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These projects reveal the pride, strength and resolve of the communities they serve as well as the balancing act of the designer. They become the destinations and the cultural identity of place.

You may have noticed in the table of contents that we welcome five new members to our editorial board: Isaac Bracher, Dan Drendel, Khalid Khan, Nick Lindsley and Michael Thomas.

Finally, we are pleased to announce that Stonehand Publishing Group and the graphic design talents of Brian Brombaugh will be the new publishing team delivering Iowa Architect magazine. Thank you to all involved in nurturing this relationship. We look forward to working with you to continue the legacy of showcasing the best and brightest of Iowa architecture.

Brad Davison-Rippey, AIA, Editor, Iowa Architect magazine
This issue’s theme is common ground, highlighting projects that have connections to their communities and the public. The role of architecture in communities and the interaction of buildings with the public are two components of a broader theme of livable communities, which is a core principle of the American Institute of Architects’ advocacy platform. Previous issues of Iowa Architect magazine have addressed various aspects of designing livable communities, and this issue continues the discussion with the following excerpts from a national publication about how architecture and architects can help communities become more livable for their citizens.
A Sense of Place

By William A. Gilchrist, AIA

In the quest to improve conditions in urban, suburban and rural communities, citizens are becoming ever more engaged with elected officials and government agencies in public processes. These lively forums, which weigh special interests against broader public concerns, often generate heated debate among permit applicants and the public officials charged with enforcing laws and synthesizing solutions.

One common thread that allows an effective discussion of such issues to occur is the shared interest among all stakeholders in the creation, conservation or enhancement of a community's particular character. This character evolves from the weaving together of many elements to create a sense of comfort, function and attractive appearance. Summarized below are five elements that help establish a community's unique sense of place.

Natural Features and Systems

In a way, every city is simply an extension of the natural landscape upon which it is sited. This landscape is composed of watersheds, aquifers and geologic formations, and may be part of a rich rain forest or an arid desert. Consideration of the natural setting is essential in every decision a community makes about how it should build.

In some cases, the natural setting is intrinsically linked to an area's community character and, in fact, defines a key aspect of its economic vitality. This fundamental relationship is reflected in many of the country's most popular resort towns, such as Hilton Head, along the Atlantic Coast in South Carolina; Sedona, in the Arizona desert; and Vail, in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado.

In other cases, the protection of natural resources comes out of a planning process that identifies a range of assets that need to be protected or restored. In Portland, Oregon, for example, a participatory process led to the 1981 adoption of a comprehensive plan affirming that every citizen should have a view of Mount Hood. Having identified this major, natural feature as a community asset, the city established protective view corridors that, in turn, guided the heights of new buildings and shaped Portland's urban form.

The Public Domain

While natural features are the initial and often most compelling components of a community's character, the existing patterns of public circulation and assembly—which have typically developed in response to regional climate and topography—play a significant role in establishing a town's identity. This network of public spaces—from well-scaled streets for movement to public destinations such as parks, plazas or waterfronts—sets the man-made framework for community character.

In addition, one of the best ways the public sector can assist in the enhancement of a city's character is to strategically place and contextually develop its own building projects. Cities and counties have the opportunity to set the standard for public parks and public institutions, including libraries, schools, fire and police stations, and the public spaces that adjoin these structures. In all cases, the placement and design of such new elements should conserve and support the existing natural and historic features of the place.

Historic Preservation

In many U.S. cities, the first "urban design" policies ever enacted were those for historic preservation. Far from being an impediment to revitalization, historic preservation has proven to be one of the best tools given to public officials to preserve a neighborhood's sense of place and then to leverage that authenticity for new investment, tourism and smart growth. Many cities have identified what is valuable about a particular place and have established development regulations, including those that restrict demolition and encourage sensitive rehabilitation, to ensure that place-defining buildings will be maintained for future generations.

While people often associate historic preservation with the rescue and restoration of a single landmark building, the broader application of historic designations over entire districts has been key to the successful urban revitalization of many cities. For example, historic designations of several districts in Charleston, South Carolina, which went into effect in the 1960s, not only preserved what has since evolved into one of the world's most engaging urban designs but also land-banked, or protected individual properties, until economic forces aligned to reinvest in this area.

Pedestrian Scale

The use of the word scale simply addresses whether a built feature is sized appropriately for its location and how it will be experienced. From sidewalk widths to building heights, size does matter in the creation of places that make us feel comfortable. To appreciate this, consider the experience of walking along sidewalks that are too narrow to feel safe near zooming cars or along endless blocks of walls that generate unpleasant feelings because of their severe monotony.

Wherever pedestrian scale needs to be championed, its adversary is usually the automobile or, more appropriately, the typical design response often engendered by development regulations that place motorized vehicles at the top of the user hierarchy. As a rule, we should ensure that every pedestrian experience is a positive one, no matter the local climate. This can vary from tree-lined streets in a temperate zone to ample continuous built canopies in an arid area. The guiding principle is that paths along which people move—whether sidewalks, bike paths or trails—should feel safe, engaging and appropriate for the climate so that pedestrians feel comfortable along the route.

Signage

Even with the clearest design and most coherent development, signage is needed to direct people through their communities. Signs may be used on private commercial property to locate businesses or to advertise the products and services they sell. Signs may also be used in the public domain to direct pedestrians, identify historic and entertainment districts, and point out cultural institutions. And, of course, there are always the basic signs of traffic management, from yielding rights of way to identifying parking spaces and garages.

Taken as a whole, these various signage components play as important a role as any other architectural or urban-design element. Signage scale, style and sometimes even content should be guided by the local context. The neon billboards and 40-foot-tall signs that work so well along the strip in Las Vegas would not be fitting on Charles Street in Boston.

Simply stated, signage must be seen as an integral design component and not as an after-the-fact add-on to a community's design.
Physical Health and Community Design

By David Allison, AIA, ACHA, and Dina Battisto, Ph.D.

