

IOWA

Architect

Issue No. 08:265 Five Dollars

Urban [re]Generation

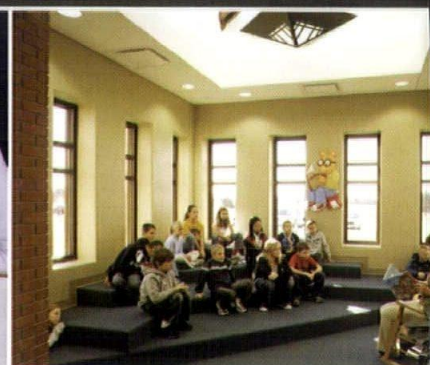
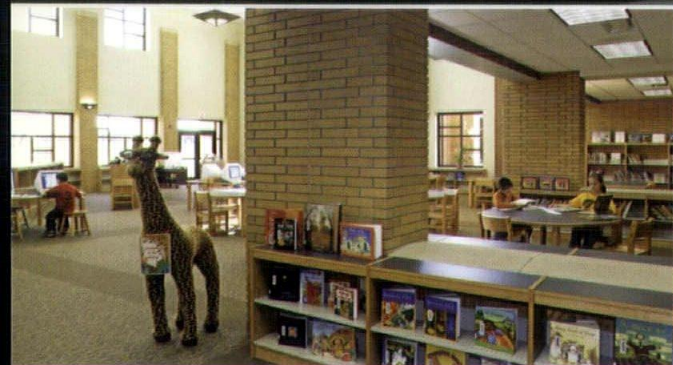


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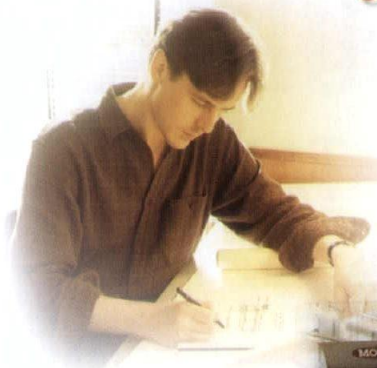
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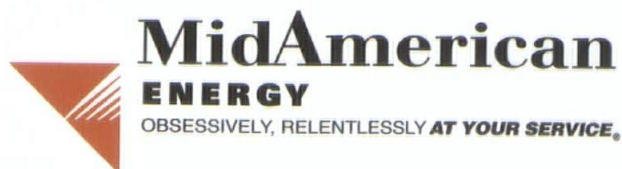


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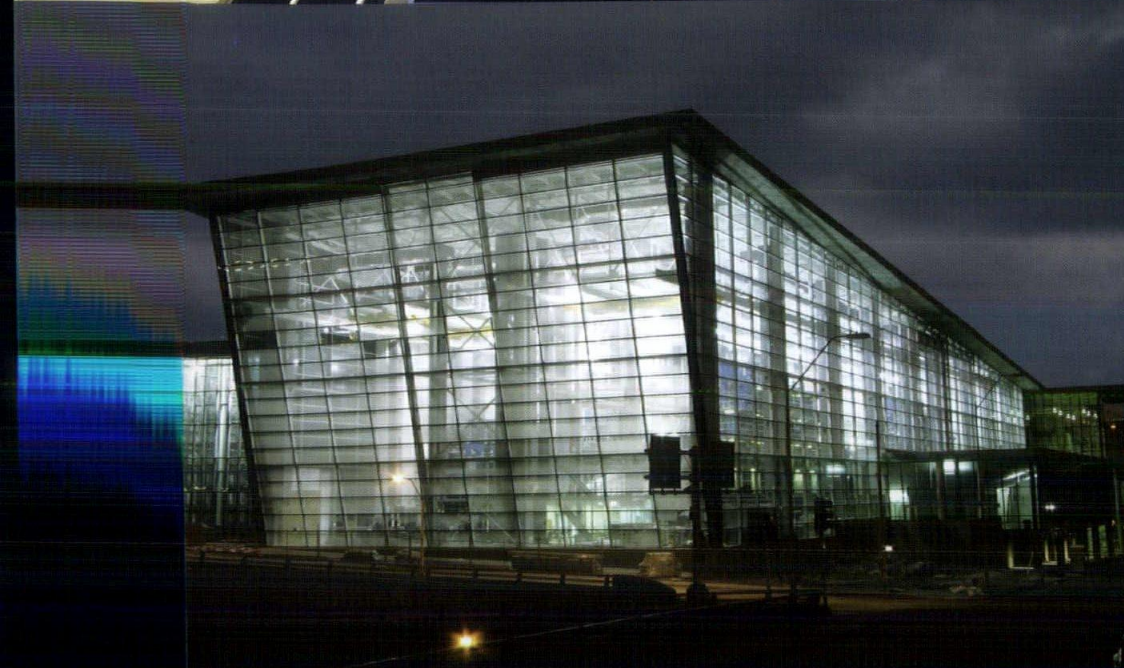


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COVER

Marketplace Apartments
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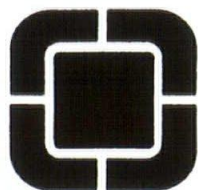
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Urban centers exist in a fragile balance. To be healthy, they must be in a constant regenerative state. One building's shell might house many tenants in its lifespan. One parcel of land can be re-built again and again. Each successive step represents an exciting commercial venture as well as a substantial risk on someone's part. When one fails, hopefully, another concept is there waiting to fill the void and serve a market need. Especially in an urban setting, it is visionary risk-takers that keep the City alive. They provide choices in housing, shopping, recreation, and employment that support a healthy urban environment at the foundation of which is design excellence.

Urban [re]Generation

If we zoom out to the holistic view, certain responsibilities fall to the City. The organizing theme of such a large scale concept can be extremely complex as illustrated in the Des Moines study; but with care, this oversight brings sustained life to urban centers.

The Iowa Chapter of the American Institute of Architects offers support for smaller communities in developing a framework and direction through the Iowa Architectural Foundation. Supporting this cause, this issue's Advocacy section focuses on 'livability' and programs like the IAF's Community Design Program.

Tim Schroeder, AIA, LEED™ AP
Editor, *Iowa Architect*

ADVOCACY

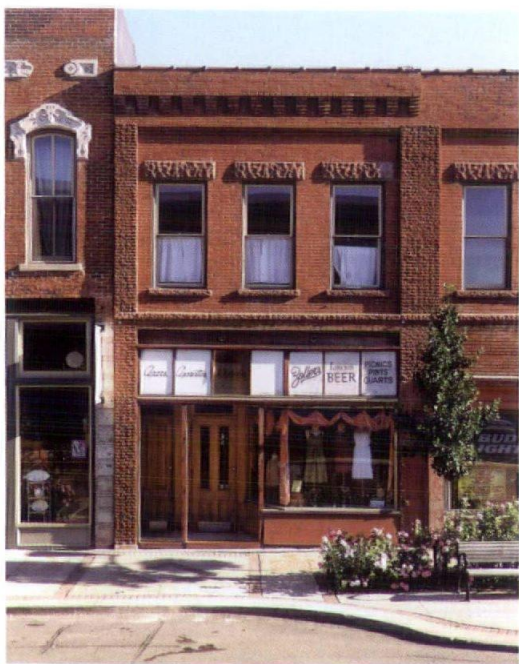
This issue focuses on preserving and regenerating urban centers. Urban regeneration is one component of a broader theme of livable communities, which is a core principle of The American Institute Architects. The following excerpts from local and national publications explore how architecture and architects help communities, both urban and rural, become more livable for their citizens.

Livability 101

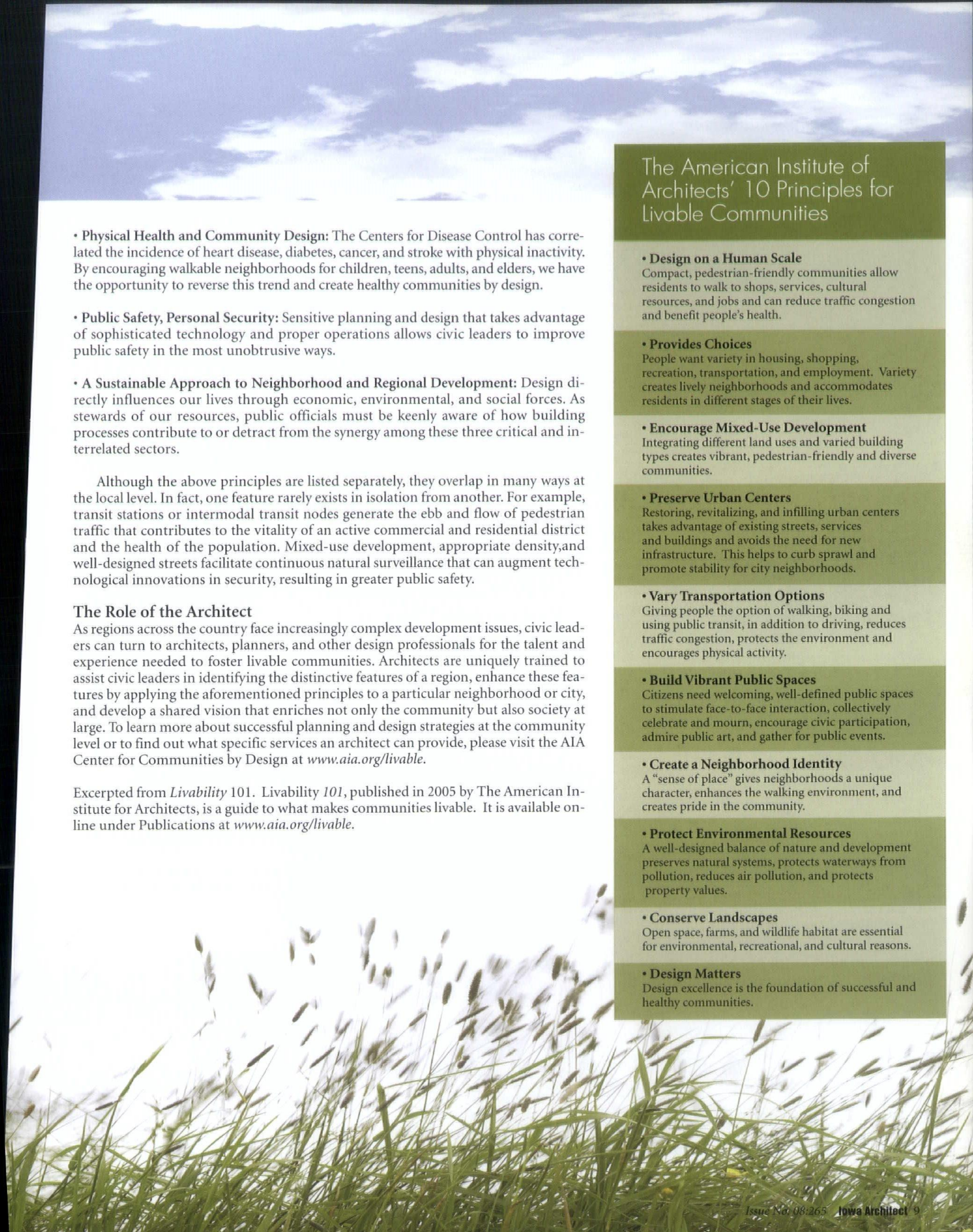
What makes a community livable? There is no single answer to that question. In a country as large as the United States—with such a wide range of geographic and climatic conditions and with a culturally and economically diverse population whose density is distributed so unevenly—*livability* is best defined at the local level. Broadly speaking, a livable community recognizes its own unique identity and places a high value on the planning processes that help manage growth and change to maintain and enhance its community character

Fundamental planning and design principles that must be considered as communities evolve over time include:

- **A Sense of Place:** By assessing and understanding a district's unique combination of natural and manmade assets that distinguish it from other locales, civic leaders can develop an action plan to preserve, strengthen, or enhance those qualities that are most essential to the community.
- **Mixed-Use Development:** Purposefully including a variety of appropriate uses within walkable distances provides convenient access to services while creating a vibrant backdrop for commercial and social exchange.
- **Density:** Increasing the number of housing units per acre goes hand-in-hand with mixed-use development. Planners must carefully consider the density required to foster lively main streets. Good design can be achieved at various levels of density.
- **Effective Planning for Regional Transportation:** Civic leaders from neighboring jurisdictions can improve the economic health of their region by working together to develop a coordinated network of viable public transit options, walkable paths, and bike trails, plus transit-oriented development.
- **Street-Savvy Design:** By designing a street completely and properly, planners create a pedestrian-friendly public realm that is not overpowered by vehicles and, therefore, offers a safe and attractive alternative to automobile travel.



Above: East Village Restorations. Courtesy of the architect, HLKB ARCHITECTURE



The American Institute of Architects' 10 Principles for Livable Communities

• **Physical Health and Community Design:** The Centers for Disease Control has correlated the incidence of heart disease, diabetes, cancer, and stroke with physical inactivity. By encouraging walkable neighborhoods for children, teens, adults, and elders, we have the opportunity to reverse this trend and create healthy communities by design.

• **Public Safety, Personal Security:** Sensitive planning and design that takes advantage of sophisticated technology and proper operations allows civic leaders to improve public safety in the most unobtrusive ways.

• **A Sustainable Approach to Neighborhood and Regional Development:** Design directly influences our lives through economic, environmental, and social forces. As stewards of our resources, public officials must be keenly aware of how building processes contribute to or detract from the synergy among these three critical and interrelated sectors.

Although the above principles are listed separately, they overlap in many ways at the local level. In fact, one feature rarely exists in isolation from another. For example, transit stations or intermodal transit nodes generate the ebb and flow of pedestrian traffic that contributes to the vitality of an active commercial and residential district and the health of the population. Mixed-use development, appropriate density, and well-designed streets facilitate continuous natural surveillance that can augment technological innovations in security, resulting in greater public safety.

The Role of the Architect

As regions across the country face increasingly complex development issues, civic leaders can turn to architects, planners, and other design professionals for the talent and experience needed to foster livable communities. Architects are uniquely trained to assist civic leaders in identifying the distinctive features of a region, enhance these features by applying the aforementioned principles to a particular neighborhood or city, and develop a shared vision that enriches not only the community but also society at large. To learn more about successful planning and design strategies at the community level or to find out what specific services an architect can provide, please visit the AIA Center for Communities by Design at www.aia.org/livable.

Excerpted from *Livability 101*. *Livability 101*, published in 2005 by The American Institute for Architects, is a guide to what makes communities livable. It is available online under Publications at www.aia.org/livable.

• Design on a Human Scale

Compact, pedestrian-friendly communities allow residents to walk to shops, services, cultural resources, and jobs and can reduce traffic congestion and benefit people's health.

• Provides Choices

People want variety in housing, shopping, recreation, transportation, and employment. Variety creates lively neighborhoods and accommodates residents in different stages of their lives.

• Encourage Mixed-Use Development

Integrating different land uses and varied building types creates vibrant, pedestrian-friendly and diverse communities.

• Preserve Urban Centers

Restoring, revitalizing, and infilling urban centers takes advantage of existing streets, services and buildings and avoids the need for new infrastructure. This helps to curb sprawl and promote stability for city neighborhoods.

