

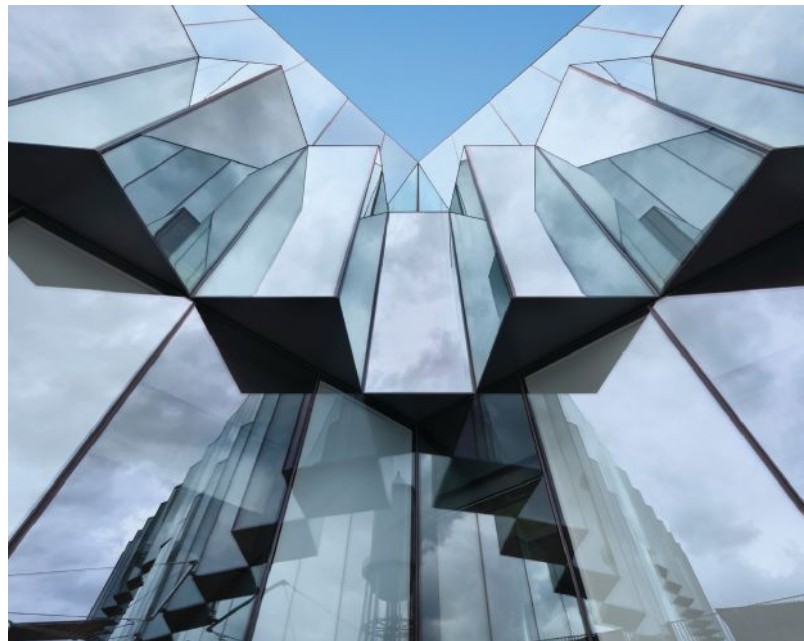
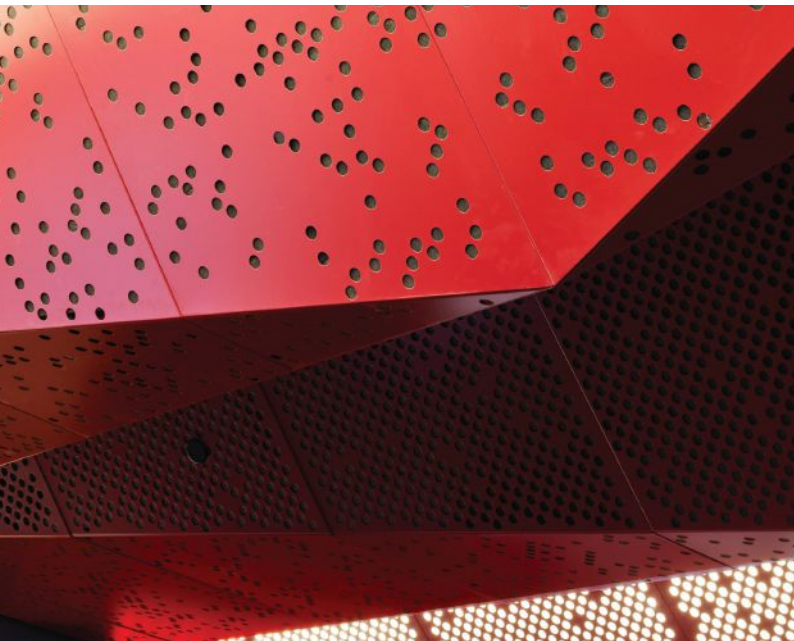
ia architect

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF AIA IOWA



**Moments of
Connection:**
Illuminating
Experience
Through Craft

CRAFTING MOMENTS OF CONNECTION



substancearchitecture
DES MOINES IOWA

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IOWA ARCHITECT MAGAZINE SPRING 2024



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Steel District Reimagines the Office Building

Unveiling the Power of UHPC Precast



Nestled on the banks of the Big Sioux River in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, The Steel District rises proudly, not of steel as its name might suggest, but of a remarkable concrete innovation: Ultra-High Performance Concrete (UHPC). This first-of-its-kind office building marks a turning point in precast construction, showcasing the game-changing potential of this revolutionary material.

With its sleek, slender aesthetic and exceptional strength, UHPC promised a new era in building design. But bringing this futuristic material to life in the real world posed its own challenges. Enter The Steel District. A project driven by ambition and a vision for the future, it dared to break the mold. In place of the steel frame initially conceived, designers embraced UHPC, crafting 69-foot beams that spanned the entire building, eliminating the need for bulky interior columns. This feat of engineering opened up a world of possibilities.

By using UHPC beams, engineers were able to reduce the amount of precast concrete pieces needed, decreasing crane time needed onsite, while designing a cleaner framing system. The specifically designed beams featured openings that accommodated essential ductwork and piping, creating significant height clearances on each floor.

UHPC Unlocks Unprecedented Design Flexibility

Gone are the days of restrictive layouts dictated by columns. The column-free interior of The Steel District empowers tenants to customize their spaces, be it a restaurant with sweeping river views or an office buzzing with adaptable work areas.

"It's a clean slate," explains architect Keith Thompson. "Imagine the possibilities – from dynamic office layouts to future conversions into apartments or other ventures. This building adapts, not the other way around."

But innovation demands a team willing to learn. With limited guidelines for working with UHPC, the precast concrete specialists at Gage Brothers tackled each hurdle head-on. "We had to earn it," says Joe Bunkers, president of Gage Brothers. "But in the process, we developed valuable knowledge that paves the way for future UHPC projects."

And those future projects are eagerly awaited. The success of The Steel District sparks a buzz across the built industry. Architects and engineers envision a skyline reshaped by slender, graceful structures, businesses drawn to the labor savings, and the adaptive potential of UHPC.

"It's a revolution brewing," says Maher Tadros, principal at eConstruct, who played a key role in the project's engineering. "UHPC is no longer just a futuristic dream; it's a reality with endless possibilities."

This revolution won't be solely in aesthetics. UHPC along with traditional precast products boasts superior thermal insulation and fire resistance, improved sound transmission floor to floor, reduced energy consumption, and enhanced safety. Furthermore, UHPC has superior mechanical properties to those of conventional construction materials. Its durability promises longer building lifespans, minimizing environmental impact, and long-term maintenance costs.

The Steel District stands as a testament to the ingenuity and foresight of those who dared to dream bigger. It's not just a building; it's a beacon of innovation, a concrete canvas painted with the potential of UHPC. As developers, building owners, architects, and engineers across the nation take notice, one thing is certain: the future of building is taking shape, one ultra-strong beam at a time.



For more information or to discuss how UHPC can innovate your next project, connect with Gage Brothers by visiting us online: gagebrothers.com



Editor's letter



Grant Nordby, AIA
Editor, Iowa Architect

Welcome!

We each spend most of our lives in and around buildings. That means that spaces designed by architects form the backdrop for many moments of personal significance. People are born, grow up, learn, get married, work, play, and even say goodbye in buildings. How those experiences are supported—through what Aalto called the “art of arranging materials to fulfill human needs”—*matters*.

Through thoughtful design executed with care, architectural details can shelter, comfort, nurture, educate, enable, and empower our most human moments of connection.

Explore with us as we celebrate architectural moments of connection—the little details that connect us with ourselves, with one another, and with our environment.

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 INNOVATIVE PUBLISHING

Iowa State University Students Attend NOMA Conference

WORDS: REAGAN DIAMOND

Each year, the National Organization of Minority Architects (NOMA) hosts a conference to build relationships between architects and students, celebrate member achievements, and provide engaging opportunities to learn and grow through seminars and tours. The 2023 NOMA national conference was held in Portland, Oregon, and was themed as “Building Bridges Towards Just and Joyful Futures.”

American Institute of Architects, Iowa Chapter (AIA Iowa), annually sponsors a group of Iowa State University students to attend the NOMA conference. Timothy Zhang, a fifth-year architecture student at Iowa State, was one of the students who attended this year’s conference. “This year’s conference was a really great experience,” says Zhang. “There was such high energy and engagement, and it’s really cool to see how all these architects and designers are so invested in creating a better, more just and equitable future related to the built environment.”

According to NOMA’s conference wrap-up, more than 1,550 NOMA members, allies, and students registered for the sold-out conference—making 2023 the largest conference yet, with representation from 38 states, one United States territory, and four countries. “We got to reconnect with a lot of alumni, which was great,” says Zhang. “We also met professionals. It was really encouraging seeing how all of these people are invested in the growth of students because NOMA itself is a professional organization, but they have so much commitment to developing students and letting us see

“AIA Iowa has been very supportive over the past few years that I’ve been in NOMAS, so thank you to them for supporting our chapter. Because of their support, that has helped us ensure that experiences like attending the NOMA conference are accessible to us, especially as students [for whom] financial feasibility is really important.”

— TIMOTHY ZHANG, STUDENT, IOWA STATE

what it might be like in the professional world. It was really cool to be in a space where everyone shared a collective goal of trying to be more inclusive and empathetic and finding more equitable ways of designing.”

The five-day conference featured more than 50 educational sessions; eight tours throughout Portland, including the Portland Japanese Garden, Nike Worldwide Headquarters, Meyer Memorial Trust Headquarters, and PAE Living Building; and networking events. “I’ve had the opportunity to go to the conference twice now,” says Zhang. “Each time I go, I feel like I’ve learned a lot. There [are] so many learning opportunities built into the programming, from regular conference events to site visits. We got to go to the Japanese Garden and walk around and see projects. Hearing from speakers and other like-minded students who are doing similar things was cool to bring back [that information] and see that there are other people doing this across the country.”

