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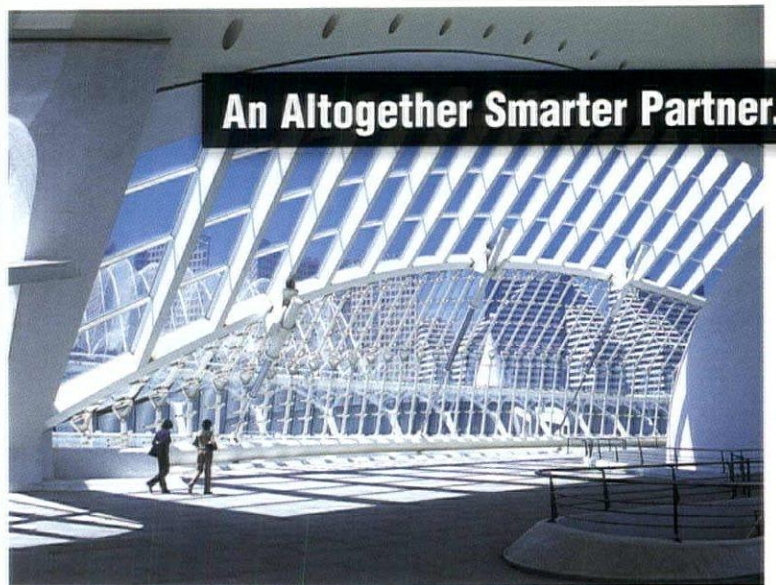
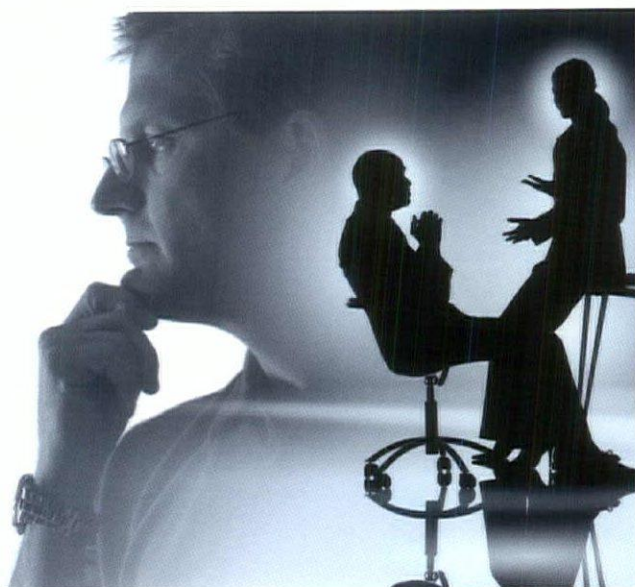
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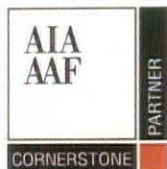
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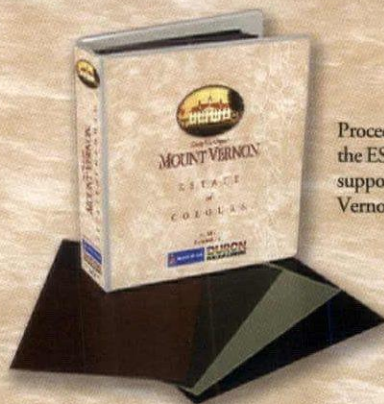
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## FROM THE EDITOR

### Passing the Torch

What can I say? After 18 years as the founding editor of *Inform* magazine, I am stepping down to do other things.

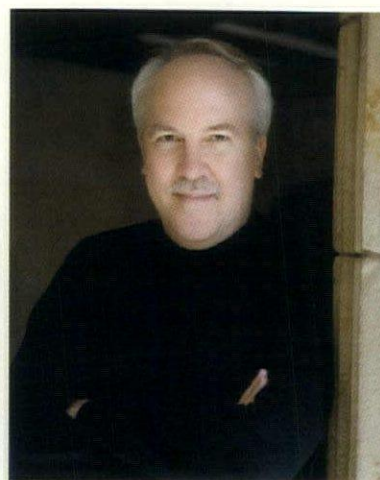
For the moment, I'll ask your indulgence as I pause to reflect on how we've done. It seems ages ago – spring of 1989, to be exact – that I responded to an open letter seeking an editor to launch a new magazine for the Virginia Society AIA. It was an intriguing opportunity – a chance to return to my hometown, reconnect with family, and start a design publication completely from scratch. How often would I get that chance? The launch of *Inform*, I should note, came at a time when the AIA was talking a lot about its need to do better at public outreach. The creation of a new magazine seemed to mesh seamlessly with that goal.

So the project moved ahead, an editor hired, graphic designers engaged, and an identity established. We didn't know much about branding, but we knew we wanted to create something memorable – something that architects could be proud of. In the early days, we talked about *Inform* in terms of being "a Smithsonian magazine of design." That's the standard we hoped to achieve. We assigned stories to professional writers who could engage design professionals without pushing the prose to a level of technical detail that would sail over the heads of lay readers – the key decision-makers in government and business who were our primary targets. We aimed to delight and enlighten them.

Along the way, we adapted the magazine in ways that have proven popular among a range of design professionals. First was the creation of the *Inform* Awards, which we structured to celebrate design accomplishments that were being overlooked. The program caught on immediately and, now in its sixteenth year, has become a fixture on our editorial calendar. When we were struggling to weather the recession of the early 1990s, we also initiated the feature called "On the Boards." I continue to be amazed by the number of architects who tell me this is the first thing they read in every issue. (A good way to scout the competition, no doubt.) But after all these years, I am proudest of the level of quality we have been able to maintain through the collaboration with talented graphic designers, the contributions of thoughtful writers, and the good eye of the region's best architectural photographers. Many readers have taken the trouble to send compliments about the magazine we created, and I want to offer my thanks for your encouragement and support.

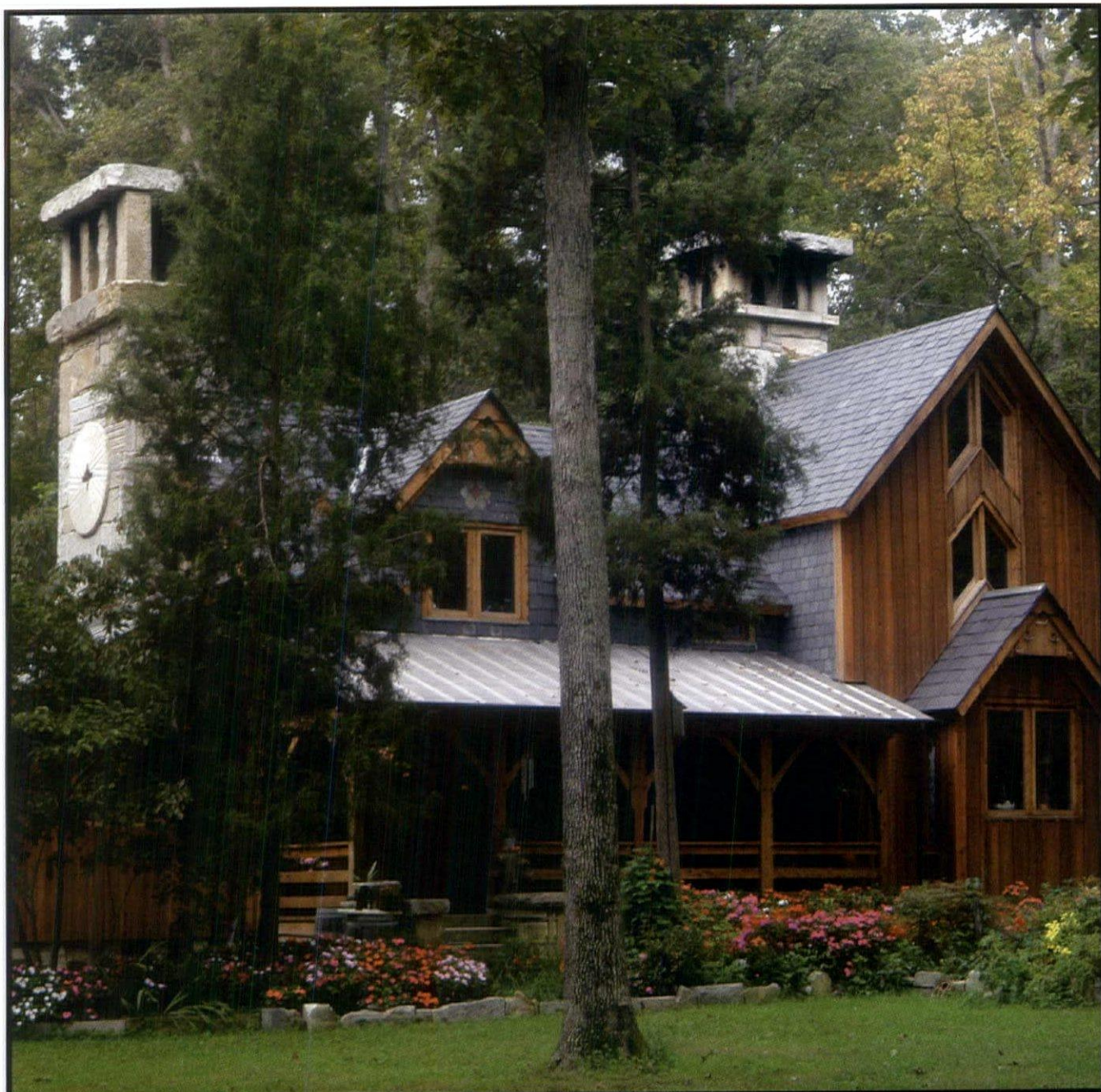
So what now? Although I'll be passing the torch to a new editor, I'll reside professionally at the Virginia Center for Architecture part of every week in the continuing role as Curator of Architecture + Design. Even though the Center has been open for two years, there is much work yet to be done before it becomes an established resource in statewide and local circles. But I believe its potential to raise public awareness of design and to position architects at the heart of important discussions about our physical surroundings is virtually boundless. Now I'll be devoting more of my energy to driving the engine of the Center and its exhibition and lecture programs. In addition, I have joined the team at *Architect* magazine as Editor at Large to aid the launch of another new journal – one that covers the national scene – and will work on other communications projects.

So while I'll be leaving the pages of *Inform* with a certain twinge of separation anxiety, I hope to keep seeing many of you as I continue my career in architecture – a career focused on writing and curatorial output. There's still plenty for us to accomplish together.



– Vernon Mays ([vmays@aiaa.org](mailto:vmays@aiaa.org))





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volume eighteen number one

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## Modern Makeover

SMBW Architects and a collaborative team help Richmond City Hall shed the recurring problems of a failing marble skin to unveil a shimmering civic presence. *By Kyle Copas*

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## Downtown Turnaround

Important downtown projects by Frazier Associates, from a vital parking deck to new loft housing in a renovated YMCA, are leading Staunton's transformation. *By Lisa Goff*

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By combining the programs of three nonprofit arts groups, the R.R. Smith Center for History and Art breathes new life into a decaying downtown hotel. *By Lisa Goff*

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## Design Lines

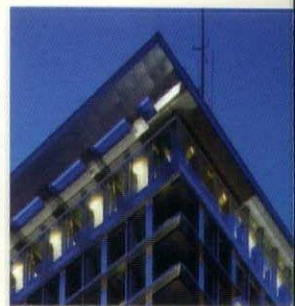
new developments in design

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## Taking Note

doing the small thing well



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View from Richmond City Hall  
Photo by James West

In our next issue:  
Review of Virginia  
Architecture &  
Inform Awards





A sweeping, all-encompassing exhibition like the National Design Triennial, established by the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum in New York in 2000, aims to be an overview of the latest in design of all kinds, from jewelry to robotics, the famous and the unknown, the corporate giant and the start-up, all in one enormous show. This leaves the curators in a bit of a quandary: Do you select designers and objects in a way that is comprehensive or thematically coherent?

The Cooper-Hewitt's Ellen Lupton, who has curated all three Triennials thus far (this time joined by Barbara Bloemink, Brooke Hodge, and Matilda McQuaid), falls on the side of comprehensive, giving the public a broad look at design in a show that is not discernibly organized by discipline or any other theme. Its title, "Design Life Now," is pretty much interchangeable with its predecessors, "Inside Design Now" (2003) and "Design Culture Now" (2000).

So as engaging and as enlightening as this Triennial is, it is hard to tease out any overarching narratives or lessons. The four curators each give it a try in separate essays in the exhibition catalog, but with mixed success.

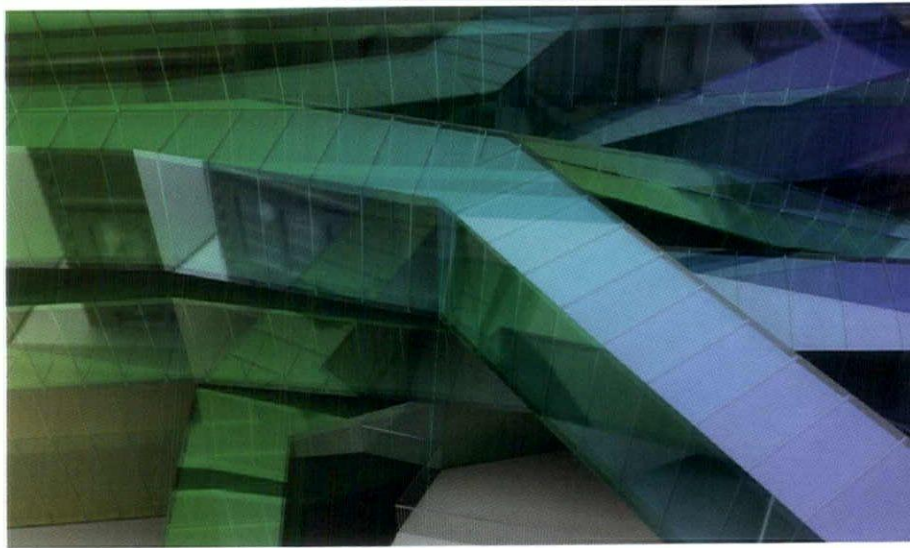
The show's introductory wall text suggests a series of dichotomies running throughout the work: craft and technology, natural and artificial, regional and global, and virtual and authentic. They left out "serious and frivolous." It seems that for every world-changing or life-saving product or process in the show, there is a silly, one-liner consumer product that suffers by the juxtaposition. For instance, the show features a device for transporting donor kidneys – designed by the manufacturer Organ Recovery Systems with the industrial design firm IDEO – that nourishes and monitors a kidney while in transit, adding up to 17 hours to an organ's viability. (Surprisingly elegant, it looks a little like a bread machine, though let's hope it won't be mistaken for one.)

