how special the site is and saw no reason to separate the building from its bucolic surroundings. Led by Mike Killeen, AIA, project architect, and Paul Mankins, FAIA, principal, of Substance, the team worked with the head of the family to build a vision for the space.

In addition to creating a building that is intimately tied to its natural setting, the client wanted a contemporary space that



Left: The building nestles into the grade of the sloping landscape—rather than sitting on top. **Top:** Treehuis includes exterior decks and a dock. **Above:** Despite there only being windows on one side of the building, the effect invites the outdoors in, creating the sensation of a heavily glazed building.

could accommodate up to 100 members of the growing family. The building needed a large gathering area as well as a less formal area for family members to spend time together and play.

The result is the Treehuis, a truly unique 7,000-square-foot conference center with a large multifunction dining space for up to 100 people, lounge and breakout spaces for adults and children, service spaces, exterior decks, and a dock.

“The challenge was finding the right orientation,” says Killeen. “We wanted the building to sort of reveal itself as you circulate through the site.” The building’s design was developed to maximize its rural setting’s potential. Upon arrival at the site, visitors see a planted, grassy area that slopes westward into a low brick sidewall. Only as one approaches the building on foot does the Treehuis begin to unfold itself to the visitor, largely because the building is nestled into the grade of the sloping landscape—rather than sitting on top—and has an extensive green roof.

The building conceals itself, requiring a procession of discovery. “It uses the site to reveal the building to you,”

says Mankins, “rather than presenting it all at one time ... It’s mysterious in that way.”

One entry path moves visitors down a set of steps along a low masonry wall. The grade begins to fall away and the wall grows to become the building. Entering, the visitor’s eye is drawn to the expansive window overlooking the pond and forest line. An alternative entry path from the parking area crosses a bridge, moves into the building between two masonry masses, and opens onto the communal dining space.

Substance worked with the landscape architecture firm Genus on the site plan for the building and the parking lot. The development enhances the natural setting rather than overpowering it. The Substance team also worked with Genus and the client to carve out a series of hiking trails with the Treehuis as the trailhead, inviting family members to explore the wooded site and surrounding wetland.

“This isn’t just an object plopped out here in the forest,” says Mankins. “It’s a choreographed experience.”

Interiors take advantage of framed views out to the site.



During the day, the result is a series of warm, daylit spaces. In the evening, the building becomes a lantern, drawing the family members back into its embrace. “It looks like a landscape wall and a couple of small masonry buildings from one side. From the other side, it seems like a glowing, all-glass beacon,” says Mankins.

“You can completely imagine, after a long day of meetings, coming back and hanging out by the fire,” continues Mankins. “It kind of welcomes people back at night. And I think that that is pretty powerful.”

Despite there only being windows on one side of the building, the effect invites the outdoors in, creating the sensation of a heavily glazed building. “The view is focused out toward [the pond] and it brings that in,” says Killeen. “And then on the lower level, your foreground is the pond ... feeling like you’re sitting on the water.”

The family wanted the building to have a direct relationship with the pond, so the upper-level business space overlooks the water while the more residential lower level opens onto a patio a mere 16 inches above the waterline, a feat involving intensive water management. The overall effect is that the building, the land, the water, and the trees are all one.

“In the winter ... you’re looking out at this snow-covered pond and snow-covered trees,” says Mankins. “And in the summer it really comes alive.” The landscape is welcomed as part of the interior design of the space. As the land surrounding the Treehuis changes throughout the seasons, the feeling of the building changes along with it.

This land-building connection is enhanced by the material palette, which is highly reduced and helps knit the building into the site. “The brick material that we used provides that texture and richness to both the interior and the exterior,” says Killeen, “because it comes inside and out, and reinforces the idea of being rooted to a place and having a foundational element for the family.”

The brick is an expressive feature of the building, giving the impression that the building is growing out of this particular site, in the same way that the family did. “They originated from this place that they’re all spread out from, but they come back to this place that is rooted there and will always be there for them,” says Killeen.