• Vary Transportation Options

Giving people the option of walking, biking and using public transit, in addition to driving, reduces traffic congestion, protects the environment and encourages physical activity.

• Build Vibrant Public Spaces

Citizens need welcoming, well-defined public spaces to stimulate face-to-face interaction, collectively celebrate and mourn, encourage civic participation, admire public art, and gather for public events.

• Create a Neighborhood Identity

A "sense of place" gives neighborhoods a unique character, enhances the walking environment, and creates pride in the community.

• Protect Environmental Resources

A well-designed balance of nature and development preserves natural systems, protects waterways from pollution, reduces air pollution, and protects property values.

• Conserve Landscapes

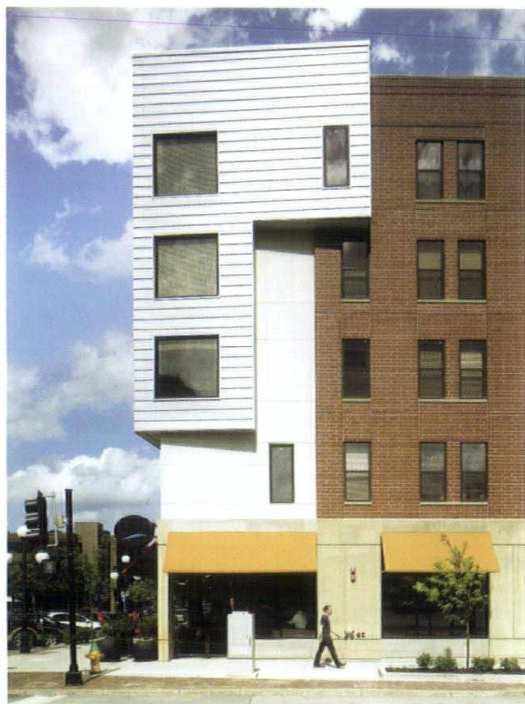
Open space, farms, and wildlife habitat are essential for environmental, recreational, and cultural reasons.

• Design Matters

Design excellence is the foundation of successful and healthy communities.

Definition

Livable Community = a well-planned, well-designed community that supports inclusiveness, accessibility, affordability, health, and opportunity for all; a great place to live



CAMERON CAMPBELL AIA

Above: Market Place Lofts. Courtesy of the architect, ge Wattier architecture, inc.

Livable Communities in Iowa

What will it take to make Iowa *America's Most Livable State*? The answer lies in the design and planning of our communities and neighborhoods.

A community reaches its full potential when it embraces unique qualities, places a high priority on managing growth and implements a new vision that maintains and enhances those qualities.

What makes Iowa special? Most people reminisce about a small Iowa town that they grew up in or visited as a child. Whether they describe the Amana Colonies, Winterset's covered bridges or the quaint Dutch architecture of Pella, the response is typically the same; they describe a community that grew through the generations to typify the social heritage of the residents.

Some people may recall landmarks of the larger cities, such as the State Capitol or a Regent's University, or a specific neighborhood within an urban core like Cedar Rapids' Czech Village or the East Village in Des Moines. Still others refer to naturally occurring phenomena such as the Iowa Great Lakes, the Loess Hills or the Rivers that bracket Iowa's borders. Although these answers are diverse, they paint an appropriate framework for the continuance of the underlying principles that make Iowa such a great place to live and raise a family.

There is much to learn from these models as Iowans look forward to how their communities grow and change through the next decade and beyond. These lessons are deeper than the nostalgia inherent in many of the above examples. An all-inclusive look into what makes these places unique and special can be found below the surface with a more comprehensive study.

The American Institute of Architects has published a list of 10 Principles for Livable Communities. Community design strategies include:

- Provide an environment of inclusiveness and accessibility
- Offer appropriate and affordable housing
- Provide accessible, affordable, reliable and safe alternative transportation
- Promote business, volunteer and educational opportunities
- Provide key health and support services
- Encourage participation in civic, cultural, social and recreational activities

These tenets work together to maximize people's independence, assure safety and security, promote inclusiveness and provide choice.

For most Iowans, this framework sounds very familiar; it seems like the way we have done things for years. Unfortunately, this isn't necessarily the case, as suburban

Designing Livable Communities: The Iowa Architectural Foundation's Community Design Program

The Iowa Architectural Foundation's Community Design Program helps Iowa towns and cities create and improve upon principles of livable communities.

The Iowa Architectural Foundation is an independent, non-profit organization dedicated to fostering an appreciation of design excellence while working for the preservation of our cultural heritage. The IAF supports programs, projects and publications that share this vision. It solicits, receives and expends gifts, grants and legacies for education and preservation of architecture and its allied arts and sciences. It also provides guidance to those groups, individuals, and companies who endeavor to improve their communities.

The Iowa Architectural Foundation sponsors multiple initiatives, including the Community Design Program which helps Iowa communities with urban planning, design assistance, and creating more livable, sustainable environments for their citizens.

Community needs range from redesigning a town square to a total image change for the community. The Community Design Program helps those communities by providing a very open and public decision-making process that brings organizational representatives, community officials, and concerned citizens together with professional designers.

After several months of organizing, these parties come together for an intense weekend charrette. The strength of the Community Design Program is the immediacy of the evaluation of all ideas put forward and the ability to visualize the possibilities suggested by community development initiatives.

A typical charrette requires a three-day weekend in the community, but to adequately serve the community, there are months of preparatory work with community leadership. Considerable time is also devoted to follow-up on ideas generated after the workshop. Each workshop is tailored to fit the community and in return, they are required to cover the expenses for the team by paying a fee (based on population and scope of the project) as well as provide meeting space, housing, meals and some materials.

Recent workshops have been conducted in Avoca, Oakland, Walnut, Knoxville, Sioux City, and Council Bluffs.

For more information, visit the Iowa Architectural Foundation's website at www.iowaarchfoundation.org.

developments have continued to use more and more land while urban centers continue to decay. These often-well-intentioned plans cause civic, health and welfare functions to be separated by greater and greater distances leading to ever-increasing over-reliance on automobiles and less personal contact, independence and choice.

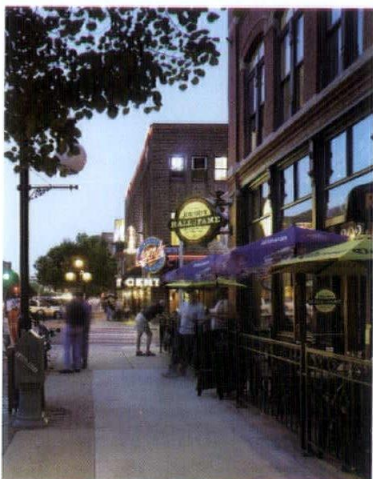
Communities that are truly great places to live do not happen by accident. They embody standards of livability that must be carefully planned and consistently promote the highest quality of design. Members of The American Institute of Architects provide their services to help communities accomplish this.

Iowa must continue to keep an eye on the past as we look forward to the future. We must celebrate the land and culture that has made this state so beautiful. This cannot be attained alone, without the support of both the public and private sectors. It must be embraced by small cities as well as by major metropolitan areas. It must

be championed by farmers as well as financiers, by mayors as well as mail carriers, by educators as well as students.

Iowans must band together to create a groundswell of support for these guidelines through integrated policies and action. As a result, Iowa can improve upon its successes and become America's "Most Livable State".

The above article is written by Matt Cole, AIA, and Tim Hielkema, AIA, and was published by The American Institute of Architects, Iowa Chapter, in 2007.



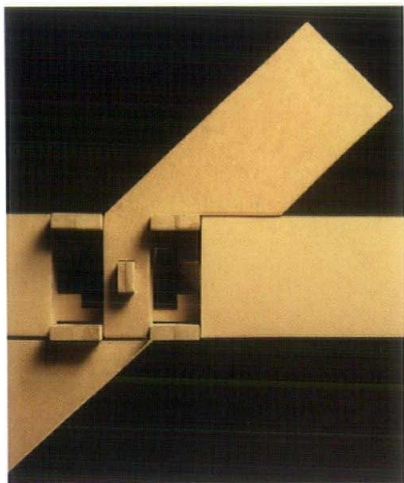
CAMERON CAMPBELL, AIA

Above: Court Center in Des Moines.
Courtesy of the architect, ge Wattier
architecture, inc.

ALTERNATIVES

AZHARI RASUMAN AND
RAYMOND GANDAYUWANA

SCION PROJECT



Top: Medium: Medium Density Fiber
Dimension: 20" x 20" x 16"
This joint defines joinery as a mass of interlocking geometries.

Right: Medium: poplar wood, twine, concrete, nylon wire
Dimension: 16" x 16" x 16"
The Jiggly Joint defines joinery as a series of parts that are woven together.

Left: Medium: concrete, nylon wire
Dimension: 16" x 16" x 16"
Buildings are not as entirely rigid as we perceive them to be, the Jiggly joint was constructed to reflect on the rigidity of concrete and the flexibility of the joint.

Center: Medium: poplar wood, twine
Dimension: 16" x 20" x 20"
In contrast to the flexibility of rigid materials in the Jiggly joint, the fuzzy joint with its twine weaving allows what is essentially a pivot joint to express a sense of rigidity not normally seen in woven materials such as fabric.

Right: Medium: concrete, Muslin fabric
Dimension: 24" x 24" x 24"
This pedestal is a discovery that the soft imperfection of concrete form could sustain as a structure. The fabric was woven between the horizontal slab and concrete was poured in it. As a result, the fluidity of concrete was captured by the tension of the fabric based on the natural distribution of its material load.

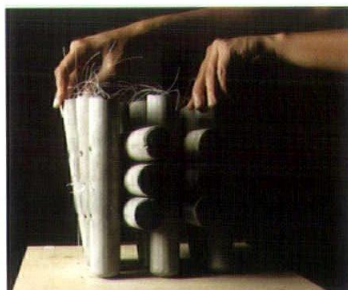
The SCION PROJECT deals with the issue of how architectural detail is made. With the invention of the screw the joining of materials has primarily been mechanical. Joints are no longer designed specific to their purpose. With the industrial society's need for efficiency and economy the screw ultimately becomes a one solution method.

Thus, the project begun by examining other methods of joining material inspired from traditional Indonesian construction, during which no mechanical methods such as the screw/bolts were used. By exploring traditional detail as well as current methods of construction and use of materials, the project's goal attempted to gain an intimate knowledge of craftsmanship in the creation of joints.

The resulting joints are arranged into several categories: Avoiding the screw, Woven Material and Concrete Study. From these studies the (Sarcophagus) emerged as an object constructed by reversing the process of design starting first with the joint then finding what program the joint could be applied to.

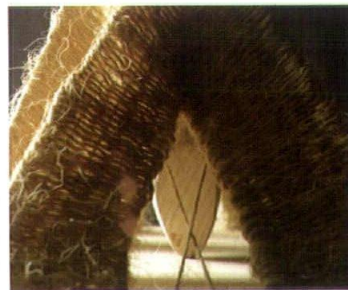
The products of this project invite the opportunity that a refined joint could bring character to a building. These investigations encourage the esthetics of craftsmanship through a curious design methodology.

From concept to the final product our process of design keeps us engaged with the material at hand, experiencing the limitation and discovering the possibilities of the joints we are devising. We do not separate formation of concept and creation of object. Instead concept and creation occur in parallel as we are informed of design decisions through the actual manipulation of materials. By eliminating the gap between conceptual drawing and the actual crafting of joints, the design process follows closely the spirit of discovery.



Avoiding the screw

With the invention of the screw the joining of materials had primarily been mechanical. Joints are designed specific to their purpose. With the industrial society's need for efficiency and economy the screw ultimately becomes a one solution method.



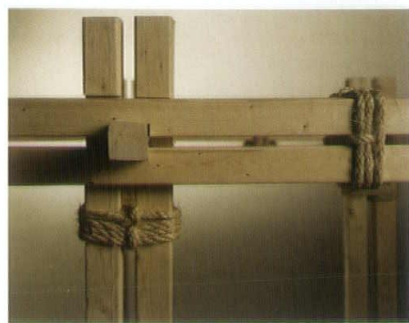
Woven material

The woven material is the application of weaving into materials as a method of joining. Our intent is to gain an intimate knowledge of craftsmanship as a way of understanding traditional Indonesian construction

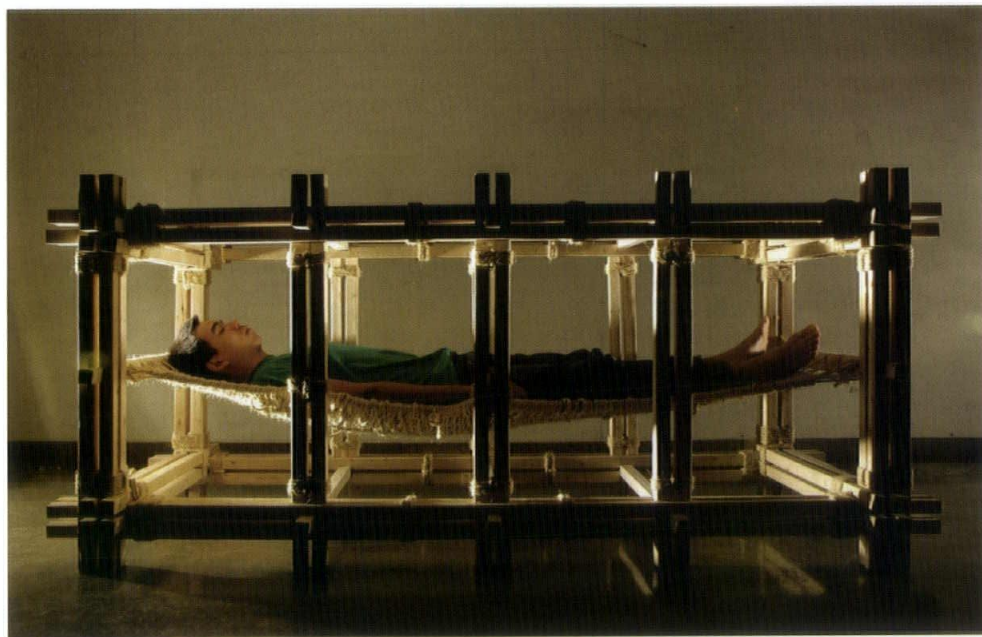
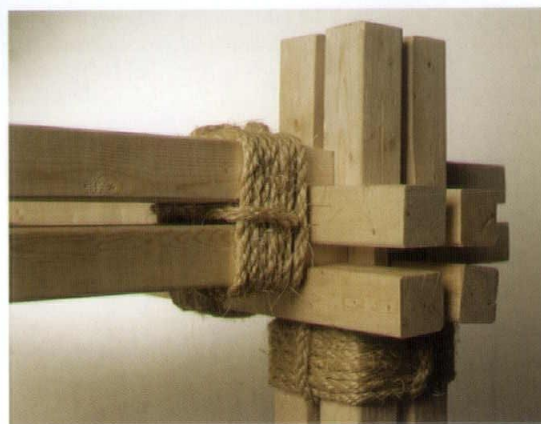


Concrete study

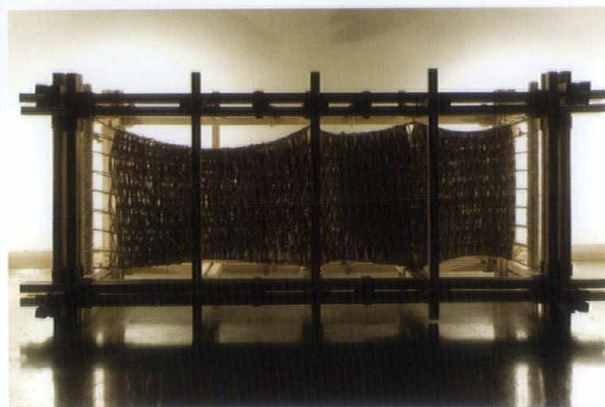
Fabric formed concrete is used to form concrete beams and columns that have direct relationship to the moment diagram. Applying fabric formed concrete into the joints between column and slab allows the expression of concrete's fluidity and compressive quality within fabric's tensile property.