Not far away is a collection of works by designer Jason Miller, who makes mirrors that look cracked, tables that look dusty, and an uphol-

# Controlled Chaos

Ideas and disciplines collide at The National Design Triennial

by Mark Alden Branch



Preston Scott Cohen's dynamic design of corridors for Robbins Elementary School in Trenton, N.J., draws on geometric principles to connect a glass addition to an existing building.

stered chair with trompe l'oeil leather patches that look like duct tape. These are funny, momentarily, but after you've seen the kidney transporter, Miller begins to look like the kid at the science fair who soaked a chicken bone in vinegar while the team at the next table was working on cold fusion.

And there are plenty of other dead-serious projects on exhibit. At least two of them employ virtual reality and are inspired by the Iraq War – the major event that has intervened since the last Triennial. An Army-sponsored project called the Institute for Creative Technologies (ICT), located at the University of Southern California, has been working with Hollywood creative people to develop training tools for soldiers based on video game technology. The exhibit features ICT's Sergeant John Blackwell, a 3-D virtual character who uses artificial intelligence to interact with visitors (though he wasn't making a lot of sense the day I spoke to him). Also employing virtual reality is Hunter Hoffman of the University of Washington, whose Arctic-themed snowball-throwing game *SnowWorld* has been shown to reduce dramatically the pain of burn victims. He is currently working on a game that helps soldiers cope with post-traumatic stress disorder.

Robotics turn up in several guises in the show, from applications as simple as the Roomba, a roving vacuum cleaner and floor washer from iRobot, to the next generation of rover from NASA, a six-limbed "Swiss army knife" for planetary exploration called the LEMUR (Limbed Excursion Mechanical Utility Rover). In a similar vein is the Robolobster, a robot that can walk underwater and trawl for mines. Developed by Northeastern University marine biologist Joseph Ayer and sponsored by the Office of Naval



Virtual reality blunts the agony of burn victims, whose conscious attention to pain is diverted by a game called *SnowWorld*.





New York designer Ron Gilad's spider-like chandelier, *Dear Ingo*, pays tribute to German lighting designer Ingo Maurer.

Research, the machine's design is inspired by the form and behavior of a real lobster.

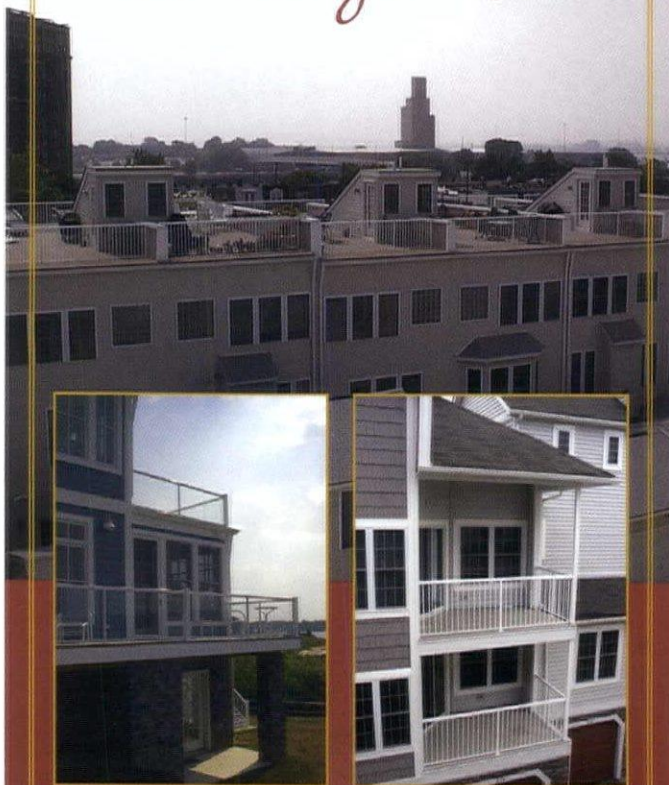
At the other end of the spectrum, several other entries have the same "fiddling while Rome burns" lack of gravitas of the faux duct-tape chair, but they make up for it by being more innovative or visually arresting. Designer Ron Gilad's *Dear Ingo* chandelier is made from 16 task lamps – mainstays of the designer's studio – set in a circle. And men's clothing designer Thom Browne confounds expectations by combining traditional tailoring with unusual materials: a suit made with football-jersey mesh, a terry cloth blazer. In the "problems you didn't know you had" category, designers Leon Ransmeier and Gwendolyn Floyd have on exhibit (among other more useful things) a bookshelf called "Crop," which has special hinged panels that fold down to hide the distressing fact that the tops of your books are not all the same height.

The most interesting architecture selected for the exhibit runs more toward gee-whiz technology than ironic playfulness. Two architects who have each developed winsome prefabricated housing systems – Craig Konyk and Charlie Lazor – are represented. The influence of computers also shows up in the architectural work, notably in the complex geometries of Preston Scott Cohen, whose project for an elementary school in New Jersey features tube-like corridors connecting the original school with a glass box addition. Most unusual and forward-looking is a tiny project by the New York firm SHoP: a small, monolithic structure housing a camera obscura in a town park on Long Island. The building was designed digitally, with each



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# DESIGN LIFE NOW

NATIONAL DESIGN TRIENNIAL 2006



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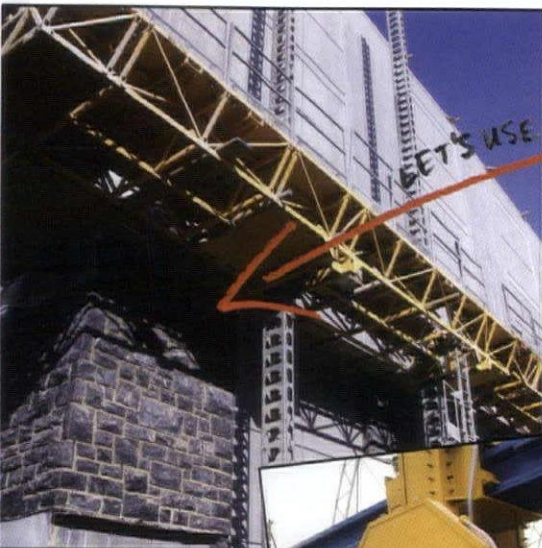
of its 750 pieces fabricated by machine directly from the designers' files, suggesting a future that will reconcile pre-fabrication and custom design.

But one of my favorite projects for the built environment is an installation by lighting designer Leni Schwendinger. For the city of Glasgow, Schwendinger invented a lighting scheme for the Kingston Bridge in which colors change based on the amount of traffic congestion on the bridge and the status of the tide in the river below. The project is a wonderful combination of aesthetic and information that suggests a way our physical environment could communicate with us in elegant ways.

All these projects are collected in the exhibition's catalog, which allots one page or two to each of the 87 designers or firms in the exhibition. Like the wall text in the exhibition, the book was designed by COMA, a graphic design team in Amsterdam and New York that is featured in the exhibition. The most notable feature of both the book and wall text design is the use of fonts called The Clash and The Clash Sans, designed by COMA for the show. Perversely, the fonts combine roman consonants and sans-serif vowels (vice versa in the "sans" version) for an effect that is unforgivably distracting and hard on the eyes. I can only guess that the "clash" is supposed to suggest the variety and chaos of the show itself, but the curators, in the end, pull it off with more aplomb.

Mark Alden Branch is executive editor of the Yale Alumni Magazine.





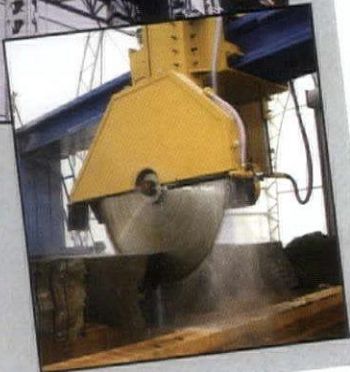
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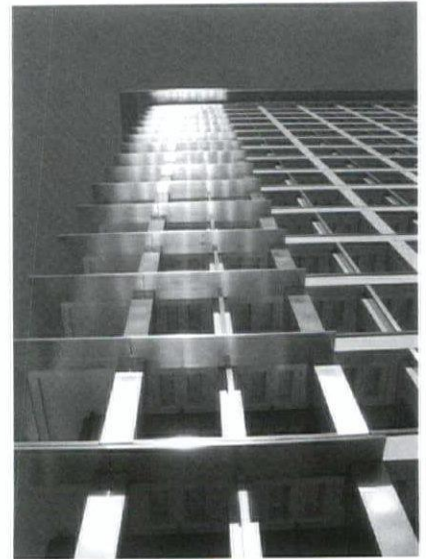
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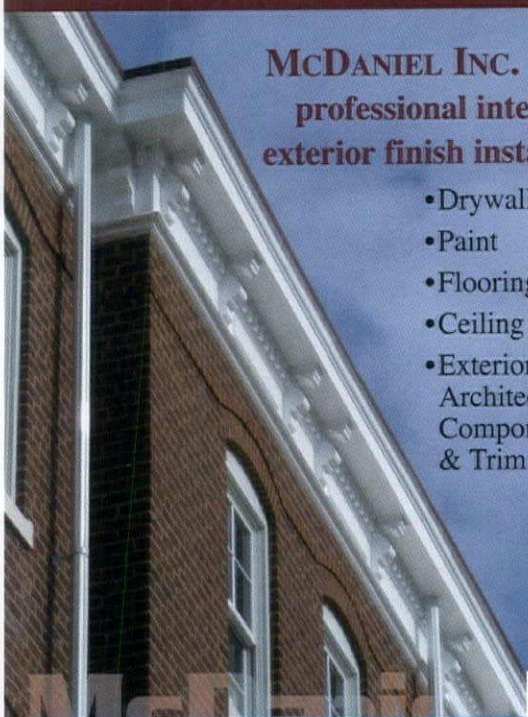


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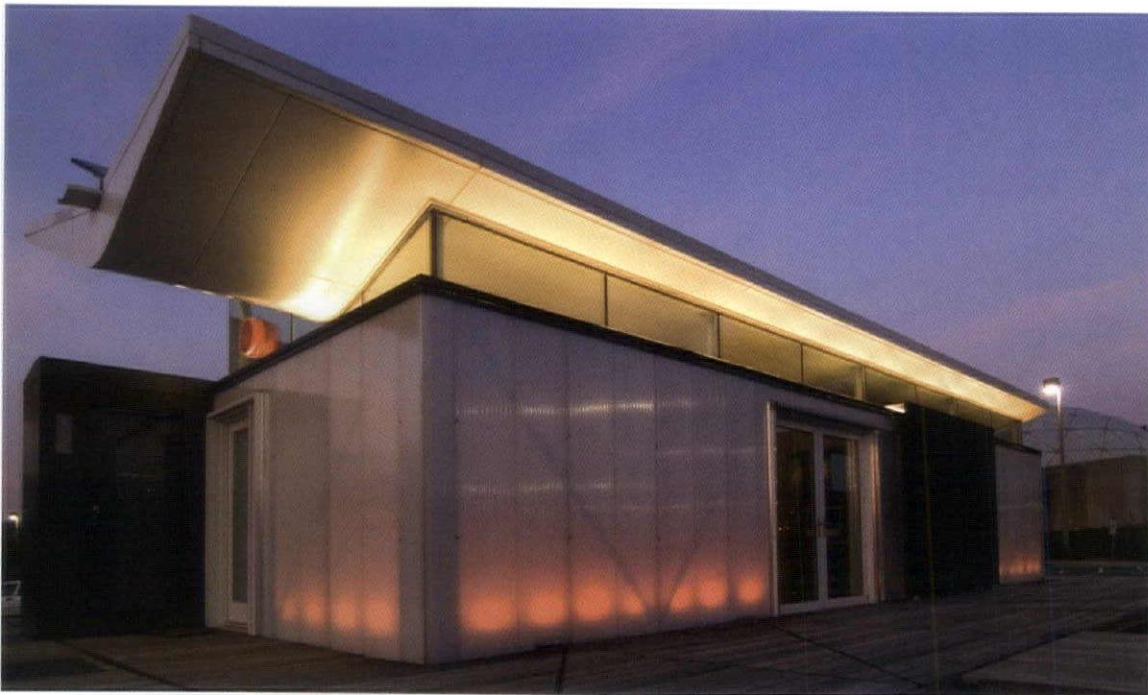
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For a glimpse of where architecture might be heading, check out the glowing little house sitting untethered in the Science Museum of Virginia's parking lot.

Don't look for any electrical lines overhead – Virginia Tech's award-winning solar house, built for the 2005 U.S. Department of Energy Solar Decathlon, is drawing all its power from the sun.

The 590-square-foot prototype dwelling, clad in translucent, polycarbonate panels with a banana-shaped roof, uses solar power to satisfy all its energy needs, from heating and air conditioning to kitchen appliances to radiant floor heating.

Museum officials are delighted to have the educational exhibit on their Richmond grounds. "The house is designed to demonstrate how solar and geothermal energy can be feasible," says museum staff scientist David Hagan. "It will be really neat to see the public's reaction when the house is open to visitors." At press time, the house was still closed due to a code issue that requires building berms around the house. That issue is expected to be resolved soon.

The primary architectural challenge, besides getting manufacturers and suppliers to donate materials, was making a small space seem big, says Robert Dunay, AIA, a professor of architecture at Virginia Tech and one of several faculty advisers for the project. "For energy requirements, we wanted to heat as small an area as possible," Dunay says. "The roof lifts to a clerestory – an 18-inch-tall strip of glass high along the wall – around the entire circumference of the house, so space seems to release as well as enclose, making it seem much larger than it is. It's bringing the outdoors in."

The curved ceiling's reflected light causes the roof to appear to be floating, while dimmer-controlled LED lights in the translucent panels mean the color of the house can be changed instantly.