The Iowa State University chapter of NOMAS (National Organization

of Minority Architecture Students) provides minority students with a space to support each other and develop both professionally and academically. “We host different events like professional development workshops, guest speakers, professional panels, and social activities,” says Zhang. “Now that a lot of things are online, we are able to host Q&As with companies from around the world and graduate school virtual visits and also things to de-stress like movie nights.”

AIA Iowa is proud to sponsor these students each year and is committed to growing the field of architecture through investing in its future professionals. “AIA Iowa has been very supportive over the past few years that I’ve been in NOMAS, so thank you to them for supporting our chapter,” says Zhang. “Because of their support, that has helped us ensure that experiences like attending the NOMA conference are accessible to us, especially as students [for whom] financial feasibility is really important. Our goal is to expand on the learning and energy that we create through their support.”

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A FINELY CRAFTED EXPERIENCE

Celebrating Dedication to Community Through the Citizen Architect Program

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

WORDS : DREW CLARK



JENNA WIEGAND, AIA

Since its inception in 2008, the American Institute of Architects, Iowa Chapter's (AIA Iowa), Citizen Architect Program recognizes AIA Iowa members

who represent AIA's values in their communities through acts of public service. Eligible participants include any AIA Iowa member who serves as an appointed or elected member of a government committee, council, or body at the local, county, regional, or state level, or who serves as a volunteer for a nonprofit organization that seeks to benefit people in need, their community, or the state—all while advocating for AIA Iowa's core principles of quality design, sustainability, or livable communities.

One of this year's Citizen Architect Program participants is Jenna Wiegand, AIA, project manager with DLR Group DSM, who was recognized for her volunteerism with Pleasantville Youth Initiative (PvilleYI). The young nonprofit serves as a place for gathering, connecting, and advocating for youth in the rural community of Pleasantville, Iowa—also Wiegand's hometown—by providing them with opportunities for

growth in their life skills, interests, and faith. Wiegand's contributions include serving as an architectural adviser to the nonprofit's Board of Directors, using her experience to guide PvilleYI through their first-ever endeavor of restoring an old building to become a fun, energizing place for children. The nonprofit plans to renovate an abandoned grocery store—which once served as a lively hub from

the 1960s through the early '90s—into a community center.

Since the structure is connected to multiple buildings and sat dilapidated for years, Wiegand says the building needs to come down, which is where expertise comes in. "Having the understanding of how that building will come down and [rebuilding] in its footprints is also something that



Above: Pleasantville Youth Initiative plans to renovate an abandoned grocery store—which once served as a lively hub from the 1960s through the early '90s—into a community center. Credit: Jenna Wiegand, AIA

[PvilleYI] needed to be educated on,” Wiegand explains. Her responsibility to the community is to create something that is reflective of the grocery store’s ties to Pleasantville’s history, while simultaneously building an inclusive and inviting space for children, especially for those who may not be able-bodied or experience neurodiversity. This approach promotes AIA Iowa’s core principles of quality design and livable communities.

In addition to her obligations to PvilleYI, Wiegand spearheads Philanthropy 2024, a monthly plan outlining ways employees at DLR Group DSM can engage with their communities. Each month highlights a different social cause. For instance, April is Global Volunteer Month, and the goal is to celebrate individuals for their volunteer work and community accomplishments. May’s theme is “Gardening Fever,” which

encourages people to build a bee or bat habitat in their backyard or to donate one to their local urban garden. “It’s a volunteer opportunity, but it’s also an opportunity to educate,” Wiegand says. “Taking something on every single month and introducing it to the office, getting as many in the office as involved as possible, is the goal throughout the entire year.”

Public service is a pillar of AIA Iowa’s organization, and Wiegand encourages members to get involved with their communities. Strengthening your community through volunteer work requires a lot of time and energy, so Wiegand cautions overcommitting yourself. “But also, don’t be afraid to jump in,” she adds. “Start small to get your feet wet. You can always increase your involvement once you have found your bearings.”

April Is Architecture Month in Iowa

WORDS: DREW CLARK

Every April, members of the American Institute of Architects, Iowa Chapter (AIA Iowa), spend the entire month celebrating the architecture profession. Through social events, online campaigns, and networking events, AIA Iowa comes together to highlight the role architects play in their communities. The purpose of Iowa Architecture Month is to celebrate and draw attention to the fine architecture in the state and the fine work of Iowa-based architects who promote quality, livability, and resilience while maintaining the state’s cultural heritage and values in well-planned, well-designed buildings. This monthlong celebration engages Iowan communities and the public to create healthier, safer, and more dynamic places in which to live, work, and play.

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

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THANK YOU TO ALL WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE 2024 AIA IOWA CITIZEN ARCHITECT PROGRAM.

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The Energy Code: A Matter of Health, Safety, and Welfare

WORDS : GRANT NORDBY, AIA

Those following the Iowa Legislature in recent years may have noticed activity around something called the “energy code.” Given its impact on Iowans’ health, safety, and welfare, we thought it might help to explore its purposes and benefits.

What Is the Energy Code?

Per www.energycodes.gov: “Energy codes ... set minimum efficiency requirements for new and renovated buildings, assuring reductions in energy use and emissions over the life of the building. Energy codes are a subset of building codes, which establish baseline requirements and govern building construction.” Energy codes regulate the efficiency of the building exterior, plus electrical and mechanical systems.

History of Iowa’s Energy Code

Iowa’s first statewide *building* code was established in 1972, followed by its first *energy* code in 1978. Consolidation of national standards led Iowa to adopt the International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) in 2004. It correlates with other building codes from the International Code Council (ICC). This cross-referenced family of codes is updated by a broad group of experts and stakeholders (code officials, elected officials, architects, engineers, homebuilders, labor groups, contractors, and others) on a three-year cycle to address evolving dangers, practices, and technologies.

As of this writing, the state of Iowa is on the 2015 version of most ICC codes, except for the mechanical code (2021),

electrical code (2020 NEC), and the *energy* code (2012). That is to say: Most of Iowa’s statewide codes are nine years old, and its energy code is 12 years out of date. This is concerning, in part because codes work as a family, coordinated in complex ways that can be dangerous to customize. It matters across all of Iowa because even cities with capable building departments are now prohibited by the state from adopting a modern energy code, freezing new buildings’ technical progress in time and “imped[ing] the utilization of new and improved technology, techniques, methods, and materials ...”¹

Benefits and Purposes

The latest energy codes convey many benefits to building owners and occupants. They make buildings cheaper to own and operate—a “lunch you get paid to eat.”² These codes make us less vulnerable to sudden energy price hikes. They increase household savings over time, reducing mortgage payment defaults by 32 percent where implemented.³ And they improve occupants’ health and comfort by reducing air leaks and preventing condensation that leads to mold growth.

Modern energy codes even increase our disaster resilience by slowing buildings’ heat gain or loss during temperature extremes and power outages. An efficient building can stay warm for days without power, giving electricians time to bring power back online before pipes freeze and damage the property.

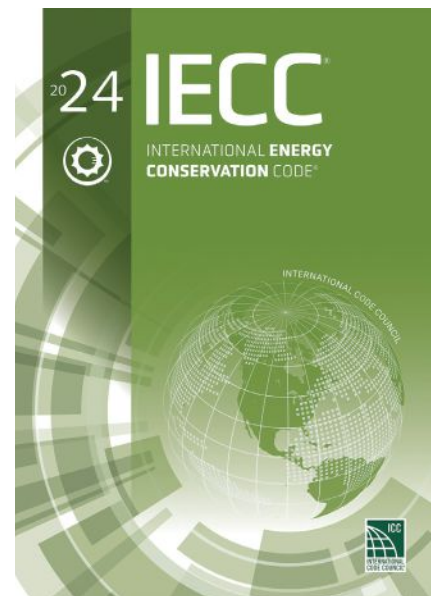


Image: International Code Council

Newer energy codes similarly reduce statewide and national vulnerability to costly disasters like the deadly 2021 Texas freeze and Pacific Northwest heat wave. They decrease national security risks and infrastructure costs by reducing peak and average demand. And they reduce buildings’ release of greenhouse gases by burning fewer fossil fuels on-site and at power plants. Those gases accelerate the warming climate, which is making natural disasters more *likely* and more *severe*. Think of Iowa’s \$6 billion 2008 flood, \$11 billion 2020 derecho, and ongoing drought (\$248 million in crop insurance in 2023 alone). Energy efficiency improves our climate resilience by



Top: An efficient building can stay warm for days without power, giving electricians time to bring power back online before pipes freeze and damage the property.

slowing the rate of change and by making buildings safer in the event of extreme weather.

Myths and Facts

Some people—citing concern for high housing costs—argue that we should sacrifice efficiency for cheaper upfront cost. Upon analysis, this proves to be a poor trade. Each time a new code iteration nears publication, national laboratories produce cost/benefit analyses for every state. Their latest comparison of Iowa’s currently adopted 2012 IECC to the proposed 2021 IECC showed that the average new Iowa home would see *\$173 in savings each year* by going to the 2021 code, repaying the increased upfront cost in just over two years, after which savings accumulate to the household.

New homes’ upfront cost can be reduced in other ways. Here are a few: Reduce red tape with pre-reviewed, free house plans; revise zoning to allow “granny flats” and “bungalow courts” for today’s smaller households; relax on-site parking minimums in urban areas with good bike and transit access; make full use of federal energy efficiency incentives; and offer training on cost-saving construction like “advanced” framing and frost-protected shallow footings. State and local jurisdictions can even access federal funds helping them implement best practices.