After an entire semester of investigating screw-less joints there came a constant question on the application of the joints. The approach that we took to tackle this task was to select a joint from our investigation and see what architecture can come about. The joint selected are interlocking joint2 and the fuzzy joint. The program was selected so that it directly engaged the human body at one to one scale. We no longer built models of objects but are building an actual object. We decided on several properties that the object had to exhibit. The object had to enclose a body. The construction had to be easily disassembled. The container had to restrict the body's movement to some extent. The Joint should not use any mechanical joints or adhesive. The final creation is simply a container for the body that is decorated by the joints. The object reverses the joints and the human body.



Medium: Douglas fir, twine
Dimension: 96" x 38" x 38"



What's Next, Downtown?

A NEW PLAN FOR DOWNTOWN DES MOINES ROUSES THOUGHTS ON THE ROLE OF PLANNING FOR IOWA ARCHITECT

In March 2008, the City of Des Moines and Polk County approved and Downtown Community Alliance endorsed this new downtown plan.

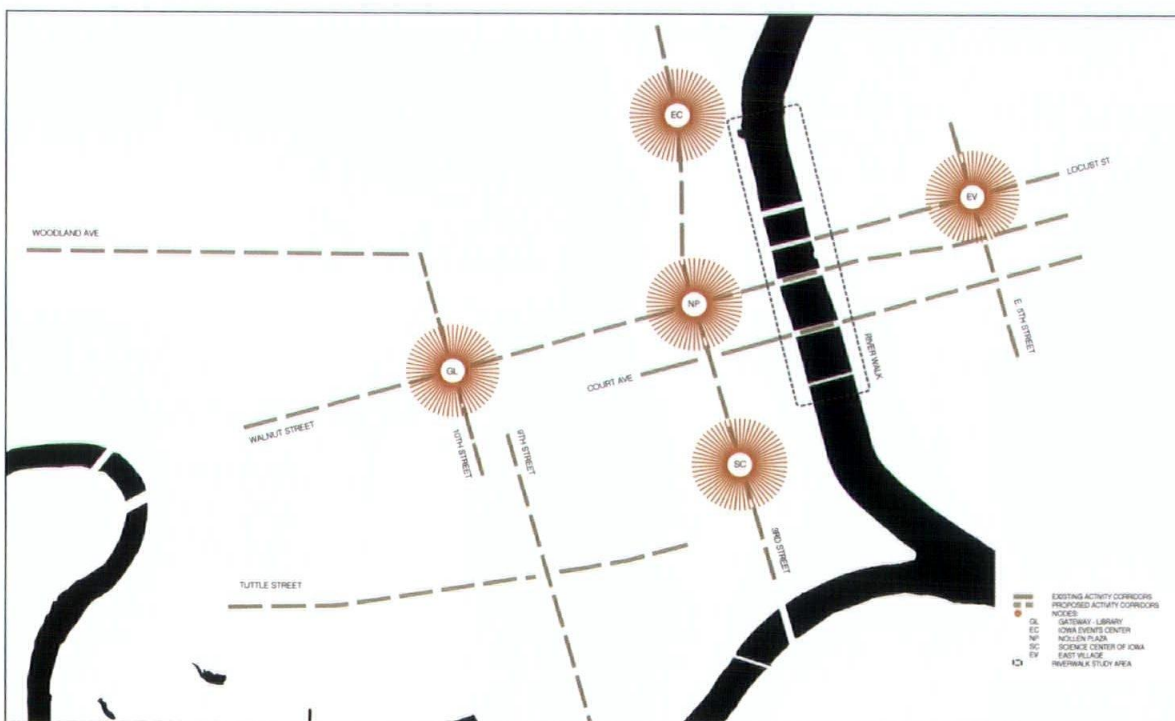
Make no little plans. They have no magic to stir men's blood and probably themselves will not be realized. Make big plans; aim high in hope and work, remembering that a noble, logical diagram once rewarded will never die, but long after we are gone will be a living thing, asserting itself with ever-growing insistency...let your watchword be order and your beacon beauty.

— Daniel Burnham, speaking about *The Chicago Plan of 1909*.

Right: 2007 aerial photograph looking northwest at the confluence of the Des Moines and Raccoon Rivers.

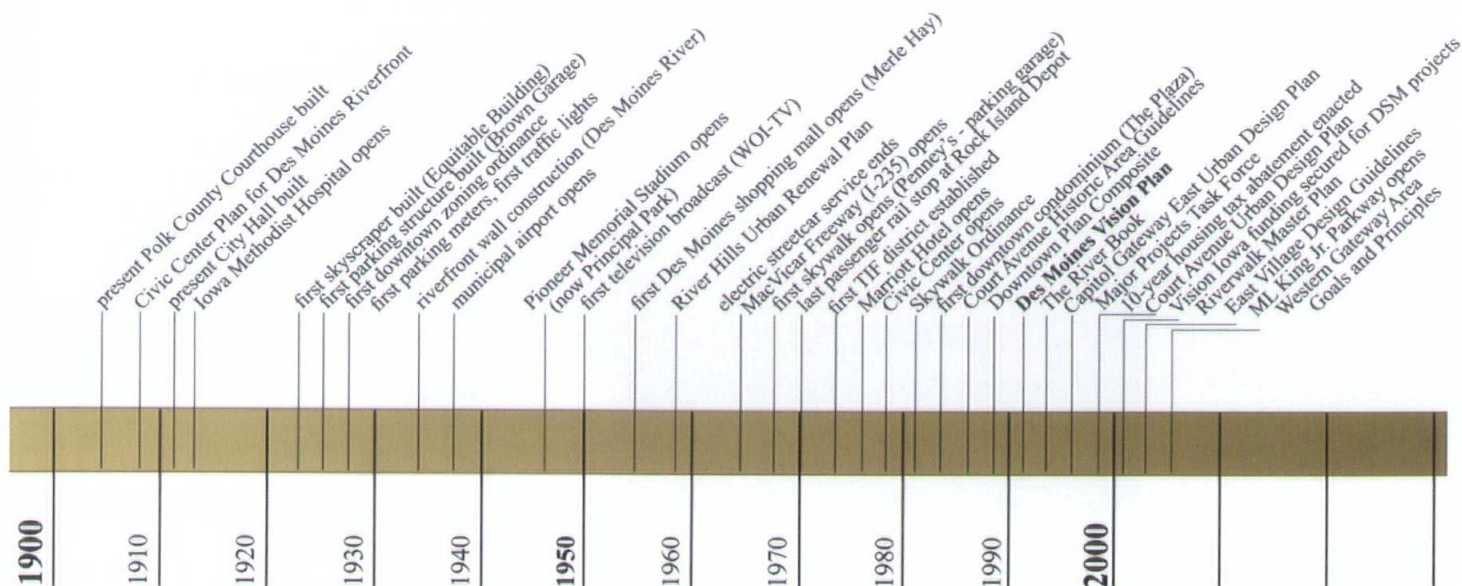
Below: Major nodes and corridors in downtown Des Moines

Sometime in the 20th Century we Midwesterners lost our appetite for thinking boldly, even broadly, about our cities. Although planning has always had a promotional aspect, at some point, catering to our market economy and attracting big business became the mantra of the city. Meanwhile, planning the densest of our urban areas for the sake of long-term quality, efficiency, sustainability, and yes, even beauty, went by the wayside. Late in 2005, Des Moines, like many other cities in recent years, decided to reverse this trend. In the wake of nearly \$3 billion in downtown investment since 2001, the City of Des Moines and Polk County allocated funding for a new downtown plan that would also consolidate and update a number of plans for downtown areas. In mid-2006, I was hired to conduct this planning effort and write the plan; the City and County, along with the Downtown Community Alliance, a chamber of commerce-type entity for Des Moines, hired Agrest + Gandelsonas, author of the 1990's Des Moines Vision Plan, to consult on the content of the initiatives.



Photographer: Agrest + Gandelsonas Architects and Erin Olson-Douglas

ERIN OLSON-DOUGLAS, AIA



The plan, *What's Next, Downtown?*, aims to balance the dominant economic development agenda with quality of life priorities in order to produce a vibrant city with ever-greater competitiveness. Four goals framed the work from the outset:

1. Identify future opportunities
2. Propose frameworks to capitalize on existing and future downtown investments
3. Develop strategies for building synergy and link ages between downtown amenities
4. Generate support and expand momentum for investment from the public and private sectors.

Utilizing the foundations of Des Moines' earliest planning, the project builds on the unique and exemplary early 20th Century urban structure with Locust Street's axis to the State Capitol, Court Avenue's focus on the Polk County Courthouse and the historic civic Des Moines Riverfront. The downtown plan supports existing amenities, while proposing initiatives in two categories: movement and development.

Movement initiatives address the connection challenges present in downtown today. Typically, these proposals are associated with public sector investment or public-private collaboration. Movement proposals include:

Walnut Street Transformation: Walnut Street spans the east-west dimension of downtown; eight of its approximately thirty blocks are currently dedicated to a metropolitan bus transit mall. Walnut Street Transformation proposes relocating the transit mall to a downtown transit center and returning Walnut Street to a conventional urban street that becomes a "movement spine" through the downtown that will serve as the route for a to-be constructed downtown tram. Desired new developments on Walnut Street include: active mixed uses at ground floors, bike lanes, two-way traffic, on-street parking, a renewed landscape, and vertical skywalk access points. The proposal provides a segue way into advocating for greater transportation options in downtown.

Skywalks & Sidewalks: As the three mile public downtown skywalk system approaches its thirtieth anniversary, it is in need of renovation. A thorough modernization plan, system extensions, and a network of public vertical access points that clearly connect the skywalk and sidewalk levels are high priority. Pedestrian improvements are identified for both the street and sidewalk level.



HISTORIC POSTCARDS

Above: Timeline showing 20th-early 21st Century evolution of downtown Des Moines leading up to this current planning effort.



HISTORIC POSTCARDS

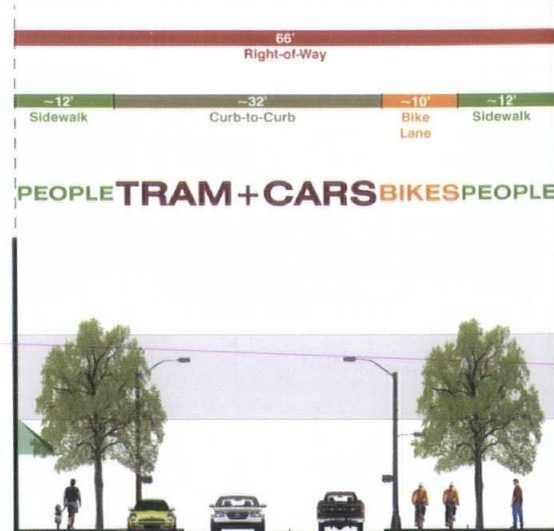
Right: Images from the 1920's, 1950's, and 2007. Note the transformation from pedestrians and the trolley, to cars on the 1-way street, then to buses on the transit mall.



ERIN OLSON-DOUGLAS



ERIN OLSON DOUGLAS



Left: Walnut Street transformation proposed section showing many possible uses within the existing right-of-way.

Right: Walnut Street transformation proposed diagram showing many possible uses within the existing right-of-way.

Below: Greening downtown proposed open space network.

Greening Downtown: The proposal includes initiatives linking nearby neighborhoods and the vast Central Iowa Trails network to a new system of downtown bike lanes. This proposal creates a network of parks with active and passive uses by integrating downtown's relationship to the Des Moines and Raccoon Rivers.

Development initiatives are more speculative and oriented to the private sector response to a number of conditions, including recent investments in the downtown as well as those proposed in the Movement section. Development initiatives include:

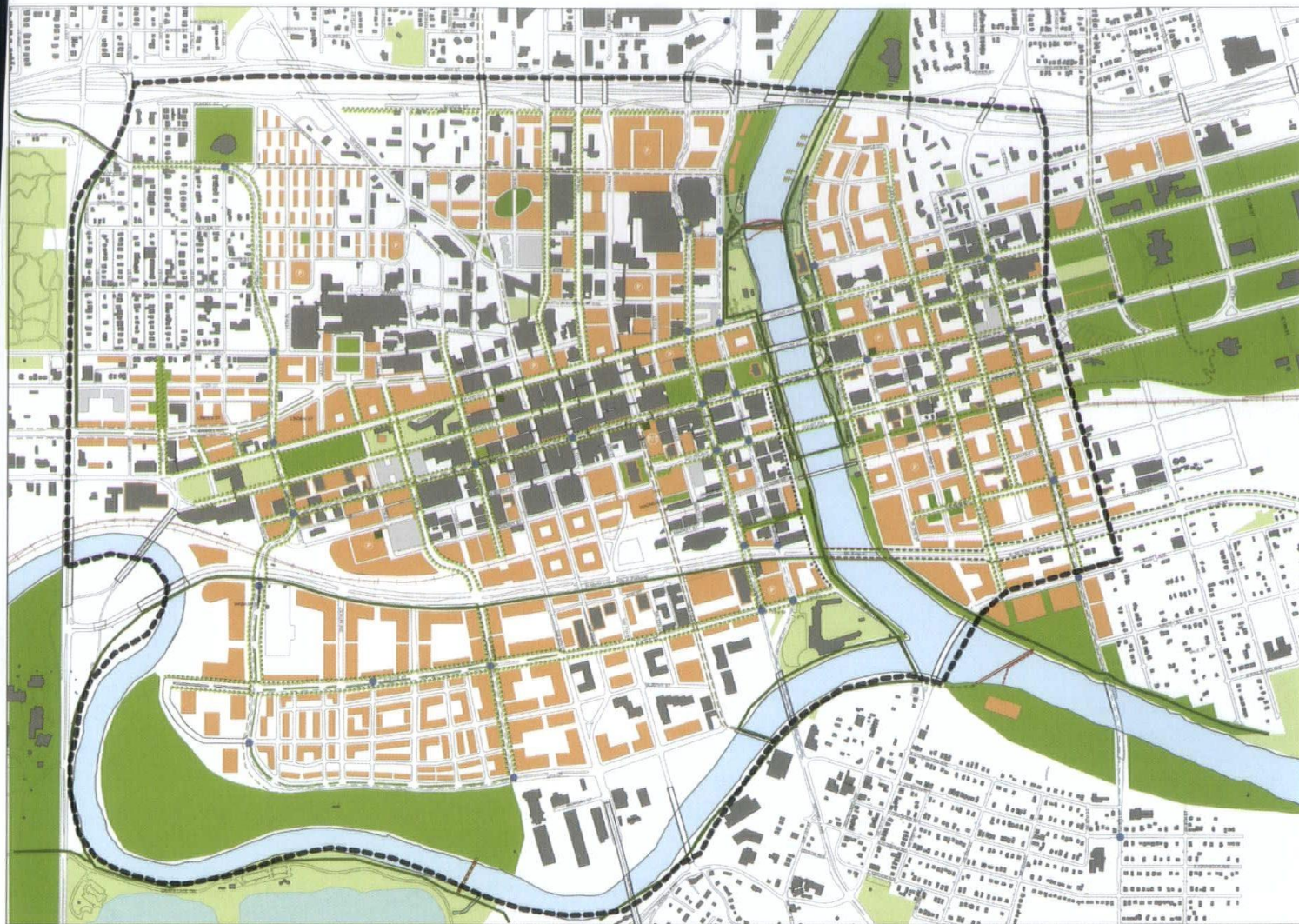
Downtown as a Business Hub: Various areas and investments in downtown create a spectrum of commercial business development potential. This section identifies four discreet areas and discusses the unique strengths and needs respective to each area.