A majority of Americans today live in suburban settings that have been designed, albeit unintentionally, to discourage active, healthy lifestyles. The prevalence of single-use zoning and sprawl requires most of us to spend ever-increasing amounts of time driving from place to place in automobiles rather than walking to at least some of our daily destinations. And most of the routes we travel along daily—between home and work, school, stores and recreational venues—are not designed for safe walking or biking, even for those who happen to live close enough that they could, at least in theory, leave their cars at home. The lengthy distances to our daily destinations mean that many people spend a greater part of the day in their cars, which leaves less time for engaging in the minimum recommended amount of regular physical activity. As a result, physical activity is no longer an integral part of daily life for all, but instead is a distinct, programmed event for only those who are both highly motivated and have the time.

The Health Problem

Unfortunately, this common phenomenon is far from insignificant to our society: There is growing evidence that our physical health is directly tied to our physical activity. According to an annual survey by the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, in 2000 only 26.2 percent of adults met the recommended requirements for physical activity. A surge of studies presented in public health journals and conferences, plus increased funding for research into links between physical activity and health, indicates a growing interest in how the design of the built environment influences health. The September 2003 issues of both the American Journal of Public Health and the American Journal of Health Promotion, for example, focused on the role of the built environment on health outcomes.

Following the 1996 publication of "Physical Activity and Health: A Report of the Surgeon General," the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) identified physical inactivity as one of the top three risk factors—along with smoking and poor nutrition—for premature death. Based on numerous studies, the CDC concluded that physical inactivity plays a significant role in the onset of four main chronic diseases: heart disease, cancer, diabetes and strokes. Chronic diseases account for 70 percent of all deaths in the United States, and the costs of health care for people with chronic diseases account for 75 percent of the nation’s total health care costs. Everyone pays for these social costs because the financial burden is ultimately carried by individuals, families, employers, local communities and government agencies.

Design Solutions

To overcome these problems, it is incumbent on civic leaders to encourage their respective communities to be planned and designed in ways that provide incentives for spending more time walking and less time in automobiles, thereby increasing opportunities to seamlessly reintegrate healthful physical activity into the normal course of daily life. The three most significant design strategies to facilitate physical health and active living in a community are:

- Implementing planning guidelines and zoning regulations that promote the close proximity of daily-living activities, services and settings so that walking to work, school, shopping and recreation is both possible and convenient.
- Providing connected networks of pedestrian-friendly pathways (sidewalks, jogging trails, footpaths, bikeways) that link residential neighborhoods to each other, residential...
Designing the pedestrian and bicycle pathways that make up these networks so that they are both safe and inviting.

Proximity Between Daily Activities

Mixed-use development enhances human health because it locates the various activities of daily living within closer proximity to each other, thus providing greater incentives for people to walk or bike to them. Communities should not only allow but actively encourage the development of compatible and sensitively designed small-scale businesses, workplaces, schools, civic institutions, parks and other open areas within walking and biking distance of residential neighborhoods. Planners and designers can locate small-scale civic uses (such as libraries, recreation centers, parks and greenways) in ways that appropriately buffer residential development from large-scale, higher-density commercial elements.

Networks of Pedestrian-Friendly Pathways

Provide networks of limited-traffic residential streets, sidewalks, bike paths and greenways that connect adjacent residential neighborhoods to each other and to nearby commercial and civic services so that pedestrians can avoid busy connector and arterial streets. Consider, for example, the following approaches:

• Prohibit new “cul-de-sac” neighborhoods where the only access is from arterial streets or roads. Cul-de-sac neighborhoods force people to move along busier arterial streets in order to leave the neighborhood.

• Require that new residential and commercial developments include sidewalks along all public streets fronting the development and along new streets within the development.

• Local governments should implement a phased plan of creating sidewalks and bike paths on existing streets where traffic is heavy and speeds are higher than 25 mph. All residential streets should have sidewalks on at least one side.

Well-Designed Sidewalks and Bike Paths

Provide incentives for using these pathways by designing them to be both pleasurable and safe. For example:

• Except in urban conditions, a landscape buffer should separate sidewalks and bike lanes from vehicular traffic on all streets. This buffer should provide greater separation from vehicular traffic as the traffic density of the street increases.

• Provide canopies on commercial storefronts for sun and rain protection.

• Provide adequate lighting of pedestrian pathways to ensure safety and security at night. Lighting should be designed to avoid light pollution in residential areas.

Excerpted from "Livability 101," published in 2005 by the American Institute of Architects. It is available online under Publications at www.aia.org/about/initiatives/AIA%75360.

The American Institute of Architects’
10 PRINCIPLES FOR LIVABLE COMMUNITIES

1. 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.

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

3. Encourage Mixed-Use Development
Integrating different land uses and varied building types creates vibrant, pedestrian-friendly and diverse communities.

4. Preserve Urban Centers
Restoring, revitalizing and in-filling 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.

5. 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.

6. 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.

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

8. 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.

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

10. Design Matters
Design excellence is the foundation of successful and healthy communities.
Host/Hostage/Guest

In USAtown, Pennsylvania

Hostage. The word enters one's ear and a violent connotation takes hold—a hiding place, a binding and gagging, a contract of return upon payment and vehement hostility. This hostility, however, is misleading. Historically, its etymology suggests a definition of hostage while encompassing the characteristics of being strange to a place. It also outlines the action of being provided food and lodging; being protected and preserved (Latin: (1) hostis - a stranger hence a guest and root (2) hos - shelter with food). The question of the relationship between a space and its being taken hostage seems to be effectively described through the institution of private property and the boundaries delineating its legal ownership. In particular, property owners' rights to protect them from trespassing or unlawful takings by the government, serving as strategies maintaining the separation between hosts and guests.

