

ia architect

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF AIA IOWA



Life Cycle

Stewardship Through Design

THE TREEHOUSE APARTMENTS ON GRAND



THE HISTORIC RENOVATION OF THREE 1923 COURTYARD BUILDINGS

substancearchitecture
DES MOINES IOWA

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design + performance.



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editor's letter



Andrew Ballard, AIA
Editor, Iowa Architect

Welcome!

Several all-caps environmental certification systems exist in the U.S.: LEED, GBI, LBC, WELL, PHIUS, etc. An editor's letter is far too short to spell all these and their worthy compatriots out, but I highly encourage you to explore what each has to offer. Spoiler alert: None packages an easy solution. Charting an ethical path—within certification systems or along best practices—inevitably entails speculation and hard decisions. Notions of “correct” sustainable strategies are often not as objective or absolute as they might seem. Architects are obliged to approach these challenges rationally. We also find in them opportunity for poetry and art.

The buildings in our Fall issue push beyond obligatory solar panels, low-flow fixtures, and LED lighting. They enhance their communities' core values and bring sustainable principles to bear in a compassionate and forward-thinking way. Some are tools for recovery. All are havens of resilience.

Stewardship extends beyond design and planning to encompass operation and management. As our magazine often notes, successful projects are an ongoing team effort. In this issue, building back better takes the coordinated response of agencies, funding sources, stakeholders, and a team of dedicated professionals. Architects step up as team captains—communicating, encouraging, scanning the field, moving off the ball, and finding beauty where there might seem only impasse (I'm also getting a little caught up watching Messi play for Miami, fyi).

Ultimately, golden days turn into golden years. How do architects allow for what might come next?

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 INNOVATIVE
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Correction: In the Summer 2023 issue, Dale McKinney, FAIA,
was listed as AIA and should have been listed as FAIA.

on the boards

Projects
In Progress

Mason City Fire Department

Like any business vying and competing for workforce, the Mason City Fire Department faces a constant challenge of recruiting and retaining staff. The city realized they must invest in more desirable living and working quarters in order to entice new firefighters to join their team. An addition and renovation to the department aims to accommodate more personnel and enhance operations necessary to effectively engage with the public and respond to emergencies.

The design aims to optimize the safety and efficiency of department operations while demonstrating a commitment to staff accommodations and community welfare. The dorm exterior expresses strength and protection. The interior is informed by the concept of a ladder, as expressed down the dormitory's corridor to the apparatus bays. A central skylight offers an abundance of natural light.



Mason City, Iowa
Bergland + Cram Architects



Waverly Shell Rock Elementary Schools

Waverly, Iowa
INVISION

Bond passage in Waverly, Iowa, has allowed INVISION to move forward with the design of two elementary schools on greenfield sites near a recent housing development. The schools share similar plans, mirrored to address site conditions. Each K-4 building is designed to support modern education in a variety of ways with large group, small group, and individual learning spaces. A two-story media center with skylights is located at the heart of the learning community. The student commons and gym are situated to support after-hours community use and allow easy access to outdoor activity areas.

AIA Iowa Allied Members

As a profession, architecture thrives on one key ingredient: collaboration. Throughout each project, our AIA Iowa members are constantly connecting with experts who provide the products, materials, and services that make their buildings possible. AIA Iowa Allied members are our partners through it all. Our profession relies on the lasting relationships we have with product suppliers, contractors, developers, manufacturers, distributors, engineers, landscape architects,

planners, artists, and vendors in fields allied to architecture. No two projects are alike, and our AIA Iowa members value the deep understanding that each Allied member has about their area of expertise. Allied members help architects meet the ultimate project goal of marrying form with function to build an aesthetically pleasing but sustainably produced building.

“The Allied members serve a valuable role within AIA Iowa. We strive to develop

close relationships with all of the AIA architects across the state who ultimately select or influence which products or services are utilized on the projects they work on. Allied members have unique access to the AIA architects, and our knowledge and experience add value to their efforts. We serve as subject matter experts and resources from project inception to post-occupancy,” says AIA Iowa Allied Director Grant Taylor of The Hansen Company.

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IOWA ARCHITECTURAL EXAMINING BOARD (IAEB)

WORDS : GRANT NORDBY, AIA

Architecture became a licensed profession in the U.S. in 1857. As public buildings grew larger and more complex—and major fires and other disasters made the need obvious—individual states began to *require* licensure to practice architecture in the state. Building codes also became common in larger cities;

“The IAEB Member Board is a group of volunteers who also have a passion for—and understanding of—the issues upon which they act and of the importance of non-biased and thoughtful decisions, all of which are grounded for the benefit of all Iowans.”

– JEFFREY ANDERZHON, FAIA

these gradually consolidated into national model codes. Since then, such disasters have been rare and limited in extent.

Today, every state requires buildings above a certain size and complexity to be designed by licensed architects in conformity with adopted building codes. These are enforced by state or local building officials. Licensure of trained, experienced professional architects—with a duty to protect the public’s health, safety, and welfare—provides another layer of protection to a public unfamiliar with those codes and their reasons for being.

Iowa’s Architectural Examining Board (IAEB) was established in 1927 to ensure that *only* licensed architects in good standing may practice architecture in the state. It maintains a list of those licensed to practice and a list of those barred from practicing. Iowa code further makes it a misdemeanor for non-architects to misrepresent themselves as architects, with the possibility of civil penalties.

An architect must meet minimum training qualifications, experience requirements, and pass a multidivision exam in order to become licensed in Iowa. Fraud, incompetence, and other misconduct are grounds for revocation. Iowa was the first state—published in 1978—to require continuing education to remain licensed. Today, most jurisdictions follow Iowa’s lead by requiring continuing education.

Iowa’s architectural registration standards are not maintained in isolation; they are informed by the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB).

NCARB plays an active role in establishing professional registration standards that protect the public in a fair and reasonable way. As new Board member Bethany Jordan, AIA, describes, “Through NCARB, we’re part of a larger network of

In the late 1970s, members of AIA Iowa advocated for the establishment of clear and concise guidelines for contact hours as the principal means of achieving professional continuing education. These guidelines, which are still in use today, have ensured that licensed architects maintain the necessary skills and knowledge required to uphold the safety, health, and welfare of Iowans through architecture. The general law requiring continuing education for all licensed professionals was adopted in 1979 as Chapter 272C of the Iowa Code. The Architectural Examining Board subsequently promulgated detailed requirements found in IAC (Iowa Administrative Code) 193B, Chapter 3. Since the adoption of the law and rules, continuing education has been instrumental in maintaining a high percentage of licensed architects in Iowa as active members of AIA Iowa. This has been made possible by providing architects with a convenient, effective, and economical means of capturing CE hours. As William Dikis, FAIA, noted, “These requirements have had a significant impact on the high level of excellence of architecture in Iowa while also contributing to the continued success of the profession and the health and safety of Iowans.”