The Treehuis represents a blending of the outdoors and indoors, the



undeveloped and the developed, and a business and a family. It is a monument to a particular time and place of the land and of this family. “I think really good urban buildings leverage their context to become more than just themselves,” says Mankins. “In this case, I feel like this building leverages the site to become more than it would be, more than just itself.”

As the branches of the family tree and the business continue to grow, the Treehuis will keep them rooted to a piece of land and to each other. The Treehuis is “part of that landscape, part of the very rural landscape,” says Killeen. But it is more than that. “The project is about a family’s legacy, and maintaining a family connection to a place and maintaining family bonds that will endure into the future.”

Top left: Substance worked with the landscape architecture firm Genus on the site plan. **Top right:** The upper-level business space overlooks the water.

Above: Brick inside and outside enhances the connection to nature.

Opposite top: The family wanted the building to have a direct relationship with the pond. **Opposite bottom:** The space invites people to end a day of meetings by gathering around the fire.



"It uses the site to reveal the building to you rather than presenting it all at one time ... It's mysterious in that way."

**-PAUL MANKINS, FAIA,
PRINCIPAL OF SUBSTANCE**

SOUTH MAIN

Historic Charm Modernized

WORDS : VALLEN GLOVER **IMAGES:** BEN EASTER PHOTOGRAPHY **ARCHITECT:** SHYFT COLLECTIVE

The community-rich town of Pella, Iowa, has been well-traveled and cherished ever since it was settled by Dutch immigrants in the late 1800s. In recent years, unfortunately, economic growth has begun to outstrip the housing supply. A local, private partner conceptualized a project reallocating the site of a former school and engaged with Shyft Collective to co-develop the project as design-build partner to ensure the quality and character of what would become South Main.





Zane Muntz, AIA, a founding partner of Shyft Collective, entered the project with a desire to update this historic town through modern design while maintaining its inherent charm.

“One of the things that Pella had been looking to do,” says Muntz, “instead of embracing [their Dutch heritage] holistically in every project, was to expand the community’s feeling in terms of getting new and more modern architectural styles within the town.”

The old Webster Elementary’s blighted site provided the perfect location for South Main’s ground-up project. There was a delicate line to walk between being innovative and grounding this project with the town’s historic nature. Shyft studied other historical precedents of great communities, such as Boston and Chicago, to bring some of those qualities to this neighborhood in a unique way.

Pella, however, is significantly more rural than Boston or Chicago. Muntz’s biggest concern was the number of buyers that would be interested in a project like South Main. “Luckily,” says Muntz, “there were enough of those users who were looking to transition from some of their larger rural family homes into something that was a little bit more modern, dense, and urban.” There was so much interest, in fact, that almost all the properties have been sold, with only one unit in phase two available.

While the initial design called for more of a townhome-centric style, Shyft quickly learned that single-level homes were critical to the local market and pivoted into a variety of selections. The homes are divided up among brownstone homes, stacked flats, condominiums, and townhomes, all catering to residents looking for sophisticated, scaled-down living that offers privacy, safety, and less maintenance while maintaining the sense of community.

“We were able to create a lot of mostly single-level living,” says Muntz, “which is great for people to be able to age in place and convert from the larger, more rural family homes to now something that is all single family, anywhere from 2,000 to 2,500 square feet—and even above—of single-level living.”

Muntz displays a great admiration for Pella, admitting that “there’s a lot of cliches about rural communities, and you’ll find that Pella often lives up to the best ones.” He sees South Main as a building block for the town’s future. “This project was trying to build on where Pella, as a community, is looking to go.” Muntz continues, “This was a nice catalyst for a lot of projects that have kicked off in the area—that a few years ago didn’t seem possible to create—and brought some new styles and new architecture to this community. So, I take a lot of pride in the fact—and hopefully the rest of the community does as well—that this was a very catalytic project.”

