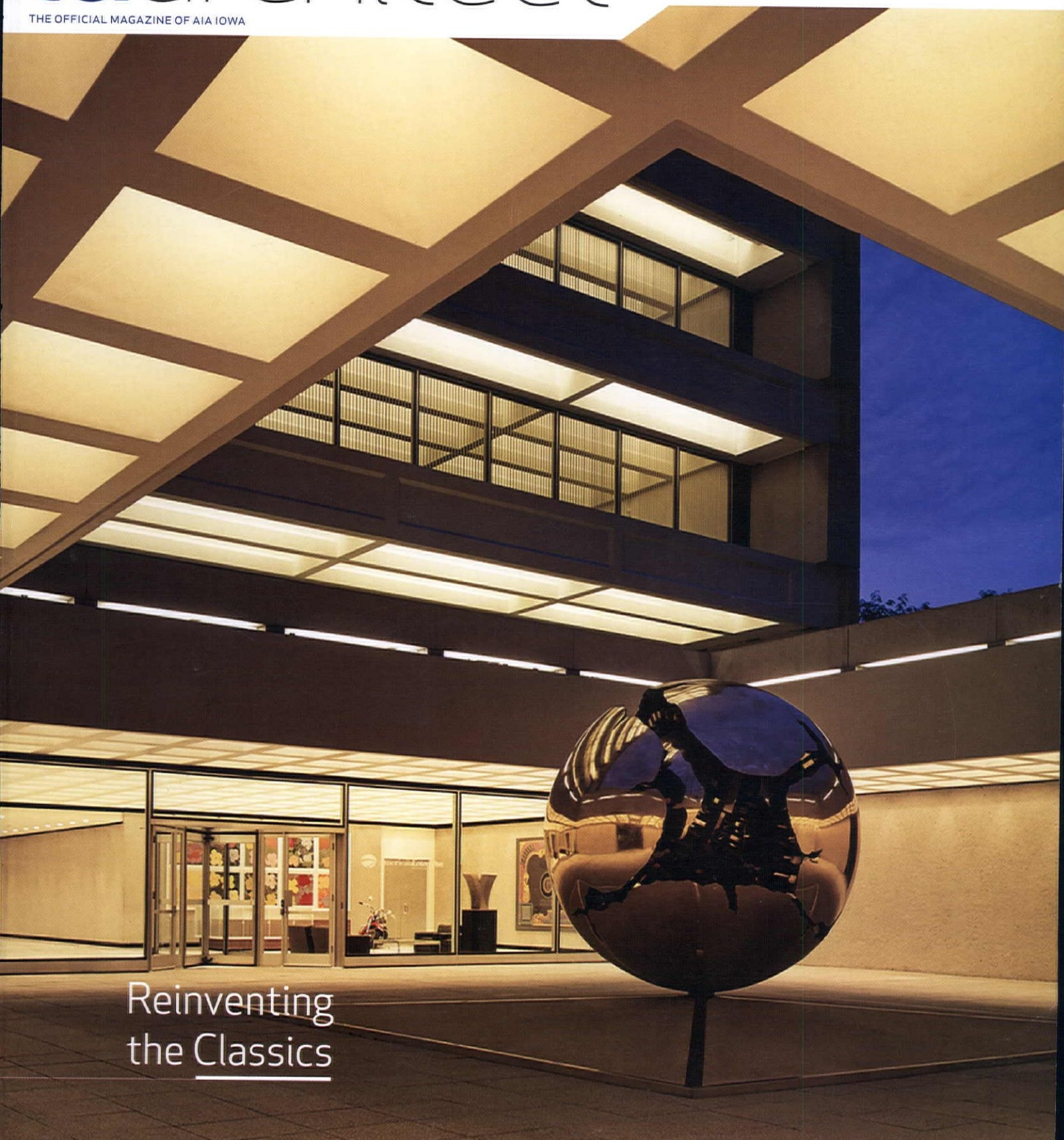


**AEG BUILDING:** RENOVATING A CLASSIC **PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARD** RESULTS **PARK INN:** BACK ON THE WRIGHT TRACK  
REMEMBERING **KIRK BLUNCK, FAIA** **WORLD FOOD PRIZE:** A GREEN REVOLUTION CENTURY-OLD BUILDING RETAINS **INTEGRITY**  
SUMMER 2016