Find code and rules at www.legis.iowa.gov/law, which also offers extensive information about state government.

55 licensing jurisdictions across the country. Our rules are based on guidelines vetted by NCARB and reviewed by the State. We don’t work in a silo—we share information, lessons learned, and solutions to shared problems. IAEB seeks to continually improve our policies and rules while protecting the health, safety, and welfare of the public.” A member organization of NCARB, the IAEB both contributes to and draws insights from this larger community of registering organizations.

Jeffrey Anderzhon, FAIA, expresses a sentiment common among Board members, “The Iowa Architectural Examining Board is staffed with extremely capable and dedicated personnel who fully understand the importance of the work they do. The IAEB Member Board is a group of volunteers who also have a passion for—and understanding of—the issues upon which they act and of the importance of non-biased and thoughtful decisions, all of which are grounded for the benefit of all Iowans.”

Jessica Reinert's 20th Anniversary with AIA Iowa

WORDS: NICK LINDSLEY, AIA IMAGE: ALEX MICHL, ASSOC. AIA



Jessica Reinert, Hon. AIA Iowa, has been a dedicated force behind the American Institute of Architects, Iowa Chapter (AIA Iowa), evolution over the last two decades. As the executive director, she remains keenly attuned to the industry's shifts and their impact on the organization's members. She's seen change affect the organization in many different ways—big and small.

“When I first started, everything was done on paper—forms, directories, magazines. But now, we have embraced digitization,” Reinert explains. She focuses on harnessing technology to enhance member services. “We prioritize streamlining our internal processes to ensure we can provide the latest and most relevant programs and educational offerings to our members,” she adds.

One of Reinert's proudest accomplishments as executive director has been fostering diversity within the organization. “Increasing diversity and creating a platform for members from all backgrounds has been a primary goal,” she emphasizes. Simple steps, such as making the Board of Directors' election process more transparent, have had a positive impact. “By increasing accessibility, we can achieve higher member satisfaction and make a larger impact across the state,” Reinert notes. She has also taken measures to diversify the AIA Iowa staff, recognizing the unique perspectives and efficiencies that a diverse team brings. Reinert acknowledges that architectural nonprofit experience is not common, so she actively taps into her team's wide range of skills and talents to drive success.

Reinert's ability to quickly adapt to unfamiliar territory has been instrumental in her leadership journey. Starting as the director of communications and progressing through roles like deputy director to her current position as executive director, she has seamlessly transitioned from a task-oriented mindset to strategic decision-making. “Today, I focus on long-term

strategies to anticipate staffing and member needs of the future. I constantly ask myself how our actions today will create a ripple effect five to 10 years down the road,” Reinert shares.

During her tenure, Reinert has navigated significant challenges, including the Great Recession and the recent pandemic. Understanding the members’ needs has guided her efforts. “Above all, our members needed to feel connected to us, knowing that we are advocating for them and listening to their concerns,” she states. In response to the recession, AIA Iowa implemented special programs to support members transitioning to new career paths, providing continuing education and volunteer opportunities. Similarly, during the pandemic, the chapter served as a vital support system. “We reached out to members [and] conducted extensive research to understand their unique situations, the current market, and ensured they had a sense of community,” Reinert explains.

Reinert envisions a future for AIA Iowa that embraces increasing diversity to tackle tomorrow’s challenges and sustain the profession as well as the workforce. She also encourages AIA Iowa members to advocate for themselves and tell their stories. “Chapter staff advocate for architects and architecture through various programs and initiatives, but we could move the needle even further if our members shared their own unique narratives. By highlighting why hiring an architect matters and showcasing the impact architects have on communities, they can inspire others and demonstrate the remarkable work our members do,” she asserts, humorously adding, “Sometimes, I wish I had a magic wand to make this type of self-advocacy happen.”

Sustaining the volunteer core of the organization is another aspiration for Reinert. She acknowledges that technology has allowed the chapter to remain connected virtually, but retaining volunteers requires providing engaging opportunities and programs aligned with their interests is a must for the long-term success of the organization. “It’s a reciprocal relationship—captivating volunteers with exciting events generates member participation and support,” she emphasizes.

Reinert is thrilled about recent initiatives such as the “Bee an Architect” activity book for kids and a guidebook for school administrators, both aimed at making an impact on children and teachers in the state. She expresses pride in these endeavors and hopes to publish more informative materials that provide accurate information to diverse owner groups, furthering the mission of AIA Iowa.

When reflecting on her appreciation for architecture over the past 20 years, Reinert recalls her limited exposure to the

“I have a bird’s-eye view of the profession, and I feel like a connector, linking people together to help them achieve their aspirations.”

profession during her upbringing on a farm in northwest Iowa. Her passion for the arts served as a bridge to architecture and the creative fields. “I have come to love how personal architecture can be. It can mean something entirely different to each person, much like art,” she muses. Her current passion lies in supporting the unwavering dedication of architects. “During their college years, our members form a tight-knit community, and we assist them in navigating their path to becoming architects. It is rewarding to witness their growth, seeing students I knew from ISU become firm principals or establish their own firms. Supporting their journeys is paramount,” Reinert asserts.

Reinert embodies a servant-leader mentality, viewing her role as one of support and nurturing. She relishes the opportunity to provide assistance during challenging moments or to help individuals achieve their career goals. “I have a bird’s-eye view of the profession, and I feel like a connector, linking people together to help them achieve their aspirations,” she describes her approach.

As two decades of impactful leadership testify, Jessica Reinert has played a pivotal role in driving positive change. Yet, she remains steadfast in sharing the credit with the collective effort of the staff, board members, and committees. “It’s a big group of people; putting the right people in the right places is the key to the success of our volunteers and the organization. I never want anyone to feel they’re not getting the thanks they deserve—it’s a collective group that’s moved things forward, and I don’t want to discount that.” Reinert’s unwavering commitment continues to propel the monumental ship of AIA Iowa forward.



