

CHICAGO ARCHITECT



THE SUMMER ISSUE:
TRANSFORMATION // 23

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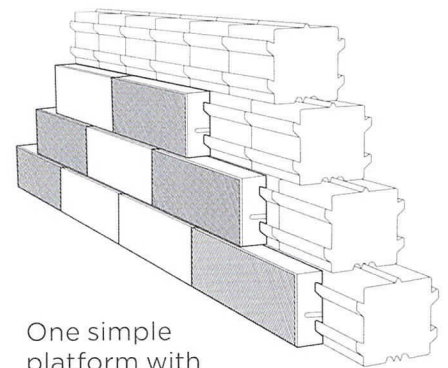
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Ballet Memphis, Memphis, TN Architect: archimania General contractor: Grinder, Taber & Grinder, Inc. Installing contractor: Ralph Jones Sheet Metal
Profile: Snap-Clad, perforated Snap-Clad, perforated Corrugated Color: Zinc, natural copper material Photo: courtesy of archimania

Perfect Performance



"We wanted to make the project dynamic and energized. The copper screen looks more solid during the day and perforated at night when lights are on behind it—enhancing the urban experience within the entertainment district."

-Todd Walker, FAIA, Principal, archimania

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LANDON BONE BAKER ARCHITECTS
HPZS
DSPACE STUDIO



PHOTO CREDIT: KATRINA WITTKAMP; KATRINA WITTKAMP PHOTOGRAPHY



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IN THE COVER

Big Moves
ISpace Studio
Photo credit: Katrina Wittkamp,
Katrina Wittkamp Photography



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REIMAGINING BEAUBIEN WOODS

With nature in mind, architects, urban planners, city officials and community members collaborate to envision a vibrant and connected transformation for the far-South Side.

How can improving access to forest preserve natural areas improve quality of life and play a role in unifying the South Side of Chicago? Beaubien Woods Forest Preserve sits adjacent to five communities on the southernmost edge of the city and next to the Little Calumet River. Complete with a boat launch, youth programming — and in proximity to regional biking trails — the woods are rife with possibility. Yet the area remains secluded and underserved, risking isolation from the new civic and cultural developments soon coming to the South Side.

Richard Wilson, AIA, saw this area as an opportunity for interdisciplinary transformation. Working closely with Josh Ellis at Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC), the duo assembled individuals from architecture, planning, civic and cultural organizations for a collaborative design workshop to address issues of connectivity and community, with the goal of improving overall quality of life via improved access to nature. “Architects were challenged to create a much bigger vision than just a few blocks,” Wilson said.

The workshop prompted three interdisciplinary teams of architects, planners, developers, transit specialists and civic officials to create design solutions to address three challenges faced by the community:



ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE CHARRETTE, COMMUNITY MEMBERS FROM THE NEARBY NEIGHBORHOODS CAME TOGETHER WITH ARCHITECTS, PLANNERS, CITY OFFICIALS AND OTHERS TO DISCUSS THEIR OWN VISIONS FOR THE REGION.

COMMUNITY: How can design and infrastructure address child care, health, wellness and economic opportunities to ensure access for all members of the community?

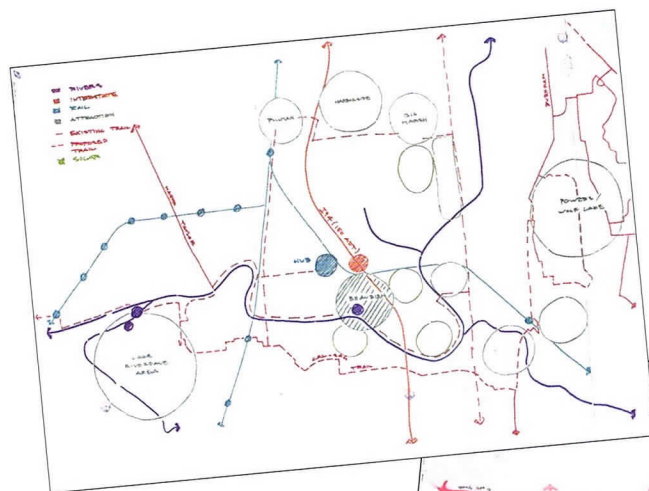
NATURE: Five underserved neighborhoods sit in proximity to a thriving nature preserve cherished by birders, boaters and outdoor enthusiasts. How can design solutions be employed to improve access to the Beaubien Woods and increase stewardship through programming?

CONNECTIONS: The impending Obama Presidential Center and Library, Red Line El extension to 130th Street and completion of the Pullman National Monument promise new opportunities for the area. How can designers and transportation planners envision a region connected by rail, foot and bicycle?

Designers met with community members on May 10 and convened the charrette on May 11 to work on developing design concepts surrounding the three themes.

The resulting designs included several opportunities to increase pedestrian and bicycle access, including a proposal to extend the Major Taylor regional bicycle trail to the soon-to-be-extended Red Line El 130th Street station, onward to the Altgeld Gardens community. Other proposals included maker markets for local artisans and community gardens.

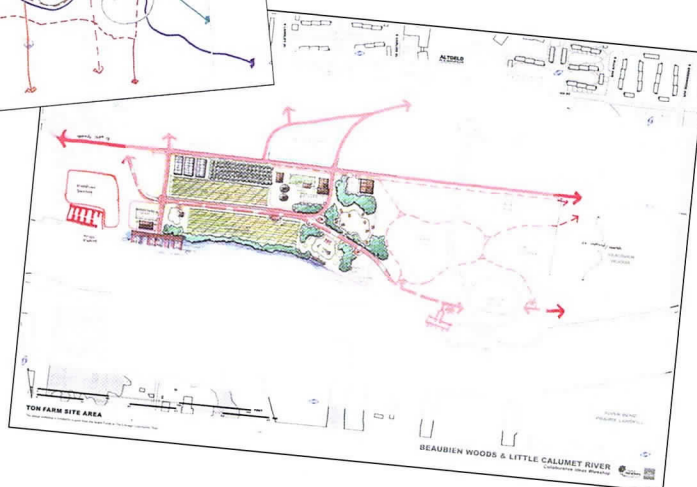
One proposal created a landmark visitor area that highlights the area's history as a site for the Underground Railroad. The former Ton Farm site, located next to the Little Calumet River, once housed escaped slaves making their way north to freedom.