The 65,000-pound house was first trucked to the Mall in Washington, D.C., for the energy-based competition. It has been parked outside the College of Architecture and Urban Studies in Blacksburg until recently, when it was relocated to the Science

Museum. It was designed and built over a two-year period by a core team of about 20 students and 11 faculty members from Tech's architecture and engineering schools.

The house won fourth place overall in the decathlon competition. But for all its eco-friendliness and energy efficiency, replicas aren't likely to start springing up in the suburbs anytime soon. The cost of materials alone totaled about \$350,000, and some components aren't even on the market yet. For example, material suppliers helped design and create the home's translucent walls. They're made of polycarbonate panels and filled with a super insulating aerogel.

The spirit of the project, Dunay says, was to make the public aware of energy consumption and the world's ultimate renewable resource – the light of the sun. Further study of solar energy could someday free us of our dependence on oil. The house will be on view at the Science Museum for at least a year.

– Deborah Abbey Kelly

See video at [http://viscomm.unirel.vt.edu/solar\\_pgs/solar\\_lg.html](http://viscomm.unirel.vt.edu/solar_pgs/solar_lg.html)



The house incorporates sustainable features such as Lyptus wood floors.



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## Modern Space, Historic Style

The building committee at Montpelier – the Orange, Virginia, home of founding father and fourth president James Madison – didn't make things easy for the architectural team designing its visitors center.

They wanted a big, beautiful building, but one that wouldn't challenge the most important edifice on the grounds, Madison's lifelong home. The new center couldn't look out of place among other 1800s-era properties. Finally, the structure had to be highly functional as both a visitor center and reception space for special events.

Two architecture firms teamed up on the project, Glave & Holmes of Richmond and Bartzen & Ball of Alexandria. After three years of design work, the 10,000-square-foot visitor center opened in mid-March to rave reviews. "We're thrilled with it," says Michael Quinn, an architectural historian and president of the Montpelier Foundation.

Most historic homes put the visitors center on a boundary of the property, as part of the gateway or entrance, Quinn explains. But the Montpelier team "put it right in the middle," where its central location makes it easy for visitors to return repeatedly, whether for a snack, bathroom break or extra film for the camera.

Constructed by Westport Construction of hand-made brick, wood, and glass, and designed to evoke the feeling of a barn, the building is filled with light. Its interior trim is rich cherry wood, its terraces bluestone – all intended to complement the reconstituted form of Madison's stately brick home.

"It fits so naturally," Quinn says of the \$8.8 million project. "Most people don't realize it wasn't there six months ago."

– Deborah Abbey Kelly



The 10,000-square-foot Visitors Center includes a theater, café, museum shop – and gorgeous views of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

Courtesy James Madison's Montpelier



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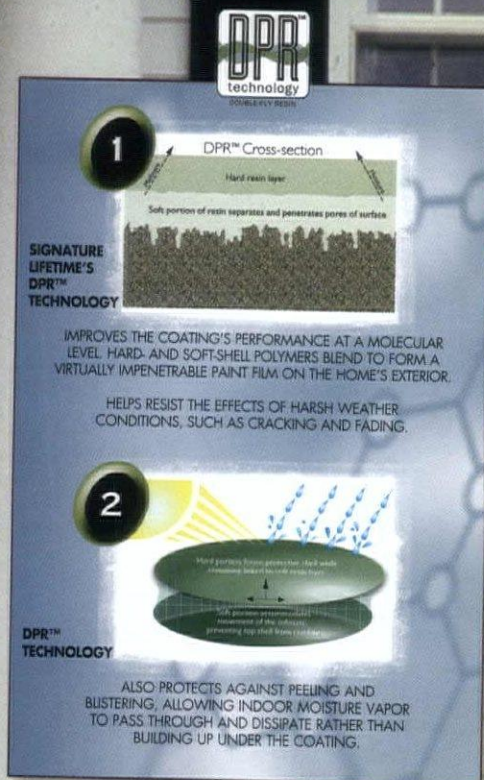
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# Modern Makeover



SMBW Architects and a collaborative team help Richmond City Hall shed a failing marble skin to unveil a shimmering civic presence.

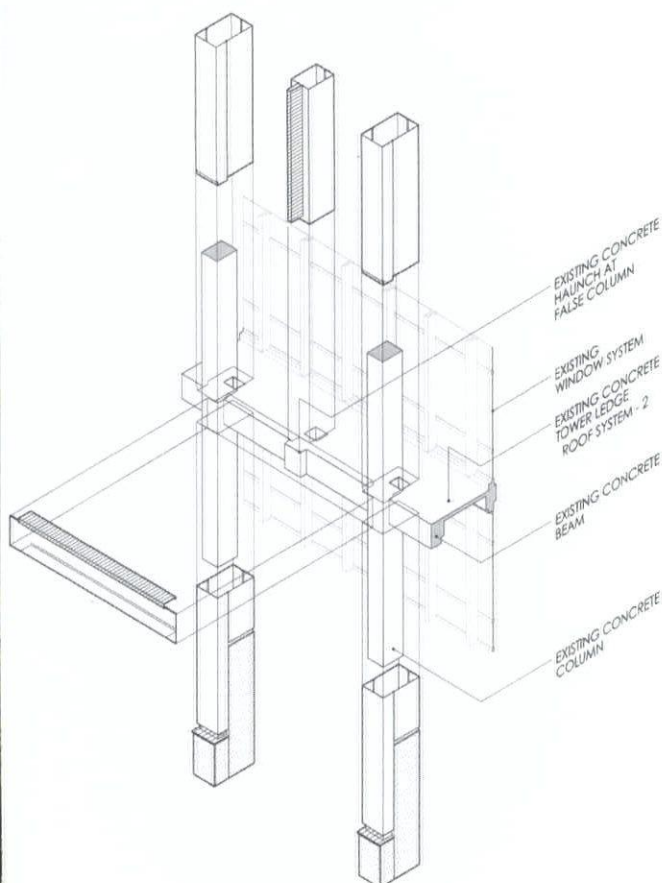
*By Kyle Copas*



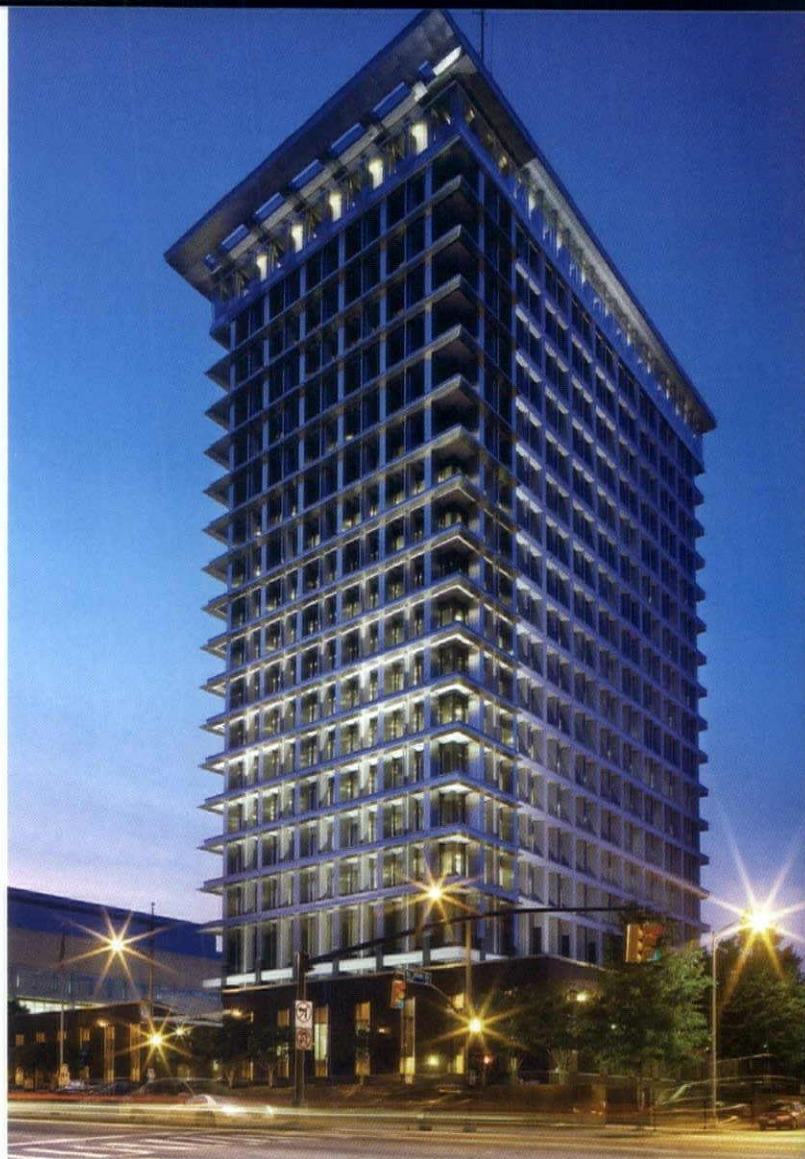
Trying to repair a failing building owned by a city government hardly seems like a compelling design opportunity. But in the hands of a team led by SMBW Architects of Richmond, the recladding of Richmond City Hall became precisely that. While working to resolve the progressive decline and breakdown of the 18-story tower's marble-veneer skin, the design team formed a tight-knit collaboration with the owner and the contractor. The result is a top-to-bottom makeover that positively reshapes City Hall's image as a vital physical and symbolic center of civic life.

For the first quarter-century of its life, the Richmond City Hall cut an uninspiring figure. Designed by Ballou and Justice and completed in 1970, the monolithic, white marble tower was punctuated with dark, deep-set openings and rose from a plinth divided into four quadrants. This home for city employees neither got nor gave much to its diverse urban setting, which includes the ornate Old City Hall and the Virginia General Assembly Building just across Broad Street. The placement of the building's front door, tucked around the Marshall Street side to the north, epitomized its relative lack of social and civic grace.

By the mid-1990s, however, officials in the Richmond Department of Public Works were recognizing that aesthetics and approachability weren't all that City Hall lacked: The marble veneer showed signs of aging as gracefully as the design itself. "We recognized that the marble was failing," says Richard Morse, the department's senior architect, so in 1995 they began a series of investigations to study the problem. Morse and other city staff initially hoped that a different maintenance regime might resolve the visible bowing and cracking some panels dis-



The modular recladding system downsizes the non-structural service columns and adds a vertical-fin detail.



City Hall's sleek new aluminum-and-stainless steel cladding transforms its physical and symbolic position along Broad Street.

played. Meanwhile, they removed those in the worst condition and sought to restrain others with temporary silicon-coated fiberglass straps. While concerns over a big remediation budget generated anxiety, so did the threat to public safety.

Enter SMBW in 1997. Principal Fred Ortiz, AIA, took the lead on the project, and the forensic nature of the initial assignment gave him no pause. "We wanted to solve the problem," says Ortiz. Their first study focused on addressing the marble problem by updating the mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems. In City Hall's original design, alternating columns on the façade were hollow shafts that contained air ducts and water pipes. The initial solution was to push the façade's footprint outward toward the edge of the slab and the building's true structural columns. Working with the Northern Virginia office of engineers Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates (WJE), SMBW dove into the original construction documents and mapped the entire tower at close range from a swing stage, assessing all of City Hall's 23,000 marble panels and tagging those that needed to be removed or restrained.

SMBW's choice to partner with structural experts WJE proved to be particularly apt. The consultant's analysis had helped lay the groundwork for the earlier replacement of marble panels on Chicago's "Big Stan," the 80-story Amoco/Standard Oil Building now known as the Aon Center. The





Three new canopies draw visitors in and signal civic, street-level transparency.





culprit they had fingered on that project quickly became a suspect in Richmond: a natural phenomenon with the dramatic name of hysteresis.

The original designers' decision to clad City Hall's soffit and fascia panels with thin sheets of Georgia white marble was consistent with a Modernist attitude toward experimentation with materials and structural techniques. Such veneers, though well established in interiors, weren't introduced widely to exteriors until the 1960s. The lessons of hindsight and high-profile failures have led to the understanding that coarse-grained marbles are particularly prone to microscopic fractures when subjected to daily thermal cycles of expansion and contraction. Individual panels deteriorate at different rates, depending on their level of direct exposure to the sun and the weather. But, once started, the process is irreversible and leads to the progressive loss of structural integrity.

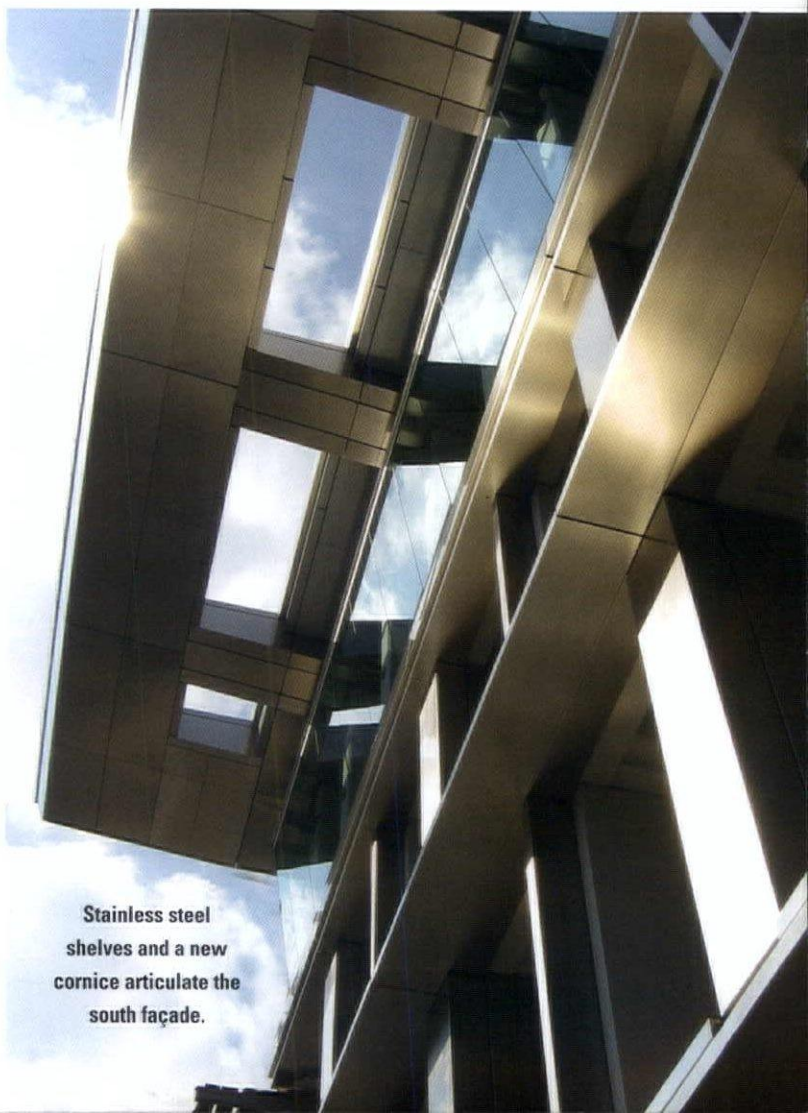
The answer to the initial problem was clear now: City Hall's marble cladding had to come down. The city soon approved several short-term steps the team proposed – immediate replacement of failing panels on the tower with painted exterior-grade plywood, temporary pinning and stabilization of those on the quadrants, and ongoing evaluation throughout – but also seized the opportunity the crisis offered to give the building a new look. The forensic study morphed into a design opportunity, and the challenge then became how to shape a radical change to the building's appearance within the constraints of cost, material, and structure.