Living Downtown: Downtown Des Moines has doubled its residential population in the past five years. With this critical mass, Living Downtown identifies distinct downtown neighborhoods wherein a unique identity could be cultivated. This section discusses the need for urban amenities such as education, transportation options, retail and services, as well as parks, in order to foster further residential development.

Cultural Development: This section recommends strategically focusing on areas and significant sites for future cultural amenities to better connect our existing cultural places. This infill strategy is intended to enhance the experience of moving through downtown and to make connections between established areas of interest and new cultural attractions.

AGREST + GANDELSON ARCHITECTS





The District Development section explores the deployment of these initiatives in the various downtown areas, now emerging as districts, and offers overall planning and design guidelines particular to conditions in downtown Des Moines. The plan concludes with an outline of priorities with an eye towards implementation.

The answer to 'What's Next?' is a series of steps that move downtown Des Moines away from complete reliance on the automobile towards a mixed-use vibrant urban center with an enticing street life that complements our skywalks. The urban amenities and improvements suggested in Movement and Development are all part of *What's Next, Downtown?* If achieved, the initiatives in the plan will significantly alter the way people use downtown and the many opportunities it offers.

The next question becomes who will rise to this call? It takes an army to create change at an urban scale. *What's Next, Downtown?* proposes a series of broad, systemic, interrelated initiatives whose boundaries are not clearly delineated. The initiatives require champions and need commitment in order to ensure the consistency needed to realize their synergistic potential. While much progress has been made in downtown Des Moines, much is still left to do.

It is an important endeavor for the public sector to undertake an ambitious planning effort. Think for a moment

about the roles that various entities play in a city. In Iowa, it is only the City that is responsible for the "whole"; it should not shy away from providing proactive guidance by undertaking the challenging task of objective planning and building the consensus for the future. Most of architecture's clients have interests that amount to a speck on a map. Conversely, a city's leadership is interested in the quality of the whole map. Planning should inspire and, in some cases, require each speck on the map to contribute to the whole. Planning should inform the priorities of a community. It should inform infrastructure investments. Planning should signal intentions and provide confidence to decision-makers. It should provide a framework that illuminates individual projects. In some cases, it may even inspire development or motivate philanthropic deeds. Done well, planning should create an urban condition where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

What's Next, Downtown? can be downloaded at: <http://www.dmgov.org/dtPlan08.htm>

—Erin Olson-Douglas, AIA practices in Des Moines and teaches at Iowa State University. Prior to moving back "home" to Des Moines, she completed an Architecture and Urban Design degree at Harvard University and worked on planning projects in Greensboro, NC, Cambridge, MA and near the Capitol in Washington D.C.

Above: Plan priorities: long-term plan for development in downtown Des Moines; gray indicates existing development, orange shows future potential development.

A Center for the City

THE COURT CENTER REINVENTS A HISTORIC BUILDING TO SATISFY THE DESIRE FOR INCREASED DOWNTOWN DINING AND ENTERTAINMENT.

The architects at GE Wattier, Inc. contributed to the new nighttime culture of downtown Des Moines with the Court Center, a three-story renovation project that turned an old warehouse into a 35,000 square foot multiuse entertainment destination.

Right: The exterior of the Nacho Mama's building, which was converted into the Court Center, but kept on the National Register of Historic Places.

Left: The Court Center is the cornerstone for a revitalized downtown entertainment district. With a restaurant serving classic American dishes and four bars, the multi-level building transitions easily from day to night.

What does it take to turn a run-down warehouse into the crown jewel of downtown nightlife? In the case of 216 Court Avenue in downtown Des Moines, the transformation came when Ames Developers Russ McCullough, David Keller, and Mark Rodgers, of Court Center L.L.C., hired local architecture firm GE Wattier, Inc. to take on their 35,000 square foot project.

CAMERON CAMPBELL, AIA



In order to covert the Court District, an area which spans the southeast section of downtown Des Moines from the courthouse to the river, from decrepit and disregarded to the entertainment epicenter of Des Moines is largely due to the talent at Greg Wattier's firm. They've worked on residential projects for urbanites, such as Brown Camp Lofts and Tone Lofts, the Hubble Tower, and the new Marketplace Lofts and Court Lofts above and adjacent to Dos Rios, which made the area a safe and comfortable place to live.

Court Center helped make the area a destination for professionals looking for a bite to eat or a place to grab beers with friends. Legend's American Grill, a locally owned sports bar and grill franchise, holds the marquis spot in the building, drawing in customers for lunch and dinner. The rest of Court Center comes alive at night, when bar-goers fill the Irish pub A.K. O'Connor's, martini-bar C.C. Taft and Co., Liar's Club, a dance club, and People's

Court, which is a bar and concert venue.

"We did a lot of things, and I'm proud of what we did, but trust me — there were a lot of people involved," principal Greg Wattier said.

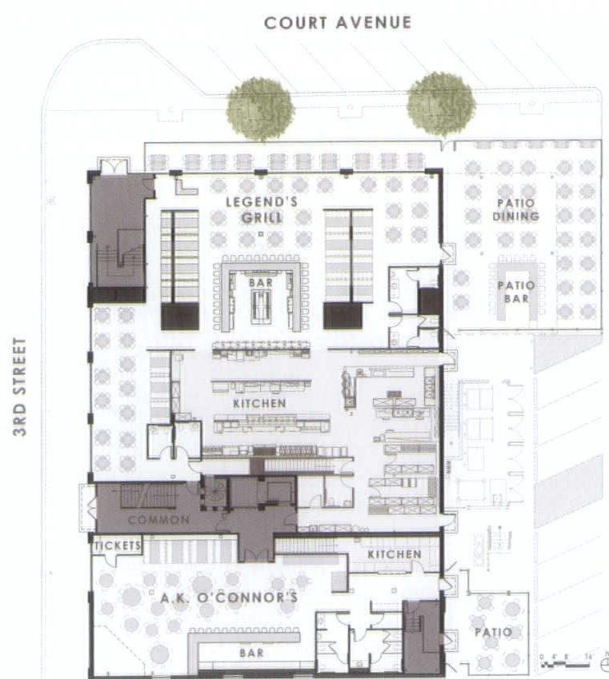
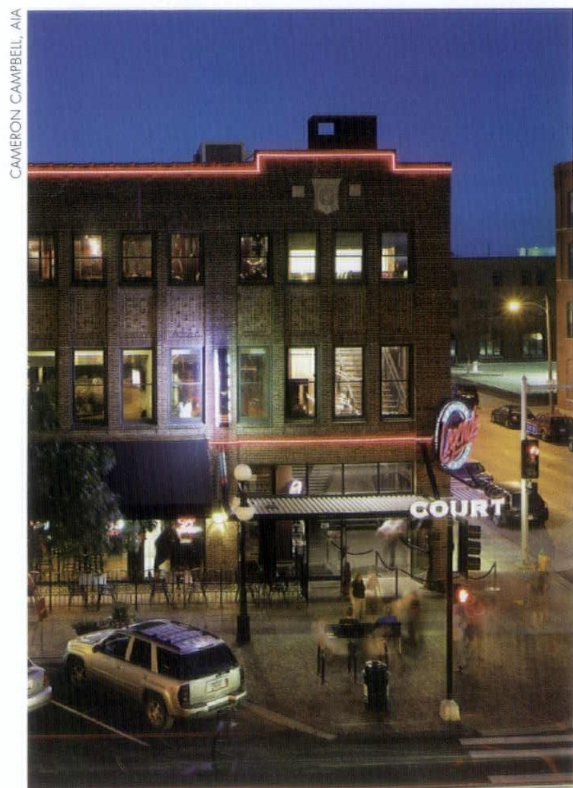
In other downtown buildings, the architects at GE Wattier, Architecture, Inc. have created space for both living and play, moving Des Moines toward becoming more of a 24-hour city.

"It's exciting and difficult at the same time to mix uses," Wattier said. "Mixing can be messy, but messy can be pretty vibrant. There's a crowd of people that want to be part of that."

It helps when the architects involved in the project are part of that crowd. The memory of a less-than-exciting nighttime downtown was fresh in the mind of project leader John Bloom, 29, who remembered most of the buildings in the area as shuttered during his college days.

Project: Court Center
Location: Des Moines, IA
Owner: Gateway Real Estate
Architect: ge Wattier architecture, inc.
General Contractor: Quebec Construction
Structural Engineer: Arnold Engineering
Photographer: Cameron Campbell, AIA/
 Parker Dobberstein/Dan Drendre

BRIANNE SANCHEZ



GE WATTIER ARCHITECTURE, INC.

Above: Dark finishes and pendant lighting create a more sophisticated air at Taft's, a martini bar and rental space that occupies Court Center.

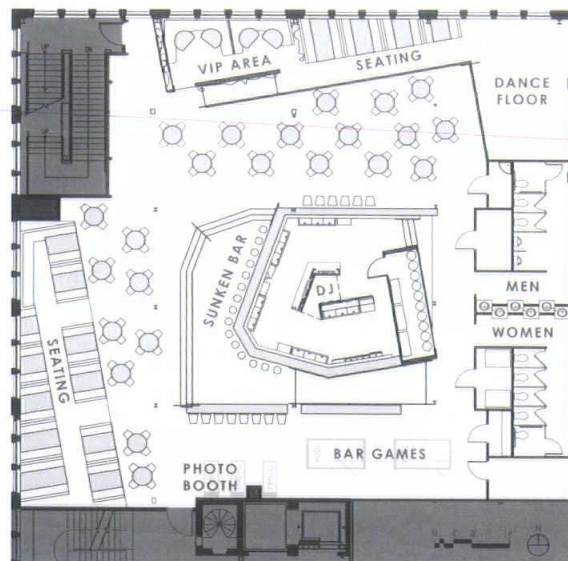
Left: The sign for Legend's, the Court Center's marquis occupant, is visible from a number of angles.

Right: Court Center floor plan.

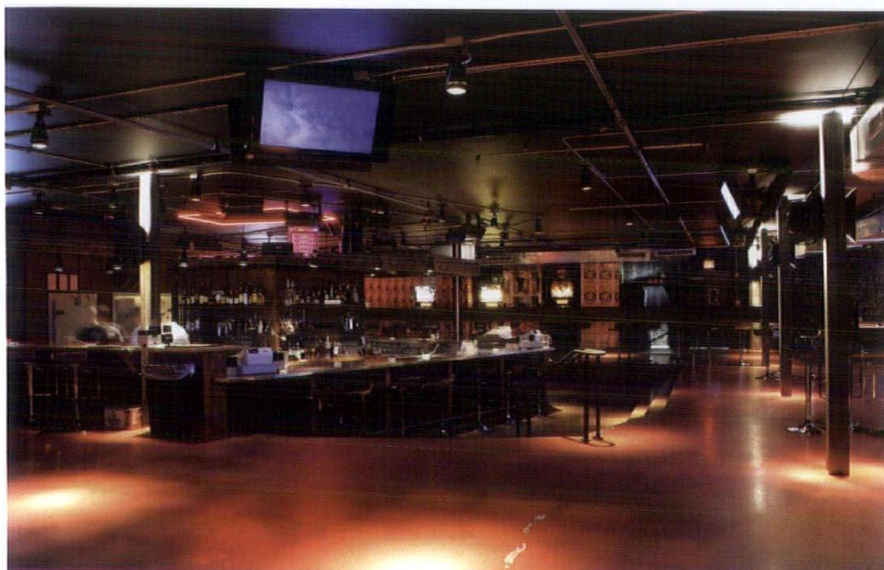
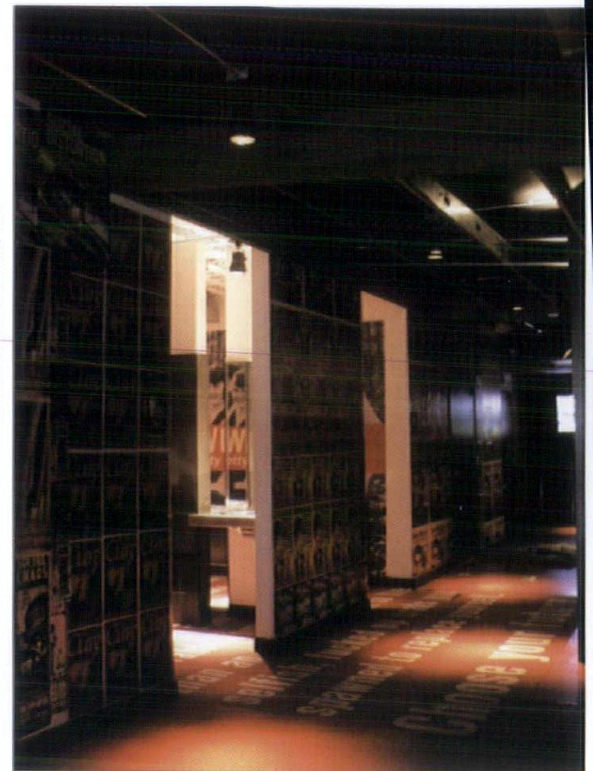
Left: Liar's Club floor plan.

Right: The innovative restrooms at Liar's Club encourage interaction at the connected men's and women's sink area.

Below: A view of the sunken bar design at Liar's Club, located on the second floor of the Court Center building.



GE WATTIER ARCHITECTURE, INC.



GE WATTIER ARCHITECTURE, INC.

Turning a historic, nearly vacant building into a local attraction involved more than just bumping up the curb appeal. However, much attention to detail was given in order to improve the aesthetic appearance of the building, including masonry repointing, rebuilding a steel awning around the perimeter, wood window frame repair, a new aluminum storefront system and new outdoor seating areas.

"It was quite a challenge to retrofit the building," Wattier said. "You have to first look at the integrity of the building. It had pretty good bones, but think of 300 dancing, bouncing people on the third floor. You have to really consider that."