TWO SKETCHES FROM THE CHARRETTE SHOW A VIBRANT, INTERCONNECTED REGION (LEFT) AND A NEW MONUMENT TO THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

"IT WAS EXCITING TO CONVENE DESIGN PROFESSIONALS WITH DEDICATED COMMUNITY MEMBERS — TO EXCHANGE STORIES AND SHARE VISIONS."

— ZURICH ESPOSITO, HON. AIA



One team led by Wilson created a prospective visitor's center that would provide an educational opportunity to learn more about this important site.

Zurich Esposito, Hon. AIA, saw this initiative as a part of a bigger project of enabling architects to engage with their communities. "As a part of national AIA's Blueprint for Better Communities initiative, the Beaubien Woods charrette brought Chicago architects together with far-South Side residents living near one of the region's most valuable natural, recreational assets: the forest preserve. It was exciting to convene design professionals

with dedicated community members — to exchange stories and share visions. These are valuable experiences that ultimately improve communities," he said.

On Saturday, May 12, a public open house celebrated the future of Beaubien Woods and the many communities surrounding it. The event included presentations by the design teams, opportunities for questions, and socializing among residents and affiliated organizations. **CA**

The design workshop is funded by a grant from the Chicago Community Trust given to the Cook County Forest Preserves, and organized by AIA Chicago and partnering organizations, including the Cook County Forest Preserve, the Metropolitan Planning Council, the American Planning Association, the American Association of Landscape Architects, the Chicago Housing Authority and The Field Museum, among other neighborhood groups from the Beaubien area.

BUILDING A PROFESSIONAL VISION

PERIMETER ARCHITECTS REBRANDS TO BRING THEM CLOSER TO WHAT THEY LOVE

If it were up to Perimeter Architects' principals Branyo Dvorak, AIA, and John Issa, life would be less work, more riding bicycles and drinking coffee. As we learn from an early age, work is a requirement, but Issa and Dvorak are reinventing their firm to give them more freedom, flexibility and time for bicycling. Perimeter has rebranded its firm as Perimeter Architects & Construction, restructuring to become an architect-led design-build (ALDB) service.

Perimeter specializes in the design and construction of medical and health and wellness developments. One of its most notable recent projects was the design of Chicago's first medical marijuana facility. Their Pot Holders project — handmade, airtight cannabis display systems — were designed for the dispensary and were recognized most recently with a 2017 Small Project Award. The project is exemplary of the firm's values, emphasizing craftsmanship and customization.

As the single point of contact for its clients, this extension of services will allow Perimeter to maintain the client's design vision through the entire construction process, bypassing many of the challenges associated with outsourcing construction management.

"We can't shy away from the financial reasons," Issa said. "This way, we don't have to secure 20 fees. Why not focus on 10 really good projects and not spend time hunting down these little things that become distractions?"

According to the Design-Build Institute of America, this service leads to an average of 12 percent faster construction times and 5.2 percent lower costs for projects.

Profit aside, the principals emphasize that fewer projects and greater control over the final product will help them achieve the craft-forward ethos driving their work. It can also create deeper relationships with clients through streamlined communication.

"We always preach craftsmanship — we believe

"WE ALWAYS PREACH CRAFTSMANSHIP — WE BELIEVE IN THE ART OF ARCHITECTURE, AND THIS IS OUR CHANCE TO CARRY THAT THROUGH."

— BRANYO DVORAK, AIA

in the art of architecture, and this is our chance to carry that through," Dvorak said.

As avid triathletes and cyclists, the two principals have also launched the firm's "We Ride" Program, which will be implemented for every design-build project. Each partner will ride to and from his client's job site

throughout the duration of the project to raise money for local and national health-conscious nonprofits that support these active lifestyles.

These two major changes to his firm structure and culture are two sides of the same coin: they are both drastically changing the way they interact

PHOTO CREDIT: ANA MIYARES



with and approach clients. One recent client, Chicago Arthritis, was impressed with their credentials and lifestyle. "He was looking at us and other

firms. Ultimately, he chose us, and he told us it was because he wanted to begin the process from the architecture side, but knowing we know how to build

secured it for him. Later, once we got to know him, he told us his dad is a marathon runner, and he loved we are cyclists," Dvorak commented. It is that

evolving relationship that builds the type of holistic relationship sought by the designers. "It's the conversation we value more," he added. **CA**



APPLY TO BRIDGE!

For the ninth year, AIA Chicago will pair emerging professionals with dedicated Fellows for the Bridge Mentorship program. If you're looking to move your career forward through mentorship, apply to Bridge by Friday, August 3, 2018. Details at aiachicago.org.

BRIDGE PARTICIPANTS MEET WITH MENTORS AND THEIR PEERS AT LOCATIONS THROUGHOUT THE CITY. PICTURED IS THE 2017 GROUP AT STUDIO GANG'S ROOFTOP TERRACE.



SAVE THE DATE: DESIGNIGHT 2018

Make sure to save the date for Designight 2018: October 26 at Navy Pier's Aon Grand Ballroom.

THE 2018 SMALL PROJECT AWARDS BROUGHT OVER 800 ATTENDEES.



PHOTO CREDIT: STEPHANIE JENSEN

SMALL PROJECT AWARDS

Once again, AIA Chicago and the Small Practitioners Group set new attendance records at this year's Small Project Awards Exhibit & LARGE Party held at Architectural Artifacts. Congratulations to the 10 award winners, including two honor awards, seven citations and one winner of the Pella Crafted Luxury People's Choice Award: bLUMEN, by Luftwerk and students at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. To learn more about their project, check out the January/February 2017 issue of *Chicago Architect*.



AIA CHICAGO MEMBERS HELP PRESERVE THE BUNGALOW

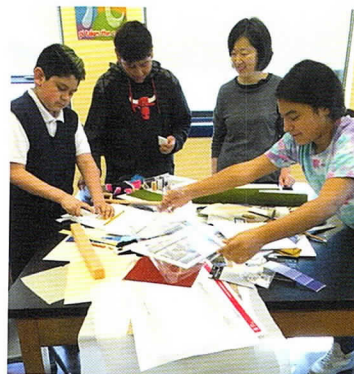
AIA Chicago's Working with an Architect program paired up with the Bungalow Association to help them Stop the Pop — an initiative to help bungalow homeowners preserve the historic integrity of their bungalows during renovations and expansions.