It seems tragic that a town be defined by the claim that it is held hostage. My stay in USAtown, Pennsylvania, began August 22, 2010. I work with the USAtown Revitalization Corporation (URC), a local nonprofit Community Development Corporation. The violent connotation of hostage seems to arise regularly in reference to the real estate speculation of a small group of landholders who own nearly 140 local properties. One has been collectively tagged as the hostage-taker—we'll call him Mr. H. Between 1992 and 2006, he commissioned an architect to graphically render four visions of the town: demand-driven outlet retail ('92), riverboat gambling ('92) and Native American gaming ('98), until the final iteration of an Olympic Velodrome/diabetes research facility ('06). Each rendering garnered written support from numerous politicians despite the previous plan's failings. Ultimately, nothing happened. Mr. H. never sold his properties, and in time they were moved into Sheriff’s Sale. As a result, entire buildings are slowly collapsing into heaps of debris.

1 The names of people and places have been changed to protect the innocent.

2 The Third Amendment was initially written to protect citizens from soldiers who were known for forcefully taking food and shelter without a property owner's consent; see hos-. 
This debris has burgeoned for nearly 20 years while USAtown has continued its economic decline. In 2005, the county and state entered into coordination of an effort toward code enforcement, pledging $2 million for obtaining blighted properties in and around USAtown's historical downtown via eminent domain, hoping to effectively remove the proverbial gun from USAtown's head. Arguably created to subvert the Third Amendment's eminent domain provided government with a tool to seize property for "public use" in exchange for just compensation. Armed with $2 million, the state helped fund code enforcement, just compensation and demolition costs for the increasingly dangerous buildings.

Soon after, Mr. H. and the other landholders have filed a lawsuit charging URC and others of colluding with the state, county and local governments, seeking control of the landholders' properties by usurping police action and using building codes as political weapons. For URC, this means no communication with the media, as advised by legal counsel (i.e., bound hands and gagged mouths). If anyone utters the name of Mr. H., voices are quick and immediately trail off. The sour relationship has motivated Mr. H. to scatter litter along his property boundaries next to the URC office (above left). Behind his building, near the concrete barriers (above right), exists a small pile of crumbled drywall. After offering to clean it up, I received a timely call from a URC board member (individually named in the lawsuit), reminding me of our juridical position against crossing the line onto his property and hence becoming his guest. The unfortunate reality of this act of beautification—this good deed to clean up a property that has been neglected—may bind our hands even tighter.

The aforementioned actions fall within the plurality of meanings within hostage. Each player has sustained rational action to achieve self-preservation and protection of his or her interests. However, when considering the end-result of these protections, one questions what was achieved. Mr. H. has worked for 20 years to protect the rendered, idealized visions for USAtown, while the existing buildings crumble and the town falls deeper into post-industrial decay. Meanwhile, the state is unable to seize the buildings until they've degraded into hazards to public safety. In lieu of all this, URC is in juridical handcuffs, fearful about cleaning up a seemingly insignificant pile of drywall and waiting for their crisis to end.

It's obvious that in hosting these players, USAtown has seen rational (and legal) claims on space begin to manifest ethical contradictions involving the creation/decay within its borders. These contradictions, and the previously described hostage situation, have stemmed from hypothetical spaces Mr. H. commissioned an architect to draw. It is not enough to simply "make" drawings. It's debatable that we "choose" for whom we draw or whom we serve. But where do we intervene otherwise? On September 29, a volunteer and I finally cleaned up the pile of crumbled drywall behind the building. Slowly, we are relinquishing our fear and acting in goodwill, as any grateful guest might do.
Riverfront Property

NEUMANN MONSON’S DESIGN FOR THE P. SUE BECKWITH BOATHOUSE FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA ADDRESSES IOWA CITY’S AMBIVALENT RELATIONSHIP TO THE IOWA RIVER

Iowa City’s relationship to its namesake river played a role in the development of a “flood-tolerant” but architecturally striking boathouse for the Hawkeye crew.

—Thomas Leslie, AIA

The University of Iowa’s rowing team represents the largest women’s sports program on campus, yet for years it stored its boats in the copper carbuncle of Frank Gehry’s engineering building alongside the Iowa River. Determined to do justice to the scale and success of the program, the university hired Neumann Monson to design a new boathouse incorporating training, storage, repair, coaching and public facilities just north of campus, along Dubuque Street, in a grove of mature trees that line the river.

Neumann Monson’s design was completed and the project was bid just prior to the 2008 flood that devastated the campus as well as the planned site. Contractors’ trailers had just been moved in, and the project went on hold as the university cleaned up from the disaster. Having bid the project, the university was understandably reluctant to unravel the careful planning that Neumann Monson had undergone, but the realities of 2008, which trashed the idea of “100-year flood lines” as safe harbors, meant that a certain amount of redetailing and specifying was necessary to make the project, in the bureaucratic language of FEMA, “flood-tolerant.” Iowa City’s relationship to the river, which had grown complacent, meant that projects like the Beckwith Boathouse came under renewed scrutiny.

Tim Schroeder and Matt Krieger, architects for Neumann Monson, recall that much of the project had been planned with the river in mind anyway. Repair and storage facilities had been designed to flood as needed, with materials specified and arranged to provide a robust palette either above or under water. Changes to the design were relatively minor. Flood vents, for example, which allow water into the boat bays and thus prevent hydrostatic pressure from lifting the building’s slab, were required for FEMA’s approval. The original design largely survived the post-flood reviews that came about for all U of I construction projects.

That design began with a tour of similar-scale boathouses on the East Coast and throughout the Midwest. Schroeder and Krieger were unhappy with the “boxy” nature of most of them, or with the twee historicism that marked several famous examples along the Charles River in Boston. Instead, they wanted to incorporate the river, the park and the dynamism of the sport into a single statement that avoided direct, obvious references to the boathouse type. Three major program elements—the 90-foot square boat bay, the so-called ERG training room where rowers train on static machines and the “tank,” which consists of actual flowing water tanks alongside fixed racks of oars—formed the basic building blocks for the scheme.

Right: A palette of metallic and organic colors and textures allows the Beckwith Boathouse to nestle into its site while announcing the technical nature of the activity within.