# ia architect

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF AIA IOWA

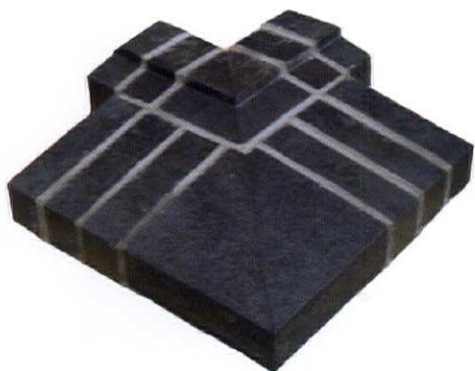


Reinventing  
the Classics





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# editor's letter



## Welcome!

In this issue, we delve into four projects that share the quality of timelessness, both due to the enduring quality of their original designs, and the subsequent renovations that allow the buildings to evolve and remain relevant and useful over time.

Architecture can embody the desires and values of a particular place and time. If done well, preservation of historically significant work can hold on to that, providing us with insight into our past and a deep connection to our place. Through careful renovations, we can embrace the desires, values, and technologies of the present, and view those changes as a continuation of our history.

These classics of Iowa architecture have imprints from many authors and stories that span generations. Let's hope the featured iteration is not the last and these buildings continue to endure and adapt to whatever the future holds.

**Jessica Terrill, AIA**

*Editor, Iowa Architect*

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## Top 10 Reasons Why You Should Choose Masonry

- 1 **Fire Resistant** / Non-combustible materials.
- 2 **Weather Resistant** / Exterior walls that will hold up to heavy storms, UV degradation, blistering heat, and sub-zero temperatures.
- 3 **Termite Resistant** / Exterior walls made of masonry means there's no wood to eat.
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- 5 **Superior Sound Proofing** / Masonry blocks out noise better than traditional building materials, resulting in a quieter environment.
- 6 **Virtually Maintenance Free** / When used in its natural form, masonry provides lasting beauty that requires considerably less maintenance than other building materials.
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- 8 **Lower Insurance Premiums** / Because masonry provides a higher level of security, fire and termite protection, and does a better job of weathering the storm, many insurance companies may offer discounts on policies.
- 9 **Environmentally-Friendly "Green" Products** / Masonry products are recognized by government programs as a contributor to green building status. Masonry products are also earth-friendly because they do not deplete precious natural and limited resources such as timber.
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Founded in 1975, the Masonry Institute of Iowa is a non-profit association dedicated to promoting the use of brick, stone, and block in construction. We look forward to meeting with you and your team to help you define your goals in designing with masonry. Call us today to learn more!



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IOWA ARCHITECT MAGAZINE SUMMER 2016



^ World Food Prize, p. 34

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## AIA Iowa's Inaugural PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARD

Voting was open to the public, which acted as the jury in this engaging competition to gain the public's interest in architecture and awareness of the level of design excellence produced by Iowa architects.

Sixty entries of all types of buildings were included in the competition, including historical restoration, modern design, adaptive reuse, churches, public buildings, and private offices.

The public was invited to visit the website [IowaArchitecture.org](http://IowaArchitecture.org), sift through the projects to

learn more and view images, and then vote for their favorites daily through the end of the month.

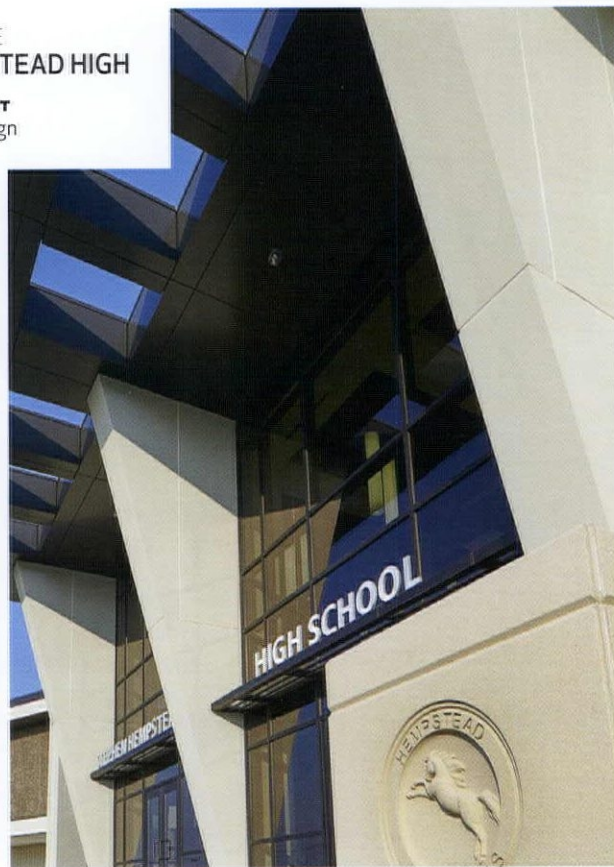
"During the month of April, the People's Choice Award brought almost 28,000 visitors to the website and more than 54,000 page views. Almost 82% of the traffic was from new visitors who had not been to the site before," says Jessica Reinert, Hon. AIA Iowa, AIA Iowa executive director.