SMBW and WJE dove into the assignment with relish – “We’re a research-intensive firm,” says Ortiz. – and conducted a comprehensive review of material options for the recladding.

They looked at granite, limestone, and a slew of engineered products such as aluminum composite panels, precast-polymer concrete, and exterior insulated finish systems, among others. At the same time, the team went mining for possible design cues, turning up a 1995 strategic plan entitled *A New Direction*. The document became a touchstone with its discussions about public services, facilities, community character goals, and the need to modernize Richmond's civic image.

Evaluating the material options along the lines of durability, maintenance, aesthetics, cost, and constructability narrowed the design options to two schemes. The first followed the example of the Amoco Building – an in-kind replacement of the marble panels with granite. And, while it addressed most of the criteria, this option was a non-starter from a budget perspective: It would approach twice the building's original \$17 million cost. The second option proposed a combination of stone and composite aluminum. Not only did it begin to change the look of the building, it also enabled the team to downsize and eliminate the false columns.

At the same time, the project's intensely collaborative spirit was becoming contagious. Positive responses aside, the stakeholders pushed the team to go further. Council clearly stated its desire that the architects use the best materials the budget would allow, and the Urban Design Committee asked the team to connect the building to the streetscape – a suggestion that led to the three glass canopies that now shelter the entrances on Broad, Ninth, and Tenth streets. Ortiz says, “When the city challenged us to use better materials, it enabled us to sim-



**Stainless steel shelves and a new cornice articulate the south façade.**





New glazing on the observation deck nudges toward the floor edge to enhance the already expansive views.

plify the scheme.” The design coalesced around a combination of solid aluminum panels, stainless steel, and granite, and a hierarchy of building elements began to evolve.

At its core is the recladding. Painted aluminum panels make up the primary replacement material, covering the structural columns around the tower. The elimination of the false-column enclosures around the building systems allowed for a new jacket, with a perimeter reduced by 35 percent. This change alone did much to alter the building’s previously monolithic appearance – an alteration enhanced by the removal of corner columns, which also allowed better corner-office views. The new rainscreen detailing also has the added benefit of eliminating caulk joints like the ones that had allowed water infiltration and hastened the marble’s deterioration.

SMBW’s new scheme also redefines City Hall’s front façade and, thereby, its urban symbolism. Stainless steel fins wrap the horizontal surfaces of the south face and wrap around the corners for the first few bays, creating an enthralling interplay





of direct and reflected light throughout the day. Stainless steel copings and vertical fins on the reduced service enclosures accent the other three façades. The addition of a projection at the roofline gives the tower a cornice like its neighbors – an effect heightened by tilting the expansive glass enclosure of the observation deck outward.

At street level, the new emphasis of the quadrant bases accentuates the design's redefinition of City Hall's mass and scale. A skin of black granite covers the quadrants and the council chambers, and three glass-and-steel canopies ground the building, draw people in, and by their transparency gesture toward the shimmering aluminum and steel above.

Beauty may still be skin deep. But by drawing its inspirations from deep within the classical and modern well-springs of civic and architectural imagery, SMBW Architects has crafted a taut, refined, and lasting new image for Richmond City Hall.

*Kyle Copas is a Charlottesville freelance writer.*

**Project:** Richmond City Hall Recladding

**Architect:** SMBW Architects, Richmond (Fred Ortiz, AIA, principal-in-charge; Fred Hopkins, project architect)

**Consultants:** Wiss Janney Elstner (building envelope); Daniels and Associates (structural); HC Yu and Associates (MEP)

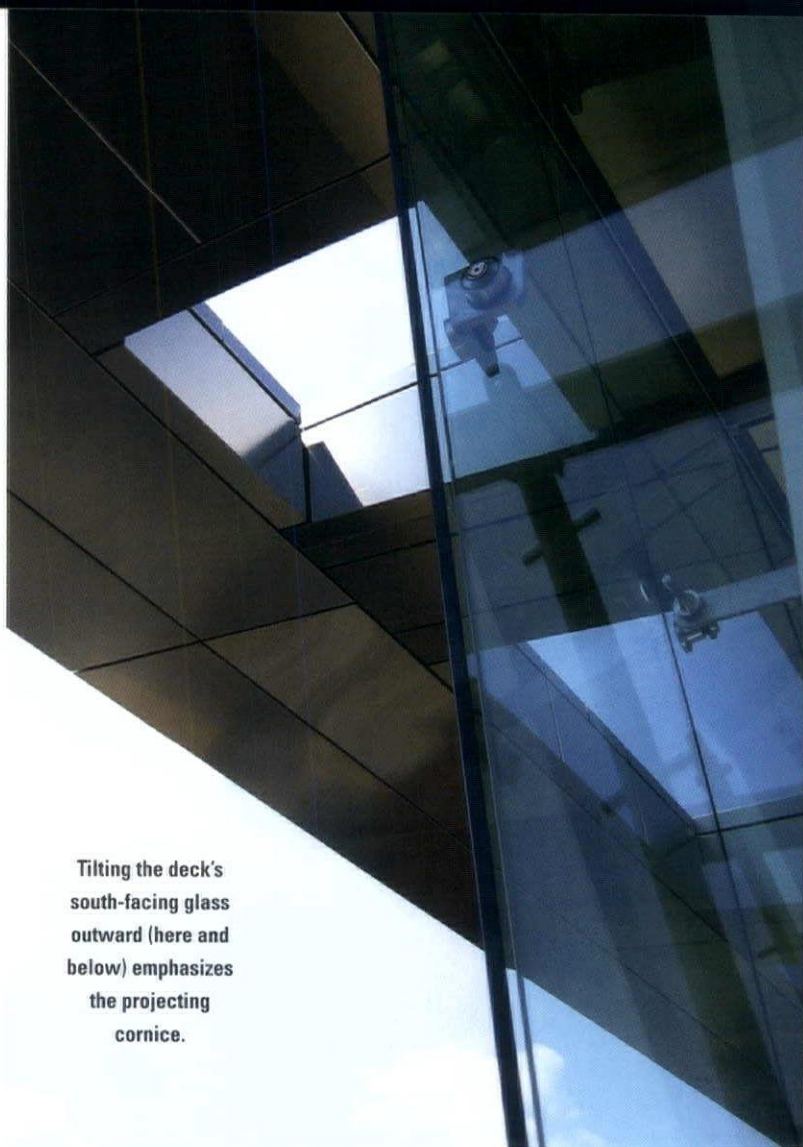
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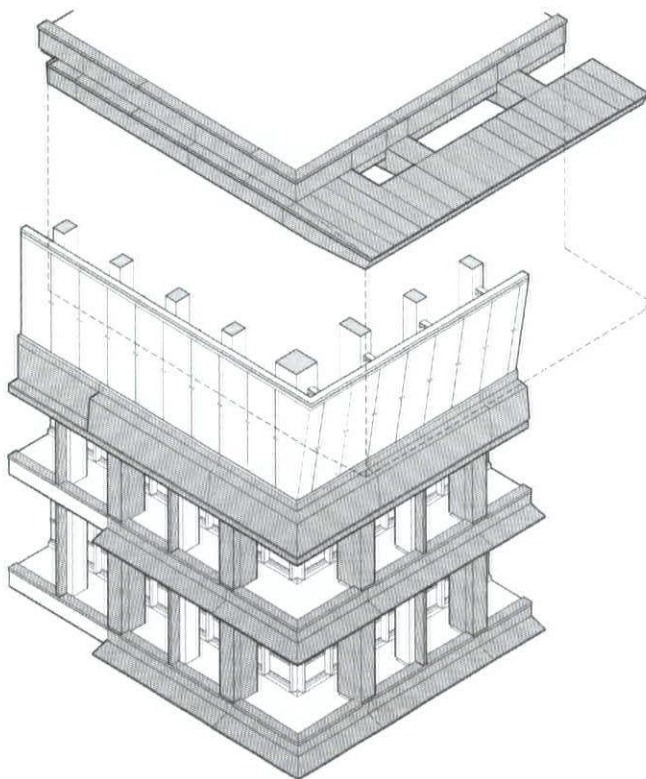
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Tilting the deck's south-facing glass outward (here and below) emphasizes the projecting cornice.

Photos: J West Productions, LLC

Before renovation (left) the observation deck was less welcoming.







# Downtown Turnaround

*By completing a number of key projects over several years, hometown talent Frazier Associates is helping to lead Staunton's transformation from decline to rebirth.*

*By Lisa Goff*

Bill Frazier remembers the opening night of a film series he launched as executive director of the fledgling Historic Staunton Foundation in 1975. "One person showed up," recalls Frazier, a principal of Frazier Associates, long an important player in Staunton's conservation efforts.

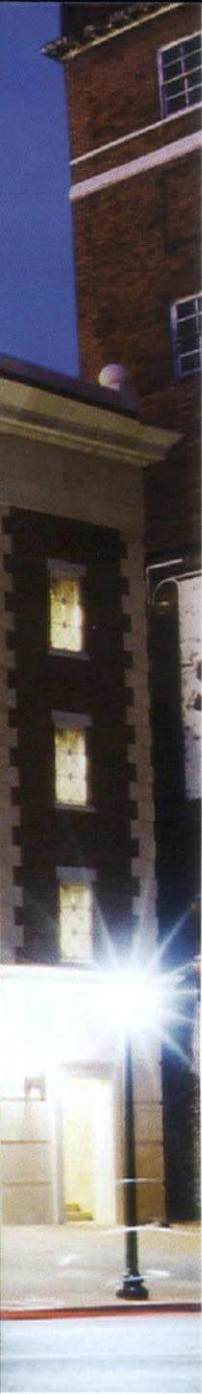
Historic preservation seemed a foreign concept in those dark, early days. "I remember I had to order that film from England, because at the time there weren't any documentaries about historic preservation in the U.S.," he says.

How times have changed. Today Staunton is a model for downtown historic preservation. Five historic districts protect hundreds of buildings in the central core, many dating from

Staunton's heyday as a railroad town in the 19th and early 20th centuries. In the past 10 years, more than \$40 million in private investment has flowed into downtown Staunton, which in 2002 won the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Great Main Street Award.

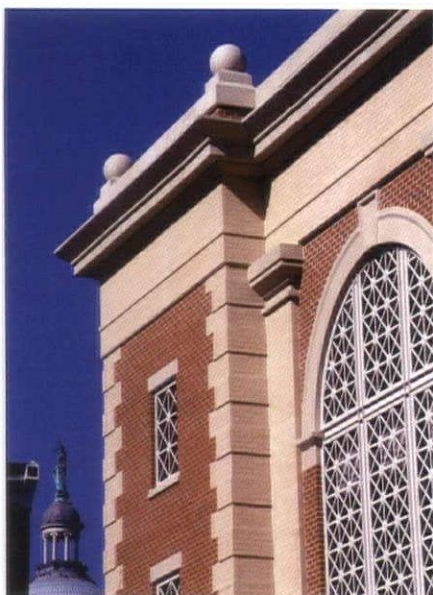
In the past five years, five major projects, including a new parking garage and the renovation of the Stonewall Jackson Hotel, have capped a downtown renaissance that started more than 30 years ago with Frazier and his film series. Except for the hotel, these projects have all been the handiwork of Frazier Associates. The 18-person firm has become synonymous with preservation in Staunton, where both principals were early lead-





Frazier Associates

A typical view of Staunton (above) reveals the scale and texture of a 19th century town. Classical detailing, familiar forms, and brick construction (below) help weave the garage into its traditional setting.



Jason Hottel

Frazier Associates

The civic parking garage (above) makes a grand gesture in the classic tradition of public buildings.

ers of the preservation movement. "Early on, there was a vision generated for what downtown could be," says Kathleen O. Frazier, AIA, who started Frazier Associates with her husband in 1986. "We kept pecking away at the little projects, and eventually the big ones got done, too."

One of the "big ones" was the New Street Parking Garage, an ambitious undertaking by the city in 2002. When the 300-seat Blackfriars Playhouse was built the year before, the city agreed to replace a nearby surface parking lot with a garage that would accommodate 277 cars. Inserting a 100,000-square-foot garage in the heart of a historic district called for nothing less than a signature design.