Project: P. Sue Beckwith Boathouse, The University of Iowa
Location: Iowa City, Iowa
Architect: Neumann Monson Architects
Interior Design: Neumann Monson Architects
General Contractor: Miron Construction
Civil Engineer: Shive-Hattery
MEP Engineer: Design Engineers
Structural Engineer: Neumann Monson Architects
Photographer: Farshid Assassi, Hon. AIA, Iowa, Assassi Productions ©
Neumann Monson's detailing throughout adds a sense of occasion to what could have been a prosaic structure. Here, the central stair connects locker rooms and offices with the tank room and boat bay below.
Above: The tank room features dual workout simulators and a highly engineered workflow system—adding a kinetic sensibility to the space.

Right: Athletes train in the ERG room, which is naturally illuminated and ventilated.
Schroeder recalls a balancing act to arrange these efficiently in two stories, enough to be visible from the street and the river, but not so tall that it interfered with the tree canopy or dominated the river. The boat bay thus juts out underneath a block of locker room and office facilities, while the tank and ERG room are connected by a spiral staircase in a rising form that inevitably recalls the bow of a boat—though Schroeder is quick to call this element a “nose,” avoiding the [perhaps too obvious] metaphor.

The shifts and slices that animate these arrangements are informed by daylighting concerns as well as architectural ones. The wedge-shaped ERG room, for instance, is defined by a strict east-west glass façade that allows the most efficient solar shading. But that also leaves an inviting roof terrace while setting up the building’s prow. A conference room overhanging a lower-level viewing space provides integrated solar shading, too, while continuing the geometry of the ERG room’s east-west slice. None of this is over-developed; rather the multiple functions and readings that such formal gymnastics entail are allowed to quietly coexist with their less apparent functional implications. These subtle moves helped make the boathouse the university’s first LEED-certified structure.

Clad in three shades of red cementitious panels, the resulting composition rests gently in the park while making a bold enough statement about its presence and the nature of the activity within. The building’s glass walls are ventilated throughout, which allows athletes to train in more or less natural conditions while reducing mechanical costs considerably. Lightly detailed metal roofing and a trellis over the outdoor terrace place a firm technological stamp on the complex, which emphasizes the mechanical nature of the machines, sculls and training inside. Finally, the palette is both restrained and unique—the red panels, arranged in a random pattern that Schroeder calls a nod to the organic character of the site, complement the natural green of the park during the summer and blend with the surrounding leaves of fall.

Such nods to the boathouse’s natural setting, however, do disguise the incredible technology within. Hidden to passersby, the tank room on the lower level features what may be the fastest-powered rowing tank on the planet. Dissatisfied with available tanks, the coaching staff asked Neumann Monson to work with engineers from the university’s Hydraulics Institute to overcome problems with standing wave generation in similar installations. The result, a complex network of turning vanes, filters, carefully placed jets and accurately modeled and proportioned flow tanks, can generate nine-feet-per-second of waterflow on its own, a figure that nearly doubles the rate of commercially available products. When the power of rowers is added to the tank, that rate increases to beyond 13 feet per second.

While this technical advance may or may not show up immediately in the team’s performance, it creates an unforgettable space. When the tank is at full capacity, Krieger notes, “the water is so kinetic that you can feel it, you feel excited, and it’s such a different feeling than just standing and looking in a building.”

—Thomas Leslie is an Associate Professor of Architecture at Iowa State University. He is completing work on a history of the Chicago skyscraper.
The speedy grand reopening of Theatre Cedar Rapids is great testimony to the power of community in the face of some very steep challenges.

The renovated Theatre Cedar Rapids (TCR) represents another high water mark for the city, and this one is cause for celebration. Fundraising for overdue updates to the historic building had just gotten underway when the swollen Cedar River overtook downtown. With carp swimming at their feet, theater volunteers sandbagged until the National Guard ordered an evacuation. Among the last to leave the unfolding disaster, the community theater was also the first major organization to return—with Mel Brooks’ "The Producers," on February 26, 2010.

While sandbags prevented the river from entering the front door, water came up through the basement and sewer system. Among the many losses were the stage floor and a valuable costume collection—much of it irreplaceable. Many in the clean-up crew sadly recognized costumes they had worn as the mess was moved out to dumpsters. Casey Prince, managing director of TCR, had both professional and personal attachments to the soggy building. "I was married on that stage, so it was especially sad to watch the boards be torn out," he said.

According to Prince, a classic "the show must go on" imperative kept members of the company from despair during the immediate aftermath of the flood. Finding a new place to stage the next production became the primary concern. For over a year the theater operated out of a movie theater at the Lindale Mall, producing 10 shows and a season of summer camps.

When Prince was hired as managing director in 2007, the company was not in good financial shape and, while its volunteer base was large and enthusiastic, no one would have dreamed it possible to raise enough money to restore and renovate the facilities to the extent that it has. Thanks to donors from the pre-flood campaign—none of whom backed out of their original pledges—and to many other generous post-flood gifts, TCR was able to use its private donations, FEMA funds and a Vision Iowa grant to clean up and revitalize not only the building, but also the community theater company. Today, TCR's new vigor is having a delightful impact on downtown Cedar Rapids.

The community theater movement in Cedar Rapids traces its roots to performances staged in Grant Wood's studio apartment and is an 80-year-old tradition. It is now one of the largest community theater organizations in the United States. Productions were staged under the direction of various organizations and at various locations over the years. In the 1980s, the present company moved to the Iowa Theater Building, a movie house and Vaudeville Theater built in 1928 and carelessly remodeled mid-century with much of its original ornamentation covered up or removed.

During the post-flood recovery, several intact pieces of the original building thought long gone were rediscovered. Brad Fritz, architect-in-charge of the project for OPN, said that "during any project there are surprises, good and bad. In the case of the theater, all surprises were fortuitous."
One particularly interesting example of how charmed the endeavor proved to be was the case of two chandeliers that now hang in front of the organ boxes. A local antiques dealer called the theater during construction to say he had two chandeliers with notes attached identifying them as property of the Iowa Theater. After finding historic photographs confirming the identity and location of the light fixtures, OPN investigated and discovered their winches miraculously still in place and working.