South Main intends to free up the housing market, allowing those at different stages of life to find living accommodations that suit their needs. Larger-scale housing inventory for young families looking to move up has been dwindling. This in turn affects the young adult demographic, as affordable single-living options are scarce. Many workers also commute to Pella from Des Moines, where there are more diverse housing options.





“There’s a lot of cliches about rural communities, and you’ll find that Pella often lives up to the best ones.”

– ZANE MUNTZ, AIA, FOUNDING PARTNER OF SHYFT COLLECTIVE

Projects like South Main can help Pella respond constructively, retaining commuters and preserving the strong, close-knit sense of community on which the residents of Pella pride themselves.

Muntz is proud of the confidence his project has instilled in the community’s housing market. “We got hit somewhere in the middle of this with COVID-19, which changed a lot of the dynamics in terms of what people were looking to do, it changed a lot of the pricing mechanisms—both in terms of labor and materials that we were dealing with. That created a lot of uncertainty and need for us to pivot, and we were able to do that relatively successfully.” As the economy re-steadies, Muntz now looks forward to further addressing the middle and workforce type housing needs that fueled the project’s original vision.

South Main provides a looking glass into Pella’s future. Whether in architecture or in life, Muntz believes that “you

always look to turn the disadvantages into advantages,” and he hopes that this project has given Pella the confidence to expand their vision out to all parts of the community. If South Main is any indication, history-rich Pella still has its best years ahead of it.

Opening spread: The homes are divided up among brownstone homes, stacked flats, condominiums, and townhomes. **Above center:** Sophistication and privacy were guiding principles, reflected in the interior living spaces. **Opposite left:** A kitchen in one of the units. **Above right:** The project is one example of the town incorporating more modern architectural styles while maintaining its historic charm.

MARION FIRE STATION NO. 1

Connecting with Nature

WORDS : DREW CLARK IMAGES : CAMERON CAMPBELL, AIA, INTEGRATED STUDIO ARCHITECT OPN ARCHITECTS



Exterior cladding is charred wood, an apropos demonstration of controlled burn that creates a beautiful, naturally protective patina.



Floor-to-ceiling windows create a welcoming environment that invites nature into the space, and wooden ceilings add another natural element.

Fire Station No. 1, Marion's 21,000-square-foot flagship, serves a rapidly growing community in eastern Iowa. The station, completed in 2020, replaces a predecessor last remodeled in 1991 when the city was half its current size. Marion's fire department now boasts around 30 career firefighters and almost as many paid-on-call volunteers. It has grown increasingly visible in the community through public education campaigns.

The visionary behind the department's evolution is Chief Debra Krebill, a 31-year department veteran and chief since 2014. During her tenure she was the only female fire chief of a career fire department in Iowa (though she is quick to point out that women lead several volunteer departments). Chief Krebill retired this April after a venerable career. Fire Station No. 1 captures her legacy and sets the trajectory on which the department will grow with Marion's emerging cityscape.

"Fire stations usually start with the number of apparatus bays," says David Sorg, AIA, principal at OPN Architects. In this case, there are three. The building's clear two-story logic allows first responders to quickly access the bays and their fire trucks from any part of the building.

A decontamination zone, hose tower, and training area occupy the ground floor, connected by one of several of the building's light-filled, public-minded features. "When we laid out the building,

rather than have an internal hallway that disconnects you from ... nature, which would not be very biophilic, we actually pulled the primary circulation on the first floor to the front of the building," Sorg says.

This created an opportunity to craft a linear lobby along the north that showcases a Marion Fire Department gallery wall through welcoming, floor-to-ceiling windows. The building's west side includes administrative offices and a multipurpose community room ready to activate as a storm shelter and emergency operations center when the need arises. On the east facade, translucent glazing allows the training stair to glow iconically at night behind a pond that provides wildlife habitat, retains stormwater, and anchors water-rescue training activities.