So, which projects won over the voters?



1st PLACE  
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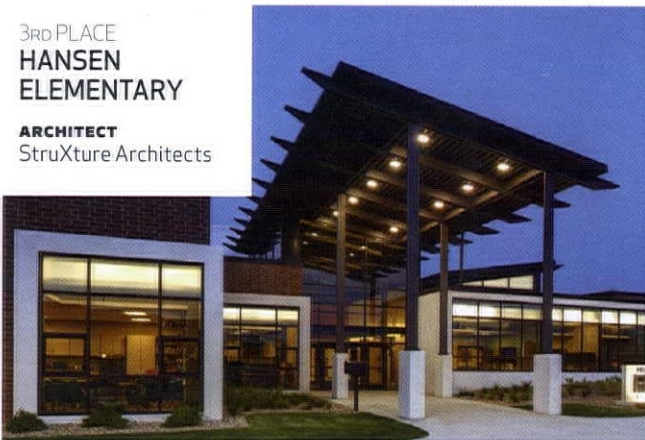
2<sup>ND</sup> PLACE  
**ANKENY HIGH**

**ARCHITECT**  
DLR Group



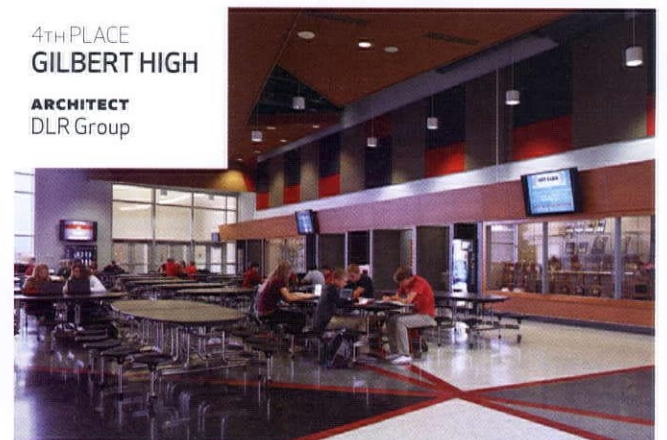
3<sup>RD</sup> PLACE  
**HANSEN ELEMENTARY**

**ARCHITECT**  
StruXture Architects



4<sup>TH</sup> PLACE  
**GILBERT HIGH**

**ARCHITECT**  
DLR Group



5<sup>TH</sup> PLACE  
**FLIX BREWHOUSE**

**ARCHITECT**  
DLR Group



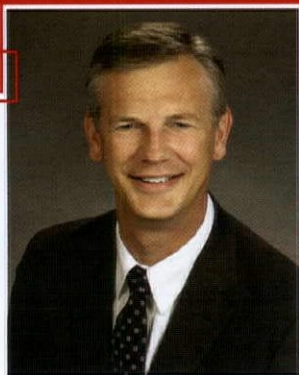
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to the **WINNERS!**

View all entries online at [IowaArchitecture.org](http://IowaArchitecture.org)