OPN's designers were careful to capitalize on discoveries, restoring original details as they found them. But the project also required significant changes to existing conditions and, in the case of new functions and technologies that were necessary to make the theater a contemporary place, OPN was unapologetic. New is new and old is old. And the past and the present coexist with surprising ease.

A telling example of this sensibility is the modernist detailing that characterizes the new Linge Lounge off the lobby along First Street. Boldly contemporary and transparent to the public, the lounge has become a great place to see and be seen in the city. The lounge occupies space previously devoted to retail rental income for TCR. The stores were dark at night during performances, masking whatever life might be inside onstage, giving the false impression that the theater itself might also be closed.

The new lounge makes TCR a multifaceted destination and Cedar Rapids more urbane. The new lobby, bigger with restored detailing, is also additional space to gather before, during and after a show. Bradd Brown, OPN partner-in-charge and TCR board member, said, "There was no reason to come early or stay late. It wasn't a night out."
Making better use of existing space in other parts of the building allowed OPN to move offices upstairs, out of the lobby area. The first-floor restrooms were enlarged and redesigned for ADA compliance. Damaged seating was removed for restoration, allowing the designers to rework its configuration, gaining 30 extra seats (and a bit more revenue for every show), plus ADA accessibility.

The renovation allowed TCR to fundamentally rethink how it occupied its facility. The project created improved rehearsal spaces, dressing rooms and other back-of-house functions. TCR's outreach abilities are now much improved as well. And because the main stage isn't needed as a rehearsal space to the extent it used to be, its potential rental income can now be realized. As it turns out, the new TCR is not only good for spirits, but also good for business.

OPN's capacity to serve TCR stems in large part from having people on staff who have long-term engagement with their local community and who bring more than formal or technical knowledge to the design process. Fritz was in the cast of "The Producers" on reopening night. Brown was in the audience. He said this year has been the company's best year ever.

—Clare Cardinal-Pett is an Associate Professor of Architecture at Iowa State University.
The Art of Purposeful Design

A THOUGHTFUL ENVIRONMENT FOR THE MIDDLE SCHOOL AND 9TH GRADE STUDENT

The College Community School District's Prairie Point Middle School and 9th Grade Academy is an excellent example of purposeful design.

The Prairie Point Middle School serves all of the 7th, 8th and 9th grade students from the cities of Ely, Fairfax, Shueyville, Swisher and Walford, plus the surrounding countryside just southwest of Cedar Rapids.

The Prairie Point Middle School brings a new quality of life to the students' school experience. The learning space is open with an abundance of large windows to admit natural light, large spaces for passing and natural wood and stone interior spaces. Daylight sensors were included in the classroom space to better utilize the natural light; a vertical-loop geothermal well system will support the facility. The two-story building has defined spaces for those attending the 9th Grade Academy, as these students begin to transition away from the middle school.

Right: A welcoming foyer is an example of large volume, wide stairways and a natural soft palette that celebrates one of the common areas of the school.

Project: Prairie Point
Middle School
Location: Cedar Rapids, Iowa
Architect: OPN Architects
Landscape Architect: OPN
Interior Design: OPN
General Contractor: Knutson Construction
Kitchen Consultants: Michael Bradnan
Civil Engineering: Hall & Hall
MEP Engineer: KWW Consultants
Structural Engineer: M2B
Photographer: mainstreetstudio.com
This extremely functional building celebrates special areas of the school where middle school students can come together. The library, foyer and cafeteria have extra volume—some with two-story windows. The color theme is a continuous palette of natural hues. The softer, earthy colors set the tone for the learning environment by surrounding students in a calm and quiet color scheme. The pattern of the stone exterior mimics the horizontal and vertical lines of the windows. The building is sited on a prairie with rolling hills. The horizontal lines of the windows capture the environment and the outside view is beautifully framed by the expansive windows.

This collaborative effort between OPN, the community and the school staff has resulted in a building that follows the mission statement of the district: “Ensure quality learning today for tomorrow.” Built for today’s student, the Prairie Point Middle School will meet the needs of future 7th, 8th and 9th grade students. OPN has designed a school that presents an environment that is conducive to learning, is extremely functional and has a beautiful aesthetic. Designed with a purpose, the school represents a turning point in the young lives of College Community School District kids.

—Susan M. Koenig-VandeHaar BFA, MSE
Art teacher, Des Moines Public Schools

Above: A common area for small groups of students is enhanced by windows that frame the landscape and flood it with natural light.

Below: Expansive windows, clean horizontal and vertical lines, a variety of textures and natural color greet students, staff and the community at Prairie Point Middle School.
For 134 years, the Iowa State Bar Association (ISBA) has had offices in various locations, including downtown Des Moines. The restored home of the ISBA is the public face for the organization. With a renovation plan in 2006, the ISBA purchased property at 625 E. Court Avenue in Des Moines.

The condition of the building prior to repair and restoration could have been cause for concern, but the client's and architect's vision saw through to the other side of what was an important and extensive endeavor.

"Let the existing building be the architecture." This was the initial thought for the design team at ge Wattier Architecture, Inc. as they began preserving and renovating the building in Des Moines' East Village. The mission for the architects became "to not let our imposed ideas compete with or supersede" the 112-foot-long by 44-foot-wide heavy timber warehouse architecture, which was originally built and completed as the Des Moines Western Railway Freight House in 1902-03.

Architects worked with historian Will Page to design and preserve architecturally significant building elements. Because the building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the project qualified for funding from state and federal agencies.

"The key with rehabilitating historic structures is to not damage or change historic fabric. We need to keep the overall character of a space, and when elements are added, they do not detract from the fabric," said Greg Wattier, AIA, principal in charge. "It is a fine line."

Repairs were necessary and extensive due to a floor that had settled slightly at the southeast corner. Adding usable space downstairs presented the need to waterproof by excavating and installing a drainage system that pumps water away from the building's border. The electrical and heat systems were updated, and several cosmetic repairs were made.

"The Iowa State Bar Association went above and beyond. They wanted everyone to be able to see into the building and through the building," Wattier said. The transparency helps fulfill a goal for members and is experiential for passersby and visitors, who can see in on all sides and out from most points in the building. This allows for a flood of natural daylight.