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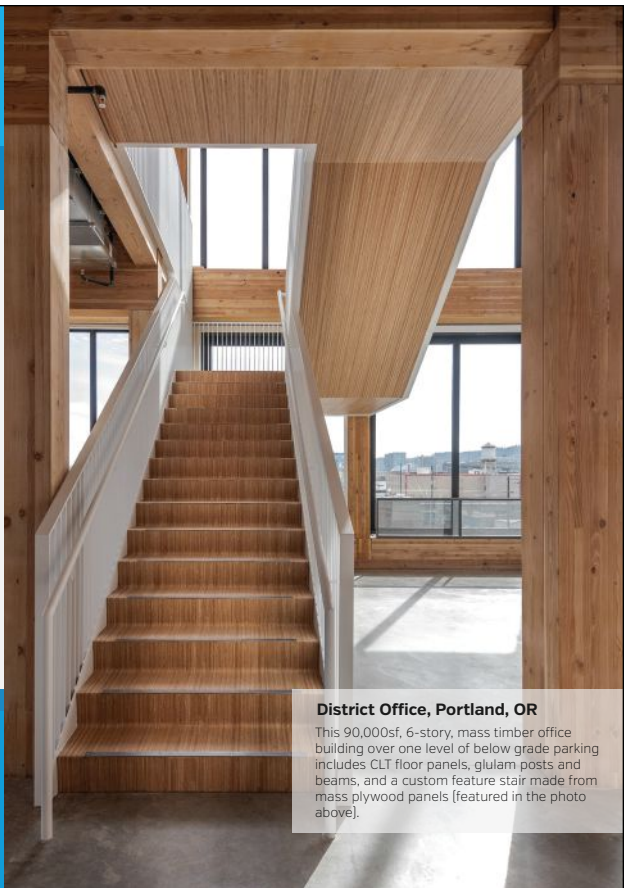
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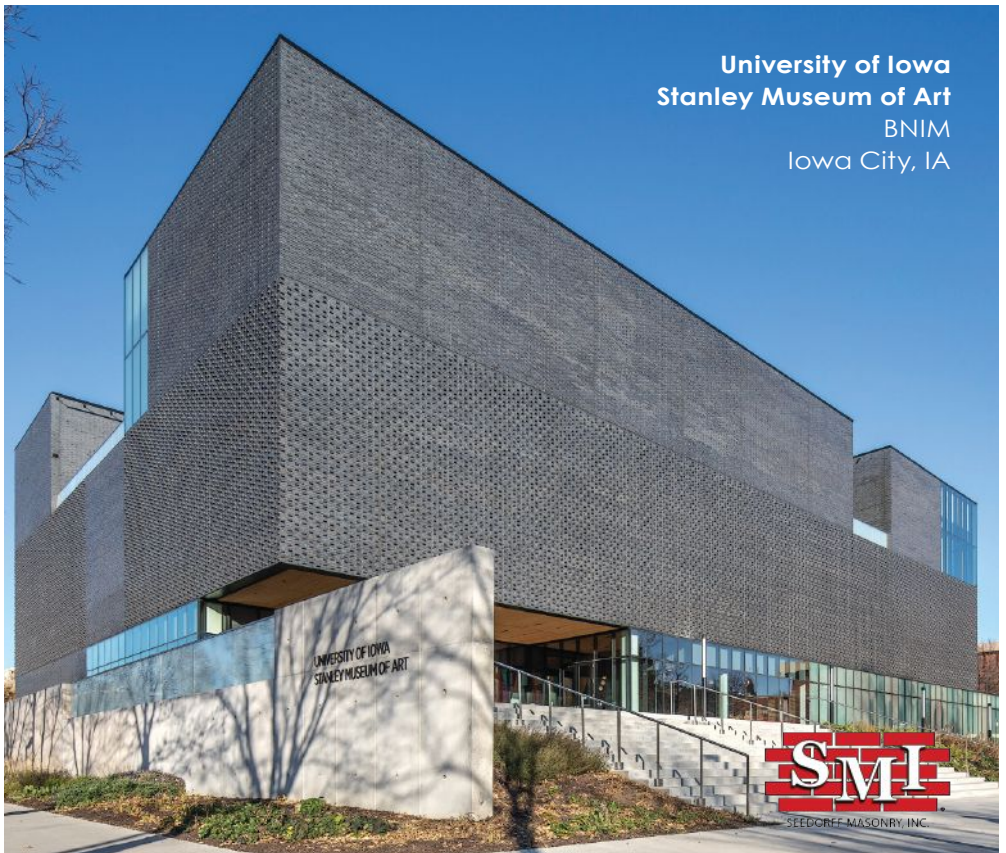
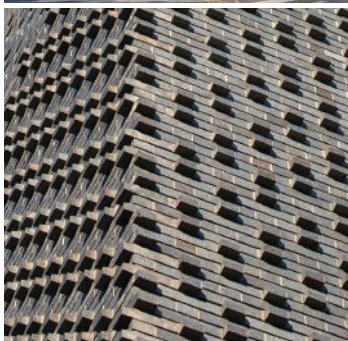
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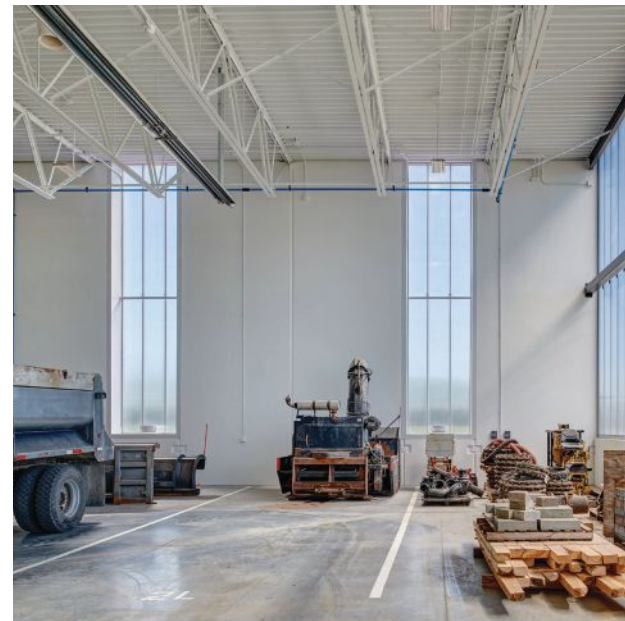
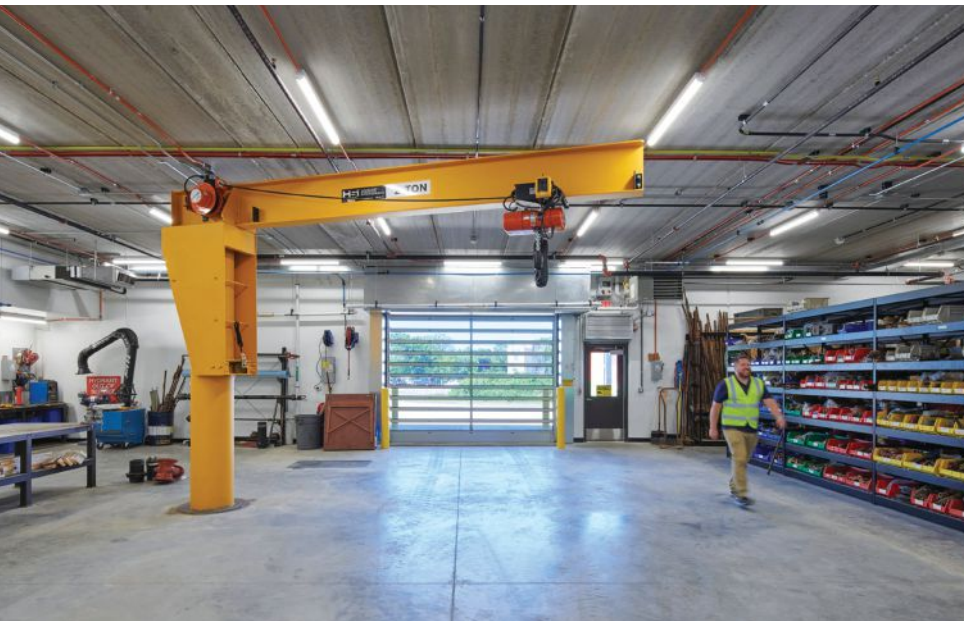
University of Iowa
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Iowa City, IA