Therefore, they opted to reengineer the building, which involved rebuilding the floors in order to accommodate the way the building was to be utilized by its tenants.

"The floor and ceiling assemblies were really well-thought-out [in order] to create an [ideal] acoustic situation," Bloom said. It would have been a problem if the blaring music at Liar's Club wafted up during a live set at People's Court, the third floor tenant.

"Another really big thing was exiting," Wattier said. Bloom didn't want to eat up all the leaseable space with his exit strategy, but traffic between bars — for patrons, staff and service people — was a concern. Bar owner Tom Zmolek initially wanted to use an original spiral staircase for performers to be able to come and go privately, but safety was an issue. "It wouldn't be very safe today, especially if people are consuming beverages," Wattier said.

They left the original staircase — visible, but not accessible from the main staircase — as part of the fabric of the building without compromising safety. Its metal steps nod to the building's industrial past, giving the building a sense of history that transcends the trendy music blaring from Liar's Club.

The end result, a central stair that is 6'3" wide and two other 5' wide stairs, conforms to code and creates an impressive connection among the three bars. The staircase is also central to the "see and be seen" atmosphere of Court Center. Glass panels secured by transoms allow a clear view of the patrons to the passers-by.

In Wattier's opinion, the building's connection to the street is its most successful element.

"The way that we were able to create a destination place — that's pretty exciting for me," he said. "Prior to this, it was a boarded-up old building. People love how it has engaged the street."

The most challenging aspect of the project? Troubleshooting during construction.

When the project began, the only secured tenant was Legend's. As it evolved, adding more bars meant catering to the needs and ideas of the owners within the parameters of the space.

Wattier was optimistic. "They weren't problems, they were opportunities," he said. "It's a bigger problem to have an empty building."

Bloom worked with the owner of Liars Club, a high energy, prep-punk dance club, to work a flying DJ booth and sunken bar area into the plans.

Other spatial features include a creative restroom design with interaction at the sinks between the men's and women's restrooms, jagged bar configuration with stain-



Above: Well-placed and well-planned spaces attract popular acts and draw large crowds. "The Nadas," play on the main stage at People's Court.

Left: A long bar at People's prevents too deep a crowd from forming.

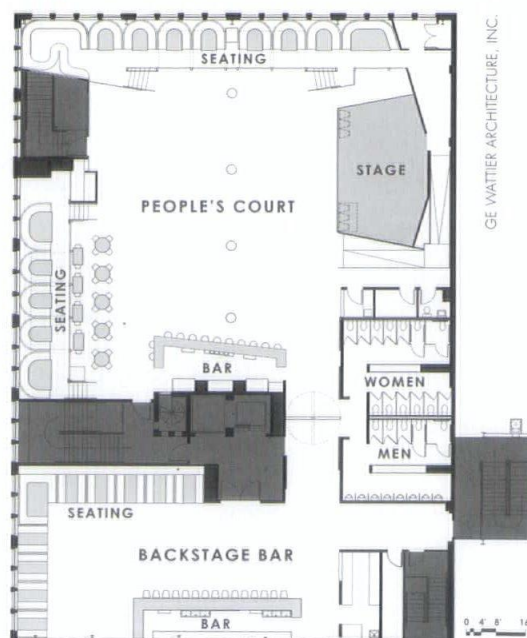
Right: Plenty of open space and moveable tables provide patrons with the ability to customize the setup, maximizing their experience.

Below: People's Court floor plan.

"One thing I looked forward to was creating a building where you'd have independent uses, but the whole building would be one family," Wattier said. "I think we pulled it off."

The Court Center's success is evident — it has become a point of reference synonymous with the exciting new culture of a reinvented downtown Des Moines.

—Brianne Sanchez lives and works in Des Moines and occasionally navigates the stairs at the Court Center after "beverages."



less steel counters, and fire engine red floors.

Vertical lighting and reflective surfaces create a sexy, cosmopolitan atmosphere so popular with its intended audience that lines form at the doors on weekends.

On the third floor, People's Court has a capacity for 600 occupants in the main stage room and 200 more in the Backstage Bar area, where various local and national acts play each week. Twenty-foot ceilings allow the venue to feel breathable, even when it's packed.

Although the individual bars were designed for separate audiences and elicit different feels, the exposed brickwork of the original, historic building serves as a cohesive element common among all of the floors.

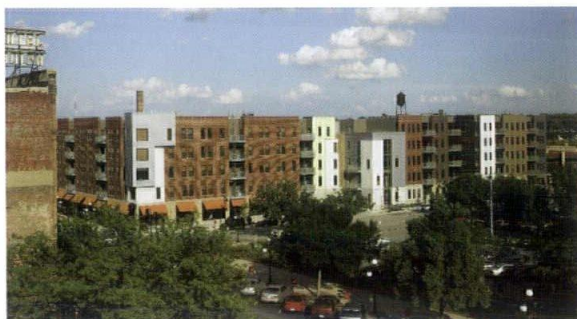
New market-rate and middle-income apartments by GE Wattier, Inc. help knit Court Avenue into a neighborhood.

Left A second phase of condominium units extends the Marketplace development toward the Science Center.

Right: Court Avenue's developing atmosphere is strengthened and enhanced by the Lofts' street level, which includes indoor and outdoor dining.

Below: The Lofts' planning reflects Wattier's recognition that the project needed to reinforce Court Avenue's existing fabric while extending its energy and atmosphere along 4th street. Entries and amenities reinforce pedestrian routes around the building's perimeter.

When Greg Wattier first arrived in Des Moines five years ago, he recalls thinking that the textbook models for revitalizing downtowns weren't necessarily applicable here. Lacking the critical mass of an Omaha or Chicago, Des Moines' downtown required more than signature buildings or streets, though it would get both of those. "You can't thrive on one artery," he notes. "You have to expand the web," to get as much mileage out of individual projects as possible, and to find ways that a project on one block can positively influence others nearby.



CAMERON CAMPBELL, AIA

Previous projects on Court Avenue had, he thought, done a good job of expanding their goals, redefining the edges of the Avenue itself, but also activating alleys and adjacent streets. The Vine Street Lofts, he thought, "got it." The Lofts had entries from all sides, with access to key amenities from the alleys. This set up networks of pedestrian paths that fed off of Court Avenue, and also extended the imprint of that street to the south. "The key," Wattier suggests, "is how to activate these secondary paths for those who don't want to walk past the bars and restaurants." The back edges of the new Marketplace Apartments, then, aren't just about service, they're about using small strokes to create a larger neighborhood.

Once this guiding principle was established, Wattier, along with Harry Bookey and Hubbell Realty, struck an architectural balance between the older facades on Court Avenue and the progressive tone of the Science Center, just two blocks down Fourth Street. The new lofts play with both the materials and the rhythms of each. The lofts have red brick facades broken by projecting balconies into elements that match the proportions of nearby buildings. A pair of "urban markers" on Fourth Street allude to the brighter pastels to the south while highlighting significant pedestrian entries into the complex. All of this sits atop a one-story base of storefronts that extend the familiar retail and entertainment scales of the two streets.

Inside, the apartments strike a balance between a more urban lifestyle and the local market's expectations. The kitchens and great rooms open into one another, but bedrooms are purposefully defined and separated. "We were trying to hit a market that we don't really yet know," Wat-



CAMERON CAMPBELL, AIA



GE WATTIER ARCHITECTURE, INC.

Project: Market Place Lofts
Location: Des Moines, IA
Owner: Hubbell Realty Company & BH Equities
Architect: ge Wattier architecture, inc.
General Contractor: Hubbell Construction Services
Structural Engineer: JF Kintz Structural Consultants
Photographer: Cameron Campbell, AIA/ Parker Dobberstein/Dan Drendel

TOM LESLIE, AIA



tier said. Des Moines is poised between urban and suburban cultures. Illustrating this point Wattier notes that there is a big difference between apartment rentals and condominium sales, as buyers are still balancing the idea of moving downtown. Meanwhile, apartment rentals are up more than fifty percent from five years ago, and the younger clientele for rentals are clearly well served by the “bohemian-lite” atmosphere of the Marketplace Apartments. All of the units were leased within three months, and the second phase of the project, which involves adding

condominiums to the mix of market-rate and medium-income apartments, is now being completed.

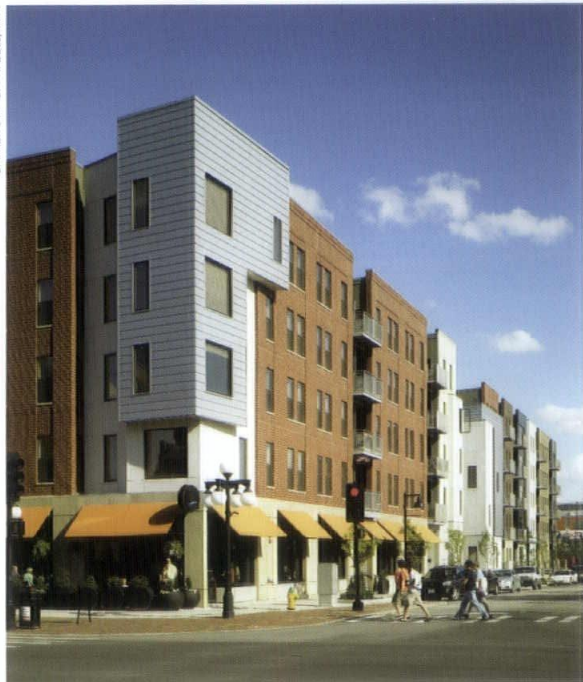
Downtown Des Moines’ renaissance has occurred on several scales, and while big projects like the Library deserve recognition, projects like the Marketplace Apartments deserve equal recognition for their subtlety and their willingness to quietly add to the city’s atmosphere.

—Tom Leslie, AIA, is an Associate Professor of Architecture at Iowa State University.

Above: The Marketplace Apartments continue and extend the atmosphere and architectural language of Court Avenue through materials, massing, and pedestrian strategies.

Left: Marketplace Lofts meet the corner of Court Avenue and Fourth Avenue with a signature corner element that breaks the rhythm of their otherwise contextual facades.

Right: Two corner elements anchor the Lofts on Fourth Avenue, tying in to the color and massing of the nearby Science Center.



What's Old Becomes New Again

A SWATH OF DES MOINES FINDS VIGOR IN AN OLD-SCHOOL URBAN MIX.

After a decade-long renovation, Des Moines' East Village discovers the past provides a good model for creating a vital area.

Just a few blocks west from the Iowa State Capitol, a baby store offers swank modern cribs and gear for parents-to-be. Down the block, a women's clothing boutique promises one-of-a-kind clothing for the fashionably inclined. Around the corner, there are packages of custom stationery to be had. Around noontime, restaurants—from noodle shops to Greek to sushi bars—buzz. After hours, a piano bar, a local watering hole and high-end restaurants draw residents and outlanders alike.

Welcome to Des Moines' East Village, circa 2008. Flip the clock back about 80 years, and the scene probably looked somewhat the same—many of small venues topped by living quarters. It is now what it was then: hot real estate in the capital city.

There are many remarkable things about the development of the East Village, not the least of which is that in just one short decade, the area has gone from a barren wasteland to a hip destination. Ten years ago, I moved back

to Des Moines and started a job at a local magazine that had relocated its offices to the East Village. We jokingly referred to ourselves as urban pioneers, a statement that wasn't too far from the truth. At that time, there were a handful of offices, the Locust Tap (a local bar that was always open, it seemed, even at 8 a.m.), and an old hardware store that sold screws, military gear and, we were convinced, handguns out of the basement. There was nary a spot to eat, much less a place to linger after hours. Before and after the work day, it was a ghost town.

I eventually moved on, and so, too, did the East Village—ever so incrementally, two steps forward, one step back. A little more retail, the first housing infill, another office building, and suddenly, it seems overnight, the East Village is THE place—to take out-of-town visitors, to find the latest restaurant, to uncover the newest retail spot. The place is so cool that it has lured retailers from the shopping mecca in Des Moines' western suburbs.



Project: East Village Restorations
Location: Des Moines, IA
Architect: HLKB ARCHITECTURE
Construction Manager: HLKB (design build)
Photographer: HLKB

KELLY ROBERSON

The space inside the retail shop Aimeé, 518 East Locust, is raw, with exposed brick and wood floors acting as backdrop to the fashions.



Right: Restored facades at 428-430 east locust.

Below: Renovation of other buildings in the area continues; one of the latest was at 512 East Grand, a sushi bar called Miyabi.



MATT NIEBUHR



CAMERON CAMPBELL, AIA

Why now and why here? The East Village has a long history, and was once vibrant, particularly due to its adjacency to the Capitol. There were a hundred or so buildings with small commercial operations on the first floor and dwellings on the second. Even in the late 1930s, the area was home to several theaters and a bowling alley on the second floor of the Hohberger at 504 E. Locust. "It was a perfect model for a thriving urban area," says Kirk Blunck, owner of HLKB architecture.

The story is the same—gradual urban decay—with an added kick of a 1960 rewritten housing ordinance. Suddenly, what was once acceptable for those second-floor apartments was no longer allowed. Rather than spend the money on upgrades, many owners simply shut off the floors, and the vitality that those live-in quarters added to the area was significantly diminished. It was the death knell for what some had called the most important commercial district in the state.

More decades passed, and other developers thought about, planned, and dropped plans for renovation. Maybe the timing wasn't right, or the money, or the mix. Then, suddenly, in the 1990s, urban living became a trendy thing.

About that time, Blunck got his first peek inside the area's signature building, the Teachout at 500 E. Locust. It had been vacant, save for one corner office, since 1978. In 1995, that building—one of the first concrete reinforced structures in the state and the tallest on the East Side—was identified as a linchpin in the area's redevelopment. Other companies had put paper and pen toward ideas to turn the building into apartments, but all had run out of energy, money, or inspiration. One Friday afternoon in November, 1998, Blunck saw the building. He made an offer the next Monday at 8 a.m., and by 8:30, the building—which had no mechanical, electrical, or plumbing systems—was his. Soon after, Blunck purchased the neighboring Hohberger, which had been vacant for five years. Its third-story dance floor had been sealed off in 1946 and was so full of pigeon carcasses that Blunck couldn't find an exterminator to clean it.

A Cross-Section of the East Village

Projects, along with original dates of construction, that HLKB has been involved in during the decade-long renovation of the East Village:

- 420 East Locust (Lucca) 1894
- 428 East Locust 1895
- 430 East Locust (Kitchen Collage) 1895
- 432 East Locust (Aimee) 1895
- 434 East Locust (Locust Tap) 1896
- 500 East Locust (Teachout Building) 1912
- 504 East Locust (Hohberger Building) 1878
- 506 East Grand 1878

- 512 East Grand (Myabi 9) 1925
- 514 East Grand 1925
- 516 East Grand 1880s
- 518 East Grand 1880s (Dornink Designs)
- 520 East Grand 1880s (Studio Block Building)

* names in parentheses note interior projects



And so, floor by floor, building by building, block by block, the work by HLKB and others began. It was as if they were channeling the area's history by creating small, affordable, commercial square footage on the ground floor—some swank, some stripped down—and most with living and office space higher up. Blunck also took advantage of the firm's previous experience with the building code for historic structures. "It gives you more latitude of what you do, and do not have to do, to historic buildings," Blunck says.