ISBA assistant executive director Harry Shipley said they desired an open concept. Numerous design details contribute to this open idea, including glass walls in Cherry wood surround and continuous transom windows. These assemblies help delineate space and extend the path of daylight.

Shipley said the new facility hosts 50 seminars each year. In addition to the third-floor conference room, two rooms allow attorneys to view presentations from other locales via video technology.

"I enjoy the history and the fact that they were able to restore the building and not abandon it," said Mary Hill, membership director and foundation liaison at the ISBA. "Between all the meetings, there are people coming and going all the time."

According to Hill, the building has come to life and attorneys are happy to have a place they can call their own.

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M. Monica Gillen lives and works in Ames.
the importance of public libraries to a community is a factor that can never be underestimated or overstated. One of the most effective and vital civic functions city governments fulfill is offering citizens a retreat from the hectic modern pace with quiet places of reading, learning and research. The seemingly consistent state and local budget constraints, however, have affected communities across the nation and impacted operational capabilities. The ability to design and build a new library in these times can only be considered a wonderful opportunity to be taken seriously.

In Moline, Illinois, the Cedar Rapids firm OPN Architects executed this admirable enterprise for the Quad City. The program called for the consolidation of the downtown facility with a branch location, thereby replacing the existing branch building. This decision was made after the library board had reviewed several potential sites, but selected this one due to its proximity to the high school, public transit, residential neighborhoods and generous parking space.

The primary project directive noted by OPN Architects principal Brad Brown, with an oeuvre that has included more than 30 library projects, "Involved creating a variety of experiences within the library so that each patron could find their favorite spot." This new elongated two-story elegant brick and stone building encloses nearly 73,000 square feet in the Midwest landscape. The design concept informing the architecture was to compose an open, transparent building actually appearing as a library from a distance. This was in complete contrast to the previous branch facility considered unrecognizable as a library except for its minimal signage.

The architects involved the community in a series of open houses and conducted historical research with input from staff, patrons and board members. They eventually determined that Moline actually had a progressive history and the building materials must reflect this blue-collar heritage. According to Bryan Zarn of Russell Construction Company, "The materials that were used to build the library have not been commonly used in other library..."
facilities in the Quad Cities. Brick, stone, copper and glass are commonly used for the City's projects, and it was great to incorporate these materials in new and interesting ways." While the library exemplifies contemporary design principles of massing and planning, the overall appearance is one of an assured and restrained modernity honoring the past.

The methodology involved composing two different types of spaces to serve diverse patron functions. In order to present the building as a library with active bustling spaces, the main floor utilizes full-height glazing to enclose the children and young adult collections, including public meeting and conference rooms. This enables views into and out of the library, establishing a genuine building identity and reinforcing the feature of transparency—a vital factor in the success of any institution. Brown said that the "fenestration relates to what happens inside the library."

The second floor presents a classical rhythm with a row of large vertical windows precisely matching the width dimensions of stack aisles, enabling patrons to catch an exterior view at all times. This notably calmer space encloses adult fiction and non-fiction book collections, reference materials, periodicals and quiet reading areas. Spaced equidistantly along the angled west elevation are four projected window boxes expressing architectural detailing and providing soft-seating lounge spaces for lengthy reading and relaxation in the afternoon sun.

"The expertise and professionalism of everyone on Team Moline made this a project that was both on time and on budget. Working well with the library board and staff, they helped to create a legacy that will benefit and enhance Moline," said retired library director Leslie Kee.

"In my new life, I'm traveling light, eyes wide open for the next move. I can't go wrong 'til I get right, but I'm not falling back in the same groove." Mark E. Blunck, Hon. AIA Iowa, breaks on through to the other side thanks to Neil Young and Jim Morrison.
The Space Between

A STUDY IN INTERSTITIAL SPACES: THE CONTEMPORARY CONVENTION CENTER

The Quad-Cities Waterfront Convention Center provides a gathering place for Bettendorf, where people come to enjoy performances, communicate ideas and celebrate weddings and holidays. It has proven to be a successful catalyst in the revitalization of downtown Bettendorf.

Right: The entry presents the circulation concourse and gathering areas to the public. The threshold from interior to exterior is minimized with the transparency and continuation of materials and lights between the exterior and interior.

Below Right: The approach view from State Street shows the primary material palette of floating steel roof, heavy pre-cast blocks and glass box entry. During project design, the architects convinced an adjacent developer to relocate their planned building to allow for better view to the convention center.

In 1995, Hans Ulrich Obrist arranged a science and art conference with all the trappings of a modern convention: plane rides, buses to the event, name-badges, t-shirts, coffee breaks, parties; without the actual seminars. This non-conference "came from the observation that obviously at a conference the most important things happen in the coffee break ... The most important things happen in interstitial spaces; they happen in-between, and they happen when we least expect it." The event was highly successful and generated many more to follow. This is what we know about conferences and conventions: We get as much or more out of the connections and networking as we do the classes and presentations.

Designing a convention center, therefore, requires as much attention to the spaces outside of the seminar rooms as it does the inside. Gary Hintermeister from Downing Architects noted that the project team understood the necessary quality of these gathering spaces, but also the challenges of getting the most out of a public building. "We wanted large pre-function areas for the facility, but needed to balance those with the budget and program." They also had the difficulty of dealing with a site that had access from multiple sides. State Street is the main approach and needed to present the project's front entry, but a large parking area was needed to the side and skywalk access was required to the Isle of Capri Casino and Hotel to the rear. The project was intended to act as a link between the waterfront and the downtown areas of Bettendorf.

VanDyke, from the Bettendorf Development Corporation, talked about the striations of the city. "The riverfront and downtown are given separate titles and we see them as different. Part of what the Convention Center does is connect the waterfront to downtown," he said.

The design of the project includes 24,000 square feet of meeting, concert and banquet space for groups up to 1,800. Full commercial kitchen facilities were created, along with a business center, offices and a 320-foot skywalk connecting to the hotel and casino. The main feature approaching the building is a glass-enclosed concourse, reminiscent of a grand train station entry. Hintermeister refers to the desire for a "marquis building" that would be attractive to a large number of users.