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Iowa City Public Works

WORDS : EMILY GIST IMAGES : CAMERON CAMPBELL, AIA, INTEGRATED STUDIO ARCHITECT : NEUMANN MONSON ARCHITECTS





At left: Iowa City Public Works represents the first half of phase one. It serves three of five public works divisions, providing a hub for the city's essential services that addresses vehicle and equipment needs. The program includes shops, large-scale vehicle/equipment storage, wash bays, and mezzanine storage as well as police and fire department storage and fire training facilities.

Nuances of an infrastructural system may often go unnoticed unless they aren't working. As Neumann Monson Architects' Associate Principal Jesse Bulman, AIA, put it, "You don't see the guy fixing the water pipe or the woman making sure the pothole's filled. You see it when it's a problem, but after it's fixed, you just drive right over it."

It takes a lot of care and planning to keep a behind-the-scenes municipal machine like this moving smoothly. Often, public works departments grow slowly, incrementally. Staff often "make do" with reused structures and scattered resources. When an urban area reaches a certain size though, the safety concerns and inefficiencies inherent in that approach just don't pass muster. It's time for officials to take a step back and put a vision in place.

Iowa City's existing facilities were ill-equipped and out of date. For example, the streets and traffic departments were at what used to be a refuse center. The space was built for much smaller vehicles with 8- to 10-foot-wide doors. Modern snowplows require 12 to 14 feet of clearance. "They didn't have enough coverage, so those vehicles were parked out in the cold. Workers had to plug them in or start them early and let them idle to warm up, because you can't just jump in and drive down the road," Bulman recalls.

The wastewater department faced their own issues with overhead lighting from the 1940s and facilities scattered across the city. "Their facility was just a warehouse that they used. It wasn't designed for water distribution," says Bulman. "Now, we have some cover for some of their equipment and all of their modern shops." The new facility houses the essential tools, including a jib crane and wash bays.

Bulman described the old traffic control station as almost comically small. With only one workbench, a single broken signal box could cause a noticeable strain. "Now, they have six stations so they can build multiple cabinets and have one that's sitting there ready to go. When there's a car accident or the motherboard goes down, it allows them to get that street back open quickly," says Bulman.

Iowa City responded by collaborating with Neumann Monson Architects and others on a six-phase project to consolidate essential municipal services into a 14-acre stretch of land south of downtown. The city-owned plot was primarily an equipment and material storage lot. Site priorities drawn from the City's 2015 South District Plan included connecting to the trail system, incorporating native plantings, and establishing an appropriate pedestrian scale along the street. Municipal department staff responded to surveys, participated in charettes, and provided input throughout the process.

Iowa City Public Works represents the first half of phase one. It serves three of five public works divisions, providing a hub for the city's essential services that address vehicle and equipment needs. The program includes shops, large-scale vehicle/equipment





At top: Iowa Public Works has earned multiple awards, including a 2022 AIA National COTE Top Ten Award, a 2020 AIA Central States Design Award, a 2020 AIA Iowa Design Award, and an American Public Works Association award.

storage, wash bays, and mezzanine storage as well as police and fire department storage and fire training facilities.

The building's east side, which borders a well-used bike trail, considers a growing residential neighborhood across the road. Projecting windows—lit dynamically at night—modulate the structure's scale. The facade's civic measure belies its building's rugged program.

“Re-examining the different systems and how to put them together had a big impact. And that helped us also deliver a better product at a lower cost to the client.” Materials are cost-effective, durable, and easily maintained. Solar panels lower energy bills, as does allocating heating and cooling strategically. Offices are fully conditioned but the shop, where garage doors are often open, is not.

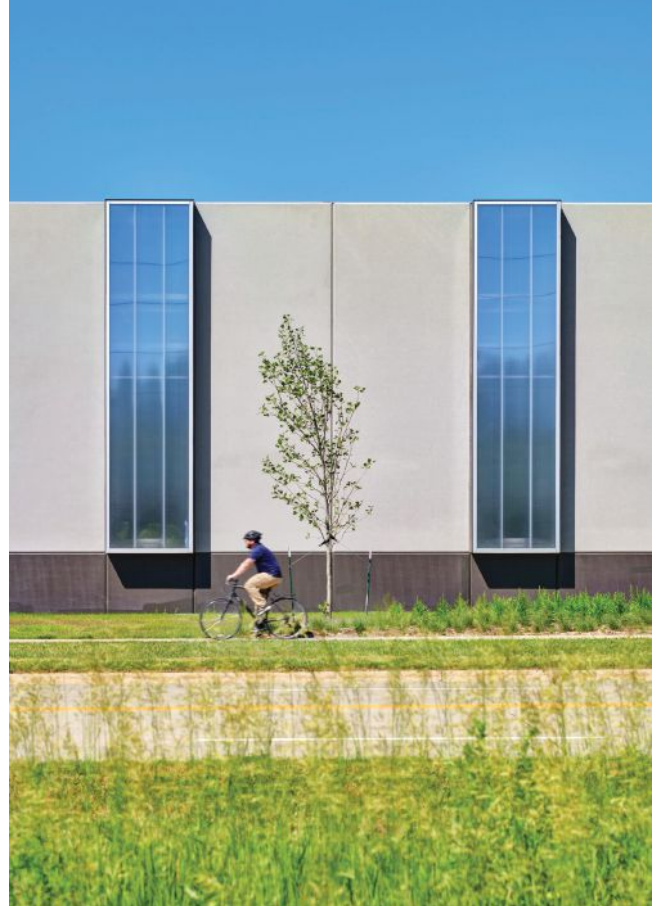
Natural light is abundant. Large windows to the street, 40 skylights, and two translucent polycarbonate walls provide a naturally lit work environment that lends operational efficiencies. A post-occupancy survey recorded that 78 percent of the building's users felt working environment safety was improved, 93 percent felt environmental health was improved, and 86 percent felt efficiency and collaboration was improved.