Chicago architects Julie Liska, AIA; Manuel Hernandez, AIA; and Frank Michalski, AIA, contributed to the Bungalow Association's Bungalow Expansion Project. They created template solution packages — including drawings and specifications — to offer multiple configurations that increase square footage and modernize historic bungalows without compromising on design.

ARCHITECTS IN SCHOOLS COMPLETES THIRD YEAR

The spring session of Architects in Schools wrapped up with firm tours and field trips for sixth- and eighth-grade classes at Chavez and Smith Elementary School. This year, four classrooms participated in design thinking exercises led by architect volunteers. The program is coordinated by the Community Interface Committee (CIC) and funded by the AIA Chicago Foundation.

You can become a volunteer by joining the CIC. Visit aiachicago.org or contact Allison Freedland at afreedland@aiachicago.org for more information. CA



DIVERSITY PIPELINE

WHY AREN'T WE TALKING ABOUT COMMUNITY COLLEGE ARCHITECTURE PROGRAMS?

BY MARK A. PEARSON, AIA, LEED AP



PHOTO CREDIT: MARK PEARSON, AIA, LEED AP

MARK PEARSON, AIA, TEACHES ARCHITECTURE AT THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF DUPAGE. HERE, HIS STUDENTS PRESENT THEIR WORK FOR A THREE-WEEK COLLABORATIVE PROJECT WITH ARCHITECT FAHEEM MAJEED.

AIA Chicago has recently highlighted a number of fantastic K-12 (or even K-8) programs aimed at increasing exposure to the profession, including Project Pipeline, Architects in Schools and the ACE Mentor Program. An article in the February edition of *Architect* magazine explored an ACSA data initiative on minority graduation rates and discussed the profession's responsibility to provide more support to a diverse student population within schools of architecture.

While these conversations raise important issues that we must continue to address, we may also need to re-examine our views of architectural education. The traditional model, where a high-performing high school student goes directly to an elite university architecture program, is not the only option, and in some cases, this conventional model is a barrier to our attempts to make the profession more diverse.

I am concerned there is a missing piece: the lack of discussion about the role that the Community College Architecture Program (CCAP) can, or should, play in contributing to diversity within architectural education.

CCAPs provide a viable alternative entry point into the architectural profession, in addition to being well-versed at serving diverse populations of students. There are more than 100 CCAPs nationwide, educating thousands of students in architecture at any given time. CCAPs already have a greater percentage of diverse students than our university peers, and these students have already declared an interest in pursuing a career in architecture.

Yet significant hurdles exist for our students. Some of these hurdles are financial, as students juggle demands of family and part-time jobs while trying to navigate success as students. Some of our students also face challenges relating to academic preparedness. Many of the challenges our students face are a direct result of the attitudes of the architecture profession itself.

For example, I recently received an email from our local AIA chapter encouraging our students to apply for scholarships; however, it applied only to



PHOTO CREDIT: MARK PEARSON, AIA, LEED AP

those who have already been accepted for transfer. Why do AIA student scholarship programs only serve students enrolled at accredited schools of architecture, excluding our most vulnerable populations? Why are we focusing on entry to the pipeline, only to ignore the middle?

Our CCAP students also face barriers related to some of the ACSA schools' attitudes toward transfer. There are still some university architecture programs that fail to recognize studio-based community college curricula as transferable. Many students cannot afford to retake sophomore studio just because a university thinks its way of teaching foundation studios is the only viable pattern. These lingering attitudes and barriers to transfer are unethical. We say we want a diverse population of students when they are in K-12, and then we place barriers on them when they try to transfer their community college studio classes. It is evidence of lingering elitist attitudes.

Over the past few years, real progress has been made. A recent ACSA report on diversity and inclusion acknowledged the community college as a vital part of the educational path for students from underserved socioeconomic communities. This report recognizes that community colleges serve a much larger group of these students (nearly twice as many) than its university counterparts. However, this same report also includes an ACSA education committee survey finding that more than half of the university architecture programs that responded still do not have articulation agreements with any community colleges. The ACSA's current strategic plan includes the goal of "expanding engagement" with community colleges — a positive forward-looking step — yet CCAP students are still ineligible to enter ACSA student design competitions.

If the AIA and ACSA are serious about accessibility and diversity within the profession and

WHY DO AIA STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS ONLY SERVE STUDENTS ENROLLED AT ACCREDITED SCHOOLS OF ARCHITECTURE, EXCLUDING OUR MOST VULNERABLE POPULATIONS? WHY ARE WE FOCUSING ON ENTRY TO THE PIPELINE, ONLY TO IGNORE THE MIDDLE?

especially within architectural education, then these professional organizations need to more vocally advocate for community college architecture students' needs, including advocating for articulated transfer agreements (with junior placement) between CCAPs and accredited schools of architecture.

Strengthening the pipeline is not just about building awareness of the discipline in elementary schools; it involves removing barriers for all architecture students as they enter the profession, especially if that path includes the first two years of their architectural education at a community college architecture program. The conventional model of an architecture education must be transformed to help build a more inclusive future. **CA**

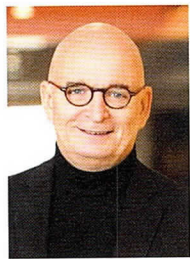
Mark Pearson is a professor of architecture at College of DuPage, a community college in Glen Ellyn, Illinois.



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Scott Mehaffey has been selected as executive director of the Farnsworth House.



Jim Jankowski, FAIA, is retiring from CannonDesign. Jankowski's long career included 25 years with Carol Ross Barney, FAIA (alongside whom he was named a Chicagoan of the Year in 1997). He has served on the AIA Chicago Board of Directors as president, vice president and treasurer, and served on the Finance Committee. Projects under his direction have received dozens of design awards.



Exp has just completed a major renovation and office realignment at the Charles F. Prevedel Federal Building. Work included site master planning and implementation, renovation of five floors of offices for various federal agencies, and a major redesign of public spaces, including the entry lobby, atrium and café.



Landon Bone Baker Architects has five newly promoted principals: Allison Sorenson, Assoc. AIA; Jack Schroeder, AIA, LEED AP; Trisha Girdwood, AIA; Dominik Soltys, LEED AP; and Tyler Brown, LEED AP.