Spin forward ten years: the vibe in the East Village is funky, retro-cool and pedestrian friendly. Most of the old facades are intact. The newer buildings add a touch of contemporary without any outlandishness—mostly brick with a little steel for good measure. The tried and true spots are still there, such as The Locust Tap, with its crazy hours and old-school clientele. But, on Friday nights, you might find post-college age workaholics sidling up to the bars, too. If there ever was a plan for the East Village, that mix was it. "If Des Moines was going to have a vibrant, interesting area there, it needed to not be homogenized," says Blunck. "I had no intention to spend any energy trying to run businesses in the neighborhood out. I was more worried they would be pushed out."

The East Village thrived on small improvements and small successes—a new boutique, a new restaurant. Buoyed by the much-hyped and long-discussed removal

and renovation of the parking lot to the west of the Capitol, the area now stretches from that point west to City Hall. Sidewalks and streetscapes are about the only uniform thing in the neighborhood. The next steps, says Blunck, are to fill in the blanks and the gaps, to think thoughtfully about parking and other urban stresses and to maintain and enliven the pedestrian experience.

Throughout the process, there have been lessons learned: Take advantage of specific attributes of old buildings. Construct places that are financially feasible. Celebrate the quirkiness of original establishments, and use those qualities to attract people to older neighborhoods. Most of all, do things incrementally and cautiously. "If you make a big splash and it fails, it sends a very negative message to the outside world," says Blunck.

The East Village has grown, organically embraced historic details and provided a place for modern life, too. There was never an attempt to whitewash the area, and, likewise, there was never an attempt to re-create, exactly, a historical point in time. "If you combine historically accurate and contemporary design ideas, it makes the area richer and more interesting," says Blunck. "Those kinds of places will continue to appeal to a greater cross section of people, and keep us interested as architects, too."

—Kelly Roberson is a freelance writer in Des Moines.

Above: Since the bulk of renovations have taken hold, the building at 526 East Grand has housed a bookstore and the offices of a planner.

Live Where You Work, Work Where You Live

RESIDENTIAL AND RETAIL ARE COMBINED IN EAST VILLAGE SQUARE LOFTS

The East Village Square project in Des Moines allows first-floor tenants to run businesses right out of their homes.

Karen Brady and Arin Weibers started Ephemera Design, a custom stationary business, as a website while they were living in Colorado. They wanted to take the next step and open a retail space, but were nervous about the expense.

They found the solution at East Village Square, a new five-story retail and living space in Des Moines. The ground floor has 21 units that allow residents to combine loft living and space for retail stores.

It's a twist on the old model of merchants who lived in apartments above their stores. In this case, Weibers lives and works in the same unit. Brady lives in another apartment in the building.

It was one of the main reasons they moved back to their native Iowa, said Brady. "It worked out really well for us," said Brady, who is 26. "Being able to split the rent between an apartment and an actual storefront was ideal for us. I think it's a great idea as far as getting younger people started with opening businesses."

Brad Rippey, the project architect, said the units, which are all around 1,000 square feet, allow residents to run a business and benefit from the passing foot traffic. At the same time, they are able to maintain a zone of privacy in the loft bedrooms.

The five-story building has a total of 115 units. "The ones that aren't ground-floor live/work spaces are one-bedroom and two-bedroom apartments." Rents for all units range from \$890 to \$1,082 per month, said Sonja Roberts, the project's interior designer and wife of developer Jack Hatch.

A car dealership on the site had been razed for construction of the mixed-use building, located in the historic

East Village section of Des Moines. "The units have a clean, industrial look," Rippey said, with concrete floors and concrete block walls.

Roberts created a youthful feel through the use of a citrusy color palette of oranges and greens. The kitchens have maple cabinets and laminate countertops.

All units have two full bathrooms – one upstairs and one down. According to Rippey, the stairs serve as a visual screen, which helps delineate the 200-square-foot upstairs loft as a private space. "If your bed's not made, unless they go up there, they may not know," he said.

"We were going back to the past, where people used to live above their shops, bringing that old vision of the mom and pop living above their operation," Rippey said. "By pulling the living space toward the back, I think we were able to deal with that issue of people feeling out in the open."

Design work for the project began in 2003, and the construction was completed in 2006. The building, which has 46 low-income units, is fully occupied and has a waiting list, said Roberts. Tenants include consultants, a tattoo artist and a jeweler, she said.

She noted that tenants are not required to run businesses, and many choose to open only on weekends and evenings, when they are home from their day jobs.

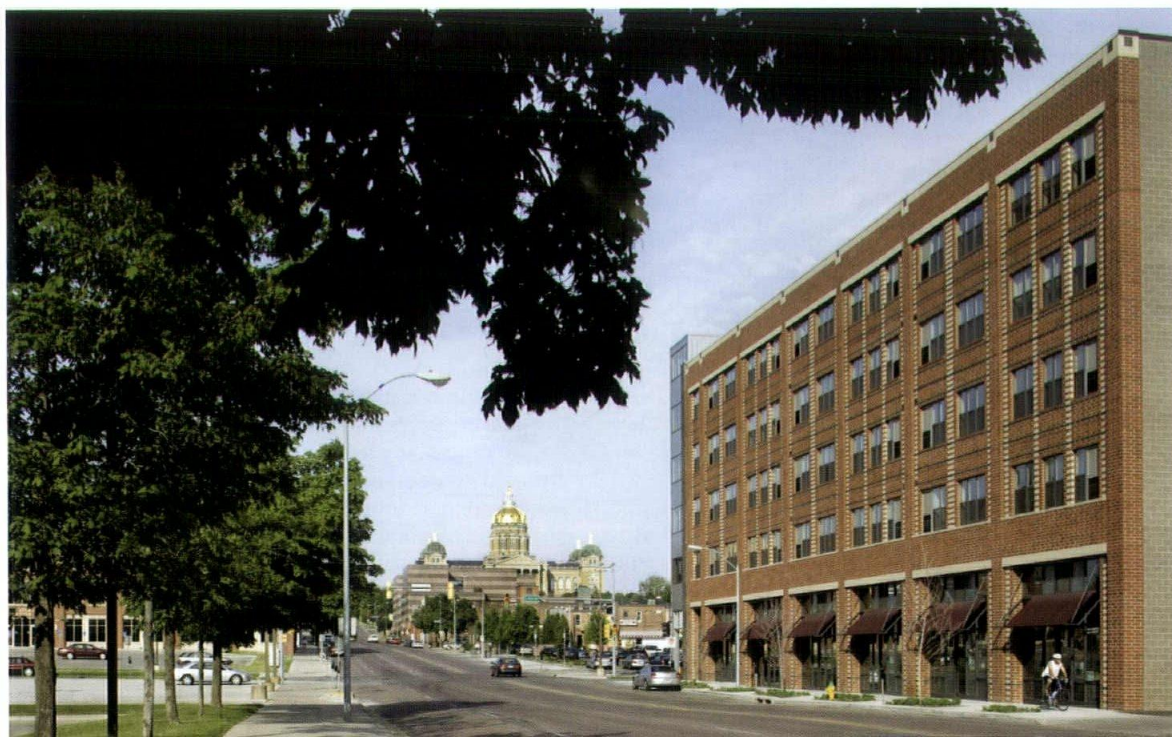
"We just saw that there was a need for it," Roberts said, "and that this was a great place for someone who had the desire to own a small business: to be able to combine the costs of renting an office or retail space with the cost of having a place to live."

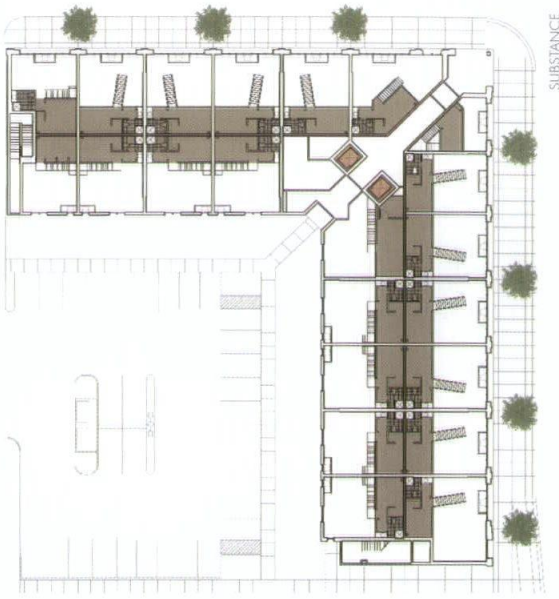
—Karen Nitkin is a freelance writer living in Maryland.

Right: East Village Square with streetscape and surrounding context.

Project: East Village Square
Location: Des Moines, IA
Owner: Hatch Development
Architect: substance
General Contractor:
Weitz Company
Photographer: Farshid Assassi,
Hon. AIA Iowa, Assassi
Productions ©

KAREN NITKIN





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Above left: Every inch of space is maximized in the units, which have two full bathrooms, as well as kitchen and bedroom space.

Above right: With its combination of retail and residential spaces, East Village Square has attracted business people who might not otherwise be able to afford a retail location.

Center: Designed as both retail and living space, the units are inviting to passers-by, while still retaining a zone of privacy.

Left: The stairway serves as a visual barrier to the upstairs loft, which tenants use as a bedroom.

Local Success Story

IOWA CITY DESIGNERS AND DEVELOPERS BUILD A BETTER DOWNTOWN

Iowa City's University of Iowa campus attracts international architects for a few high profile buildings, but the lively downtown is a local product.

Right: On the ground floor of the Plaza Towers, the Bread Garden Market and Bakery's arcade extends the building to the pedestrian plaza.

Below: Large-scale bi-fold doors tie the European-style café to seasonal outdoor seating.

While many designers gravitate towards bigger cities, others find working in a limited context more rewarding. Iowa City's example illustrates just how vital a progressive local firm is for smaller places. Many people in Iowa City have global roots, but a healthy local culture still directs downtown development. Local designers have a hand in most new construction. While high profile projects for the University of Iowa attract international stars, the ongoing job of crafting the city's evolving fabric keeps hometown firms like Neumann Monson Architects busy.

If downtown Iowa City, always a lively place, now seems on the verge of big things, Neumann Monson deserves much credit for its history of work—over 50 projects, large and small—within that little 16-block area. The firm's principals are quick to share recognition with other designers in the area, but it is their local clients that they feel most obligated to mention. Many of Neumann Monson's clients share the firm's long-term commitment to the community's welfare. Like Neumann Monson Architects, they know that their own successes are bound to the city's future. Without these risk-taking, local entrepreneurs, projects such as the award-winning Plaza Towers development wouldn't have happened.

Many of Neumann Monson's projects in downtown Iowa City have been transformative in some way or an-