Water conservation measures include efficient fixtures, reclamation systems, and drainage filters. All new plantings are drought-resistant and un-irrigated. More than 3,400 native and adaptive drought-resistant species now occupy more

than 10,800 square feet along Gilbert Street and McCollister Boulevard, helping to balance the program's extensive internal hardscape requirements. The small vehicle wash bay's reclamation system reduces potable water usage by 65 percent and the fire training area's reclamation system conserves more than 600,000 gallons a year. Uncontaminated site runoff is directed to the river via a filtering retention area.

Neumann Monson Architects took into account potential future expansions and changes. “If we do a better job planning today, it will make it easier to afford and implement later,” Bulman reasons. Fifty-foot structural spans minimize obstructions. Modularity allows precast panels and polycarbonate glazing to be replaced, repaired, and expanded upon quickly and easily. Some offices include easily demountable partition walls to facilitate a planned relocation in a later phase. The roof drainage system's central collection point will facilitate future gray water reuse.

Iowa Public Works has earned multiple awards, including a 2022 AIA National COTE Top Ten Award, a 2020 AIA Central States Design Award, a 2020 AIA Iowa Design Award, and an American Public Works Association Award. For Bulman, the awards signify more than simply an accolade. “When you see architects, clients, and contractors come together and really rethink these projects, it can be a catalyst to help other people see there are other opportunities that they can afford in this project type,” Bulman says. “And that, to me, is worth more than the awards.”



Top left: More than 3,400 native and adaptive drought-resistant species now occupy more than 10,800 square feet along Gilbert Street and McCollister Boulevard. **Top right:** The building's east side, which borders a well-used bike trail, considers a growing residential neighborhood across the road. **At bottom:** Natural light is abundant. Large windows to the street, 40 skylights, and two translucent polycarbonate walls provide a naturally lit work environment that lends operational efficiencies.



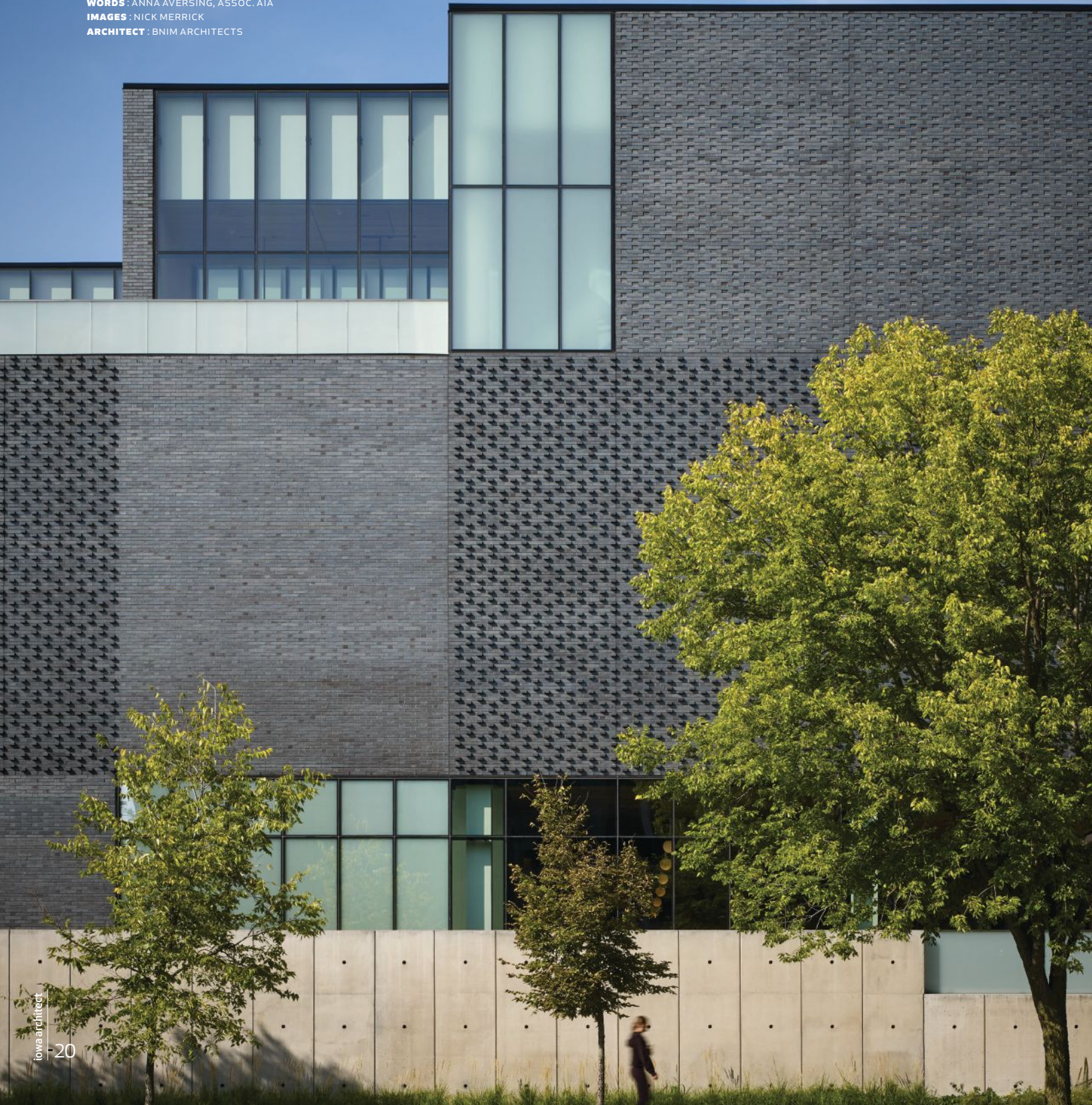
Handled with Care:

A Monumental Move for University of Iowa's Stanley Museum of Art

WORDS : ANNA AVERSING, ASSOC. AIA

IMAGES : NICK MERRICK

ARCHITECT : BNIM ARCHITECTS





Above: Although the new building is also located near the river’s 500-year flood zone, its robust protection strategy will ensure that the museum’s contents stay safe and dry in another catastrophic event. **Opposite:** BNIM worked closely with the university during site selection to make sure the museum’s orientation, accessibility, and visibility would connect the campus and draw in visitors..