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GREC Architects has designed SOPHY, a new 98-room boutique hotel located in Hyde Park.



Roderic Walton, AIA, NCARB, has been promoted to senior associate with Moody Nolan, Inc. Rachel Cooper, LEED AP BD+C, has been promoted to associate.



Corey Nissenberg, AIA; Emma Cline; and Drew Hauck, AIA, at SPACE Architects + Planning have all recently received their architecture licenses and have been promoted to senior associates.



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Moody Nolan designed The University of Chicago Medicine's new Adult Emergency Department and Trauma Center, which opened its doors on May 1, 2018.

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Tim Wolfe has been promoted to principal, design director, and **Jennifer Carzoli** to associate principal, senior project manager, at Perkins+Will.



Brian Meade, AIA, the firm's national public safety facility segment leader and design director for the Elgin, Illinois, office, was promoted to principal at Dewberry.



Troy Hoggard, AIA, EDAC, was recently promoted to principal out of the CannonDesign Chicago office.



3OX Studio designed AIRE Ancient Baths for the Spanish-owned company's Chicago location. The spa is sited in a reclaimed 1902 industrial paint factory, situated in the River West district.

Associate architects **Bruce Cairns, RA, LEED AP;** **Nathan Melotte, AIA;** and **Craig Welter, RA,** have been promoted to vice presidents at Cordogan Clark & Associates. Project managers **Alex Lopez, AIA, LEED AP;** **Kelly Schomer, RA, NCARB;** and **Tim Weber, BEC, LEED AP BD+C,** have been promoted to associates at Cordogan Clark & Associates.



PEOPLE + PROJECTS



Mark Small and Casey Burch AIA, LEED AP, PMP, have been promoted from associate principals to partners at LCM Architects.



Brian Wright, AIA, LEED AP, has been promoted to director of FGM Architects' Municipal & Recreation Practice.



Adrian Smith + Gordon Gill Architecture has announced its design of Una Residences, a new 47-story condominium tower, designed for OKO Group, in Miami's South Brickell neighborhood.



BIG MOVES

Chicago firms are growing — and so must their offices.

The summer issue of *Chicago Architect* magazine features six firms that have recently relocated their home bases. Changing offices means more than just a new space — it often indicates growth and development in staff and resources; changes to project size and impact. For some, it was an unwelcome transition-turned-opportunity, and for others, it was a chance to grow their relationship with their neighborhood.



EASTLAKE STUDIO

Modern amenities like kitchens and lounges may be commonplace in today's architecture office, but for Eastlake Studio where, until early this year, those items were physically

unfeasible. Eastlake Studio recently moved from its longtime offices at the Tribune Tower to the old Tavern Club space on Michigan Avenue. The original office housed staff on its three floors. Although the firm loved its iconic location, challenges with

smaller, unusual floorplates and an antiquated HVAC system made life uncomfortable.

The new, full-floor space, located in the former historic Tavern Club space at 333 North Michigan Avenue, provides modern amenities

that wouldn't have been possible in the Tribune Tower, including an open, one-floor staff workspace, multiple kitchens, a collaboration lounge, library and private rooms for meetings and phone calls. "We now have a studio that elegantly

"WE NOW HAVE A STUDIO THAT ELEGANTLY SUPPORTS OUR WORK PROCESS. BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY REFLECTS OUR CULTURE."

— TOM ZUROWSKI, AIA



PHOTO CREDITS: STEVE HALL, HALL + MERRICK PHOTOGRAPHERS

upports our work process, but more importantly reflects our culture," said Eastlake founding principal Tom Zurowski, AIA. "A unlit space that once connected two floors with a monumental spiral stair is now Eastlake's central

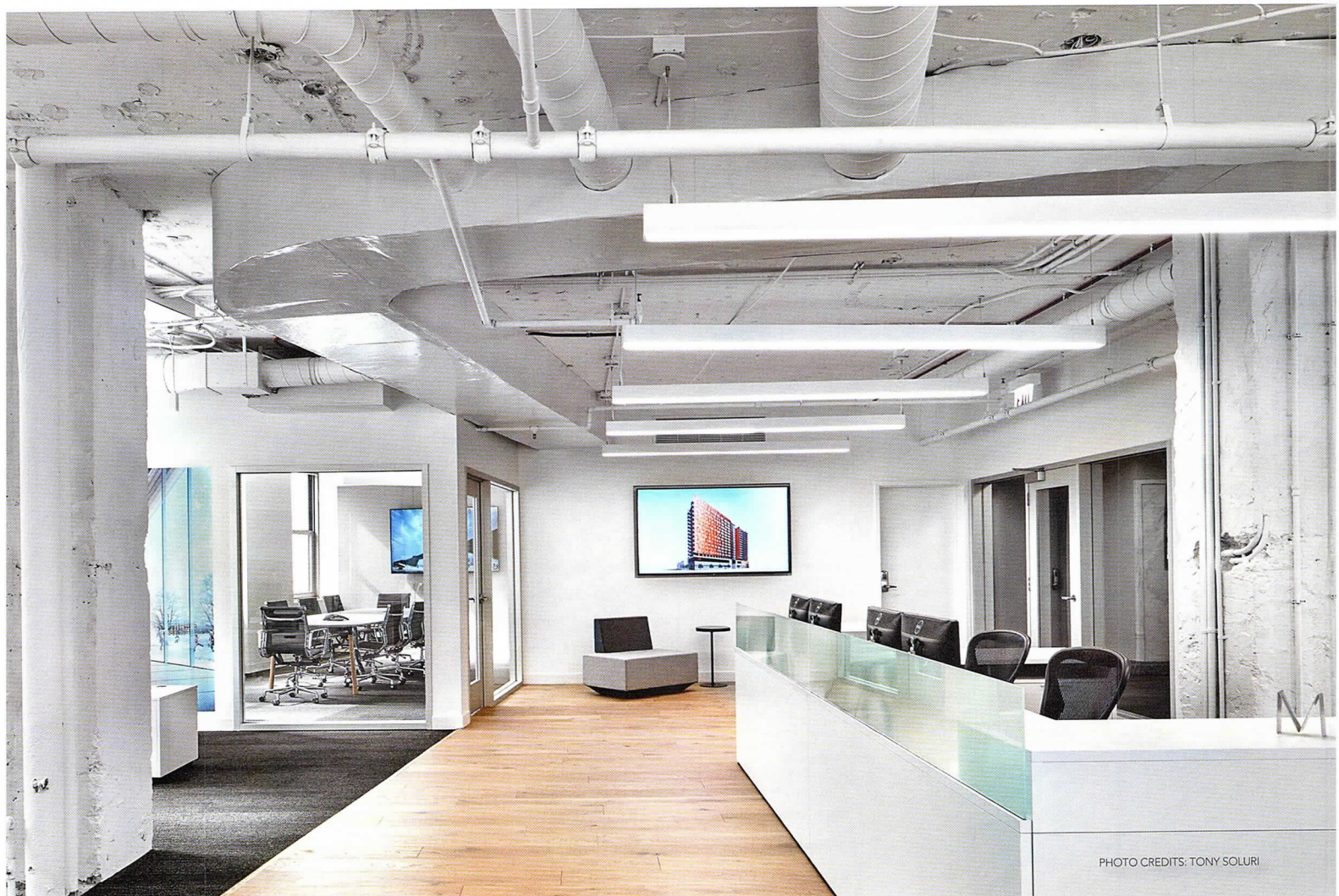
gathering space for activities ranging from weekly staff meetings to monthly salon discussions to regular social events that help shape our team into a group that cares about each other as much as they care about design."