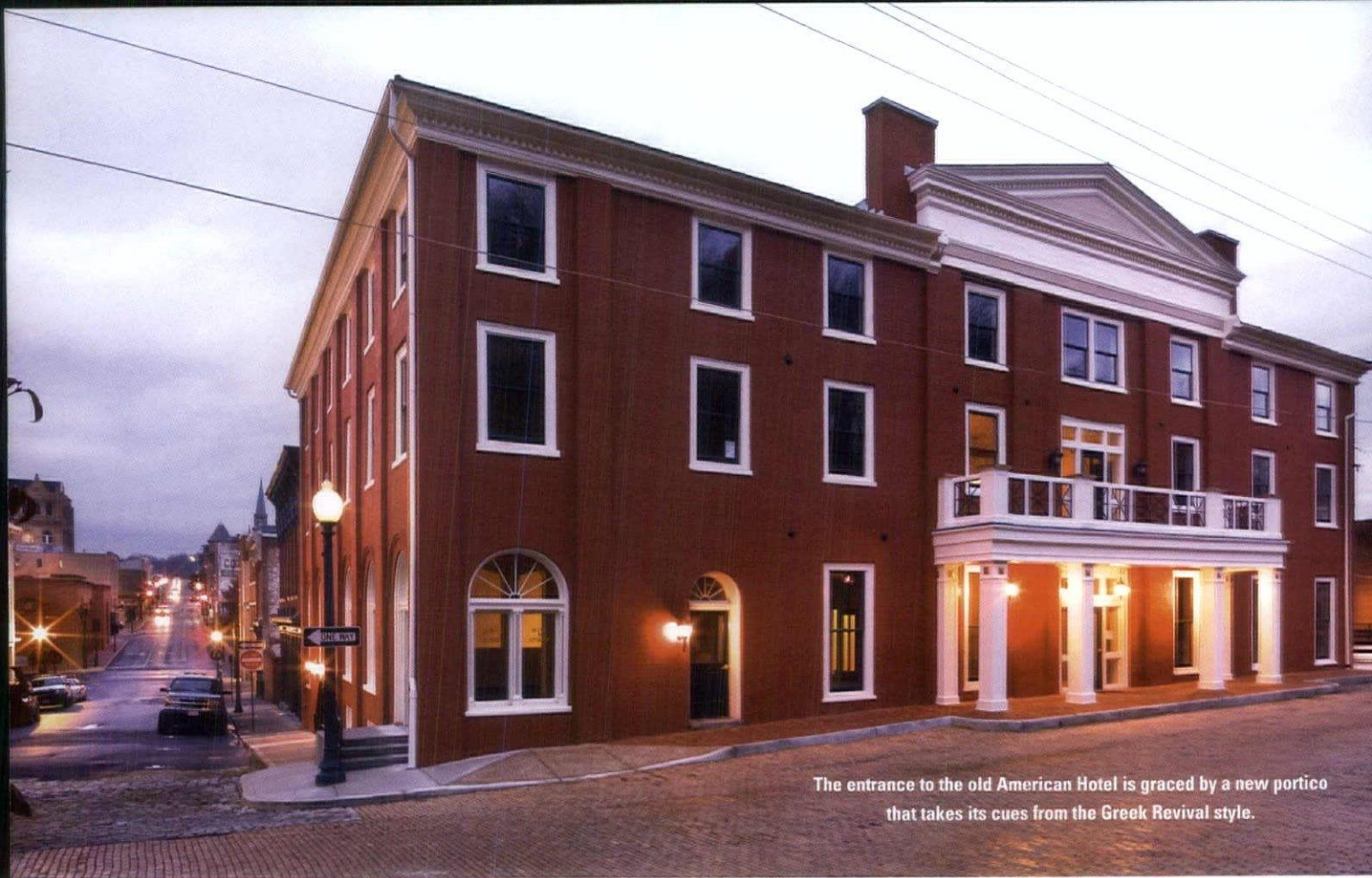
"In the past, architects designed beautiful buildings that welcomed visitors to cities," says Ms. Frazier. "So we asked ourselves, 'Why not make a beautiful parking garage that celebrates arrival the way train stations used to?'" Three soaring, arched windows make the entrance façade of the New Street Parking Garage look more like a prosperous, early 20th-century bank than a parking facility. On the side street, three retail storefronts—including one that houses a visitor center—echo the street's Victorian façades.

The parking garage and the Blackfriars Theater played a major role in attracting a developer for the defunct Stonewall Jackson Hotel, which reopened in 2005. The Georgian-style, red brick edifice, designed in 1924 by Chicago architect H. L. Stevens, dominates the corner of Market and Beverley streets, a major entrance into downtown. Architects Mark McConnel + Associates of Roanoke guided the rehabilitation of the hotel, whose red neon sign is once again a fixture on the skyline.

"I'd been working on that project since I got here in 1989," says Bill Hamilton, the town's director of economic development. "I always thought that the hotel renovation would drive the revitalization of downtown. What I learned was that downtown revitalization had to drive the renovation of the hotel."

By 2001, when Crestline Hotels and Resorts first looked at the property, there were crowds of tourists eating, shopping, and attending plays downtown. Numerous downtown buildings had been renovated using state and federal tax credits, a local tax abatement program, and a façade improvement pro-





The entrance to the old American Hotel is graced by a new portico that takes its cues from the Greek Revival style.

22 gram funded by local banks. A mid-1990s streetscape project (also designed by Frazier Associates) and the burying of utilities made downtown a draw for the meeting and conference business the Stonewall Jackson needed to succeed. The New Street Parking Garage, connected to the hotel in anticipation of its redevelopment, eliminated parking concerns.

“Usually, it’s city government that’s trying to get businesses to invest in historic preservation,” Hamilton points out.

“In Staunton, it really happened the other way around.”

The rebirth of downtown has attracted a healthy mix of residents as well as business tenants. In 2004, Frazier Associates transformed the 1854 American Hotel into the city’s first Class A office space. Located on Augusta Street near the old train station – the first part of Staunton to be rehabilitated, in the late 1980s – the hotel had been gutted in 1891 for use as a produce warehouse. The only remaining trace of interior detail was a

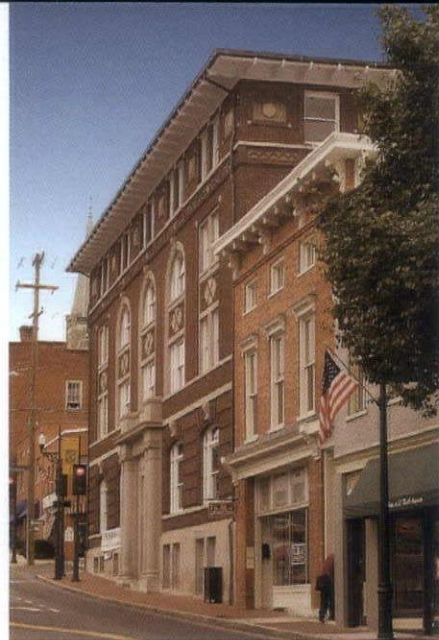


The two-story lobby balances modern appeal with traditional design.



A regional law firm was the building’s first tenant.





**The converted YMCA now provides 19 condos totaling 45,000 square feet of luxury space.**



**High ceilings and enormous windows spill abundant daylight into the lofts. With units such as these, Staunton remains a vibrant town with residents committed to urban living.**

lone Greek Revival door unearthed on the top floor.

Using vintage drawings and photographs, Frazier designed a Greek Revival portico reminiscent of the original. Wood piers with gold-studded capitals support a wooden balustrade crisscrossed by steel bars. A two-panel Greek Revival door opens onto a new lobby, where the railing and pier motifs are repeated. An inlaid Greek key outlines the parquet floor, and the offices upstairs feature exposed oak beams and columns.

Three blocks away, Frazier converted an empty YMCA into luxury lofts. Developer Miller Associates, of Richmond, used historic rehabilitation tax credits to finance the Old Y Lofts project, which features 19 residential condominiums and two business suites. Twelve units sold on the first open-house weekend; the last unit, the penthouse, was spoken for in March.

The 1914 Italian Renaissance Revival building was largely intact when Frazier was hired. The brick and cast-stone exterior was in good shape, as was the carved wooden trim in the lobby – made from walnut trees on the farm of Cyrus McCormick, the mechanical reaper magnate who helped finance the original building. The architects were able to repair the arched, wood windows.

The biggest design challenge was reconfiguring the vast 45,000-square-foot interior, with its warren of tiny dormitory cells, swimming pool, and theater. Frazier created a variety of unit models ranging in size from 790 to 3,000 square

feet. Many are two levels, which helps minimize the long corridors. Where they found quirks, Frazier created special features: the theater's stage is now a raised bedroom; the pool has become a unique wine cellar.

Staunton's renaissance continues. Frazier is working on three new projects: a 29,000-square-foot, \$14 million Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library; preliminary plans for a Globe Theater addition to the American Shakespeare Center; and the redevelopment of an 1825 mental hospital campus (later used as a prison until 2002) into a mixed-use village of condos and shops.

The Globe Theater is planned for an area outside the historic district on Central Avenue – the site of numerous urban renewal demolitions in the 1970s. "That corridor has the potential for modern infill developments," says

Hamilton. "Not everyone is drawn to historic buildings." He would also like to see part of the area devoted to green space and landscaping, which is in short supply on Staunton's narrow streets and skinny sidewalks.

The reuse of the Western State Hospital campus – 17 Jeffersonian buildings in a weeping willow-strewn park – would allow Staunton to expand its downtown. "That's a rare opportunity," says Hamilton, who spent two years convincing the state to sign the property over to the city. Frazier's plans call for a New Urbanist, pedestrian-friendly village where a first phase of residences, now under construction, will eventually be joined by retail stores, restaurants, offices, and hotels.

The days when Bill Frazier couldn't fill a room with people interested in preserving Staunton are long gone. "We're starting the next phase now – big, long-term projects that will build on what historic preservation has accomplished here," he says.

*Lisa Goff is a freelance writer who lives and works in Charlottesville.*



**A stairwell skylight (left) brightens a penthouse unit in the Old Y Lofts.**





The former Eakleton Hotel, shown in its dilapidated state in the inset at left, was designed in 1896 by Staunton's preeminent architect, T.J. Collins.

# Remarkable Recovery

The lightwell is a focal point of the interior, with original windows and bulls-eye trim preserved.

24

## The R.R. Smith Center for History and Art breathes new civic life into a decaying hotel.

By Lisa Goff

In 1980, Kathleen Frazier surveyed a decrepit 1895 hotel in downtown Staunton for the fledgling Historic Staunton Foundation. Plywood covered the windows, the delicate balconies had been lopped off, and the upper floors were abandoned. Shorn of its Victorian grandeur, the ravaged building was a fitting reflection of Staunton's decline.

In April, the former Eakleton Hotel reopened as the R.R. Smith Center for History and Art. Transformed by Frazier's architectural firm, Frazier Associates, the 25,000-square foot building is now home to three local nonprofits: the Historic Staunton Foundation, the Augusta County Historical Society, and the Staunton Augusta Art Center.

The ground floor features three exhibit galleries and a gift shop. Offices, classrooms, a lecture hall, and a library fill the upper stories, which also will house the archives of the building's prolific architect, T.J. Collins. The French Second Empire façade has been restored,

an apt symbol for the renaissance downtown Staunton has undergone in the quarter-century since Frazier first surveyed the building.

The \$6.2 million restoration was made possible by a large donation from the late R.R. "Jake" Smith, the trucking czar and Staunton booster for whom the center is named. "He told us, 'Go bigger than you think you need to go, and pick a building that's in bad shape,'" says Billie Guill-Smith, the Center's coordinator. "He wanted us to renovate a building that would jump-start redevelopment of an entire block."

His charge to choose a really bad building did not go unheeded. A major Colonial Revival renovation in the early 1900s had obscured many of the hotel's original details. Barn siding covered the exterior and sections of the interior. Worst of all, the inside was caked three feet deep in pigeon droppings.

Numerous industrial-strength cleanings later, the original tile floors

shine. Arched windows have been restored on the ground floor, the balconies and cupola rebuilt. The architects saved the original windows and bulls-eye trim in the building's lightwell, which floods the galleries and classrooms with daylight. A paint scheme of warm yellow, burgundy, and dark green recalls the building's Victorian beginnings.

In addition to private donations, the rehabilitation was funded with \$3 million in foundation and government grants and \$1.7 million in state and federal tax credits. Because it started life as a railroad hotel, it even qualified for federal TEA-21 funds (Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century), which provide some funding for historic properties impacted by past transportation projects.

The building houses organizations with similar needs and missions, but distinct personalities. "When we started planning we asked them, 'Are y'all just gonna live together, or get married?'" says Kathy Frazier. A decision to bond





The renovated hotel houses galleries for the Staunton-Augusta Art Center, the Augusta County Historical Society, and The Historic Staunton Foundation. An affiliate of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, the gallery hosts traveling exhibits.

25

permanently allowed the architects to pursue a "hybrid" program of shared entrances, galleries, and meeting spaces on lower floors, with private spaces for offices and archival collections on upper floors. An affiliation with the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts will bring traveling exhibits to the galleries, which can also be rented out to local groups for private events.

On the fourth floor, Historic Staunton Foundation will establish an archive for the papers of T.J. Collins & Sons, which closed just over a year ago. "Collins was one of those architects who designed in every style in the book," says Bill Frazier, who did his master's thesis on the architect in the 1970s. "He would use a Sullivan arch in one building, and then do a Victorian house full of turrets, a perfect Beaux Arts bank, a Gothic Catholic church." His buildings and those of his son, Sam Collins, are largely responsible for Staunton's picture book downtown.



Existing pressed metal ceilings and mosaic floor tiles were preserved in the rehabilitation.

**Project:** R.R. Smith Center for History and Art  
**Architect:** Frazier Associates Architects & Planners, Staunton (Kathleen O. Frazier, AIA, principal-in-charge; Carter B. Green, AIA, project manager)

**Consultants:** Dunlap & Partners Engineers (MEP); Linton Engineering (structural); KSA Associates (interior design)

**General Contractor:** Harrisonburg Construction

**Owner:** R.R. Smith Center for History & Art

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# Urban Initiative

*A planning effort of radical proportions emerges at Virginia Beach Town Center, where a new downtown advances architects' role as placemakers and agents of change.*

*By Rab McClure*

Turning east toward Virginia Beach onto Interstate 264, it's easy to spot the area locals have started calling "downtown": the expanding mixed-use development at Virginia Beach Town Center. The 23-story Armada Hoffer Tower by CMSS Architects of Virginia Beach, completed in 2001, is clearly visible from miles around. The building is the first of a handful of mid-rise and high-rise buildings to materialize within the new 17-block urban core at the intersection of Independence and Virginia Beach boulevards, and a bustling array of cranes now signals a second phase.