Some claim it is not the government’s place to impose minimum energy standards. But consider this: Nearly four out of five buyers of new homes

can’t influence the efficiency of their purchase. Their homes were built “on spec” by others having a profit incentive to cut corners at the expense of buyers and renters, who must live thereafter with high energy bills. If there were no energy code, they would have no way to accurately budget for unknowable utility bills, leading to even more cost-burdened households.

The longer the state waits to adopt modern energy codes or let cities do so, the more our design and construction workforce—which once led the region—falls behind in skills and readiness. Training on the latest codes is abundant (see below) but is almost nonexistent for older versions, making the jump harder the longer we wait. What are we waiting for?

Note: As of this writing, pending legislation would eliminate the State Building Code Advisory Council, a group of citizen experts who advise State code officials and evaluate alternative compliance methods proposed on difficult projects. They are required by law to deliberate in public meetings. In their place, decisions regarding code adoption would be made by untrained legislators whose likely advisers are lobbyists with a narrow understanding of building codes. The proposed legislation includes no requirement that building department deliberations occur in public meetings, leaving state building code officials isolated and vulnerable to political pressure. If this concerns you, consider contacting your legislators.

Available Resources

Many resources are available to help state and local governments, businesses, and households increase buildings’ energy efficiency at a lower upfront cost:

Federal technical assistance for states and cities modernizing their building energy codes.^{4,5}

Regional workforce training programs, including a “circuit rider” (traveling energy code specialist) and Code Compliance Collaborative.^{6,7}

Federal incentives (some soon to be state-administered) reducing home efficiency improvements’ upfront cost to homeowners and landlords.⁸

Citations

¹ Iowa Code § 103A.2

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READING IN PUBLIC

WORDS : CURTIS EHLER, AIA IMAGES : COREY GAFFER ARCHITECT : KNOP ARCHITECTS

“Thus, we never see the true state of our condition till it is illustrated to us by its contraries, nor know how to value what we enjoy, but by the want of it.”

— DANIEL DEFOE, ROBINSON CRUSOE

How we connect with buildings is often related to how we live, work, and play. For some, the connection comes from the memories a place holds and the feelings it can elicit. For others, a place provides a sense of purpose and belonging.

There is no doubt, the COVID-19 pandemic changed the world. For better or worse, it affected how we interact with each other and our surroundings, but it didn't change our wants and desires. Having left the Midwest for New York City, Linzi Murray found daily refuge from urban life within the small scale and personal feel of Manhattan's independent bookstores. When the world went into isolation in 2020, businesses found themselves at a decisive turn. Some flourished while others vanished. At a time when communities needed each other the most, Murray watched as the bookstores and coffee shops she loved shut their doors. The relatable scale of packed shelves and the homey feel of local book clubs were suddenly out of reach.

With loss came reflection.

For Murray, the nostalgia, contentment, and familiarity of local bookstores were too important to lose. In the fall of 2021, she returned to Iowa with the goal of opening and operating her own bookstore. “The energy and vibe of Valley Junction spoke to her,” architect Cody Knop, AIA, remembers. An idealistic blend of urban city and rural Americana, the neighborhood was poised and ready to embrace her business model. Several spaces of various sizes were considered. Perhaps it was memories of Manhattan that led her to the 1,400-square-foot bay, but the high ceiling and personal scale had clarity and focus.



Top left: Each shelf, standard, and reveal were detailed and developed to look sophisticated and elegant, while also being easy and affordable to construct. **Bottom left and right:** The fabrics, carpeting, and textiles were all thoughtfully chosen to match the earth tones of the wood paneling, and the warm stain of the wood was altered and adjusted to better match the overarching feel of the space.

The program was straightforward. A composition of programmatic elements arranged around two fundamental ideas: books and coffee. The solution was far more complex. How do you fit a coffee shop, a stationery store, a bookstore, a children's reading section, and spaces for lounging and study into such a small footprint? Each component of the store had to be carefully crafted and thoughtfully detailed to bring the greatest impact while providing the most value.

"The coffee was the main piece of the puzzle," says Knop. Being in a historic neighborhood within a suburban Midwest town, the goal was to attract a variety of people throughout the greater metro by creating a space where all would feel welcome. The sights, sounds, and aroma of a coffee shop were a great way to draw people in. The design team presented a series of options, but there were two primary considerations: Either locate the coffee counter against an outside wall or set it in the middle. "We chose to place the point of sale in the center of the space on-axis with the entry," explains Knop. "The center bar was assembled using similar materials as the rest of the store but with enough difference in texture to attract attention." Knowing this element would be a compelling focal point, the team sensibly chose to combine the sales location for both the merchandise and the coffee rather than separate them. This not only conserved space, but relieved staff from managing two service locations.

Once the core was set, the rest of the design fell into place. The perimeter walls became a backdrop of seating and shelving. Patrons could circulate around the center and see every available book from nearly any vantage point. The architects performed a cost analysis comparing premade shelving to custom millwork and found it to be nearly awash. The ability to tailor the shelving to the space allowed Knop's team to increase the height of the shelving and fill more of the volume above. The building's existing storefront had been designed with a regular window spacing that nearly matched that of a typical bay of shelving. Being a corner tenant with windows on two sides, this presented the design team with a grid in both directions from which to work. "The design was derived from a simple kit of repetitive parts," explains Knop. "The module was rigorously followed and doesn't break once throughout the project." Each shelf, standard, and reveal were detailed and developed to look sophisticated and elegant, while also being easy and affordable to construct. Every aspect of the project fits into this layout, including the study carrels, storage cabinets, and pendant lights.

The children's area, tucked behind the central coffee bar, was equipped with shorter shelving and smaller-scale seating. This more intimate section of the store gives parents a private and protected feel where they can more readily relax and allow their child to explore.

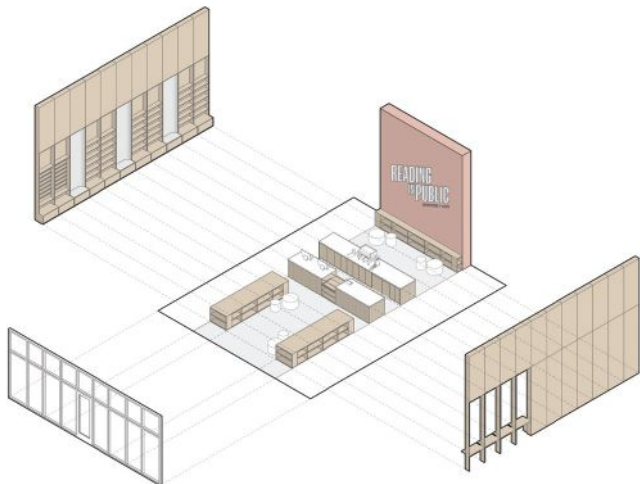
When Murray first envisioned the bookstore, there was a desire to integrate curves with smoother edges that her customers could comfortably relate to. This request posed a challenge, since bound books and stationary goods are often more rectilinear and require straight surfaces for housing. The design team recognized that the opportune place to embrace the curve was in the seating and standalone furnishings. "We helped select a furniture package with a calm color palette that coordinated with her intended brand," remembers Knop. The fabrics, carpeting, and textiles were all thoughtfully chosen to match the earth tones of the wood paneling, and the warm stain of the wood was altered and adjusted to better match the overarching feel of the space. The arched-back felt seating module was regularly spaced to interrupt every third section of shelves. This AA-B-AA-B rhythm offered a regulated yet accessible sequence for which to provide reading and restoration.



At top: The children's area, tucked behind the central coffee bar, was equipped with shorter shelving and smaller-scale seating. This more intimate section of the store gives parents a private and protected feel where they can more readily relax and allow their child to explore.

Bottom left, opposite: The ability to tailor the shelving to the space allowed Knop's team to increase the height of the shelving and fill more of the volume above. **Bottom right, opposite:** Each component of the store had to be carefully crafted and thoughtfully detailed to bring the greatest impact while providing the most value.

Reading in Public officially opened its doors in January 2023. As the only independent bookstore in Valley Junction, its impact on the community was immediate. It is a welcome stop for anyone looking for a warm beverage, a new read, or a place to study. Together, Murray and Knop's vision has brought to reality a community gathering space where design, architecture, and traditional pursuits come together to be celebrated anew.





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PRAYER IN THE PRAIRIE

Bosnjak Es-Selam Mosque Minaret

WORDS: GAUTAM PRADEEP, ASSOC. AIA **IMAGES:** CAMERON CAMPBELL, AIA, INTEGRATED STUDIO; KHALID KHAN, ASSOC. AIA; & ELVEDIN SIVAC
ARCHITECT: NEUMANN MONSON ARCHITECTS

Driving down Iowa Highway 141 toward Granger, a curious structure emerges from the Midwest agrarian landscape. Shimmering amid the trees that line the road, the coppered roof of a slender Bosnian minaret catches your attention. It feels ethereal the first time you visit the Bosnjak Es-Selam Mosque Minaret. However, it is real and is a stunning product of craftsmanship and knowledge brought to this country by those of a different soil.