An outdoor deck, contiguous with the office, will allow the firm to do some outdoor entertaining, carrying on the tradition of what principal Jon Salzmann, AIA, calls, "a reputation as a place where some pretty lively entertainment once

happened." But more than the office's ability to entertain, it is a place that will allow the firm to grow physically and intellectually. "We also now have HVAC that does crazy things like keep you warm in the winter and cool in the summer!" Salzmann added.



MYEFSKI ARCHITECTS



"THE LAYOUT OF THE NEW SPACE PROMOTES A COLLABORATIVE TEAM ENVIRONMENT — THE VARIETY OF GROUP SEATING AND OPEN WORK STATIONS MAKE STAFF MEMBERS MORE ACCESSIBLE."

— JOHN MYEFSKI



In 2018, Myefski Architects relocated to the historic Wrigley Building in downtown Chicago. After nine years in Evanston's Chandler Building, the firm saw an opportunity to grow their presence in the Loop's historic market. "The move to Chicago has been a long time coming," said principal John Myefski. "Moving into a space that has long inspired architects, designers and artists from all over the world is a truly humbling experience." Their new space boasts

spectacular views of the river and provides plentiful natural light to their studio.

The office's previous tenant, Allstate Insurance, had been one of the building's original inhabitants, allowing the firm to use some of the original structural elements in its own build-out. The columns and ceilings are left exposed to reveal the original concrete structure. These elements are intermixed with new mechanicals, which celebrate their function and visibility. The

firm chose to finish the space with a classic palette of neutral colors with Quartz and French oak accents, providing a clean contrast to the cityscape backdrop.

Importantly, the new space provides the team with flexible spaces to allow for independent and collaborative work time. "Aside from being aesthetically pleasing, the layout of the new space promotes a collaborative team environment — the variety of group seating and open work

stations make staff members more accessible, ultimately increasing productivity," Myefski said.

It's a space to build collaboration amongst employees but also to strengthen their relationship with the bustling downtown design community, Myefski noted. "Our new location in the heart of the city in such an architecturally significant building has given us an enhanced sense of creativity and ingenuity, as well as making us more accessible to clients and partners."



JGMA

Had one walked into JGMA's former space on South Wabash, they might find Juan Moreno, AIA, working from his laptop in the kitchen. The table that originally displayed the firm's models would soon become a desk to four architects. A visiting mid-sized college group would meet the firm in the middle of their open office.

Needless to say, the firm had outgrown its old space. "When we first moved in, we were eight, and there were 16 desks. I thought, 'Great! We'll never fill those, and we can take on new interns and host outside groups.'" What Moreno did not expect was that his firm would grow rapidly — both



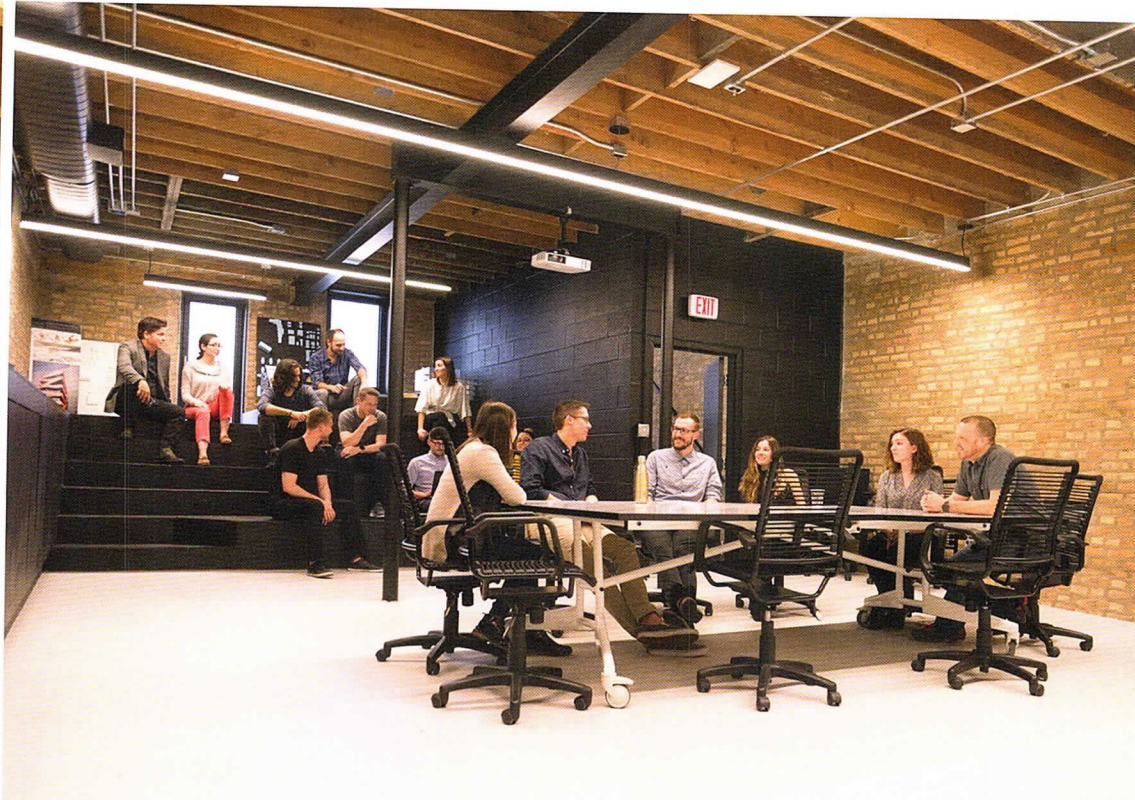
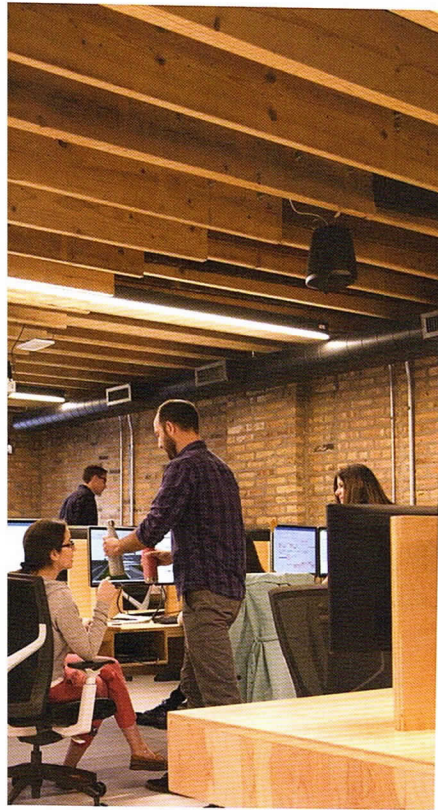
in employees and in project scale. Soon, they were 24.