Among the projects under construction are the 1,300-seat Sandler Center for the Performing Arts by Philip Johnson/Alan Ritchie Architects of New York, with CMSS Architects; the 39-story Westin Virginia Beach Town Center Residences by Brennan Beer Gorman Architects of Washington, D.C. (soon to be the tallest building in Virginia); and the five-story Studio 56 Lofts building, also by CMSS Architects. Using the term "skyline" to describe the view from the expressway is still premature, but compared to the rest of its surroundings, the development clearly shows promise of something ambitious and novel.

One should remember that Virginia Beach is itself a relatively new place, created as a resort destination in the 1880s when a rail line connected Norfolk

Pedestrian plazas, al fresco dining, and sidewalk-oriented retail create a setting that's new to the city.



and the Princess Anne Hotel. As recently as 1940, the city's population was less than 20,000, but the annexation of Princess Anne County in 1963 ushered in a time of phenomenal growth. Practically overnight, Virginia Beach became the state's largest city, despite its lack of a true urban core, street grid, or associated public infrastructure. Until just recently, zoning codes mandated broad setbacks and separation of uses, encouraged single-family housing, and created a prevailing suburban condition of strip malls, big-box retail outlets, surface parking, and automobile-dependent streetscapes.

So how did this present burst of high-density construction emerge at Virginia Beach Town Center? Neither easily nor overnight, according to CMSS principal Burrell Saunders, AIA. "It's important to understand this was never about popping in a specialty development project," he explains. "It's an initiative. We've been working for a long time, trying to establish a new pattern for development, traffic, and land use."

Saunders traces the effort to the mid-'80s, when a group of individuals from the business community recognized the lack of an identifiable city center and formed the Central Business District Association. The group lobbied for zoning revisions that allowed higher-density and zero-lot-line construction as well as encouraging mixed-use projects that would weave life and work opportunities into a walkable, interdependent urban fabric. The association's vision of retail, restaurant, and entertainment activities occurring amid office space, residences, schools, and cultural institutions catalyzed a belief among citizens and councilors alike that the region's provincial thinking needed to change if the city was to keep pace with expansion.

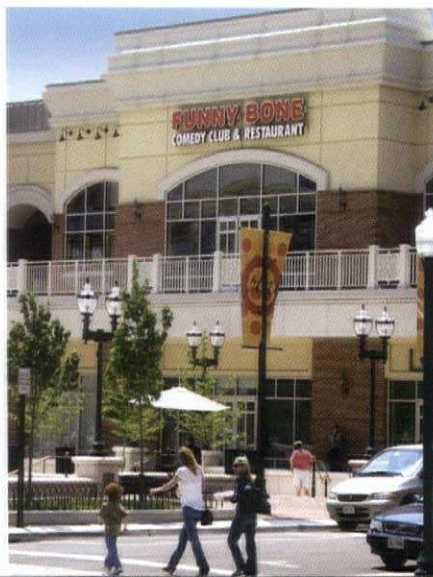
In 1998-99, a public-private partnership between the City of Virginia Beach and Armada Hoffer – a locally based real estate development and construction company – established a program for developing the initial phase of the Town Center project. The city created a Tax Increment Financing District that allowed the sale of bonds to fund new infrastruc-

Steve Budman



Sitting atop structured parking, offices in the Armada Hoffer Tower (above) lie an easy walk from shopping and entertainment (left).

CMSS Architects, PC







The Armada Hoffer Tower's glass-filled lobby is strategically placed opposite the central plaza.





The street-level restaurants and retailers surrounding the Armada Hoffer Tower use varied materials and building heights to create a sense of urban texture.

Steve Budman



The center's shift in scale and density signals a dramatic change from the low-rise, suburban character of earlier development (above).

ture such as parking structures and street improvements, which would be paid back by projected increases in tax revenue over an 18- to 20-year period. The deal cemented the project's first phase, including the Armada Hoffer Tower, a hotel, two smaller office buildings, and adjacent retail.

The complexity of the project brought many design challenges. For example, since the site had not evolved over time like a typical urban neighborhood, the design of a varied yet coherent street character became an important goal. An eclectic mix of materials, including various colors of brick, precast concrete, stucco, and stone is effective in creating a diversity that aspires toward a sense of urban texture. But some buildings suffer from an unfortunate combination of timid historical reference and expedient contemporary construction technique. One wonders whether the numerous national retail and restaurant chains are mandating brand-driven aesthetic criteria. Still, the conscious efforts to vary building heights and window sizes and create a diverse ground-level streetscape that includes pedestrian plazas and pockets of informal gathering space are largely effective.

However, the area's vitality and apparent success relies alarmingly little on the aesthetic characteristics of its architecture. The Armada Hoffer Tower, for example, is impressively large, and its commanding presence clearly signals the project's ambition toward dramatic change in the region. But the designers' assertion that the tower is "reminiscent of skyscrapers from the Art Deco era" invites unenviable comparison with the likes of the Chrysler Building or Empire State Building in New York, or even Richmond's Central Fidelity



CMSS Architects, PC





Scheduled for completion later this year, the 39-story Westin Tower will soon be Virginia's tallest building.

Bank Tower of the same timeframe. The distinctively sculpted profiles of such buildings result from a careful attention to slender, vertical proportions, the articulation of significant depth in the façade, and gradual and incrementally stepped setbacks. The skin of the Armada Hoffler Tower, by contrast, is quite flat and repetitive – doubtless a concession to construction efficiency and cost. Though the building does step back toward the top, its framework spire seems additive, stuck onto the building rather than emerging as the inevitable, organic resolution to its massing.

The second wave of new buildings seems more promising, perhaps a reflection of increased confidence inspired by the first phase's commercial success. The Sandler Center for the Performing Arts will add culture to the project mix when it opens in November. Renderings and progress on site hint at a distinctive, handsome building, with elegantly appointed theater interiors and a glassy, generous lobby situated porch-like beside an outdoor plaza under construction on Market Street. The 39-story Westin tower, with its 236 hotel rooms on 10 floors and 119 condominiums of various sizes on upper floors, is poised

to take advantage of the same plaza. Upper-level balconies provide relief to the building's mass, and the design uses subtle variations in the façade treatment across both the tower's height and sides to create a compelling expression. Studio 56, the smallest of the three new buildings taking shape on the Market Street plaza, will offer an alternative housing type to the already-rich mix of options with four stories of loft apartments above ground-level retail.

Virginia Beach Town Center's greatest distinction surely reside in its vision and the planning precedent it sets for the region. Its phased development proved critical because while restaurants and entertainment venues might expect to draw the customers required to sustain business, the initial hotel, residential, and office components ultimately needed to establish the patron base to support long-term retail tenants. Key initial tenants have provided the critical blend of reciprocal, proximate, and complementary uses, customers, and services required to defeat the skepticism this ambitious plan met early on. As it is currently taking shape, an office worker who rents or owns property in the new development can go to work, choose from a variety of dining options, shop for nearly anything



and even hit the gym without getting in the car. "It's set up so that, with the core established, development of the peripheral areas can follow the street grid, block by block," CMSS's Saunders said.

Considering its context, what's emerging at the intersection of Independence and Virginia Beach Boulevards is a planning experiment of radical proportions. Its commercial and financial success paves the way for more experimentation – something that should always be cause for celebration – and 4.3 million square feet of finished mixed-use space is no small accomplishment, either. Ultimately, the project's message for designers is extremely heartening: Architects with vision can be effective activists and agents of change.

*Rab McClure is an assistant professor in the Department of Interior Design at Virginia Commonwealth University.*

Renderings: CMSS Architects, PC



Slated to open in November, the Sandler Center for the Performing Arts will add to the district's cultural offerings, with its porch-like lobby serving as part of the show.

**Project:** Virginia Beach Town Center, Virginia Beach Armada Hoffler Tower

**Architect:** CMSS Architects, Virginia Beach (Burrell Saunders, AIA, IIDA, principal-in-charge; John Bernard, Jr., AIA, project architect; Susan Brain, AIA, job captain; Paul Gareau, ASLA, lead landscape architect; Craig Burns, construction administration; Jennifer Yun, interior designer; Julie Clifford, project assistant; Paul Sheehan, CADD management)

**Consultants:** Abiouness Cross and Bradshaw, Inc. (structural); Mathew J. Thompson, III, Consulting Engineers, Inc. (MEP); McCallum Testing Laboratories (environmental); MSA, P.C. (civil)

**Contractor:** Armada Hoffler Construction Co.

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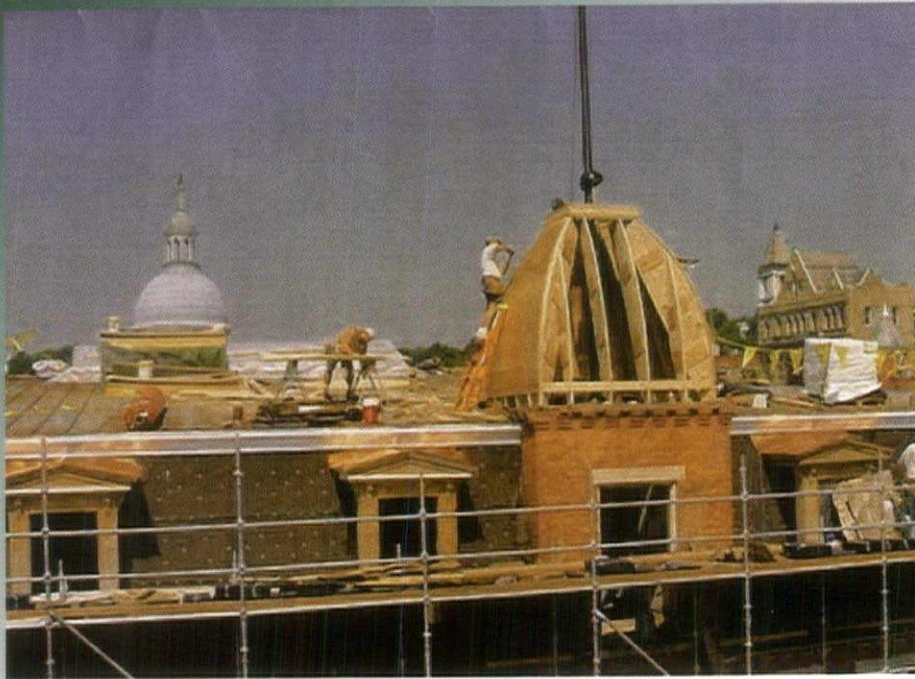
Other Vendors: **ELEVATORS:** Otis Elevator; **ROOFING:** Firestone; **STONE:** Dillon Stone Corporation; **STEEL:** E&H Steel Corporation



The Studio 56 Lofts exemplify the mixed-use program by combining residences with ground-floor dining and retail.



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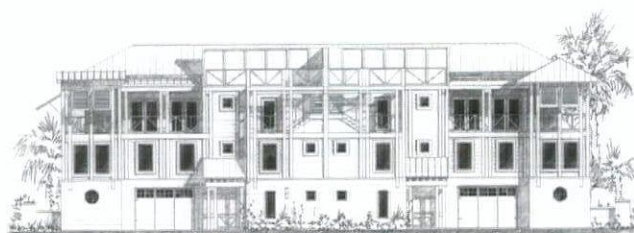


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## On the Boards



**Architect:** Arc Studio, Newport News

**Project:** Coastal Retreat Duplex

Located in the Cape Henry area of Virginia Beach, this 5,088-SF duplex will function as a vacation retreat, clad in fiber-board siding and stucco. The coastal architecture is reminiscent of the well-known Seaside development in terms of materials, massing, and color. [www.arcstudioonline.com](http://www.arcstudioonline.com)



**Architect:** Baskervill, Richmond

**Project:** Village Bank headquarters

The new corporate headquarters for Village Bank will be located at the new Watkins Center in Chesterfield County. This four-story, 80,000-SF building will also have a bank branch with drive-up lanes, and is slated for completion in the first quarter of 2008. [www.baskervill.com](http://www.baskervill.com)

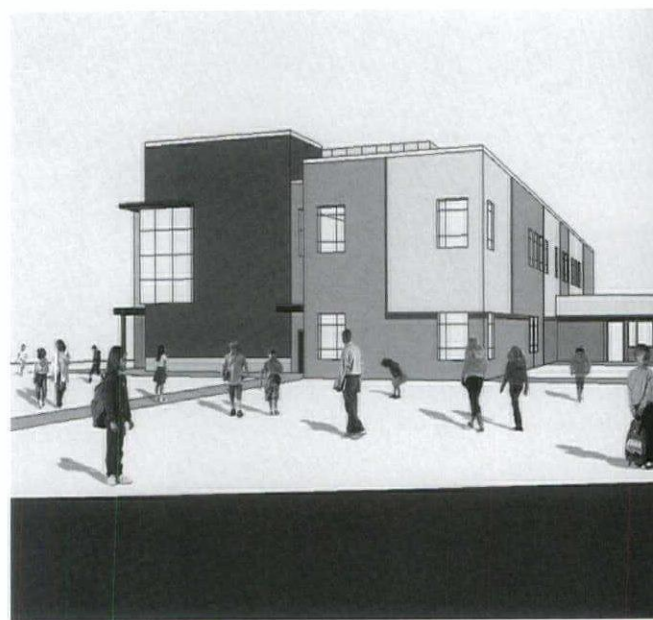
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**Architect:** BCWH, Richmond

**Project:** Powhatan Elementary School

The two-story design of the new 900-student Powhatan Elementary School helps reduce impact on a resource-rich, limited site. The building exterior incorporates materials and finishes consistent with those used at the adjacent high school designed by BCWH in 2003. [www.bcwh.com](http://www.bcwh.com)



**Architect:** BeeryRio, Springfield

**Project:** Wayside Elementary School

This elementary school addition will add 19,000 SF, providing offices and 10 new classrooms. To create a cohesive architectural expression, the project will combine existing elements from the building with elements that anticipate future modernization. 703-426-9057 / [www.beeryrio.com](http://www.beeryrio.com)





**Architect:** ClarkNexsen, Virginia Beach

**Project:** The BridgeWater

The BridgeWater, a mixed-use development at the Virginia Beach oceanfront, includes 37,000 SF of retail space, parking for 800 cars, and 120 luxury condominium units. Penthouse units occupy a bridge between two towers and offer expansive views of the ocean and the city. [www.clarknexsen.com](http://www.clarknexsen.com)