In the 1990s, many Bosnians fled to the U.S. as war refugees escaping the Bosnian War, a violent and painful period that forcibly displaced many from their families, communities, and regular lives. Among them was Elvedin Sivac, who was displaced from Yugoslavia and came to Des Moines in 1994. Sivac and other refugees faced many issues like language barriers, homesickness, and culture shock as they adjusted to their new lives. With the help of his wife, he founded the nonprofit Islamic and Cultural Center Bosniak of Des Moines in 2004 to bring together fellow refugees and build back the sense of community that was taken from them. This community grew over the years while worshiping in a commercial space in Des Moines. In 2008, the group managed to acquire a 29-acre plot in Granger. A progressive Jewish farming family sold this land to the Islamic Bosniak community, which allowed them to build a traditional cemetery and funeral home. With the land in hand, the community could also take steps to move out of Des Moines, and visions for a mosque started to pick up steam. In 2016, they decided to move forward, and Sivac invited Neumann Monson Architects principal Khalid Khan, Assoc. AIA, to help with the design of the new mosque.

Projects like the prayer hall in Dhaka, designed by Louis Kahn, and buildings in the Midwest by Eero Saarinen, started conversations for the design team. However, through consistent engagement, the community's vision became clear. The community wanted something familiar—something that aligned more with their traditional identities and memories. Elvedin summarized succinctly that, architecturally, what was important

for the community was a prominent dome and a traditional minaret. The term minaret has Arabic origins to mean a place of light. Minarets are towers accompanying mosques that act as a beacon and help carry the muezzin's call for prayer as far as possible. To the community, its symbolism means everything. Elvedin solemnly explains, "Now, our country is divided after the war. Some of the territory is under control of different people, and they bombed so many mosque[s] that when you travel, you don't see many mosques. So, once you enter territories controlled by our government, we start seeing minaret[s] first. That's where you start feeling safe. That's where you see it represents who lives there. It represents us; it's a safe place."

The minaret's importance led Sivac to drive straight to Detroit and reach out to the master craftsman Safet Djulin Tabaković. Tabaković began building minarets in Bosnia at the age of 15. Like Sivac, he also brought his craft to the American Midwest as a refugee. Tabaković, at this point, had built multiple minarets in the U.S., the last one in St. Louis. Convinced by Sivac, he agreed to help design and construct the minaret for the Bosnjak Es-Selam Mosque. As the mosque's architect, Neumann Monson helped initially define the proportions and heights of the minaret. Once Tabaković came on board, the architects provided design guidance on form, color, and materiality to maintain the minaret's relationship with the mosque. The collaboration based on mutual respect resulted in a minaret that could materialize the community's wishes and be a good neighbor. For Principal Khalid Khan, the simplicity of the minaret was especially inspired by the agrarian vernacular. But he adds that, like other immigrants to this country, "there's a part of their generation that is going to be more American, and I wanted some level of resonance to that, too."

This 131-foot-tall concrete minaret is based on traditional Bosnian minarets, which are themselves a regional variant of the classical Ottoman minaret. The foundation, designed by Raker Rhodes Engineering, used 58 yards of concrete poured into a slab on-site on a rainy day in August 2020. This day marked the start

Opposite: This minaret that stretches up amid the prairie is a testament to the welcoming soil in which the Muslim Bosniak community stays planted—and continues to thrive.



of the minaret, and the community celebrated this event with a feast where they served traditional Pečenje to the builders who worked through the rain. The octagonal base of the minaret came next, where an Ipe door provided entry into the minaret.

Above the base is where Tabaković took over. The scalloped shaft terminating in the crystalline Şerefe (a walk-around balcony) was cast in white concrete using exquisite metal forms that Tabaković designed and welded himself. An internal spiral staircase consisting of 136 steps was constructed around a single support column to circulate up to the Şerefe. Tabaković was also responsible for integrating the lighting fixtures into and around the Şerefe. The roof was made of standing seam metal panels tinted a copperish hue to match the dome of the mosque. The Alem (finial), a symbol of peace in the form of the crescent moon and stars, was then fabricated by Sivac's cousin and hoisted up carefully to embellish the top of the minaret.

For Tabaković, the early design process involved sharing drawings and small mock-ups of his ideas with the architects. However, he also made many design decisions and adjustments on-site as the minaret went up. The architects and the engineers made this incredible process of “ad-libbing” possible through open communication, intelligent planning, agile adjustments, and faith in the craftsmen—albeit with some healthy nervousness. It must be noted that, for the 16-month duration of his involvement, Tabaković lived on-site, working almost 15 hours per day. Community members built him a room in the adjacent building to stay and provided him with meals and other necessities during construction.

The budget was one of the biggest hurdles the project had to get through. Without a construction loan, the community relied mainly on donations, welcoming any way people could contribute. As many congregation members worked in the trades, the community themselves provided a large part of the labor required for this project. Additional monetary donations also came in different forms, like discounts from subcontractors, stretching the budget further. For the designers, this was a challenging ordeal as professionals cannot responsibly budget for potential community volunteerism. This financial mode of operation also led to a lengthy project duration. Currently, the minaret base is waiting to be clad in marble with the names of donors who have contributed to this project.

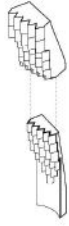
Many stories in Iowa disappear with the prairie winds. However, this minaret braves the gale. It reveals to those willing to dig deeper stories of tolerance, resourcefulness, and the power of endurance that a committed community can have. This minaret that stretches up amid the prairie is a testament to the welcoming soil in which the Muslim Bosniak community stays planted—and continues to thrive.

Clockwise from top left: This minaret that stretches up amid the prairie is a testament to the welcoming soil in which the Muslim Bosniak community stays planted—and continues to thrive. An internal spiral staircase consisting of 136 steps was constructed around a single support column to circulate up to the Şerefe. The scalloped shaft terminating in the crystalline Şerefe (a walk-around balcony) was cast in white concrete using exquisite metal forms. **At top, opposite:** The foundation, designed by Raker Rhodes Engineering, used 58 yards of concrete poured into a slab on-site. **At bottom, opposite:** This 131-foot-tall concrete minaret is based on traditional Bosnian minarets, which are themselves a regional variant of the classical Ottoman minaret.

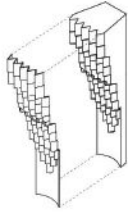




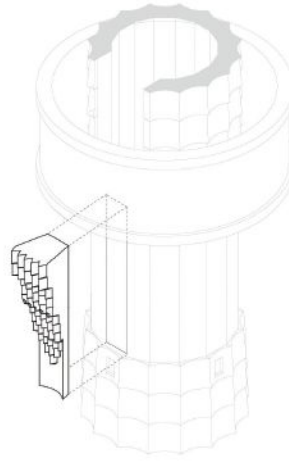
TWO PART WELDED STEEL FORM



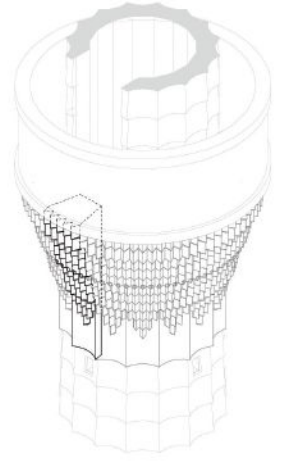
PLASTER MOLDS IN EACH FORM



FORMS REMOVE FROM ASSEMBLED CASTS



CAST ATTACHED TO MINARET STRUCTURE



16 CASTS ASSEMBLED AS MINARET FEATURE





ELEVATING THE EXISTING:

St. Kilda Brings a Crafted Culinary Experience to Clive

WORDS : ANNA AVERISING, ASSOC. AIA IMAGES : COREY GAFFER ARCHITECT : KNOP ARCHITECTS

Nestled within the confines of a one-story suburban shopping center in Clive lies St. Kilda—an Australian-style culinary gem that bears the same name and elevated dining experience as the other two locations in the greater Des Moines area. Alex Hall, St. Kilda’s London-born, Melbourne-raised, owner and restaurateur, had a similar vision for the third location, a 2,400-square-foot existing space, which formerly housed another restaurant that closed during the pandemic.

With a vision to infuse vibrancy and sophistication into the dining experience, Hall enlisted the expertise of Cody Knop, AIA, founder of Knop Architects, marking one of the inaugural projects for the burgeoning firm. The renovation was a meticulous exercise in rejuvenation, where existing infrastructure became the canvas for a highly crafted dining experience.

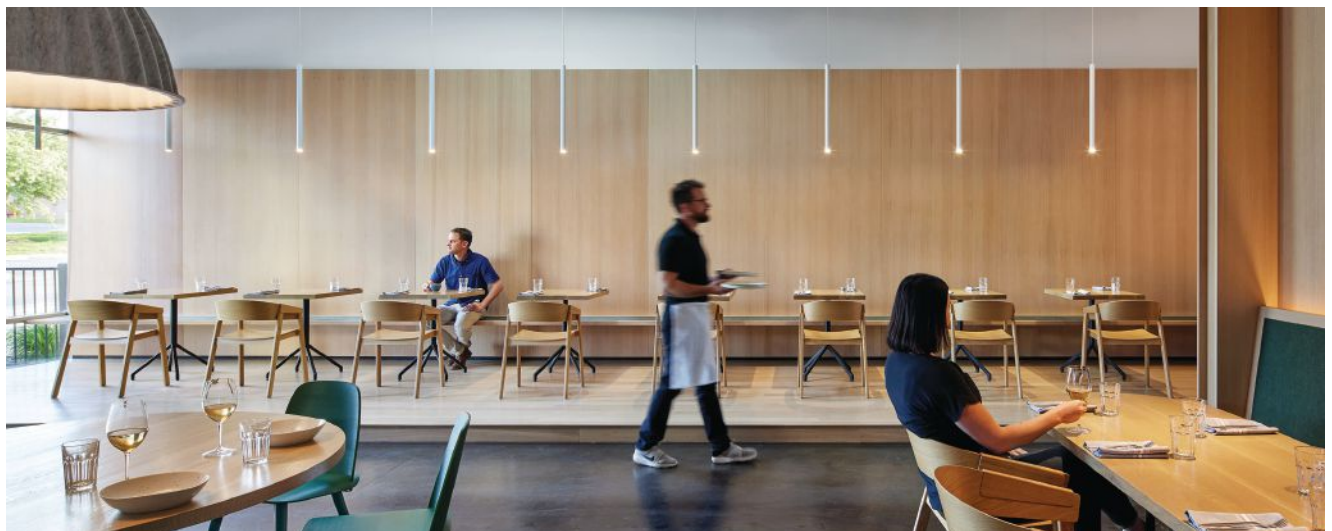
The approach to St. Kilda was not about reinventing the wheel but rather refreshing and elevating what already existed. Repurposing existing back-of-house equipment yielded significant cost savings and reduced project waste, allowing the design team the opportunity to focus on the customer experience.