When the University of Iowa Stanley Museum of Art opened its doors to the public on August 26, 2022, it welcomed 6,000 visitors to its inaugural exhibition, aptly titled “Homecoming.” Nearly 30,000 people visited the museum by the end of the year, and the crowds have not ceased.

2008’s historic flood devastated Harrison & Abramovitz’ 1969 art museum on the north end of the university’s arts campus, so school officials decided to locate its successor on safer, more visible ground. In the meantime, its vast collections—encompassing modern art, contemporary art, ceramics, drawings, prints, photography, African art, Oceanic art, and indigenous art of the Americas—were placed in storage or loaned to other institutions. Now those resources take their place alongside nearly 100 newly installed artworks in a striking brick volume designed by BNIM Architects’ Des Moines office. The building is a gathering place for students and the public to explore galleries, attend classes, and enjoy public programs.

BNIM worked closely with the university during site selection to make sure the museum’s orientation, accessibility, and visibility would connect the campus and draw in visitors. As a result, Stanley Museum of Art rises comfortably among RDG Planning & Design’s Campus Recreation & Wellness Center

and eccentric (and architecturally overlooked) institutional elders such as SOM’s Lindquist Center and Charles Richardson and Associates’ Main Library extension. The museum’s position on Gibson Square’s west side allows the rest of the block to realize its tranquil potential as a tree-shaded sculpture park crossed by pathways.

The Stanley Museum’s welcoming stance and open connection to the surrounding campus belies the flood-related fortification that BNIM subtly integrated into the design. Although the new building is also located near the river’s 500-year flood zone, its robust protection strategy will ensure that the museum’s contents stay safe and dry in case of another catastrophic event.

BNIM project architect Levi Robb, AIA, notes: “From the outset we viewed this building as a jewelry box for displaying the collection.” Programmatic requirements posed a difficult challenge: How can a building maintain an inviting visibility while shielding delicate art collections from the sun? How do you animate a building that is necessarily opaque?

The solution, Robb explains, was to create “timeless elegance and simple beauty through detailing.” The design centers on the artwork and functionality of its displays. The building achieves an understated elegance through differing brick bonds, a



subtle patterning that clicks as it hits, leaving first-time visitors wondering how a building with no windows somehow *just feels good*. Reflective manganese in the Flemish bond's glaze renders it dark but lustrous. Fields of projecting bricks differentiate levels with artworks from other public spaces.

As visitors enter the space, the brick exterior's gravitas dissolves into a voluminous and light-filled lobby with an exuberant entourage of red Womb Chairs. Clear white ash slats on ceilings and walls connect lobby spaces to the central stair and guide visitors to keep moving through, up, and out.

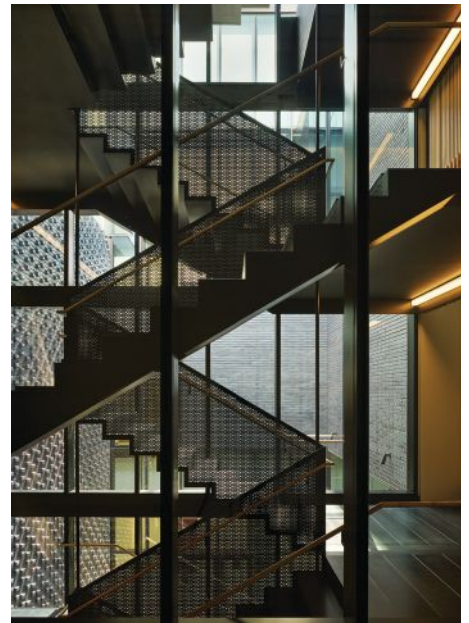
There is no wrong way to navigate the museum's collections. After visiting the welcome desk, visitors embark on a choose-your-own-adventure route through collections that span centuries. A knowledge of fine art is not required to enjoy the Stanley Museum's vast offerings; the self-guided tours and free literature provide ample information about the significance of each piece and include prompts and questions to encourage reflection and discussion.

These guidance features are reinforced by an intuitive circulation strategy: a central open-air courtyard accessible on the ground level and visible from every floor. The resultant light well, adjacent to the main stair, acts as a connection and

orientation device. As visitors finish viewing the collections on the second and third floors, the light well's guiding glow steers them back toward the center and onward.

Nighttime and overcast days reveal the lobby's ability to illuminate externally, lending a floating effect to the dense brick volume above and emphasizing the ground floor's connection to the park. Transparency on the ground floor was very much intentional, a major design move that Museum Director Laura Lessing describes as a metaphor for how the museum functions. "We belong to the community and the campus, and we want to function in partnership with the people in this community," Lessing explains.

BNIM aimed to create spaces that showcase world-class art collections, provide flexibility and functionality, and engage audiences in support of the university's educational mission. The Stanley Museum's self-guided tour promotes the "Iowa Idea," an inclusive approach to liberal arts education that integrates art practice with art history and generates cross-disciplinary creativity. It features work by University of Iowa students, faculty, and alumni that inspired universities across the country. All the museum's collections, exhibits, and programs are free and open to all, allowing the museum to serve as a gathering place for discovery and discussion.



Top left: The level 3 terrace formally connects with the light well, which extends through the building and acts as a wayfinding device for visitors and a tool for controlling light entering the building. The terrace offers views across the river, as well as a place for public and private receptions and opportunities for outdoor exhibitions. **Top right:** As visitors enter the space, the brick exterior's gravitas dissolves into a voluminous and light-filled lobby with an exuberant entourage of red Womb Chairs. **Bottom left:** After visiting the welcome desk, visitors embark on a choose-your-own-adventure route through collections that span centuries. **Bottom right:** As visitors circulate through the galleries and public spaces, the adjacency of the stair and light well work in conjunction to offer moments of visual reprieve with views to the exterior and a clear level of wayfinding throughout the building. **Opposite:** The Stanley Museum's welcoming stance and open connection to the surrounding campus belies the flood-related fortification that BNIM subtly integrated into the design.