A green roof punctuated by trellised terraces extends around the second floor, which hosts nine overnight-shift dorm rooms as well as a fitness room, kitchen and dining area, and common area. The larger, more visible terrace occupies the west, and the smaller, more private deck nestles into the south.

"The arrangement works very well because you want to separate the functions, but at the same time you have to constantly think about reducing response times," Sorg says. "And so, the architecture creates the separations but also creates the most direct path from where the firefighters will be to the apparatus bay."



Firefighting can be as taxing and traumatic as it is rewarding, so natural elements enhance the station's experience before, during, and after emergency calls. "One of the things that the fire station worked hard to do was create different spaces to accommodate different moods or what was best for the firefighter at that time," Sorg says. OPN Architects deployed a simple material palette. Exterior cladding is charred wood, an apropos demonstration of controlled burn that creates a beautiful, naturally protective patina. A horizontal and vertical wooden trellis complements ipe wood decking on the upper terraces, affording shade and privacy. Interior finishes take a similar biophilic tact. Many ceilings are wood. Carpet pattern in the community area suggests moss and rocks; window frit in the conference room resembles an abstraction of trees; and tile in the bathrooms and kitchen is octagonal.

An advanced artificial lighting system helps firefighters align wake-sleep cycles, adjusting color temperature over the course of the day to mimic natural outdoor lighting. "Obviously, they're on call all the time, so the circadian lighting was a very important

part of it," Sorg says. The on-call alarm system, which gradually increases in volume, is less jarring than the classic without sacrificing effectiveness.

The station's parallel attention to efficiency and experience demonstrates a dual respect for the fire department's essential role and for its professionals' psychological needs. Its sensitivity fosters a dynamic connection to a community in flux, as the station's surrounding swaths of greenspace belie the rapidly changing nature of Marion's urban landscape. Flexibility and adaptability will be critical, and it's safe to say Fire Station No. 1 is well-equipped.

Left: A horizontal and vertical wooden trellis complements ipe wood decking on the upper terraces, affording shading and privacy. **Top right:** The interior of the apparatus bay has a wood ceiling and a direct path to where firefighters spend time. **Above:** The building's clear two-story logic allows first responders to quickly access the bays and their fire trucks from any part of the building.

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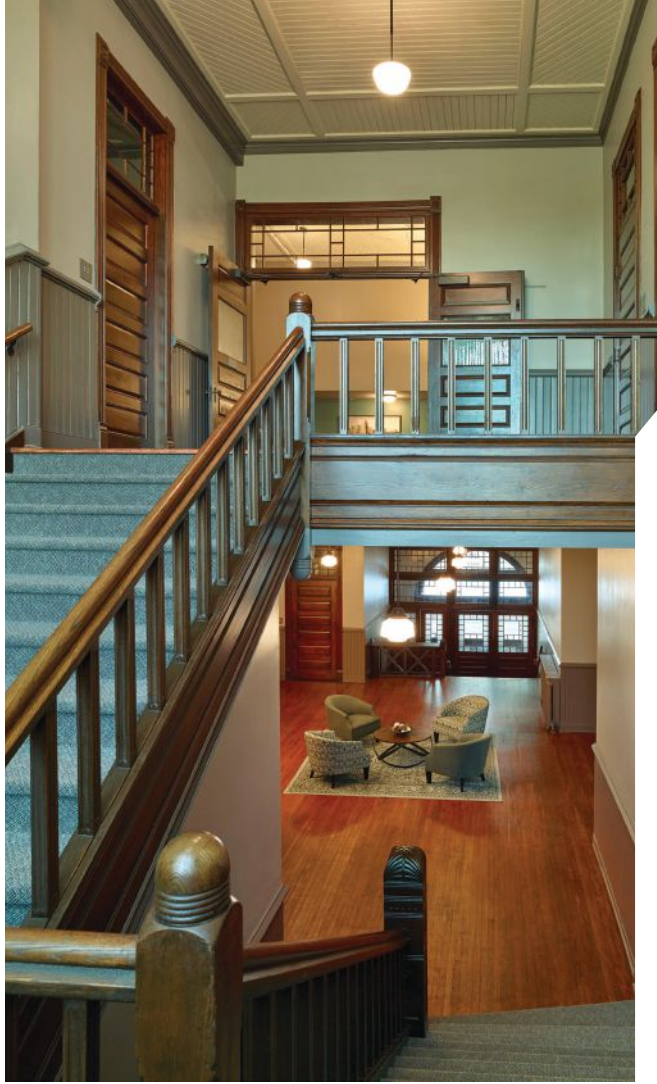
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Above: Common areas were kept as close to the original as possible. **Top:** The second floor utilizes mezzanine-level bedrooms to maximize living areas. **Opposite:** The building was adapted into 16 apartments, without the benefit of existing drawings to assess available space.