“The challenge was to create different experiences within a small space on a lean budget,” Knop explains. “The goal wasn’t

to reinvent the brand or introduce groundbreaking materials, so we aimed for a consistent level of detail with an extreme amount of care and craft.”

Through a strategic blend of repurposing and refinement, the team breathed new life into the venue. The replacement of the standard drop ceiling with custom skylights transformed the venue from a light-starved strip mall to a bright and welcoming space. From custom tables and benching, every aspect was imbued with a consistent level of detail and commitment to craftsmanship. To meet the challenge of creating different dining experiences, a raised seating platform was introduced—a subtle gesture that simultaneously adds variety and creates order. A series of vertical white oak panels line walls and round corners as verdant green accents add lushness and liveliness. A rounded booth with felt inlays and playful cove lighting offers another perspective of the space and further showcases the level of thought invested in every aspect of the diners’ experience.

A subdued material palette defines St. Kilda’s casual but elegant atmosphere. The project reveals a deep appreciation for wood and other materials that promote a warm and a calming presence in the space. Furniture selections follow suit; Knop



Above and at left: The project reveals a deep appreciation for wood and other materials that promote a warm and a calming presence in the space.

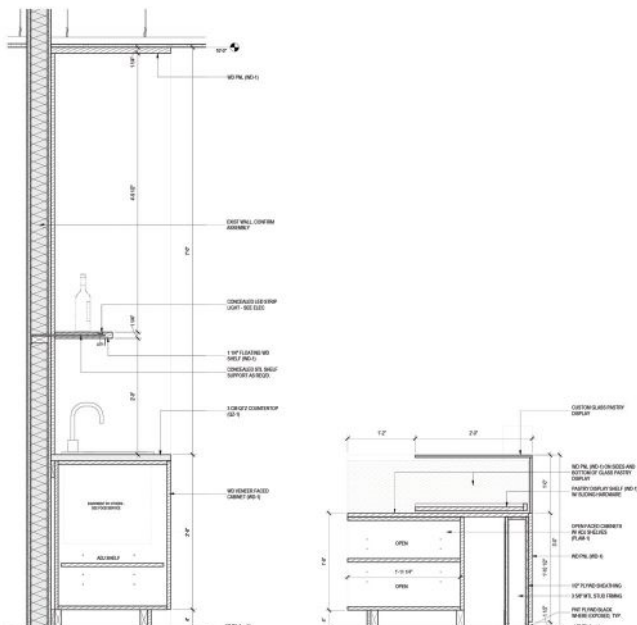
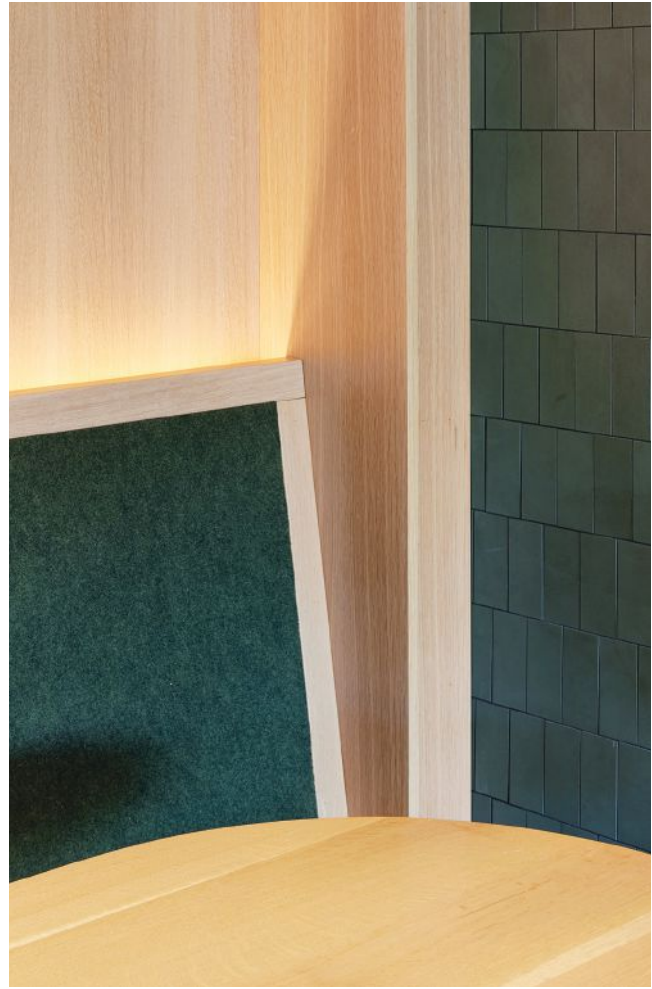
and his team selected Muuto dining chairs for their higher quality and durability. As part of an overarching brand strategy for the restaurant, it was a conscious choice to invest upfront in furniture and millwork that would withstand the test of time.

As the project unfurled at a remarkable pace, culminating in a mere six weeks, the collaborative efforts of skilled craftspeople—notably Hildreth Construction Services and SJM Custom Carpentry—ensured the seamless realization of the team’s vision: a bright and refined dining experience that matched the spirit of the menu. This rapid timeline was a response to the challenges posed by the pandemic and an anticipated reopening in 2021. It meant that the project didn’t follow the traditional design and review process; instead, the team heavily relied on detailed drawings and daily on-site collaboration.

A project of this caliber could not have been accomplished without the collaboration of skilled craftspeople. They played a pivotal role in bringing each meticulous detail to life; their expertise in crafting custom pieces and their commitment to perfection were instrumental in realizing the vision of the owner and the design team.

The restaurant industry faced unprecedented challenges during the pandemic, but St. Kilda not only survived but thrived. The restaurant continues to offer patrons exquisite cuisine paired with a dining experience that celebrates the art of craftsmanship.

At right: Repurposing existing back-of-house equipment yielded significant cost savings and reduced project waste, allowing the design team the opportunity to focus on the customer experience. **At bottom left:** Through a strategic blend of repurposing and refinement, the team breathed new life into the venue. **At bottom right:** As part of an overarching brand strategy for the restaurant, it was a conscious choice to invest upfront in furniture and millwork that would withstand the test of time.

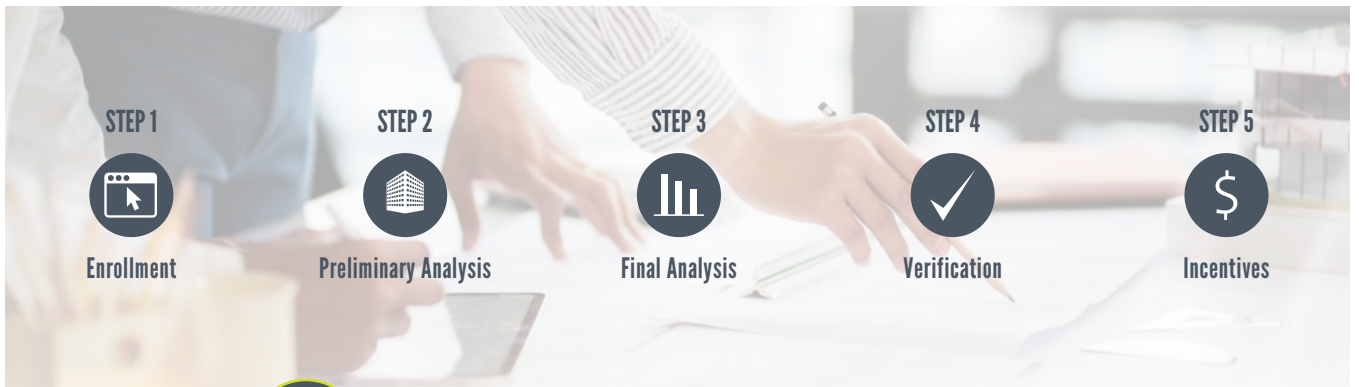





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KREG TOOL HEADQUARTERS STAIRCASE:
**CRAFTING
CONNECTION**

WORDS: RAE HOWE **IMAGES:** CAMERON CAMPBELL, AIA, INTEGRATED STUDIO **ARCHITECT:** NEUMANN MONSON ARCHITECTS



When Kreg Tool dreamed up a new facility, their goal was connection. As described in the Spring 2023 issue of *Iowa Architect* magazine, the new facility aimed to bring together disparate teams, which had previously been siloed by department. Completed in July 2021, the new building translated Kreg Tool’s values—“connecting head, heart, and hands”—into built form. The central spine of the monumental stair connects the head (office) with the hands (manufacturing), and the heart (the “marketplace,” or common area).