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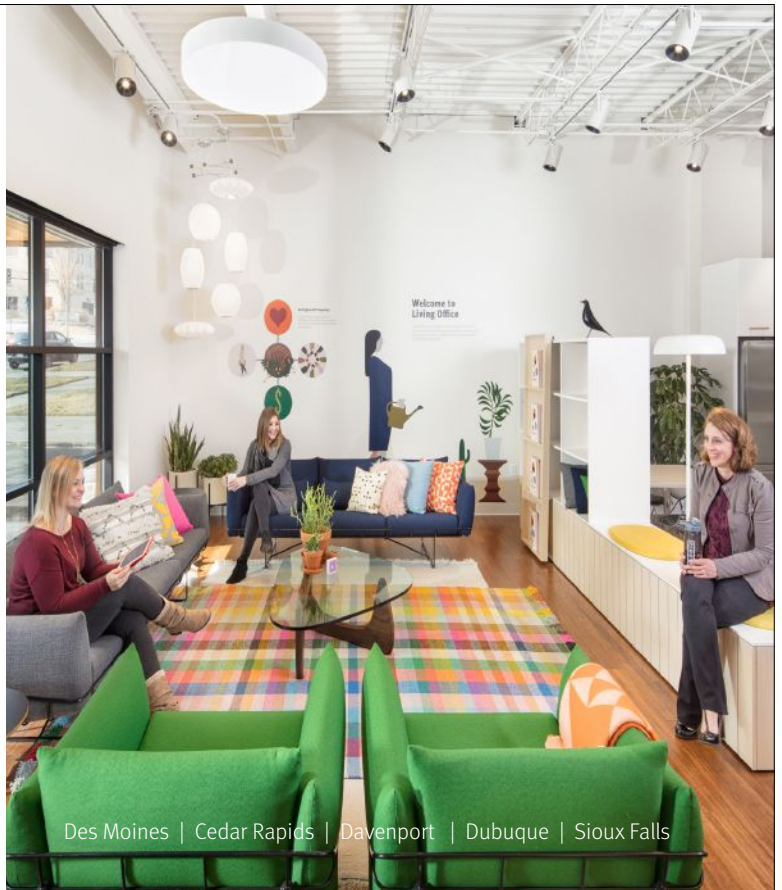
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FLINT PUBLIC LIBRARY

A Community Lifeline

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

Libraries are more than a place to grab the latest read. For small communities and large municipalities, libraries are a vital resource for technology, children's programming, access to books, and much more. For the community of Flint, Michigan, having a building to locate resources during a time of crisis was crucial.



At top: The new atrium space and learning stairs with floating conference room above draw visitors in. **Bottom right:** The original building had three meeting rooms, while the renovation boasts 12. A conference suite takes up residency on the upper level with new study rooms, which have been in "nonstop use." **Bottom left:** A large opening was cut into the floor slab between the first and second floors to create an atrium-like space with a new stairway. **Opposite:** Libraries are more than a place to grab the latest read. For small communities and large municipalities, libraries are a vital resource for technology, children's programming, access to books, and much more.



A lack of clean water in Flint led to a complete collapse of property values. What initially existed as a multiple-branch library system ultimately diminished to only the main location. The community decided that pouring as much funding as possible into this one building would enable it to function as a community lifeline. After a search, OPN Architects was selected to design its renovation. The goal was to modernize and adapt the library to fit Flint’s specific needs.

The team discovered early on that the initial project budget of \$12 million would only give the library a small refresh, with no allowance for infrastructure improvements and mechanical system upgrades. The library’s team was dreaming bigger, explains Toby Olsen, associate principal at OPN Architects. Flint Public Library expanded the scope and budget to \$30 million to transform the facility and maintain library services at a temporary location during construction. The project started from

scratch—Olsen and his team took the building down to its core structure and exterior walls and then replaced everything else, with a complete interior redesign. Community partners passed a \$12 million bond to expand the project, and the remaining funding was filled by community leaders and foundations. The Mott Foundation in Flint was a significant donor to the project.

The original building wasn’t conducive to the public’s needs, says Olsen. “Community rooms were relegated to the lower level, and they were in dire straits. There were very few meeting spaces. This was an opportunity to reimagine all of the space that was in the building. How do we give that back to the people and the community of Flint?” The offices in the original layout were on the second floor, which offered views of the street lawn. Rather than keep offices on that level, OPN decided that community members should have the chance to enjoy the outside scenery. Offices were moved to the lower level, and a

large opening was cut into the floor slab between the first and second floors to create an atrium-like space with a new stairway. Bathrooms originally against exterior walls were also moved and consolidated into the building's core. This lent a more open design that improved lines of sight, security, and wayfinding while also bringing in natural light.

"We wanted to be very sensitive to the mid-century modern aesthetic of the building," Olsen explains. "The Flint Public Library sits on the Flint Cultural Campus, so it's among many mid-century modern buildings." OPN matched infill masonry to the existing exterior brick at the new community terrace and community room areas. For other areas of the building, the team added new insulation and windows, replacing green metal panels with a poly resin panel system that Olsen describes as a "dark-wood wrap."

The usability and expansion of resource rooms are what Olsen says he's most proud of. The original building had three meeting rooms, while the renovation boasts 12. A conference suite takes up residency on the upper level with new study rooms, which have been in "nonstop use." The children's area has also doubled in size. "It's become a hub for the community in many wonderful ways and ways that we couldn't even imagine," Olsen says.

The service model was completely reimagined. Previously, patrons encountered a security guard and large desk at the entry ropes and stanchions, which made for an uninviting mood. Now, the lobby has a kiosk/concierge-type of model with self-service checkouts. The new atrium space with learning stairs draws visitors in.

An expansive community room features large sliding glass doors that connect to the lobby. The library can open the doors or close them off. If left open, the space spills out into a new terrace, perfect for event space. You can even book a wedding, as the library now also contains catering kitchens and other event support areas. Each space lends to the library's flexibility, both as a community and family resource and as an event hub.

Patrons can read outside and enjoy the fresh air, or they can look out at the flowers as they study indoors. The community exceeded their goal of creating a vibrant, inviting space for Flint residents in a time of healing. Libraries can often be taken for granted, yet without them, communities lose a much-needed area to cultivate learning and offer accessibility.