THE ROOSEVELT SCHOOL APARTMENTS

WORDS: REAGAN COFIELD **IMAGES:** TIM HURSLEY **ARCHITECT:** ASK STUDIO

The Roosevelt School Apartments in Clinton, Iowa, represent the very best of what can happen when new life is breathed into an old structure. At more than 130 years old, the building has been revitalized to bring much-needed affordable housing to the surrounding neighborhood.

Roosevelt High School—which also housed the city’s public library—was built in 1888. After 120 years of continuous use, the Clinton Community School District deemed it too expensive to maintain, which led to the historic building being used administratively and then left vacant for years.

A \$3 million grant to the City of Clinton from the Iowa Economic Development Authority in 2015 greenlit the project to adapt the structure into apartments. Community Housing Initiatives, a nonprofit affordable housing developer, led the project. Patrick Denahey, AIA, of ASK Studio served as project architect. “Our primary goal was to save the building,” says Patrick. “If it had been left for too much longer, it was at risk of being torn down.”

The charge of the design team was the insertion of 16 apartments within a school containing about 14,000 square feet made up of seven classrooms and a large gathering space, while maintaining the integrity of the existing walls and spaces. Transforming a high school into modern living spaces is not without its challenges. Proper execution requires intensive planning.

“The first challenge was assessing the building and properly documenting so we knew what space we had available,” says Patrick. “There were no existing drawings so there was a lot of time spent measuring and photographing existing spaces and photographing to define how much space we had available to fit the apartments and provide for accessibility.”

All historic walls are maintained. The second floor utilizes mezzanine-level bedrooms to maximize living areas while capitalizing on the beautiful two-story windows. The main hall remains in its original state to pay homage to the building’s past. Patrick recalls that his favorite project



accomplishment was “preserving the spaces and giving people an opportunity to go in and experience these rooms.”

High ceilings are a great bonus of living in an apartment that used to be a school. “I think they’re in the 14-foot range, which is obviously very unique for an apartment,” says Patrick. “When we took over the building, it had a lot of drop ceilings, so as we got into demolition and started opening it up, it was really fun to see those spaces as they originally existed.”

Envisioning the space as it originally existed and keeping that integrity was a key point throughout the project’s progress. “We wanted to keep the common areas as original as we could,” says Patrick. “The Historic Preservation Office has very strict requirements, but we still had to add in things like sprinkler systems, so working carefully with the sprinkler installer to run those lines in a way that minimized the impact on those common spaces was a fun process. It was nice to go in after construction completion and still have those common spaces read as they would have back when it was a new building.”

The space officially reopened as a one- and two-bedroom apartment complex in October 2016.

ASK Studio notes, “The success of the building is measured in what is untouched, the architecture of the repurposing is to be unseen. The changes in fire exiting, improvements for accessibility and inclusion of fire protection are all accomplished in a demure manner. It is not a design product of ego, but rather restraint.”