Joinery as Symbol

Kreg Tool is rooted in the joinery of wood, prompting principal-in-charge Khalid Khan, Assoc. AIA, of Neumann Monson Architects to be inspired by “[n]ot just the joinery of wood, but concealed joinery of wood through the use of the Kreg pocket-hole jig. We used that as the inspiration for creating an internal connection within the facility where the two aspects of their facility—the office and manufacturing/assembly—are intertwined and act seamlessly together. ... The grand staircase was utilized to

At top, left: The grand, broad ribbon avoids overwhelming the space with vertical bulk, thereby maintaining visual access and intuitive connection between floors. **At top, middle:** The central spine of the monumental stair connects the head (office) with the hands (manufacturing), and the heart (the “marketplace,” or common area). **At top, right:** “[The stair] showcases the use of wood in many forms, both from a sensory and a tactile manner. The handrails, the floors, the ceiling, the slatted walls along the perimeter of the stairs that leads to the charred wood walls are all intentionally made of wood for that purpose,” says Khalid Khan, Assoc. AIA, of Neumann Monson Architects.

reinforce this connection, serving as a central gathering space and as a stage for quarterly all-staff meetings.”

Folded Plane

Khan explains, “The staircase is ... an expression of a continuous ‘floor plane’ that unfolds into treads and risers. This, along with the suspended steel structure, creates a sense of grandeur while minimizing the overall verticality by introducing an expansive intermediate landing area. The natural materials and tactile elements further engage the senses and prolong the experience.” The structure of the stair is inviting. The grand, broad ribbon avoids overwhelming the space with vertical bulk, thereby maintaining visual access and intuitive connection between floors.

Celebrating Wood

Project architect Cheung Chan, AIA, describes key materials and their purposes: “The structural floor and roof deck are made from laminated wood deck and left exposed as the finished ceiling of the office space. The office and conference room mass ... is clad with charred wood, and the central feature wall, stage, grand stair, and landing are clad and finished with oak.”

Khan adds, “[The stair] showcases the use of wood in many forms, both from a sensory and a tactile manner. The handrails, the floors, the ceiling, the slatted walls along the perimeter of the stairs that leads to the charred wood walls are all intentionally made of wood for that purpose.”

Giving Pause

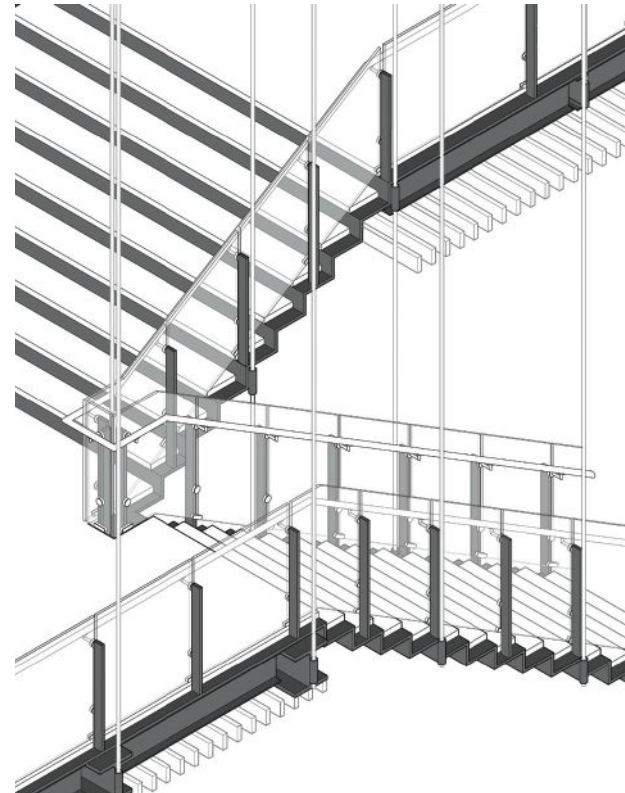
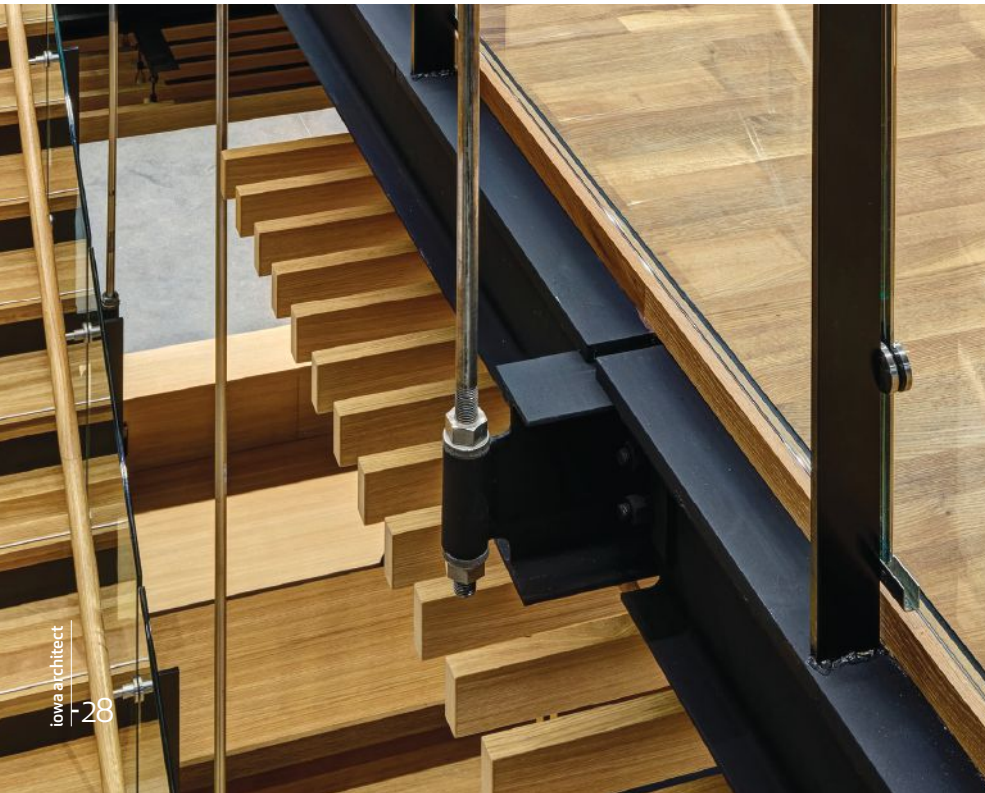
The expansive “dogleg” configuration creates space for being. “The switchback design with the oversized mid-landing and upper floor landing changes the scene for the people traveling up and



down the staircase and encourages them to take pauses along the way, instead of treating the staircase as [merely] a device to get from one floor to another,” says Chan. This in-between space invites users to take a moment between events of the day and reconnect with their body. Users can feel the solidity of the stair under their feet, run their hands along the rail, glimpse the landscape beyond and allow sensory delight to help them transition between tasks, physically and mentally.

When we design spaces to answer our needs—physically, mentally, and aesthetically—we enable moments of connection, which can restore and inspire occupants to new efforts. Perhaps the next generation of woodworking tools will have its genesis from just such a moment on this very stair, itself a tool of connection.

At top: The grand, broad ribbon avoids overwhelming the space with vertical bulk, thereby maintaining visual access and intuitive connection between floors. **Bottom left and right:** This in-between space invites users to take a moment between events of the day and reconnect with their body. Users can feel the solidity of the stair under their feet, run their hands along the rail, glimpse the landscape beyond and allow sensory delight to help them transition between tasks, physically and mentally.



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BAR NICO DOORS: CONNECTING CRAFTSMANSHIP

WORDS: ANNA AVERSING, ASSOC. AIA **IMAGES:** JOSEPH KASTNER & CAMERON CAMPBELL, AIA, INTEGRATED STUDIO **ARCHITECT:** ASK STUDIO

You might mistake the 12-foot-tall windows at the entrance to Bar Nico in Des Moines' East Village for just another storefront. But the massive glass panes wrapped in slender steel frames also serve as doors. When opened inward, they offer easy access to the sidewalk for patrons of the taco and craft cocktails hotspot.

This custom installation is a creative collaboration between chef-restaurateur Jason Simon, architectural design team (ASK Studio), and fabricators (Factor Fabrication).

Vision

Simon envisioned doors that, when open, seamlessly connect the interior with the sidewalk, providing an al fresco ambiance. This feature gained importance when the pandemic suddenly required fresh air and social distancing.

Simon's approach to design—described as “uncompromising”—spurred a creative collaboration that made the doors more than mere functional elements. They became a statement of craft. Brent Schipper, AIA, of ASK Studio shares: “What’s fun about working with somebody like Jason is that he gets people really excited about what he’s going to do, and he appreciates design as much as craft.”

Creative Challenge

Simon wanted to retain the historic aesthetic of the existing building while gaining flexibility. Thus, doors had to convincingly appear as large windows and then transform into expansive openings when needed.

The challenge lay in the details—large openings, a narrow frame, careful proportions, and robust custom mechanized hardware.