"When I was thinking about our next chapter, I was thinking about

the ways the office could function," Moreno said. He began looking and found a three-story office space in the River North neigh-

borhood, and he began promptly building out an office that could accommodate a growing firm with multiple interests and priorities.

The new office was completed early in 2018. The three floors include two open office workspaces (with flexible work stations) and multiple private phone booths. Visiting student groups will no longer have to hear presentations in the midst of a busy office: a conference room with custom amphitheater seating is ideal for both formal and informal conversations. A ground-floor atrium seating area extends through all three floors, drawing light in from all sides. Like the office's furniture, much of the built-in



“THE ARCHITECTS HAVE A MULTITUDE OF ENVIRONMENTS TO WORK IN ... IT’S THE INCIDENTAL MOMENTS THAT BREED CREATIVITY, NOT JUST WHEN THEY’RE IN FRONT OF THEIR LAPTOPS, BUT WHEN THEY’RE CHATTING WITH EACH OTHER IN THE CAFÉ.”

— JUAN MORENO, AIA


oodwork was designed by JGMA architects and built on-site in the office workshops.

Most memorable, however, is the first-floor café: a storefront library housing Moreno’s extensive collection of architecture literature. A coffee bar complete with espresso

machine entices staff members to mingle and draws designers working on myriad projects. “The architects have a multitude of environments to work in ... it’s the incidental moments that breed creativity, not just when they’re in front of their laptops, but when

they’re chatting with each other in the café,” Moreno said.

“I can tell there’s already more dialogue about ideas,” he continued. “I don’t want this to be a reception area. This is my nostalgic way of saying I miss the Prairie Avenue bookstore.”



LANDON BONE BAKER ARCHITECTS

Landon Bone Baker had occupied its corner storefront office at Chicago and Milwaukee Avenues for the last 10 years. The space was both convenient and sufficient for the established firm, with a semi-open floorplan providing clear separations between staff members and designers

at the front of the space, a conference room and kitchen, and a rear space for more designers and the summer high school internship program.

It came as a surprise to the principals that the building was sold and would be torn down. “We liked the space, and we weren’t ready to move,” explained Pete Landon,

FAIA. “We started looking for something similar — a similar size and convenient to downtown.”

The firm took some time to find a new spot that would be close to public transit. It was not an easy task, but eventually they settled on a second-floor space on the eastern border of West Town,

among former industrial buildings on Ashland Avenue. At 77,000 square feet, the space is somewhat larger than their former, “but feel twice as big,” according to Landon who remarked on the office’s 22-foot, exposed-truss ceilings.

To fill the new office, Landon and his team looked at other architect-



are firms' layouts, only to be less than thrilled about architects working in very close quarters with one another. "They were all jammed in there," he said. Instead, he drew up some open office plans with a space for each staff person.

"Nobody liked it," he said.

Finally, the team came up with a way to reuse dividing panels from their former office space by dropping them eight inches to create low barriers between workspaces. They got rid of the barely used storage systems at each station, and the result is a clean, spacious workspace for each employee. The divided workspaces in their former office split the staff into too separate areas. Today, every-

"CHANGE SHOULD INVIGORATE YOU. ANY CHANGE IS GOOD, AND THIS ONE REALLY GAVE US A LOT OF GOOD ENERGY."
— PETE LANDON, FAIA

one works in the one room. Unlike those who see the open office plan as distracting, Landon sees it as an opportunity to learn.

"It's a good thing," Landon explained, "when you get to hear someone on the phone working through their own communication challenges."

What began as a reluctance to move and change became an

invigorating experience for the firm, which has finally settled into its new offices complete with bicycle storage, kitchen, formal and informal meeting spaces, and easy access to the Green Line El. "We walked into a great place," Landon said. "Change should invigorate you. Any change is good, and this one really gave us a lot of good energy."

dSPACE STUDIO



“THE STUDIO IS DESIGNED SO CLIENTS CAN SEE AND TOUCH dSPACE’S INNOVATIVE DETAILS IN PERSON, LIKE A WORKSHOP.”

— KEVIN
TOUKOUMIDIS, AIA

Dozens of Chicago’s architecture firms choose to keep their studios outside of the downtown Loop neighborhoods, embedding themselves in the local fabric. dSPACE Studio principal and founder Kevin Toukoumidis, AIA, saw Lakeview as an opportunity to bring design to the people. “We chose this site to bring architecture into the neighborhood, emphasizing the concept that good design is a part of everyday life,” he said.

Located on a busy pedestrian strip of Lakeview’s Lincoln Avenue, dSPACE Studio had originally occupied a single glass-faced storefront, which housed its workstations, kitchen and conference room/library that shared a transparent wall with the storefront façade. When the storefront next door opened up, Toukoumidis decided it was time to expand.