This design philosophy was rewarded in 2017, when the Roosevelt School Apartments received the Preservation at Its Best award at the Preserve Iowa Summit in Fort Dodge. Patrick was on hand to accept the award along with Sam Erickson, chief executive officer of Community Housing Initiatives, and site manager Mike Brown of Ringland-Johnson Construction. The award symbolizes recognition as “Iowa’s top historic adaptive use restoration for 2017.”

Top: It was important to preserve the integrity of the original building while adding in accessibility features, sprinkler systems, and other “unseen” improvements. **Above:** The apartment complex has one- and two-bedroom units.



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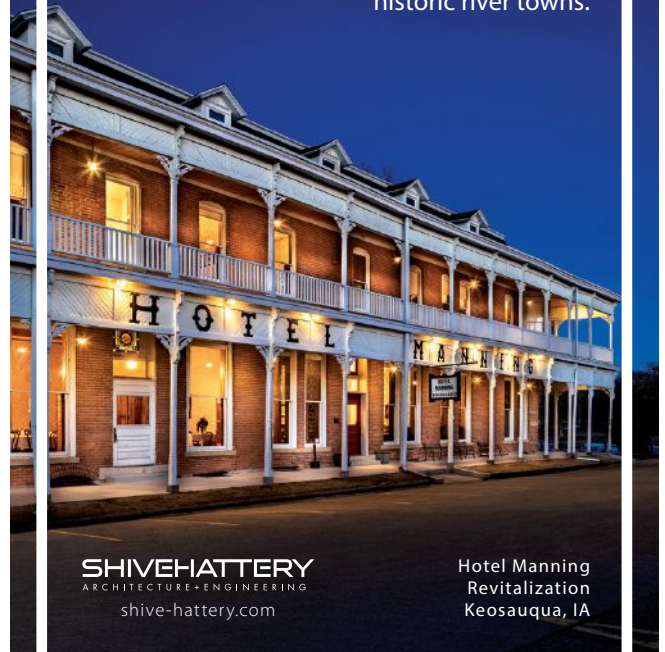
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project credits

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Location: Louisa, Kentucky
Architect: OPN Architects, Inc.
Photographer: Alex Michl, Assoc. AIA

Hotel Maytag

Location: Newton, Iowa
Architect: RDG Planning & Design
Acoustical Consultant: David L. Adams Associates
Contractor: Estes Construction
Developer: Hatch Development Group
Environmental and Demolition Services: Earth Services and Abatement
Structural Engineer: Tometich Engineering, Inc.
Photographer: Jacob Sharp, IRIS22 Production

Treehuis

Architect: Substance
Contractor: Neumann Brothers
Landscape Architect: Genus
M/E/P Engineer: Design Build: MMC with IMEG
Structural Engineer: KPFF
Photographer: Corey Gaffer

South Main

Location: Pella, Iowa
Architect: SHYFT Collective
Construction Manager: SHYFT Collective
Contractor: SHYFT Collective
Engineer: IMEG
Photographer: Ben Easter Photography

Marion Fire Station No. 1

Location: Marion, Iowa
Architect: OPN Architects
Civil Engineer: Hall & Hall Engineering
Contractor: Christner Contracting, Inc.
Foodservice Consultants: Rapids Foodservice Contract & Design
Geotechnical Engineering: Terracon
M/E/P Engineer: Design Engineers
Structural Engineer: M2B Structural Engineers
Photographer: Cameron Campbell, AIA, Integrated Studio

Roosevelt School Apartments

Location: Clinton, Iowa
Architect: ASK Studio
Contractor: Ringland-Johnson Construction
Historic Consultant: AKAY Consulting, Alexa McDowell
Photographer: Tim Hursley



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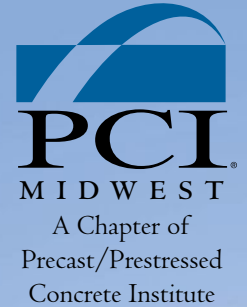
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