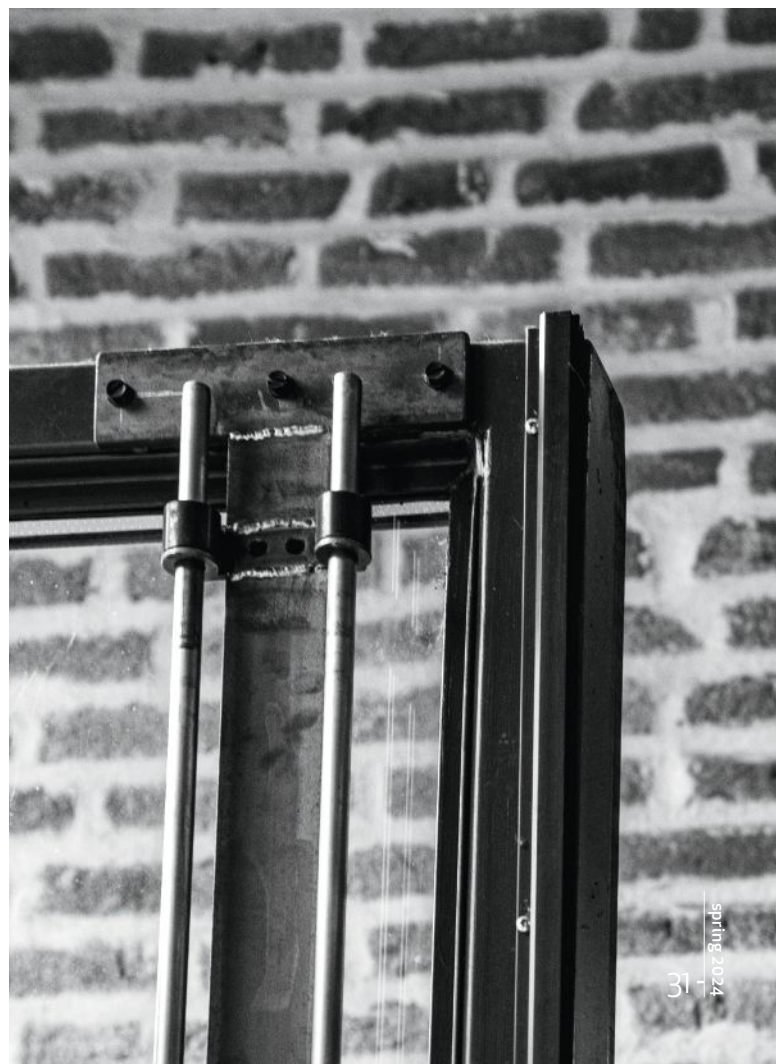
Experimentation, tinkering, and commitment to a vision going beyond the standard kit-of-parts resulted in a mechanism for movement that is both practical and sculptural.

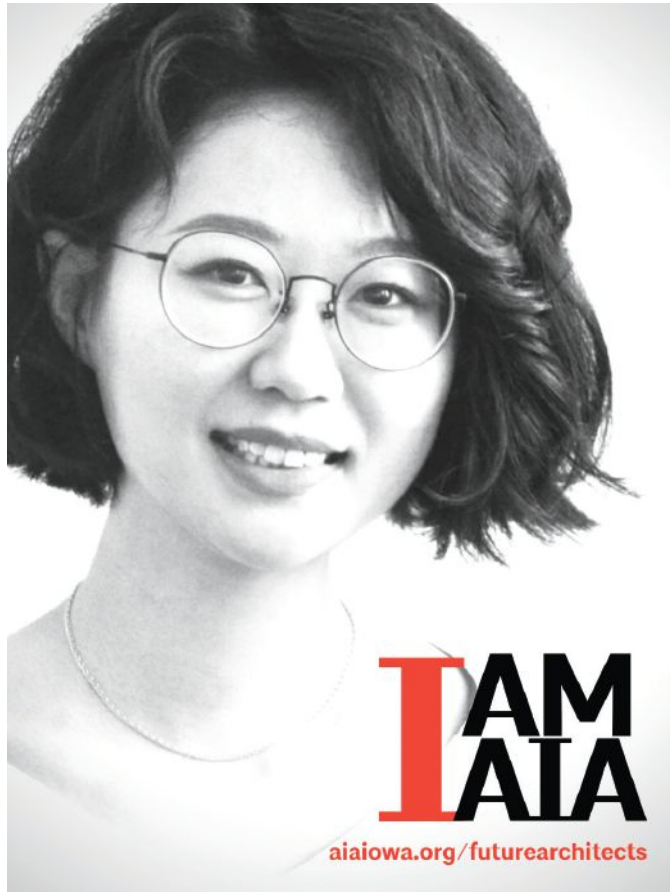
More Than the Sum of Their Parts

The story of Bar Nico's doors goes beyond their physical presence; it encapsulates the spirit of joyful collaboration in crafting something extraordinary. These doors transcend their practical purpose, representing the ultimate fusion of creative vision and the art of craftsmanship.



At left: Jason Simon, chef-restaurateur of Bar Nico, wanted to retain the historic aesthetic of the existing building while gaining flexibility. Thus, doors had to convincingly appear as large windows and then transform into expansive openings when needed. **Opposite:** This custom installation is a creative collaboration between Simon, architectural design team (ASK Studio), and fabricators (Factor Fabrication).





AIA Iowa

"I love that my design philosophy and skills have grown alongside my path of discovering my purpose and values as an architect. The moment I realized architecture can create experiences and stories to empower people and bring them hope, I understood becoming an architect was the right path for me."

- Yifan Sun, Assoc. AIA

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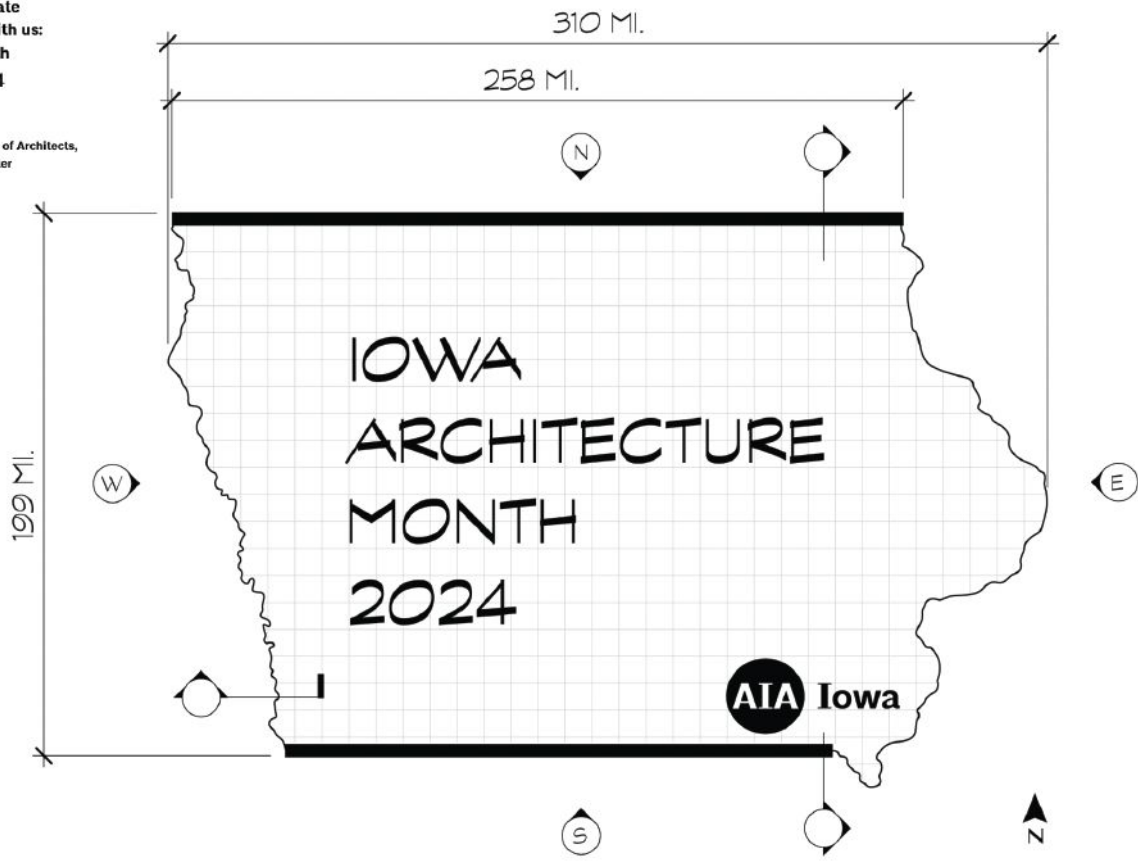
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Top left and right: The vibe is thoughtfully eclectic, with a flavor-forward material palette of copper, blackened steel, charred beetle-kill pine, and concrete.

SOMETHING TO SAY

TUESDAY AGENCY'S IOWA CITY OFFICE UNPACKS THE MINDS OF ITS FOUNDERS

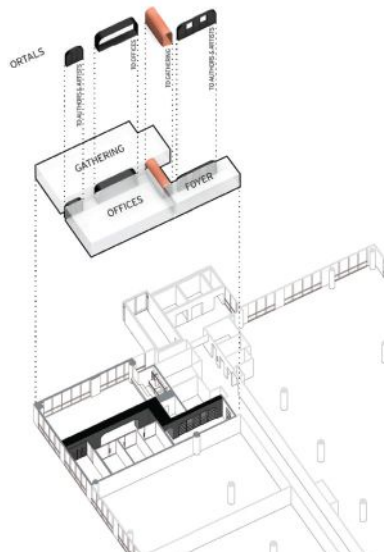
WORDS : ANDREW BALLARD, AIA **IMAGES :** CAMERON CAMPBELL, AIA, INTEGRATED STUDIO **ARCHITECT :** NEUMANN MONSON ARCHITECTS

The Tuesday Agency connects authors, journalists, historians, artists, and scholars to speaking engagements around the world. Trinity Ray, who established the group with Kevin Mills, was keen to align its headquarters with Iowa City's reputation as an international city of literature. The two founders tapped interior designer Amy Guhl of Neumann Monson Architects to help carve the agency's identity into 2,000 square feet of The Chauncey's fourth floor. An entry library, office area, and wet bar create an "L" around a flexible lounge and meeting area, which commands most of the space's expansive downtown views.