"This is an opportunity to share with the world that Flint isn't this tragic place," says Olsen. "It is still a place where there's community, and they have agency and try to make their world better. Flint is still struggling. There's a lot of real issues that the community is facing. This is a way to kind of say, 'Hey, we're not giving in.'"

At top, opposite: "We wanted to be very sensitive to the mid-century modern aesthetic of the building," Olsen explains. "The Flint Public Library sits on the Flint Cultural Campus, so it's among many mid-century modern buildings," explains Toby Olsen, associate principal at OPN Architects. **At bottom, opposite:** The project pivoted to instead start from scratch—Olsen and his team took the building down to its core structure and exterior walls and then replaced everything else, with a complete interior redesign. **At top:** The community exceeded their goal of creating a vibrant, inviting space for Flint residents in a time of healing. **At bottom:** Adjacent to the building are outdoor program spaces, gardens, terraces, and water filtration systems.



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REGENERATIVE DESIGN

FROM DEVASTATION, A NEW BEGINNING: Ellis Golf Course Clubhouse

WORDS : BREANNA RIVERA IMAGES : CAMERON CAMPBELL, AIA, INTEGRATED STUDIO ARCHITECT : OPN ARCHITECTS





CITY OF CEDAR RAPIDS
ELLIS GOLF COURSE



On August 10, 2020, a powerful derecho with winds up to 140 miles per hour swept through Iowa and caused 700 miles of destruction in a span of 14 hours. Most of the state felt the storm's impact, with more than 400,000 people losing power.

Cedar Rapids was particularly shaken, with more than half its urban tree canopy downed and countless buildings damaged or destroyed. Streets and sidewalks were unrecognizably littered with branches and debris. The storm left the city in shock and devastation, and some residents continued without power for two weeks.

Among Cedar Rapids' affected areas was the historic Ellis Golf Course, a public, city-owned course with affordable rates making golf available to all. It opened with nine holes in 1919 and grew to 18 holes in 1949. A clubhouse was added in the 1960s.

Other golf courses across the city were able to get back to business shortly after the storm's passing, but Ellis' damage was far more significant and would require time, effort, and resources before visitors could walk its greens again. The derecho culled 850 trees and demolished the clubhouse, a touchstone of any Ellis golf outing.

Months later, the city announced plans to build a new clubhouse that could be as useful, inviting, and beautiful. The project was financed mostly through insurance payout, with general funds covering the rest of the \$3.5 million project. A request for proposals resulted in the selection of OPN Architects and a consultant team.

The 6,000-square-foot clubhouse is organized beneath a single-slope roof with a wood deck that warms and softens the clubhouse's otherwise grayscale surfaces while lending indoor-outdoor continuity. Multiple entry points connect to the

concessions, bar area, and pro shop. A generous event hall and porch anchor the building's north. On the west below the high eave and facing the golf course, corrugated panels alternate with floor-to-ceiling glass. "The original clubhouse didn't visually open," says David Sorg, AIA, OPN principal. "So, what we wanted is once you come in from the front door, there's a procession through the clubhouse, and then it immediately opens up to the beautiful views of the over-100-year-old historic Ellis golf course."

The clubhouse's simplicity allows it to act as a backdrop and viewing point for the natural scenery surrounding it. The clubhouse impacts its environment minimally and is on track to be net-zero, according to Sorg. "It wanted to be responsible to the environment at a larger scale as well as its immediate surroundings."

For Sorg and his team, collaborating with the city to help rebuild after the disaster was incredibly fulfilling. "We appreciated the city's commitment to not only sustainability, but design excellence," says Sorg. "They embraced the goal to do something special ... and to be able to design something for our community after a traumatic event like the derecho and then work with the city in that partnership ... was a great, rewarding experience for us."

The new Ellis Golf Course Clubhouse reflects the resilient nature of the city, the strength of its community, and the dedication of those who call Cedar Rapids home. As Sorg notes, "The City of Cedar Rapids, whether it's a flood or a derecho, they don't want to just get back—they want to build back better. And I think this building is a great example of coming back better and stronger."



At top and bottom right: Multiple entry points connect to the concessions, bar area, and pro shop. **Bottom left:** On the west below the high eave and facing the golf course, corrugated panels alternate with floor-to-ceiling glass. **Opposite:** The clubhouse's simplicity allows it to act as a backdrop and viewing point for the natural scenery surrounding it. **Previous page:** The 5,000-square foot clubhouse is organized beneath a single-slope roof with a wood deck that warms and softens the clubhouse's otherwise grayscale surfaces while lending indoor-outdoor continuity.



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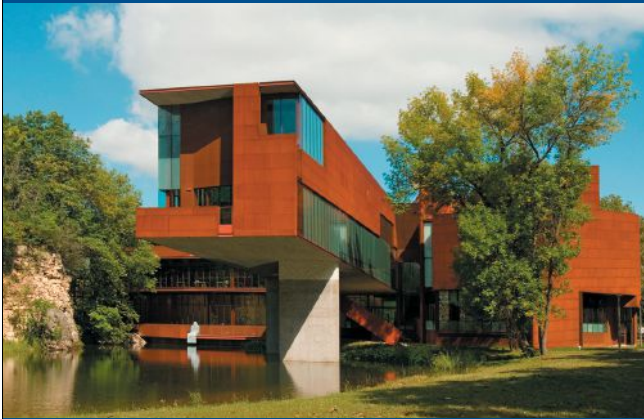
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project credits

Iowa City Public Works

Architect: Neumann Monson Architects

Location: Iowa City, Iowa

Civil Engineer: Snyder

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Landscape Design: Genus

MEP Engineer: Modus

Structural Engineer: Raker Rhodes Engineering

Photographer: Cameron Campbell,
AIA, Integrated Studio

University of Iowa Stanley Museum of Art

Architect: BNIM Architects

Location: Iowa City, Iowa

AV Consultant: Jaffe Holden

Civil Engineer: Shive Hattery

Architecture Engineering

Contractor: Russell Construction

Elevator: Lerch Bates

Envelope: Eckersley O'Callaghan

Furniture: Pigott

Lighting: Renfro Design Group

Masonry: Seedorf Masonry

MEP Engineer: Design Engineers

Museum: Walt Crimm

Security: Architects Security Group

Signage: Environmental Graphic Design

Structural Engineer: Meyer Borgman Johnson

Photographer: Nick Merrick

Flint Public Library

Architect: OPN Architects

Location: Flint, Michigan

Photographer: Alex Michl, Assoc. AIA

Ellis Golf Course Clubhouse

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