**Architect:** CMSS Architects, Virginia Beach, Reston, and Richmond

**Project:** Point Chesapeake Condominiums

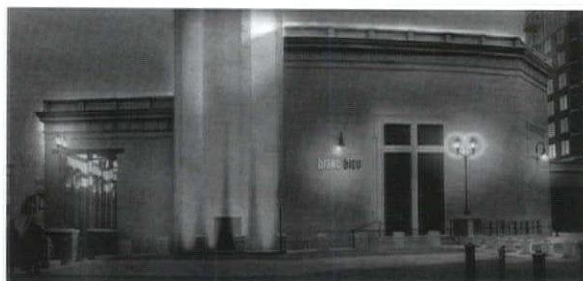
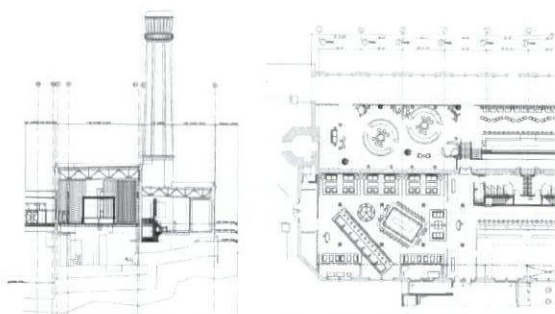
Located along the shores of the Chesapeake Bay in Virginia Beach, this high-rise residential complex will feature 156 luxury living units, as well as a 400-space parking structure. 757-222-2010 / [www.cmssarchitects.com](http://www.cmssarchitects.com)



**Architect:** Cunningham | Quill Architects, Washington, D.C.

**Project:** Columbia Crossroads

This new government, retail, and residential center in Fairfax County, focused about a new public open space, responds to the county's goal of transforming this aging inner-ring suburb into a series of urban, pedestrian friendly, mixed-use neighborhoods. [www.cunninghamquill.com](http://www.cunninghamquill.com)

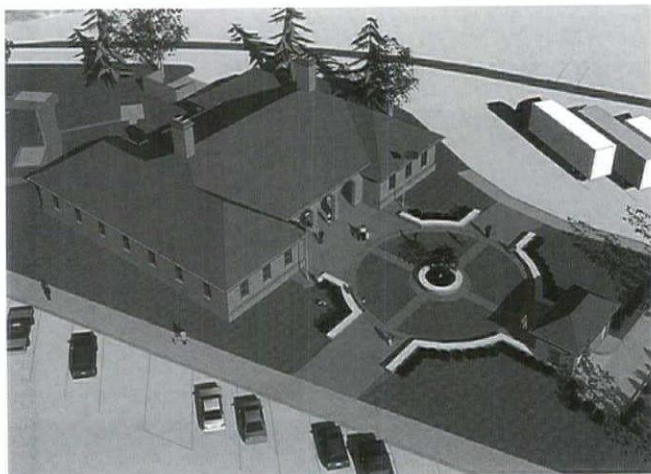


**Architect:** Curry Architects, Baltimore, Md.

**Project:** Richmond Hydro - Blanc Bleu

With a flair that enhances the industrial shell, this high-end restaurant inhabits the 1902 Richmond Hydro-Electric Plant. Accessibility into "The Yard" revitalizes the complex, which includes shops, condominiums, an office building, and garage. 410-528-6002 / [www.curryarchitects.com](http://www.curryarchitects.com)

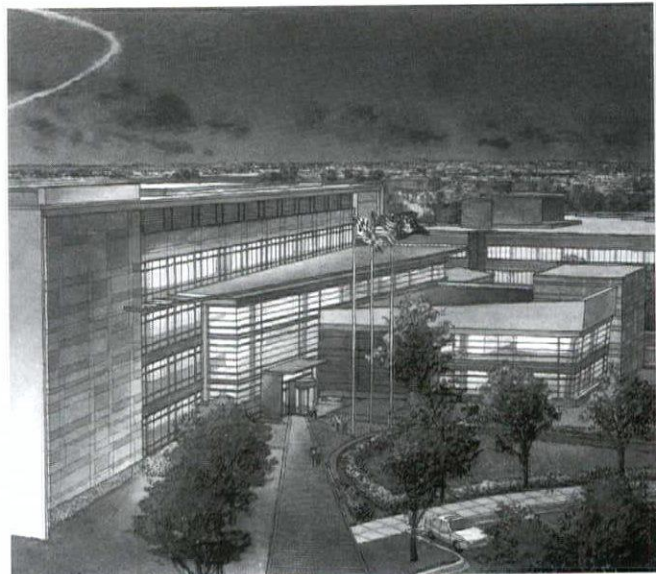




**Architect:** DJG, Inc., Williamsburg

**Project:** VDOT Safety Rest Area & Information Center

The new VDOT Safety Rest Area & Information Center on I-64 in New Kent County replaces the existing 40-year-old facility on the same site. The facility will be certified at a minimum LEED Silver. Learn more at [www.djginc.com](http://www.djginc.com).



**Architect:** DMJM Design, Washington, D.C.

**Project:** Air National Guard Headquarters, Andrews AFB

The firm is providing program management, master planning, architectural design, structural engineering, and LEED consulting for the 170,000-SF addition to the Air National Guard Headquarters. The \$65 million project will be the National Guard's first LEED-NC building. 703-682-4900

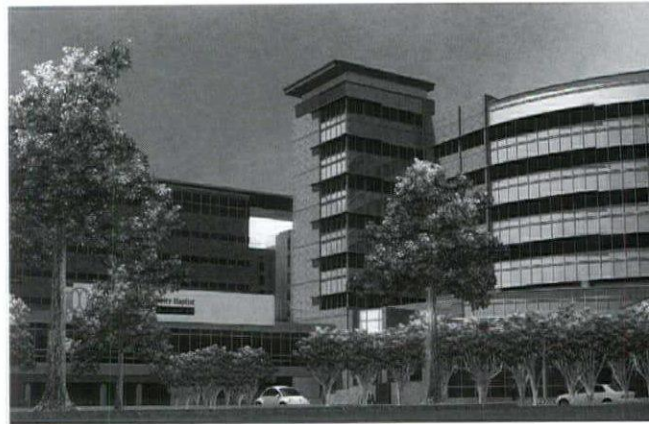
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**Architect:** Dominion Seven Architects, Lynchburg

**Project:** Carlbrook School

Located in rural Halifax County, the campus on the former estate of the Carlton cigarette owner is a private boarding school for bright, underachieving 15 to 18 year olds. The architecture of the new 10,653-SF academic building is modeled after the original stone manor house. 434-528-4300

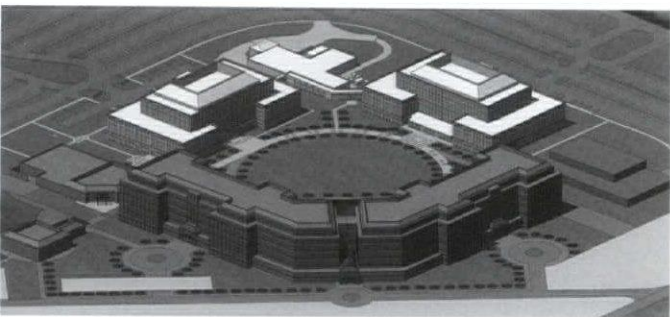


**Architect:** HKS, Richmond

**Project:** Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center Tower

This 11-story, \$155 million critical care tower consists of some 525,000 SF of new construction housing a 66-bed emergency department with a 20-bed observation unit, laboratory, 14 critical care beds, food service, administration, utility extensions, and relocation of a public street. [www.hksinc.com](http://www.hksinc.com)





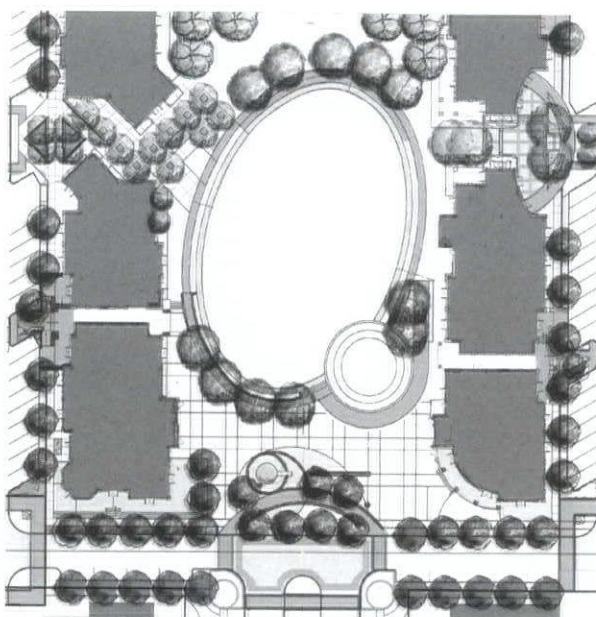
**Architect:** HSM, Roanoke & Charlotte  
**Project:** Government Office Building Campus

HSM is providing programming, master planning, and 35 percent design to produce a design-build RFP for this 750,000-SF office development expansion. Charrettes were held to establish conceptual solutions, enabling completion on a fast track. Contact Michael Brennan / mbrennan@hsm.com.



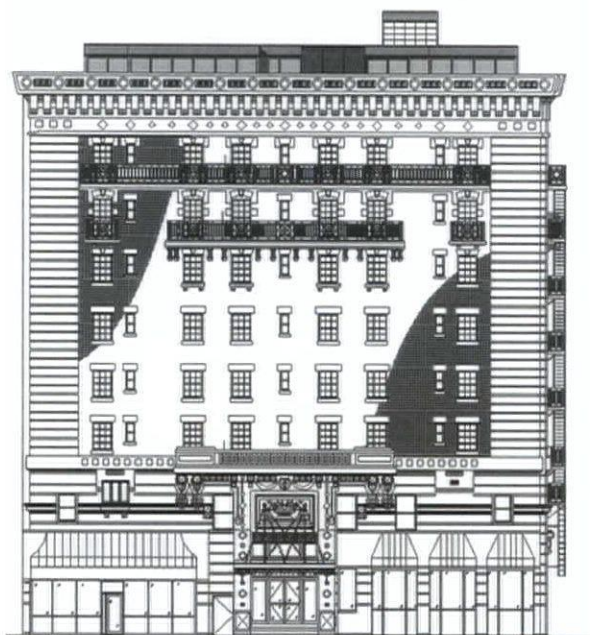
**Architect:** Mitchell Matthews Architects, Charlottesville  
**Project:** Trillium

Building 1 of this mixed-use, infill project in Rockville, Md., is located in an area enjoying revitalization and growth. The completed project, to be built in four phases, will provide 200,000 SF of commercial, office, and residential space attached to a multi-level parking structure. 434-979-7550



**Landscape Architect:** Land Planning and Design Associates, Charlottesville  
**Project:** Daleville Town Center

LPDA is working to implement Daleville Town Center, a traditional neighborhood development in Botetourt County. Nestled in the Blue Ridge Mountains, the community focuses on amenity and lifestyle-based design, at the heart of which is a community green. 434-296-2108 / www.lpda.net



**Architect:** MMM Design Group, Norfolk  
**Project:** Commodore Maury Condominiums

The James Madison Hotel will be converted into a 52-unit high-end condominium building. Historic façades and interior public areas will be maintained. A restaurant, lounge, and retail space are on the first level. 757-623-1641 / www.mmmdesigngroup.com



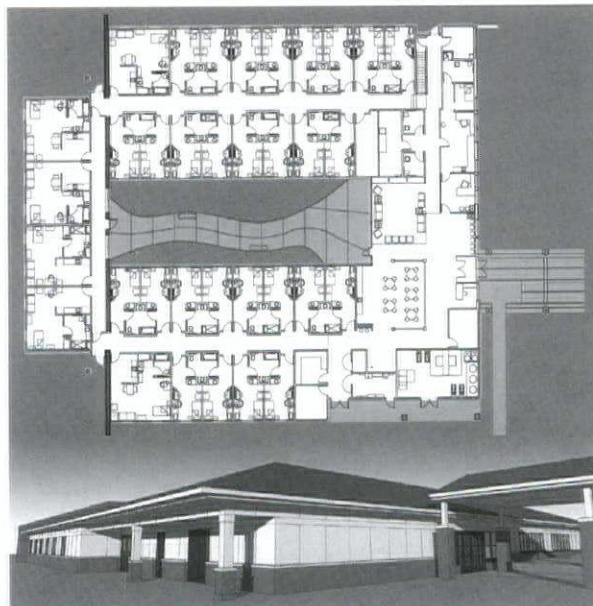
## On the Boards



**Architect:** Moseley Architects, Richmond & Charlotte

**Project:** Rockingham County Courthouse

Five courtrooms will be housed in this new 98,000-SF judicial facility in Wentworth, N.C., which will also provide space for court support functions. The three-story building will adjoin a new adult detention center. 804-794-7555

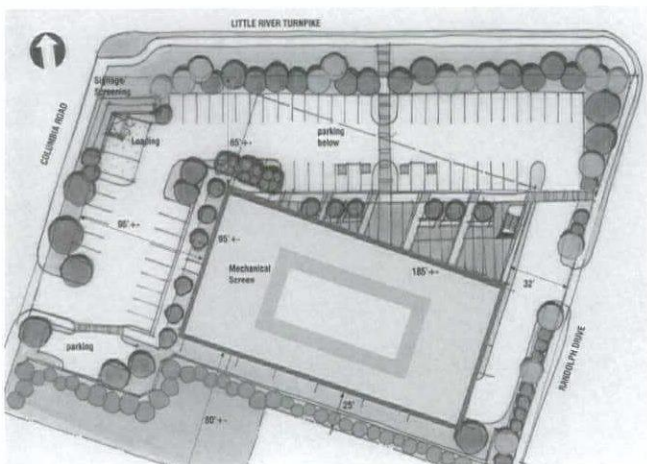


**Architect:** nbj Architecture, Glen Allen

**Project:** Dormitory for the Blind and Vision Impaired

Located on the site of the state's existing dormitory at the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired, this new facility will provide 28 single-occupancy rooms and six Independent Living-Training Units, all clustered around a central courtyard. 804-273-9811 / [www.nbjarch.com](http://www.nbjarch.com)