Guhl worked closely with Ray and Mills to design a progression of spaces that manifests the founders' curiosity and frames moments of focus. Convex glass portholes in the entry door allow visitors to get a distorted peek into the library, a preview of the curves and eased

edges that reappear throughout the office. Meanwhile, a portal device allows the owner to cue public and private thresholds. Shifting the conference table to beneath the broad office arch, for example, subtly signals that area as off limits during cocktail hours and concerts.

The vibe is thoughtfully eclectic, with a flavor-forward material palette of copper, blackened steel, charred beetle-kill pine, and concrete. Ceilings vary from oak paneling to felt baffles. Floors are concrete, with rugs providing texture, color, and acoustic absorbency where and when desired. Guhl points out that, as an organization immersed in storytelling, the owners preferred materials with something to say. "Each moment is framed in a material that ages gracefully, like copper, blackened steel, and wood." The prominent black wood wall is a charred beetle-kill pine salvaged from Colorado, a highly sustainable material that brings with it figure and texture.



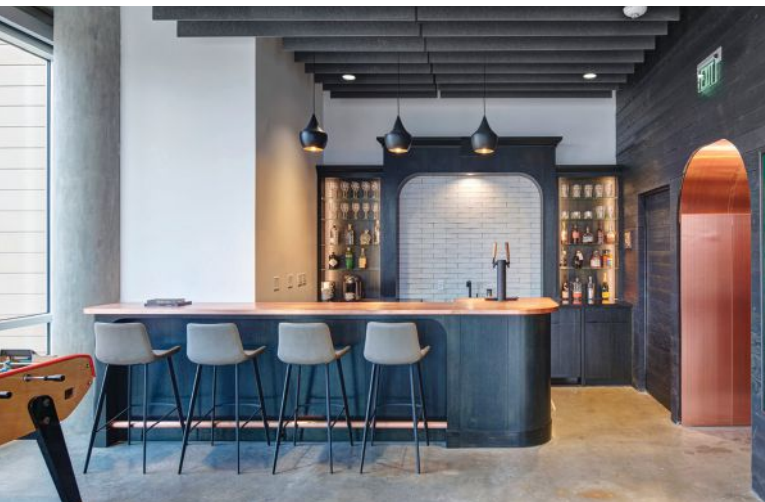
At top: The prominent black wood wall is a charred beetle-kill pine salvaged from Colorado, a highly sustainable material that brings with it figure and texture. **Clockwise from left:** Ceilings vary from oak paneling to felt baffles. Certain aspects are fixed and built in, while others will change (and have already changed) since the project's completion. An entry library, office area, and wet bar create an "L" around a flexible lounge and meeting area, which commands most of the space's expansive downtown views.

Sourcing beetle-killed pine rather than standard lumber saves healthy trees while taking carbon out of circulation.

Commissioned custom pieces anchor the primary spaces. As Guhl relates: "We worked with Jeremy Rudd, a Dubuque-area craftsman and good friend of the owner, to fabricate the bar, built-in record shelves, and conference table. It was a collaborative effort to develop the details, select the material palettes, and then coordinate them into the overall space." Guhl and Rudd took a conversational approach to design and fabrication. They engaged early and came to consensus with the owners on approach and execution by bandying about ideas, sharing images, and sketching iteratively.

The office's character manifests that of the clients. "There is a bold thoughtfulness to the space that pulls you in, similar to the clients' personality." The design expresses the agency's rooted convictions and registers its roving curiosity. Certain aspects are fixed and built in, while others will change (and have already changed) since the project's completion. There is an evolving collection. Some art and records pre-date the project, while others joined during the process. "The client wanted to see, touch, and feel their collections—of records, artwork, books—and these rich decorative layers start to form the experiences of daily pleasures." A few items are somber, but most are quirky: a Moooi Pig table, well-dressed deer, and Elvis Costello.

Walls and built-in features provide a baseline to the office's everyday experience and a background for the owners' idiosyncratic art and accoutrement. The design imparts rich character to flexible spaces with a tunable capacity to foster thought, camaraderie, and celebration. The Tuesday Agency is a haven for inquisitive minds and lively conversations.




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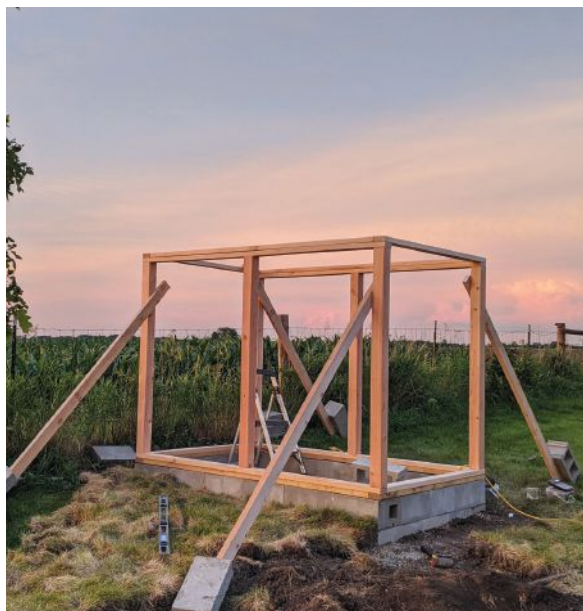


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CLOSE TO HOME

WORDS : GRANT NORDBY, AIA **IMAGES :** ANDREW BALLARD, AIA
ARCHITECT : STUDIO COMBINE

Rest your eyes for a moment on these scenes. Heart and mind will recognize vital connections between land, home, animals, and family, entwined in their shared daily and seasonal patterns.

Designer Bill Stumpf once complained that today “[o]nly farm kids have the luxury of learning how things grow, how animals are born, how crops are harvested—how life actually works.” But the backyard chicken movement represents a willful return to a cottage-industry ideal from which modern life had isolated us. Such changes reconnect home to small-scale agriculture, workplace, and community.

North Liberty-based Studio Combine Architect Andrew Ballard, AIA, took one step onto this path when his wife nudged him to build a coop for backyard chickens on their suburban plot, which overlooks an urban agritourism farm. Asked if involving young helpers was a family tradition, Ballard recounts: “I helped my dad build a tool shed as a teen in North Carolina. It was a wonderful experience.” Exposure to the craft of building sparked a desire to pursue architecture.

Now he jokes that designing for his own “unskilled craftsmanship” presented an additional mental challenge. “I was so proud that I got the door to actually work the first time.” Ballard would sketch a detail, tweak it to conditions in the field, then sketch the next without revising the first—a luxury to professionals typically bound by linear constraints of design-bid-build. Feedback—from the surroundings, family, materials, and chickens—was immediate during construction and continues in close quarters with the result, which is duly tectonic, constructable, and commodious for chickens and caretakers alike.

Shared moments speed by, leaving physical traces in and on the remaining form. Accidental dog prints on the sheathing took permanent significance when the beloved companion passed away. Momentary became memorial—a tender reunion with the treasured past. Just so, the humblest of commissions takes on meaning from the moments of connection that gave it life.

At left: Feedback—from the surroundings, family, materials, and chickens—was immediate during construction and continues in close quarters with the result, which is duly tectonic, constructable, and commodious for chickens and caretakers alike.





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Reading in Public

Architect: Knop Architects
Location: West Des Moines, Iowa
Contractor: Hildreth Construction Services
MEP Engineer: Currie Engineering Associates
Photographer: Corey Gaffer

Bosnjak Es-Selam Mosque Minaret

Architect: Neumann Monson Architects
Location: Granger, Iowa
Civil Engineer: Civil & Environmental Consultants Inc.
Contractor: Neimar Company LLC
Lighting Design: Safet Tabakovic
Photographer: Cameron Campbell, AIA, Integrated Studio; Khalid Khan, Assoc. AIA; and Elvedin Sivac
Structural Engineer: Raker Rhodes Engineering

St. Kilda Café

Architect: Knop Architects
Location: Clive, Iowa
Contractor: Hildreth Construction Services
Photographer: Corey Gaffer

Kreg Tool Staircase

Architect: Neumann Monson Architects
Location: Ankeny, Iowa
Civil Engineer: Civil Engineering Consultants
Contractor: Graham Construction Company
MEP Engineer: Baker Group
Photographer: Cameron Campbell, AIA, Integrated Studio
Structural Engineer: Raker Rhodes Engineering

Bar Nico Door

Architect: ASK Studio
Location: Des Moines, Iowa
Contractor: Factor II Fabrication
Owner: Bar Nico
Photographers: Joseph Kastner and Cameron Campbell, AIA, Integrated Studio

The Tuesday Agency

Architect: Neumann Monson Architects
Location: Iowa City, Iowa
Contractor: McComas Lacinia Construction
MEP Engineer: Alvine Engineering
Photographer: Cameron Campbell, AIA, Integrated Studio

Maison du Poulet

Architect: Studio Combine
Location: North Liberty, Iowa
Builder: Ballard & Son
Photographer: Andrew Ballard, AIA

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