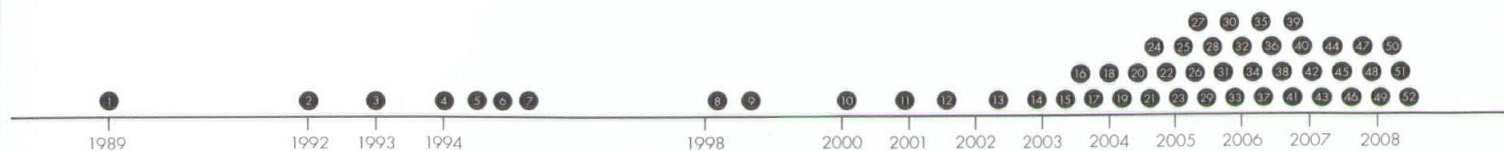


NEUMANN MONSON ARCHITECTS

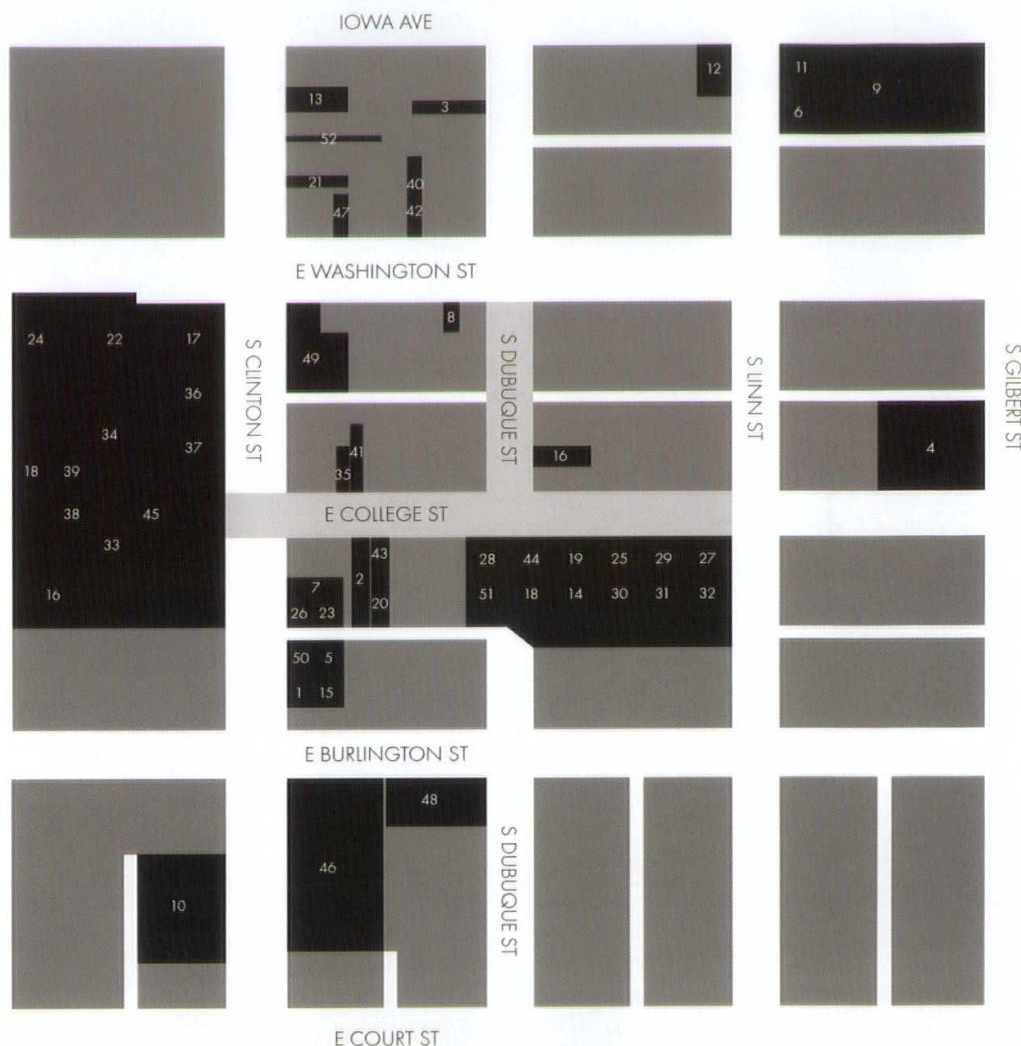


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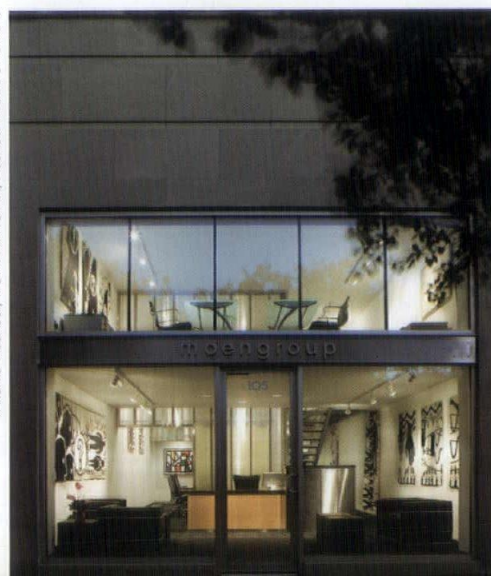
- 1 NEUMANN MONSON CLINTON ST. OFFICE
- 2 NEUMANN MONSON 111 E COLLEGE ST. OFFICE
- 3 MICKYS REMODEL
- 4 TRINITY CHURCH
- 5 BREAD GARDEN BAKERY
- 6 THE COTTAGE BAKERY
- 7 MONDO'S
- 8 JEFFERSON BUILDING REMODEL
- 9 IOWA AVE MULTI USE PARKING FACILITY
- 10 IOWA STATE BANK HOME LOAN CENTER ADDITION
- 11 IOWA CITY CABLE TV
- 12 VOGEL HOUSE
- 13 THE SUMMIT
- 14 PLAZA TOWERS
- 15 MOEN-JETT LOFT
- 16 UNIVERSITY CAPITOL CENTRE
- 17 HILLS BANK OLD CAPITOL TOWN CENTRE
- 18 IOWA CITY FITNESS SHERATON
- 19 FORMOSA PLAZA TOWERS
- 20 VENUTOS
- 21 AIRLINER REMODEL
- 22 BEAT THE BOOK OLD CAPITOL TOWN CENTRE
- 23 WHITE WAY
- 24 UI OFFICES UNIVERSITY CAPITOL CENTRE
- 25 NEUMANN MONSON 221 E COLLEGE ST.
- 26 JOSEPHS
- 27 EASTWIND HEALING
- 28 TAIT'S NATURAL FOODS PLAZA TOWERS
- 29 KLEFFMAN SEEDS PLAZA TOWERS
- 30 IOWA CITY FITNESS PLAZA TOWERS
- 31 HOTEL VETRO CONFERENCE PLAZA TOWERS
- 32 HOTEL VETRO PLAZA TOWERS
- 33 LA NAILS OLD CAPITOL TOWN CENTRE
- 34 JS FISH AND CHIPS OLD CAPITOL TOWN CENTRE
- 35 DONNELLYS
- 36 STUFF ETC OLD CAPITOL TOWN CENTRE
- 37 MAHARISHI ENLIGHTENMENT CENTER OLD CAPITOL TOWN CENTRE
- 38 PLANET BEACH OLD CAPITOL TOWN CENTRE
- 39 ADVANCED EYECARE OLD CAPITOL TOWN CENTRE
- 40 HAYEK FIRM
- 41 SAOON
- 42 JAVA JUICE
- 43 GRAZE
- 44 BREAD GARDEN MARKET PLAZA TOWERS
- 45 U OF I CLINIC OLD CAPITOL TOWN CENTRE
- 46 HIERONYMUS SQUARE
- 47 GINSBERG'S
- 48 THE VU
- 49 IOWA STATE BANK AND TRUST REMODEL
- 50 HOT HOUSE YOGA
- 51 SHERATON RENNOVATION
- 52 BALDYS REMODEL



other, but the award-winning Plaza Towers represents something very new. Developer Marc Moen gambled on a luxury residential high rise—a modernist one at that—in the heart of a town full of folks with historic preservationist leanings. Moen's hunch that professionals, not just students, would want to live in the city center didn't arrive overnight. He had already collaborated with Neumann Monson on two other mixed-use developments, the Whiteway Building and Vogel House. As it turns out, the intended housing market for those projects, students, proved a bit off the mark. The Whiteway and Vogel House studio apartments also attracted working adults.

In much of the United States, creative and educated people are choosing to live and work in pedestrian-friendly "urban villages" as opposed to suburbs. Iowa City seems wellpositioned to take advantage of this new trend. Given its cultural amenities, the city could compete with some of Chicago's or Minneapolis' more dynamic neighborhoods.

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Above: A timeline and map of Neumann Monson projects in downtown Iowa City.

Left: The modernist façade of the Moen Group office on East College Street, designed by Neumann Monson Architects.



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Above: In 2001, Vogel House challenged the public's expectations with its modern detailing, yet the studio apartments proved to be very popular among both students and professionals.

Right: In 2000, The Whiteway residential and commercial development design responded to local pressure for historically referential architecture.

One of downtown Iowa City's assets, good restaurants, is often credited to another long-time client of Neumann Monson Architects, Jim Mondanaro. Jim's energy and imagination are legendary. He opened his first area restaurant in 1980 called Mickey's Irish Pub, which Neumann Monson remodeled in 1993. Mondanaro and Neumann Monson have worked together ever since, recently collaborating on The Bread Garden Market and Bakery in the Plaza Towers. This project provides the downtown area its first real grocery store in decades. According to a recent Iowa City Press Citizen interview with Mondanaro, Plaza Towers owner, Marc Moen, "tricked him into taking on the task..." of reinventing the original market, which did not survive its suburban competition.

According to some locals, Mondanaro has his own bag of tricks. The outdoor patio at The Saloon, produced in cahoots with designers at Neumann Monson, took the city's sidewalk café ordinance by surprise. The firm used all its rhetorical skills and a fancy digital video to convince the city and a skeptical public that occupying the planters out front would be a good idea. The team of Fresh Food Concepts, Mondanaro's umbrella company, and Neumann Monson succeeded.

Like the clever maneuver in front of The Saloon, the tax increment financing (TIF) for Plaza Towers was controversial. There was also vocal taxpayer opposition to a similar scheme, the Hieronymus Square project. It is important to remember that local investment initiatives often require political and financial support to get off the ground. In many communities, financing these initiatives can become a point of contention. Iowa City's activist, well-educated population eventually gets things done. In hindsight, however, errors have been made. In the 1960s and 70s tearing down old buildings seemed like a good idea. The site of the Plaza Towers was vacant since then, used for little more than parking for years.

The Hieronymus Square project, planned to occupy an open area in need of urban renewal just south of Burlington Street, includes a mix of functions: high-end housing, a hotel, and store frontage on street level. The building envelope will be ultra-clear glass with minimalist detailing. Like the Plaza Towers, Hieronymus Square will offer new vistas of Iowa City.

Neumann Monson is designing this project for Hodge Construction. A long-time client and local entrepreneur, Hodge has provided capital for some of the most important urban changes in the downtown area.

One of Hodge's most significant investments, which is just now beginning to turn a corner, is the Old Capitol Centre. The developer bought the property at the project's financial nadir, shortly after the Coralville Mall opened for business. Neumann Monson has helped Hodge and the



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NEUMANN MONSON ARCHITECTS



NEUMANN MONSON ARCHITECTS

Center's tenants redevelop the failed urban mall in many ways, but, most importantly, by adding more street-front access along Clinton Street.

In fact, Neumann Monson Architects' offices have remained the downtown fabric for over 20 years. Its newest location is on the College Street pedestrian mall, and it is the first LEED architectural office in Iowa. The firm is providing leadership for sustainable design practices across Iowa.

Most contemporary planners recognize the value of local knowledge and place-specific economic forces in the context of sustainable development. It is difficult to toe the LEED "triple bottom line" without engaging the economic, environmental, and social dimensions of a project's context. The larger challenge for sustainable designers is to build integrated communities, not isolated green buildings.

High density, high-rise housing is certainly more sustainable than sprawl, but these new projects—particularly Plaza Towers, Hieronymus Square, and its proposed neighbor, The Vu, challenge Iowa City's sense of itself and present a real threat to the downtown's walk-up, small-town character. The architects at Neumann Monson must make sure, as they have done in the past, that each new project adds life to the street.

—Clare Cardinal-Pett Associate Professor of Architecture
Iowa State University.

Above left: The Hieronymus Square mixed-use development for Hodge Construction is on the boards at Neumann Monson Architects.

Above right: The penthouse balcony view from Plaza Towers: high-rise, high-density living in Iowa City.

Right: The planter space in front of Jim Mondanaro's bar and restaurant, The Saloon, is now a sidewalk café.

PORTFOLIO

BY EVAN SHAW



e5w, Des Moines, Iowa
ge WATTIER architecture

e5w (East 5th and Walnut) is located in the heart of the East Village in downtown Des Moines. The new building is a mixed use project with ground level retail, second level office and three levels of condominium space. The project pays tribute to the historic nature of the East Village yet is undeniably contemporary with its large windows, metal canopy entrance and layered precast concrete structure. The building explores the idea of “peeling away” the corner to create a unique urban end. ●

Garden Overhead, Des Moines, Iowa
goche' Inclusions + HLKB Architecture

Garden Overhead is a new shading assembly that is being added to an existing boathouse at Gray's Lake in Des Moines, Iowa. The overhead trellis is to provide shade for various kinds of cultural events that are routinely held on the roof deck of the existing facility.

The scope of work consists of a structural carriage that supports an artificial shading system and an organic shading system. The structural carriage is composed of a set of painted steel tubes placed between the existing steel beams. This new family of beams serves as a carriage for a net of stainless steel tension cables. In order to provide shading while the native River Grape Vine develops, a temporary shading system will be deployed using cloth panels suspended beneath the structural carriage. As the plant material spreads, the cloth panel shading panels will be removed. This living composition, in time, is to provide a cloak of dappled light and shade. ●



Washington Free Public Library, Washington, IA
OPN architects

OPN Architect's design for the Washington's Free Public Library places the library in a new building, replacing three vacant storefronts, and will serve as a catalyst for future downtown development.

The library will occupy portions of three levels with approximately 10,000 sf per floor. Meeting rooms, reference section, adult non-fiction collections, and an adult reading lounge overlooking the town square are located on the upper floor. The main level features the children's collection, circulation services, popular materials, another reading lounge, and the adult fiction collection. The local genealogy collection and future library expansion areas will be located on the lower level. ●



Amsterdam – Water = Underground City

Ambitious plans for a \$14.4 billion USD underground city were unveiled this year in Amsterdam. The scheme requires the city's canals to be drained to allow the construction of a vast underground mixed-use complex beneath. Zwarts & Jansma Architecture explained "There has always been a lack of space in the city, so what we are doing is building a city under the city by using a new construction technique, which will not interfere with street traffic." Through a system of underground spaces with entry and exit points along Amsterdam's A10 ring road, a range of underground facilities would be created at various levels below the city. These would include parking garages, sports facilities, cinemas, cables and ducts and supply facilities. Construction work is expected to take around ten years, and if approved, could begin in 2018. ●



IMAGE BY ZWARTS & JANSMA ARCHITECTURE

PALMOASIS?

The Venetian themed vision of Biscayne attempts to recreate the urban condition of Venice. Since Miami is lacking any significant public open space the project rethinks the Venetian themed vision and proposes a public recreational space which is site specific and establishes an open space typology for Miami. Palmoasis consists of 4000 palms arranged on a 30' grid, connecting to Julia Tuttle Causeway and DiLido Island via pedestrian bridges. Overlaid within the grid of palms are suggested flexible program zones for uses such as concerts, picnics, movies, bbq, swimming pools and contemplation. Between the palms narrow canals, navigable by canoes or other small vessels, ensure the park remains undisturbed by the machine and may remain a quiet haven for both the natural and the man-made. Although the project was not meant to be built with its success in the local media, and its interest outside of Miami, there might spark enough desire in local politicians and developers to make PALMOASIS a reality. ●



IMAGE BY WORLDARCHITECTURENEWS.COM

Fingers Crossed For 2016

June 4th the International Olympic Committee (IOC) selected the City of Chicago as a Candidate City to host the 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Chicago officially becomes a Candidate City and enters the next stage of the bid campaign. Madrid, Spain, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and Tokyo, Japan, were also named Candidate Cities. Among many new buildings Chicago is proposing is the Olympic Stadium, residing on 100 acres of land in Washington Park. The stadium would host the Opening & Closing ceremonies, as well as the Athletics competition. The concept for this facility is both innovative and responsible; during the Games it will accommodate crowds of 80,000; post-Games it will be reconfigured into a community-friendly, 5,000 seat amphitheatre that will host sporting events, festivals, concerts and other cultural activities. Learn more about this building and others proposed at www.chicago2016.org ●



Buildings In Motion - Literally

On June 24 2008 Visionary Italian architect Dr. David Fisher announced the launch of the revolutionary Dynamic Tower, the world's first building in motion, to be constructed in Dubai and Moscow with other locations planned worldwide including New York, Canada, Germany, Italy, Korea and Switzerland. Rotating Tower Dubai Development Ltd headed by the Dynamic Group revealed the design and floor plans of the rotating building which will have 80 floors and be 1,380 feet tall. Apartments will range in size from 1,334 SF, to Villas of 12,916 SF complete with a parking space inside the apartment. The Dynamic Tower offers infinite design possibilities, as each floor rotates independently to create a building that constantly changes shape, resulting in a unique and ever evolving architectural structure. The Dynamic Tower the first building designed to be self-powered, with the ability to generate its own electricity. It achieves this feat with wind turbines fitted between each rotating floor. An 80-story building will have up to 79 wind turbines, making it a true green power plant. The Dynamic Tower is also the first skyscraper to be built entirely from prefabricated parts that are custom made in a workshop. Learn more at www.dynamicarchitecture.net ●