The firm renovated the space, adding workstations and a new kitchen, and connected the two offices with three penetrations through the brick wall, articulated by steel portals. The expansion now hosts all designer workstations and workplace amenities. It also provides another storefront, with clear views from the entrance to the new rear kitchen.

The expanded studio now allows for multiple spaces for teamwork. “We designed spaces for people to think and be creative — from multiple break-out areas, to conference areas, a landscaped back deck and a glass-roofed atrium phone booth,” Toukoumidis said. The back deck speaks most to the neighborhood feel — a traditional Chicago-style wood back porch offers outdoor seating and has allowed the team to build relationships with residential neighbors. Architects at dSPACE

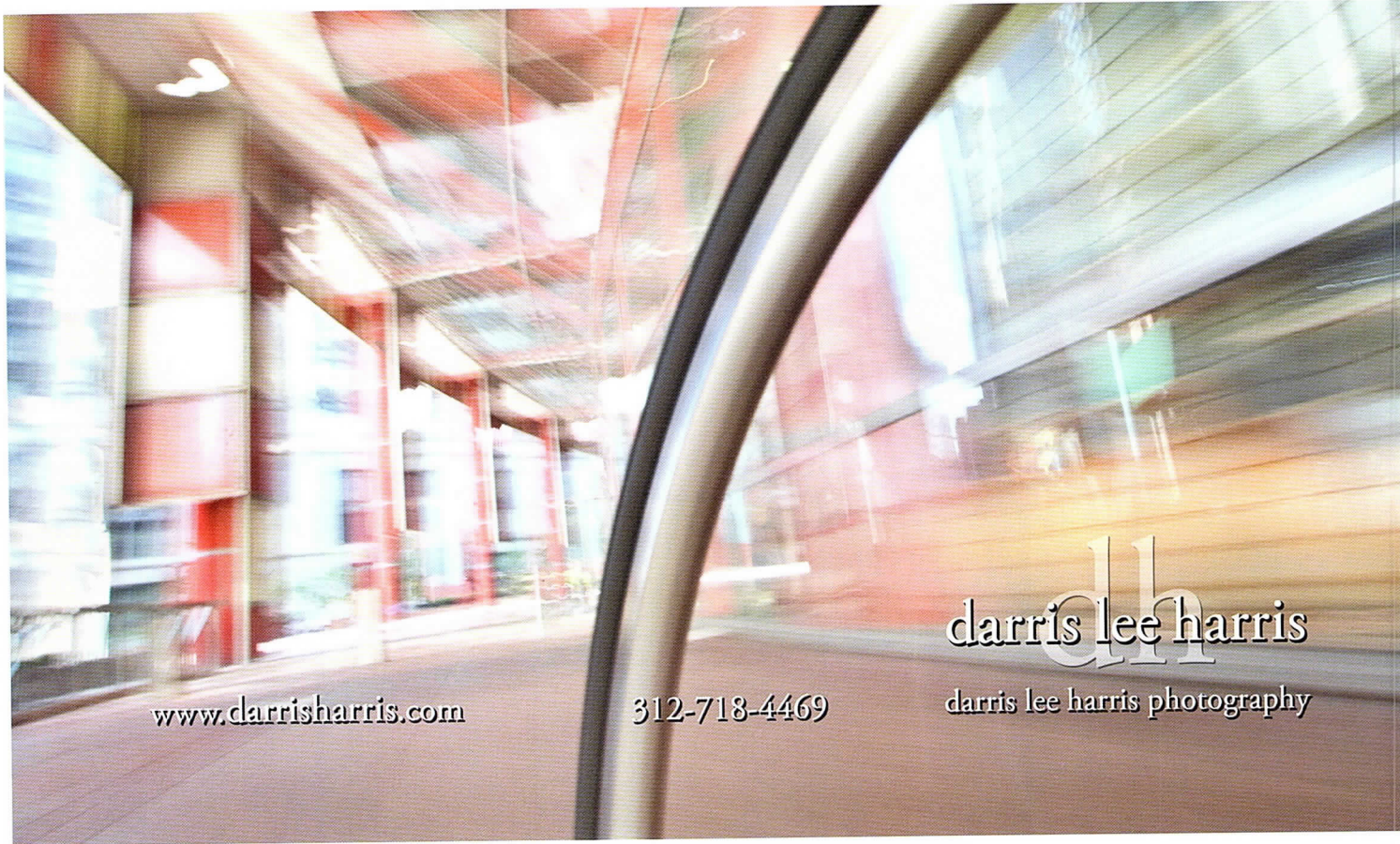


have even built an outdoor maneuverable bike “lift” to house the shared bicycles.

Toukoumidis’ firm is known for its award-winning residential projects, which he attributes to collaboration and client relationships. He explained, “The studio is designed so clients can see and touch dSPACE’s innovative

details in person, like a workshop. The studio incorporates details such as flush baseboards, steel portals and a curated range of lighting, flooring, millwork and materials. Our expansion allows us to manifest physically many of the architectural values we hold at dSPACE — this really resonates with our clients.” **CA**





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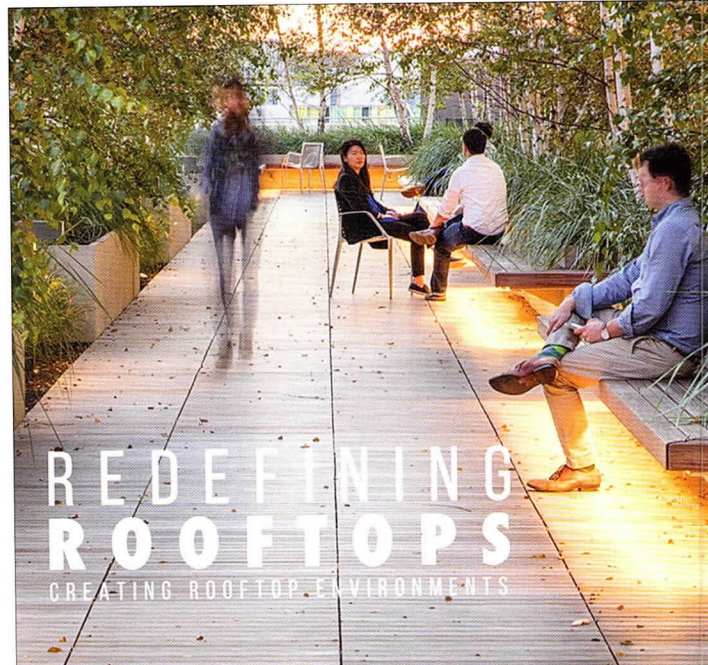
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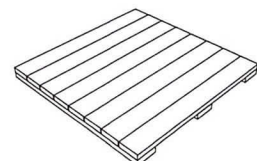
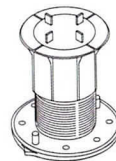


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TURNING CHALLENGES TO OPPORTUNITIES

AIA Chicago's Zurich Esposito recently met with Lamar Johnson, FAIA, to discuss the Lamar Johnson Collaborative in the firm's West Loop offices. The LJC will celebrate its first anniversary in August.