Project: Quad-Cities Waterfront Convention Center
Location: Bettendorf, Iowa
Architect: Downing Architects
General Contractor: Estes Construction
MEP Engineer: KJWW
Structural Engineer: KJWW
Photographer: Forshid Assassi, Hon. AIA Iowa, Assassi Productions ©
The concourse and lobby areas wrap around the main ballroom and push a pre-cast clad set of rooms toward the parking area entry. The pre-cast runs directly from inside to outside and under a large-scale steel space frame. The effect makes the roof appear to hover over the facility and unifies the set of blocks underneath.

The public spaces are highly articulated with materials that differentiate one from another. Informal gathering is promoted in a series of generous circulation spaces, including the skywalk, which has seating areas that make it less of a hallway and more of an extended glass lobby. A mixture of heavy and light materials with bright open spaces and more enclosed areas break down the scale of the large facility, making it both easy to navigate and comfortable to stop and have a conversation. This is the major success of the project—it promotes gathering in many ways while creating a progressive and attractive identity for visitors to Bettendorf.

—Jason Alread, AIA, is an Associate Professor of Architecture and the Director of the graduate program at Iowa State University.
When the first employees from the General Services Administration (GSA) pulled up to the U.S. Courthouse (USCH) in Cedar Rapids on June 16, 2008, what they found was a veritable ghost town laid waste by water. Four days earlier the building had been shut down—evacuated, powered off, basement quickly cleared, doors locked. Surging waters had transformed the Cedar River, once a lazy stroller through the heart of downtown Cedar Rapids, into a raging beast. Before the Flood of 2008 was over, the river would crest 20 feet above flood level.

For the buildings located downtown, including the USCH, and the people of Cedar Rapids, the flood was much worse than originally forecasted. While USCH and GSA employees did what they could to remove valuables from the basement, their efforts would be for naught; the river would rage, crawling up an additional 54 inches inside the first floor alone.

The building's pumps had easily taken care of the few inches of water from the Floods of 1993, but in 2008, they were useless. In fact, by the time Diane Strawn, property manager with the GSA in the state of Iowa, first assessed the USCH, the water lapped at the third step leading from first floor to basement. "Everything in the basement was topsy-turvy—things piled on top of each other, dank and dark," she said. "There was a thick layer of mud, silt and muck on the floors. Documents were all over the place, piled up in corners."

Fortunately, before the flood, the GSA had kicked a post-flood recovery plan into high gear. Almost immediately it was put into action, including drying out the building. Pumps worked day and night until the river and water table levels receded. When all was said and done, more than 64 million gallons of water had been removed from the USCH.

Next, the entire building had to be dehumidified—no small task in the middle of an Iowa summer. Plastic was used to button up entryways, says Strawn, and desiccant dehumidifiers did the rest. In the meantime, one day after the flood, temporary space had been leased, and just a week post-flood the courts were back up and running.

But the water had wiped out city, state and federal offices, and took with it the district's steam system, which had powered USCH's heating. Suddenly, the GSA had a big, empty building—and one that, along with 150 other downtown structures, needed gas immediately.

For the team, the sense of urgency in recovery efforts was even more paramount: Iowa's winter was really just a few short months away, and the building was without heat and electricity.

"Our issue wasn't just getting it cleaned up, it was getting the building off life support," says Denise Ryerkerk, a registered architect and project manager for the Heartland Regional Office of GSA.

Below Right: The restored exterior of the courthouse bears no visible scars from the damage inflicted by the Flood of 2008.
The mailboxes are a focal point to the building’s revitalized first floor.

Paul Crosby
Floodwaters raged through downtown Cedar Rapids, rising to over 50 inches on the first floor of the courthouse.

PAUL CROSBY
Cleanup would continue through July, asbestos abatement would start in August, gas service would be installed in October and new boilers would fire in November, just days before the first cold snap hit the state. Even while activity continued at a ceaseless pace, the GSA maintained a two-pronged approach—continuing cleanup and stabilization while planning for the building’s future—even though no one was sure what that would be. “GSA and the courts had been planning for a new courthouse since the late 1980s, and finally got design money in 2003, but had previously never gotten construction funding,” says Ryerkerk. In fact, part of the new courthouse plans included transferring the USCH to the City of Cedar Rapids. “We knew we wouldn’t be in the building forever. We had a lot of different scenarios with a lot of different construction options, but we knew we had to do right by the building.”

As cleanup continued, Substance Architecture began Phase II design in September 2008. The firm began by taking a critical eye toward what had, through the years, been sometimes insensitive renovations. The building, originally a post office and courthouse, had been built in 1933 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. But some simple and distinct details—ornate cast-iron vestibules, ornate woodwork and coffered ceilings—had either been covered up, painted or removed. “We really had two things we had to do: Put together the basement and the first floor, and attempt to do better by the building than what it was,” says Todd Garner, AIA, principal with Substance.

To do that, the firm began by restoring as much as they could to return the building to a historically accurate representation, including materials and color schemes. Stone on the interior was cleaned and re-tuck pointed when necessary. A collection of ornate mailboxes—part of the building’s original historical infrastructure but in non-working order—was relocated across from the entry, and cast iron was stripped of layers of paint. Odd walkways that had been shut off were reopened, and the original terrazzo floors were stripped and stabilized. As much of the old wood trim was salvaged as could be, and marble was repaired and matched where possible.

Halfway through programming, funding for the new courthouse was approved and the federal courts decided to stay put in their temporary location until the new building could be completed. Substance wrapped up the renovation, essentially finishing both basement and first floor as tenant shell space, just over a year after the flood. The new courthouse will be completed in 2012, and the city has yet to decide what they’ll do with the revitalized, refreshed USCH. “There was this perception of the building pre-flood as crowded and run-down,” says Ryerkerk. “But it’s a beautiful building and those little things made a big difference. We were able to bring it back to life.”