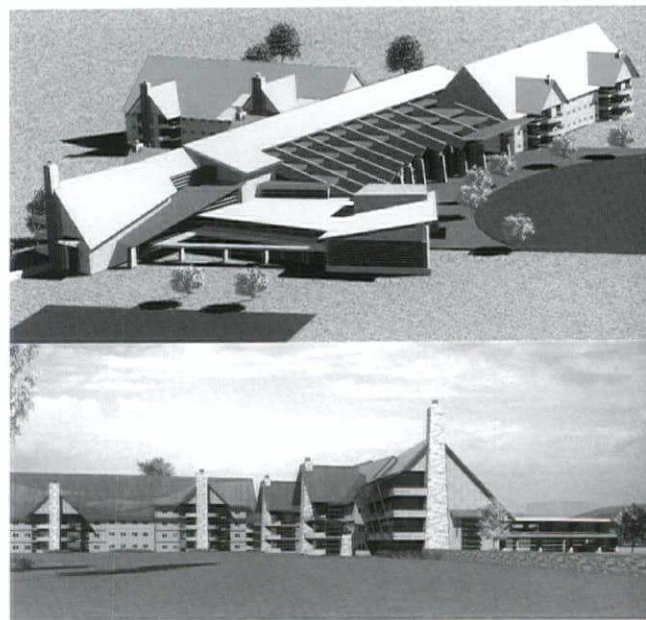
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**Architect:** PSA-Dewberry, Fairfax

**Project:** Carrico Corners

A signature office complex in Annandale, this 34,000-SF building has been scaled to relate to surrounding residential communities. The project also reflects the neighborhood's architectural details, including polychromatic traditional brick with cast stone accents. [www.psa-dewberry.com](http://www.psa-dewberry.com)

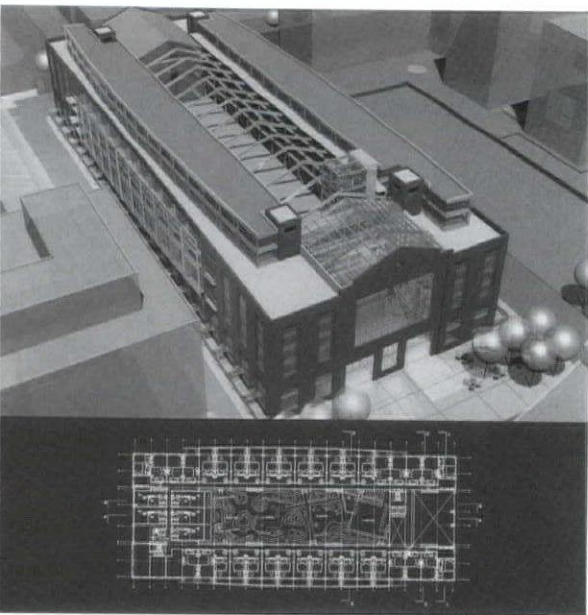


**Architect:** SFCS Inc., Roanoke

**Project:** Highland Park Artisan Community

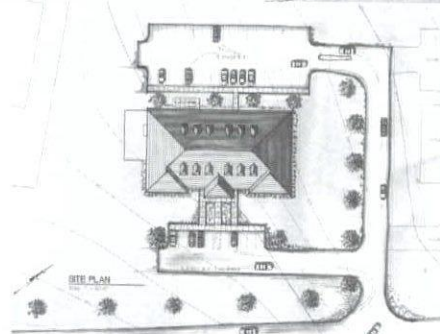
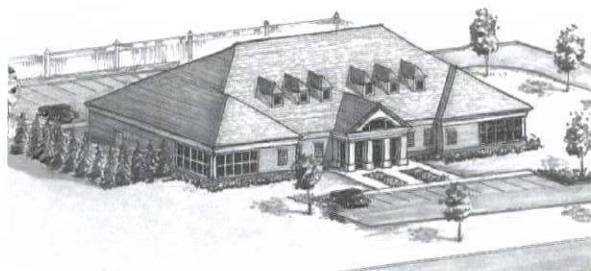
This active adult community in Sellersville, Pa., is envisioned as an arts and crafts destination. The LEED-based design includes 140 living units, 60 art studios, a wellness center, retail space, and a restaurant. 540-344-6664 / [tjamieson@sfcsc.com](mailto:tjamieson@sfcsc.com)





**Architect:** SK&I Architectural Design Group, Bethesda, Md.  
**Project:** Building 202

A highlight of Washington, D.C.'s Southeast Federal Center Master Plan, this six-story, 1941 structure will feature a two-story addition and include 238 loft-style units. The building, formerly a munitions manufacturing plant, will seek LEED certification. 301-654-9300 / [www.skiarch.com](http://www.skiarch.com)



**Architect:** Wiley & Wilson, Richmond & Lynchburg  
**Project:** Emergency Communications Center

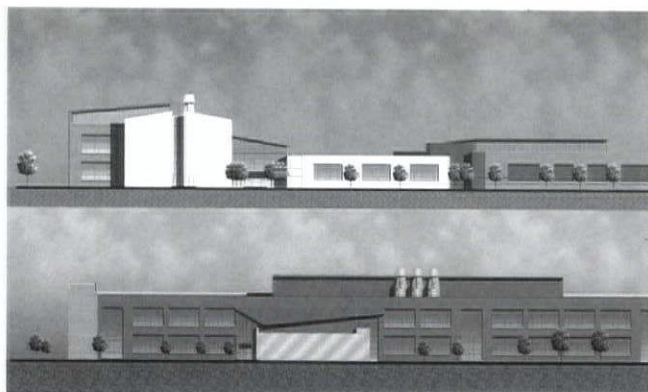
The new 10,000-SF Emergency Communications Center for Hanover County's Emergency Communications Department will be located in the courthouse complex. It includes meeting/training rooms and areas for dispatchers, administration, and equipment. 804-254-7242 / [www.wileywilson.com](http://www.wileywilson.com)

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**Architect:** William Henry Harris & Associates, Inc., Richmond  
**Project:** Catholic Church of the Visitation

This brick-clad sanctuary and administration wing for a Catholic church in Middlesex County will add 128 seats and provide administration space, a daily chapel, a reservation chapel and bell tower, accessible bathrooms, storage, and support spaces. 800-473-0070 / [www.harrisarchitects.org](http://www.harrisarchitects.org)



**Architect:** McKinney and Company, Ashland  
**Project:** Northern Forensics / OCME Facility

This 112,000-SF laboratory in Prince William County contains space for the Department of Forensic Science, including DNA, trace evidence, firearms, toxicology, and latent prints labs. The facility also houses the region's Chief Medical Examiner. 804-798-1451 / [www.mckinney-usa.com](http://www.mckinney-usa.com)





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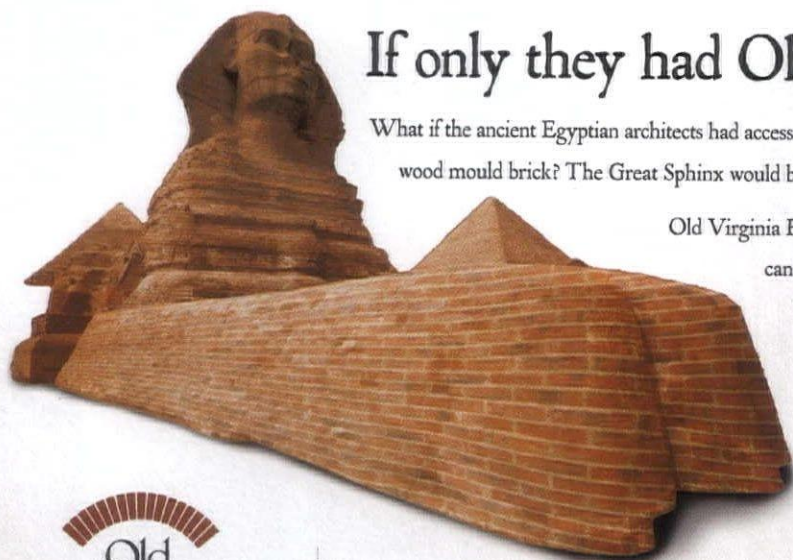
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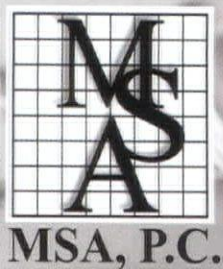
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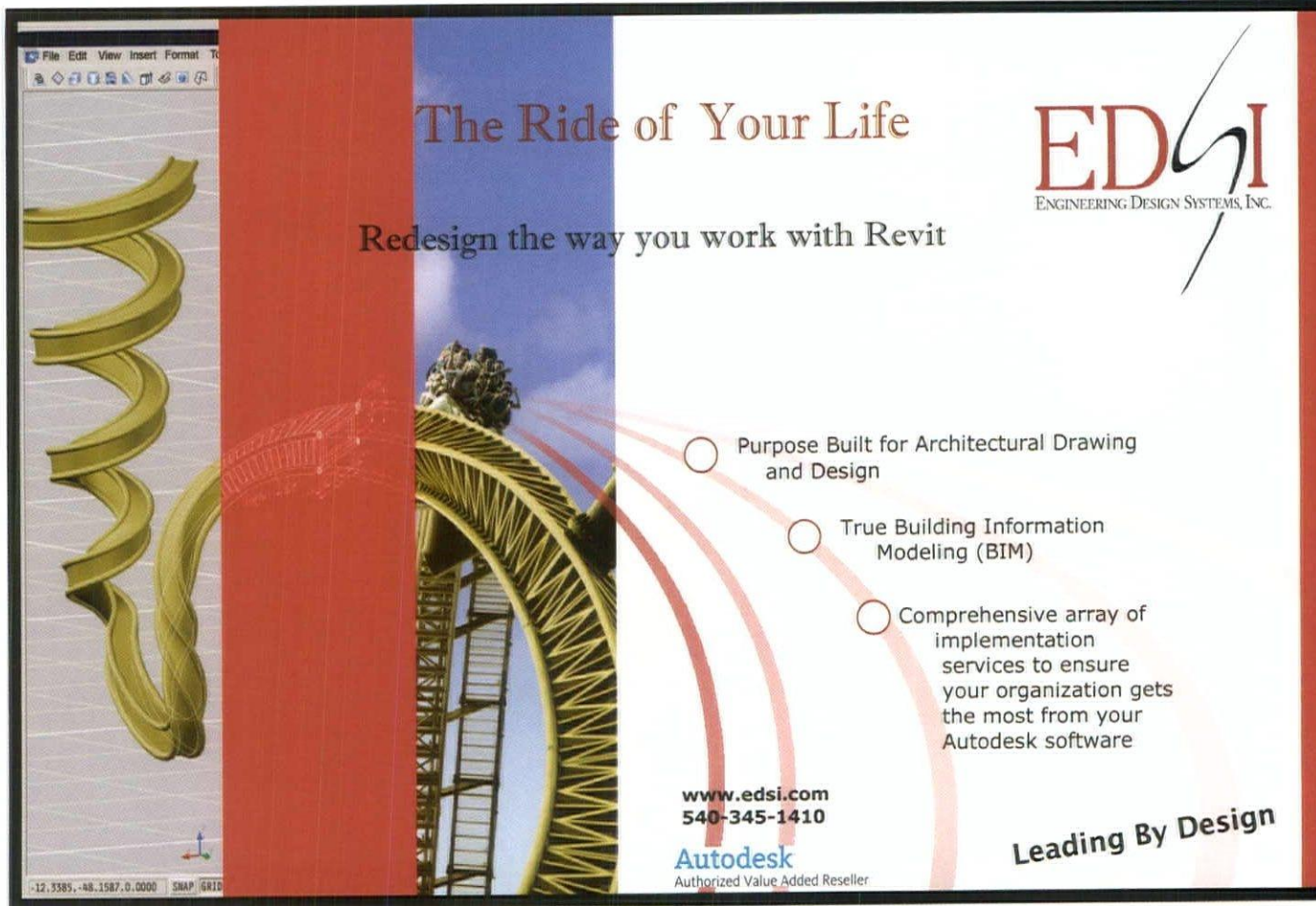
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## ! Taking Note

The sleek design and casual sophistication that distinguishes the Norfolk restaurant Bobbywood is a long way from the abandoned warehouse that architect Randy Lyall, AIA, first surveyed in the late 1990s.

"It was a mess," says Lyall, whose firm, Lyall Design Architects in Norfolk, directed the recent transformation. Originally an auto dealership, the interior had deteriorated to "a dirty, beat-up, brick-falling-off-the-walls space" – much like many of its downtown neighbors.

That was then. The ensuing years have brought life to Norfolk's moribund downtown, and Bobbywood is helping burnish its newfound reputation as a vital city core. Owner and chef Bobby Huber, who operated Bobbywood from 1995-2003 on Granby Street before opening on Monticello Avenue last year, wanted a space that would mirror the refined style of his award-winning cuisine. "He's a very creative and innovative chef, and he wanted his restaurant to reflect that kind of cutting-edge attitude," Lyall explains.

Custom and structural columns divide the restaurant into three areas: bar, dining room, and banquette seating. The design team chose warm, light woods for the bar, fixed seating, wait stations, and planters. A thick bar top of maple and purpleheart is anchored to a concrete base rising out of the floor. Stained concrete floors work in harmony with carpeted areas.

Eye-catching lighting takes center stage throughout. Suspended illuminated discs of varying size and color add visual interest to the lounge and dining room, while an elliptical fabric lantern emits a soft glow in the restaurant's center.

"We wanted it to feel casual but elegant," Lyall says. "If you're in a tux going to the opera, you should feel comfortable. And if you're wearing jeans and a dress shirt, you should feel equally at home."

Bobbywood is cozy, gutsy, and surprising – everything you'd want in a stylish urban restaurant. And just what its owner ordered.

– Deborah Abbey Kelly

## Where Metro Meets Chic



The banquette seating area features a fabric lantern. Floating light disks (below right) set the stage in the main dining room.

Photos: John Wadsworth



The backdrop of the bar (above) includes a glass-enclosed, temperature-controlled wine room.