Zurich Esposito: As the individual who, 21 years ago, led the opening of Gensler's Chicago office and its subsequent growth, you built more than a reputation for yourself and for Gensler. What compelled you to start this new firm last year?

Lamar Johnson: Inevitably firms grow and responsibilities change. When I opened the Gensler office, there were four people. When I left, there were about 350. Somewhere in between, you transition from being an architect to an administrator. I love being an architect, and I wanted that back, so that was one reason to recreate and recapture that vitality and excitement by starting something new.

ZE: And is there anything that makes this new firm different from others?

LJ: I like to think we've paid it forward for 21 years, so we get a lot of support from clients and friends and contractors, some of whom maybe we only interacted with once, but they remember and support you later. And we have people here who have really impressive experience. We tell clients we have big experience in a mid-size firm. That distinguishes us.

ZE: Barely a week goes by that we don't see a new hire in your firm published in *Crain's*. How have you attracted so many accomplished professionals to your firm?

LJ: I think the people we have are here for the same reason I started the firm: to recapture the energy and buzz many of us felt early on in our careers. Some of the 22

PHOTO CREDIT: DARRIS LEE HARRIS



people here today have worked with me for 15 years, and they saw this as an opportunity to stretch themselves and learn new things and take on new opportunities. Others have come from other great firms. Leaving a large, accomplished and well-positioned firm takes courage and a vision of what you want to do. It takes fearlessness and the people who have joined me here are fearless.

ZE: How do you describe the client base you currently have and are moving toward?

LJ: The kinds of clients we have now are the kinds of clients I've worked with for 20 years: big mixed-use, complicated, entertainment/retail/residential/transportation projects. We're doing a lot more residential than I did in my former firm because the market is really supportive of that and because of the strength of people we have leading the effort. And that market can use some new energy.

ZE: Your firm partner is your wife, Lisa Johnson, whose background is in financial services. She leads the firm with you. How would you describe your leadership styles?

LJ: On the surface, we're fairly different. She's a banker; I'm an architect. While that would seemingly be a big difference, we have a lot in common, including a love of building and growing something new. I sort of represent the front line, and she's the back of house, and I guarantee that without Lisa we would not have a firm. She is amazing at organizing and managing our business operations. We've found ourselves to be pretty complementary, as long as I don't cross her.

ZE: How does Lisa's background in financial services contribute to leading an architecture and design practice?

ZE: For starters, she impressed upon me early that cash flow is a really important concept that I needed to get my arms around.

She has convinced me that losing money on every project, but making up for it in volume, was not a sustainable economic model. It has been great working with her.

ZE: The name of your firm includes the word "Collaborative." That was certainly an intentional decision. What does that mean to you and the practice?

LJ: The word "collaborative" isn't just about the group of us working here, and it's not just about us and our clients; it's about all the people who are part of the process of creating the built environment. It's our clients and us working with contractors, sub-consultants, sub-contractors, manufacturers, suppliers and others. We're just one part of that team. None of us is as good as all of us.

ZE: After so many years in a leadership role at Gensler, you've probably seen almost everything that leading a firm can present. Have you had any fresh surprises leading this firm?

LJ: I'm on every project that we do. I was hoping that would happen, but I'm surprised that it actually has. I wake up happy and motivated to rush out the door, excited for the day. That is a gift.

ZE: What challenges have you encountered establishing this new firm?

LJ: I may be naïve, but I don't regard challenges as anything but opportunities, and I don't spend a lot of time worrying about what we don't have. I tell my kids and the staff to live your dreams not your fears. **CA**

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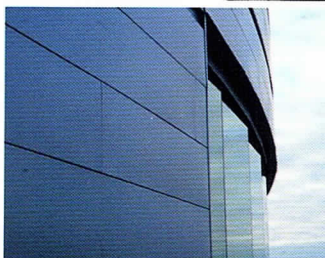
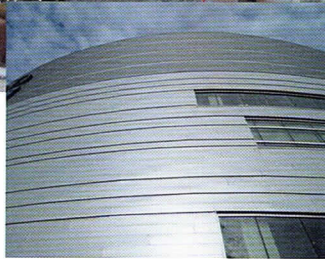
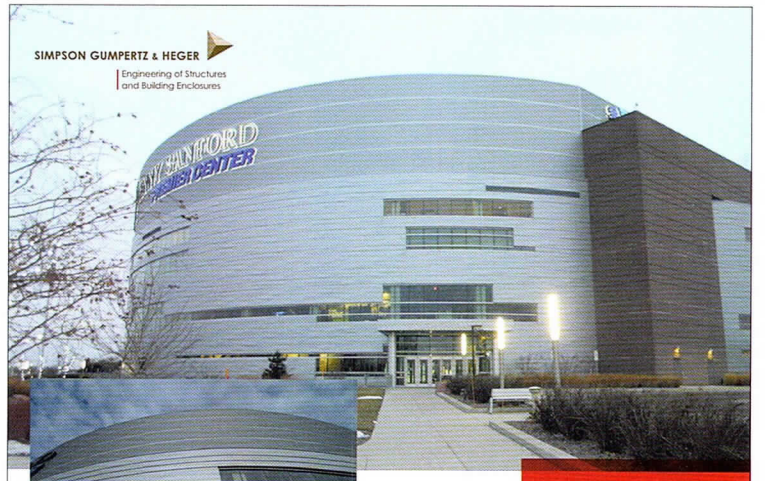
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