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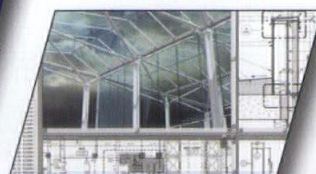
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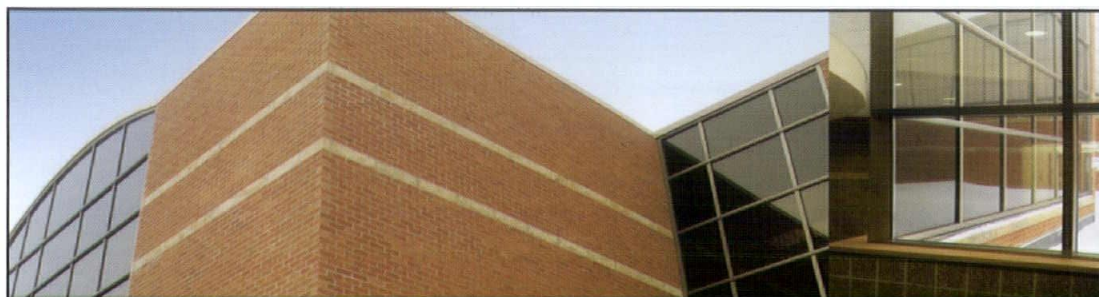
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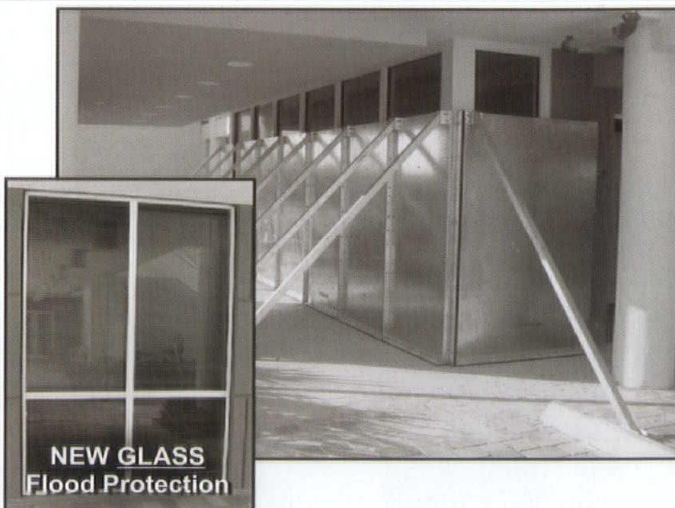
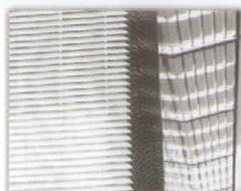
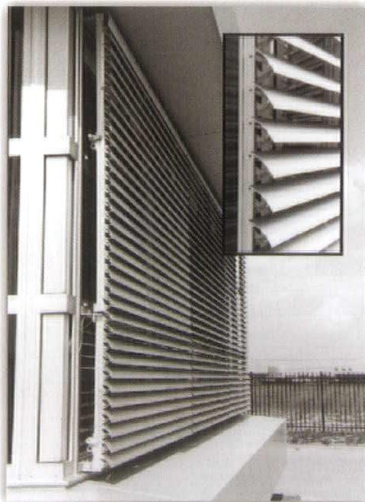
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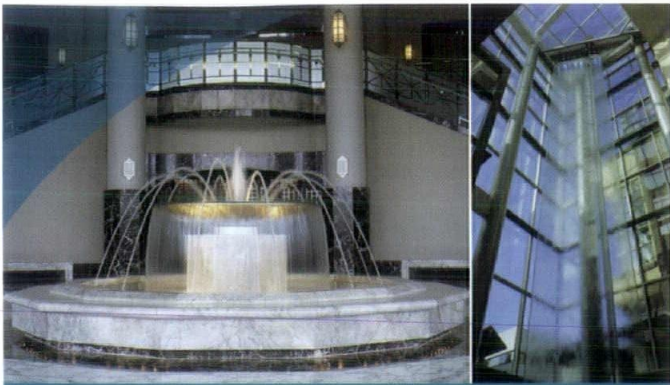
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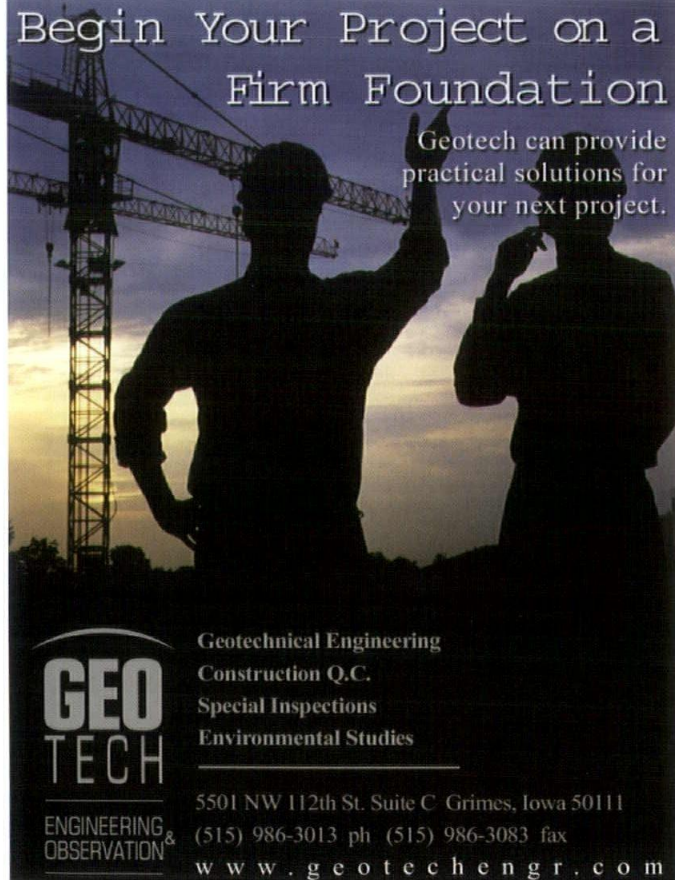
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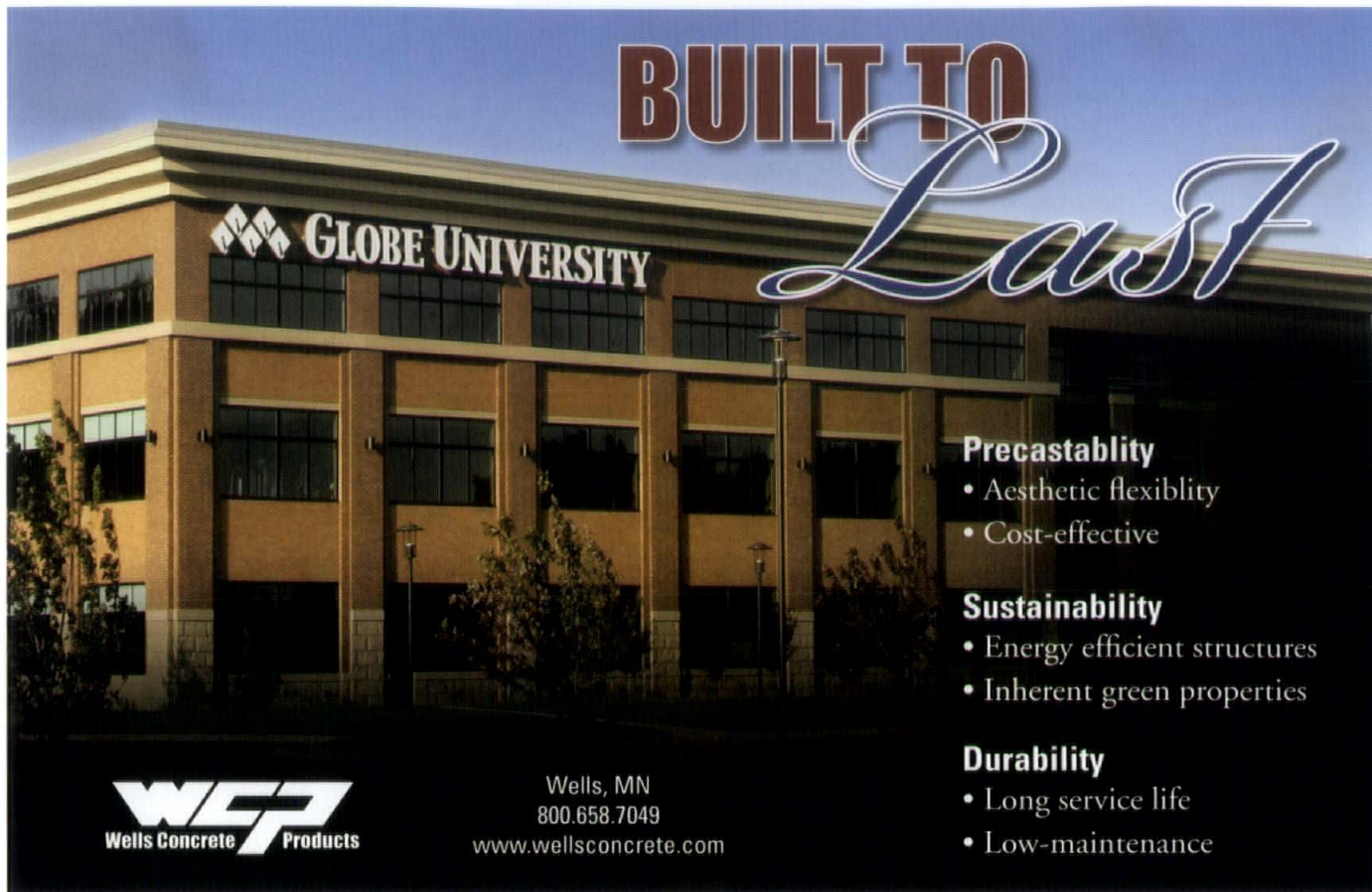


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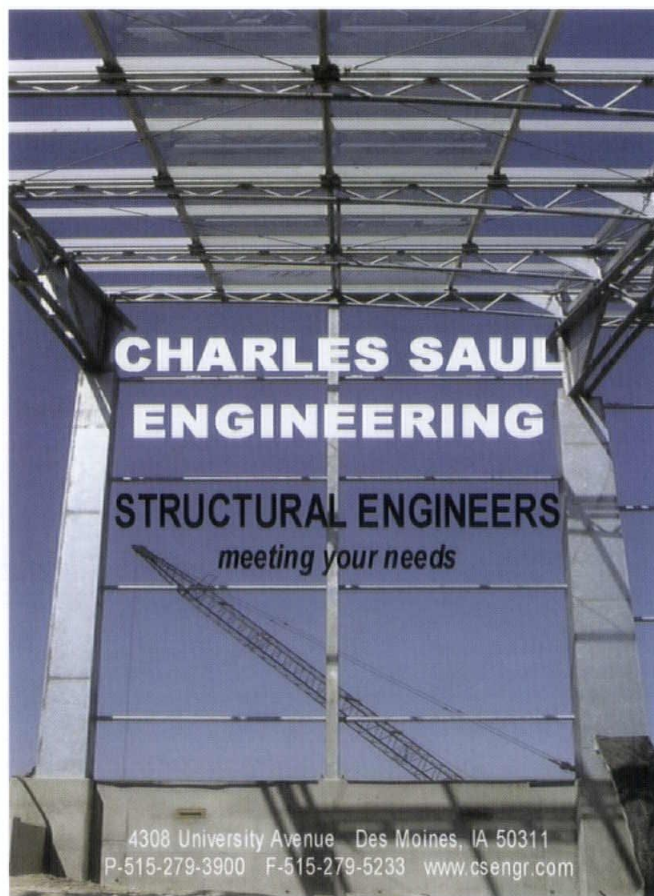


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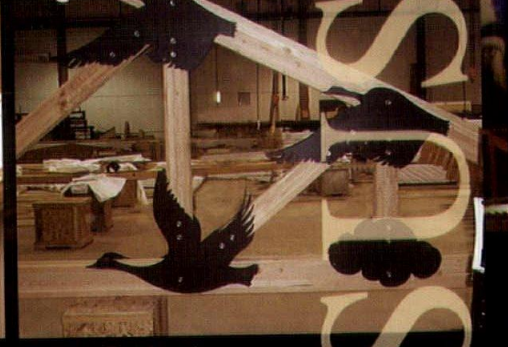
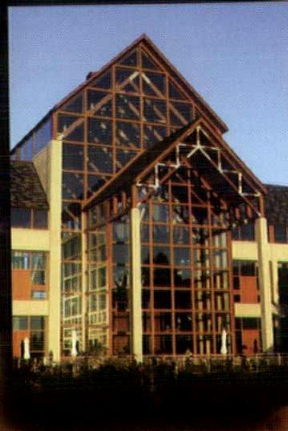
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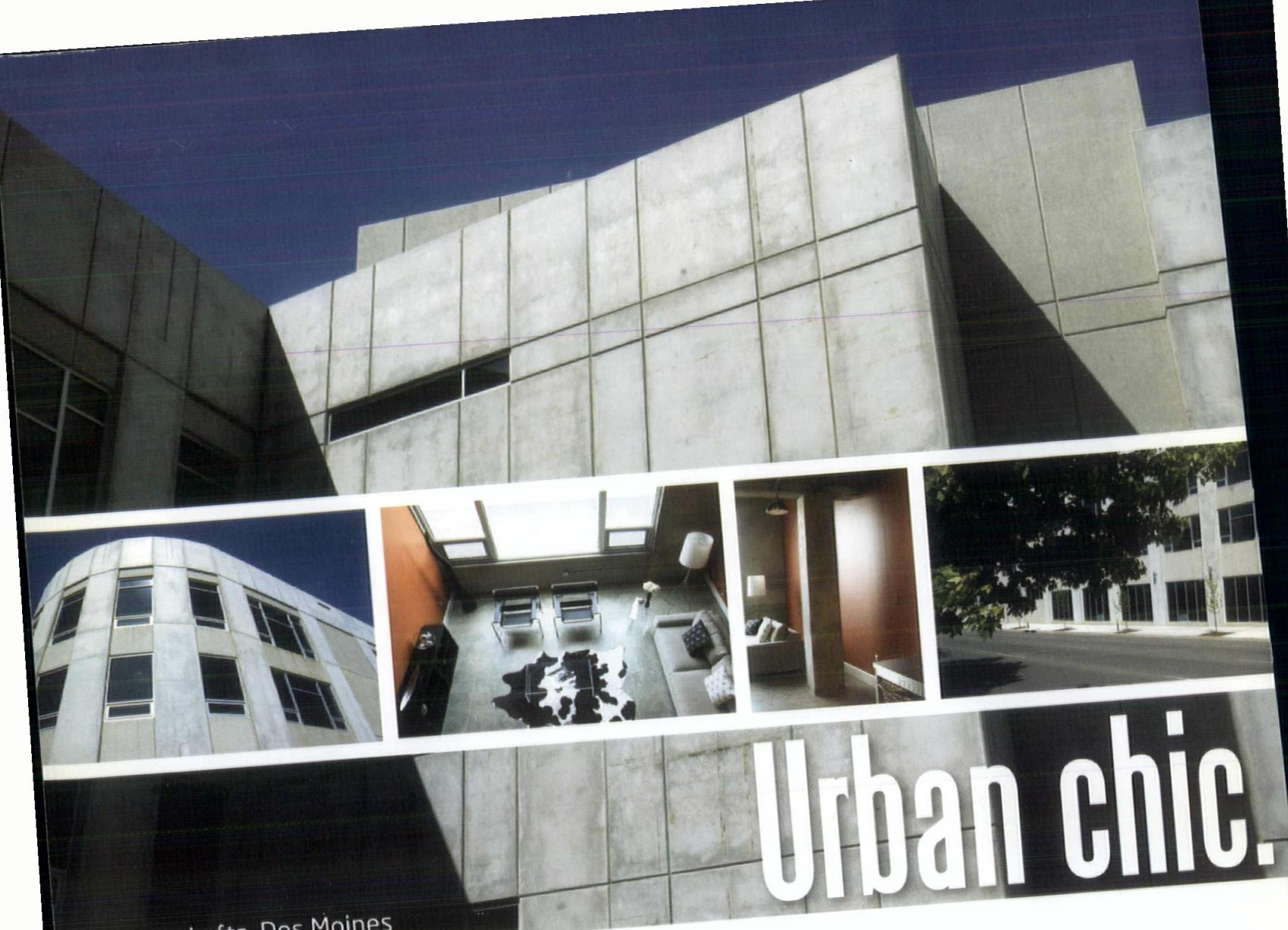
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