—Editor and writer Kelly Roberson lives in Des Moines and writes frequently about shelter.
Iowa Utilities Board and Office of Consumer Advocate
Des Moines, Iowa
BNIM

BNIM Architects of Des Moines was selected to design a demonstration energy-efficient office facility for the Iowa Utilities Board (IUB) and Office of Consumer Advocate (OCA) to serve as a testament to the sustainable stewardship of the State of Iowa. The building is organized into two wings: The north wing comprises the IUB on levels one and two, while the south wing is comprised of common space on level one and OCA on level two. The project, currently under construction and scheduled for occupancy in December 2010, is on track for LEED Platinum certification and is modeled to consume 63% less energy than a code-compliant office building. Additional measures implemented during construction, and the addition of a 43 kW roof-mounted photo-voltaic array, are expected to increase savings to 70%. Sustainable features include a 40 kW wind turbine, a daylight-harvesting sunscreen, high-performance envelope and on-site treatment and infiltration of 150% of site storm water through an off-site storm water diverting system.

Public Safety Facility
Brooklyn, Iowa
ge WATTIER Architecture, Inc.

Community of Flags in Brooklyn, Iowa, has continued to invest in their civic facilities in recent years. ge WATTIER Architecture, Inc. worked with them in the past on a new community center located in the heart of Main Street, and now on their new public safety facility. Both projects push forward the idea of working within a typical, economic metal building system while addressing the needs of the community. The public entry is announced by the exposed rigid frame that remains visible throughout the interior public spaces. The shed form scales down to the north, where the building interfaces with a residential neighborhood while opening up to the south, taking advantage of passive solar gains and daylighting in the vehicle bays. The project will serve as a base of operations for both the local ambulance and fire departments but also includes public training facilities and an EF5 tornado safe room.

Veterans Memorial Auditorium Renovation
Des Moines, Iowa
OPN Architects

Veterans Memorial Auditorium in Des Moines is being renovated into a state-of-the-art convention center that will work in tandem with the new Hy-Vee Hall and Wells Fargo Arena. The new complex will house 27 meeting rooms, with flexibility to capture additional exhibit space. A main concourse will link the east and west entrances of the facility, and a grand stair leading up to a new 28,500-square-foot ballroom will be located on a new third level. The renovation will display images of the building as it was, and maintain a strong commitment to honoring Iowa’s veterans. Construction begins in October 2010, and will conclude in January 2012.
**Clarity. Connection. Community.**

This summer, the Des Moines Area Regional Transit Authority (DART) partnered with local nonprofit Urban Ambassadors, a group that promotes sustainable living in Greater Des Moines, to recreate a famous series of photographs from Muenster, Germany. The three pictures in the Des Moines version, like the originals, were shot from up in the air, each looking down on the same picturesque city street at a group of 40 people standing near their transportation of choice. The photographs, when released online with graphics, quickly spread across the Web (including tweets from at least four continents), delivering a compelling illustration of how alternative transportation benefits the environment and makes the nation's cities more livable. The project was the brainchild of Drew Maifield, a board member of Urban Ambassadors, who said, "It was a worthy pursuit for people to be able to see that in Des Moines, the power of the image speaks so much more than we could ever preach." 

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**School of the Future?**

"We don't just want to educate students, we want to change the face of Moscow," said Ilya Oskolkov-Tsentsiper, president of the recently opened Strelka Institute for Media, Architecture and Design. The Strelka Institute is based in former industrial garages that for several years had served as gallery space in the burgeoning arts neighborhood of Moscow. The institute has transformed its site into a single multi-purpose environment, complete with classrooms, a bar and an open-air auditorium—a novel space for Russia, where students are accustomed to lectures in traditional halls. Students at the institute will be handpicked by an education committee that will include Rem Koolhaas, who has also signed on to teach a post-graduate course. As a non-profit, tuition-free organization, the institute will be open to students outside of Moscow as well, and classes will be taught in English for the benefit of international applicants. Planned courses will cover topics ranging from the preservation of cities to the future of energy, a core interest of Koolhaas's current architectural practice. The intention is to create a dialogue between teachers and students, placing the learning process in the tradition of the informal yet revolutionary conversations once held in Soviet kitchens.

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**Scribbles**

If 8-year-old kids designed furniture, it might look a lot like the work of Belgian designer Peter Donders. His C-Bench and C-Stone seats are giant scribbles in 3-D—only you can sit on them, pick them up and probably even throw them, and they'll never break. That's because they're made of carbon fiber, the ultra-strong, lightweight material used in everything from Formula One cars to spacecraft chassis. Donders created them by first modeling the forms in Rhino. Then he wrapped a strip of carbon fiber around the molds, emphasizing stress points such as each bench's center to prevent snapping. Finally, he removed the molds. Donders calls his technique Fiberture. Each seat weighs only 13 pounds and they are available in limited edition through the Outdoorz Gallery. For more information, visit Donders's website at www.morphs.be.

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**mid-WEST**

From modest beginnings, the Iowa West organization, headquartered in Council Bluffs, Iowa, has evolved into one of the largest non-profit organizations in the Midwest—and it's still fairly young. The Iowa West Foundation was established in 1994 as a private charitable foundation and is funded by investment income and contracted fees paid by local casino operators Ameristar and Harrah's. Since its inception, the Iowa West Foundation's grant program has awarded more than $200 million to improve the quality of life for thousands of citizens in 100 communities in Western Iowa and Eastern Nebraska. 

The Mission of the Iowa West Foundation is to improve lives and strengthen communities for today and future generations. They do this by providing leadership, creating partnerships, leveraging resources and serving as a catalyst in identifying and supporting community needs. They have special interest in community development and beautification, economic development, education, and human and social needs. As a result of a community needs assessment, the foundation has announced two overarching goals: To assist local schools in reducing the high school drop-out rate, including helping to increase educational attainment opportunities for citizens; and, to improve lives and transform neighborhoods in Council Bluffs and communities throughout Pottawattamie County. For more information on the work of the foundation, grants awarded or how to apply, visit www.iowawestfoundation.org.
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