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William D. Lee, AIA

40

H.K. Bussard, FAIA

50

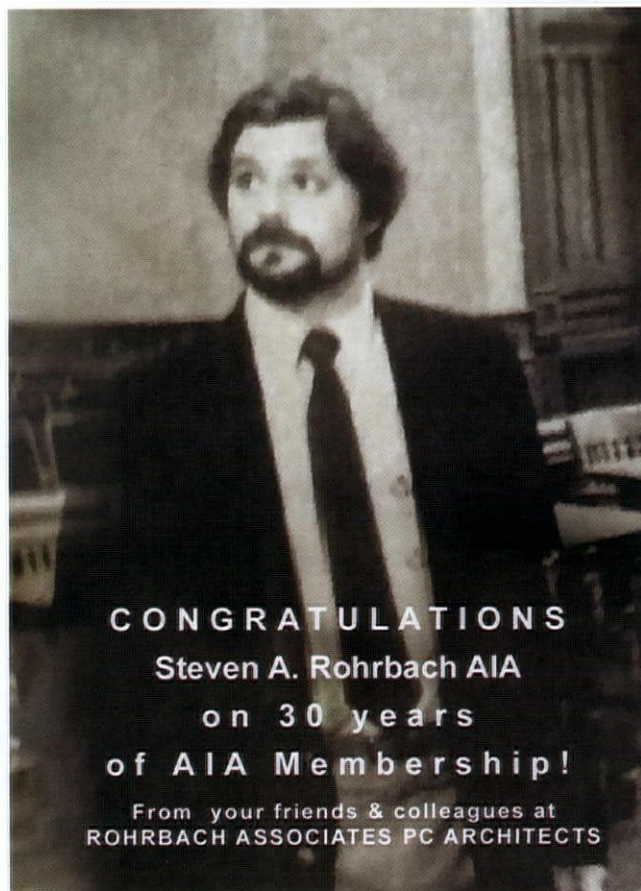
Norman H. Rudi, AIA

55

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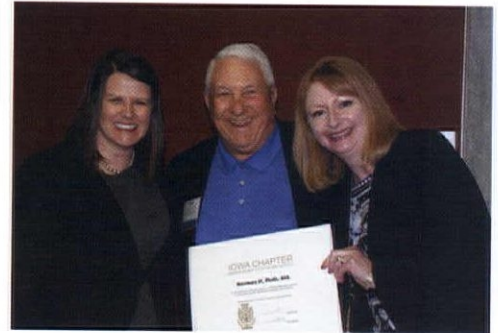
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# Iowa Architect Recognizes AIA Iowa's Long-term Members

We congratulate and thank all of our dedicated AIA Iowa members.

	NAME	EMPLOYER
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	Jack D. Patton, AIA	RDG Planning & Design
	Cheryl Peterson, AIA	State Historic Preservation Office
<b>35 yrs</b>	David A. Stivers, AIA	Principal Real Estate Investors
	Daniel J. Thies, AIA	OPN Architects
	Scott A. Hatfield, AIA	SVPA Architects Inc.
	Gerald W. Kneeland, AIA	HR Green, Inc.
	Gregory E. Larrison, AIA	Larrison & Associates Architects P.C.
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	Edward W. Storm, AIA	FEH Design
	Allen M. Varney III, AIA	Ament Design
<b>40 yrs</b>	Glenn D. Vondra, AIA-E	
	Robert H. Warner, AIA	MSA Architects
	Terry Lee Allers, AIA	Allers Associates Architects, P.C.
	Robert Patten Burns, AIA	Burns & Burns Architects
	William H. Dreyer, AIA	
<b>45 yrs</b>	William D. Lee, AIA	
	William J. Ludwig, AIA	William J. Ludwig & Associates, Ltd.
<b>50 yrs</b>	Roman Scholtz, AIA	
	H. K. Bussard, FAIA	
<b>55 yrs</b>	Roy C. Neumann, AIA-E	Neumann Monson Architects
	Norman H. Rudi, AIA	



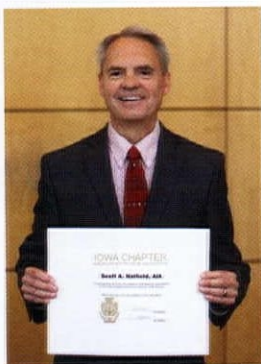
**From Top to Bottom:** Mindy Aust, AIA, 2016 AIA Iowa President; Norm Rudi, AIA (55 years); Jessica Reinert, Hon. AIA Iowa, AIA Iowa Executive Director; Ken Bussard, FAIA (50 years); Robert Burns, AIA (40 years); Gerald Kneeland, AIA (35 years); Scott Hatfield, AIA (35 years); Al Varney, AIA (35 years)





SVPA Architects Chairman of the Board, Scott Hatfield, AIA, IIDA, was recognized for his 35 years of dedication and commitment as a member of the American Institute of Architects, Iowa Chapter at their annual Spring Conference.

CONGRATULATIONS SCOTT!



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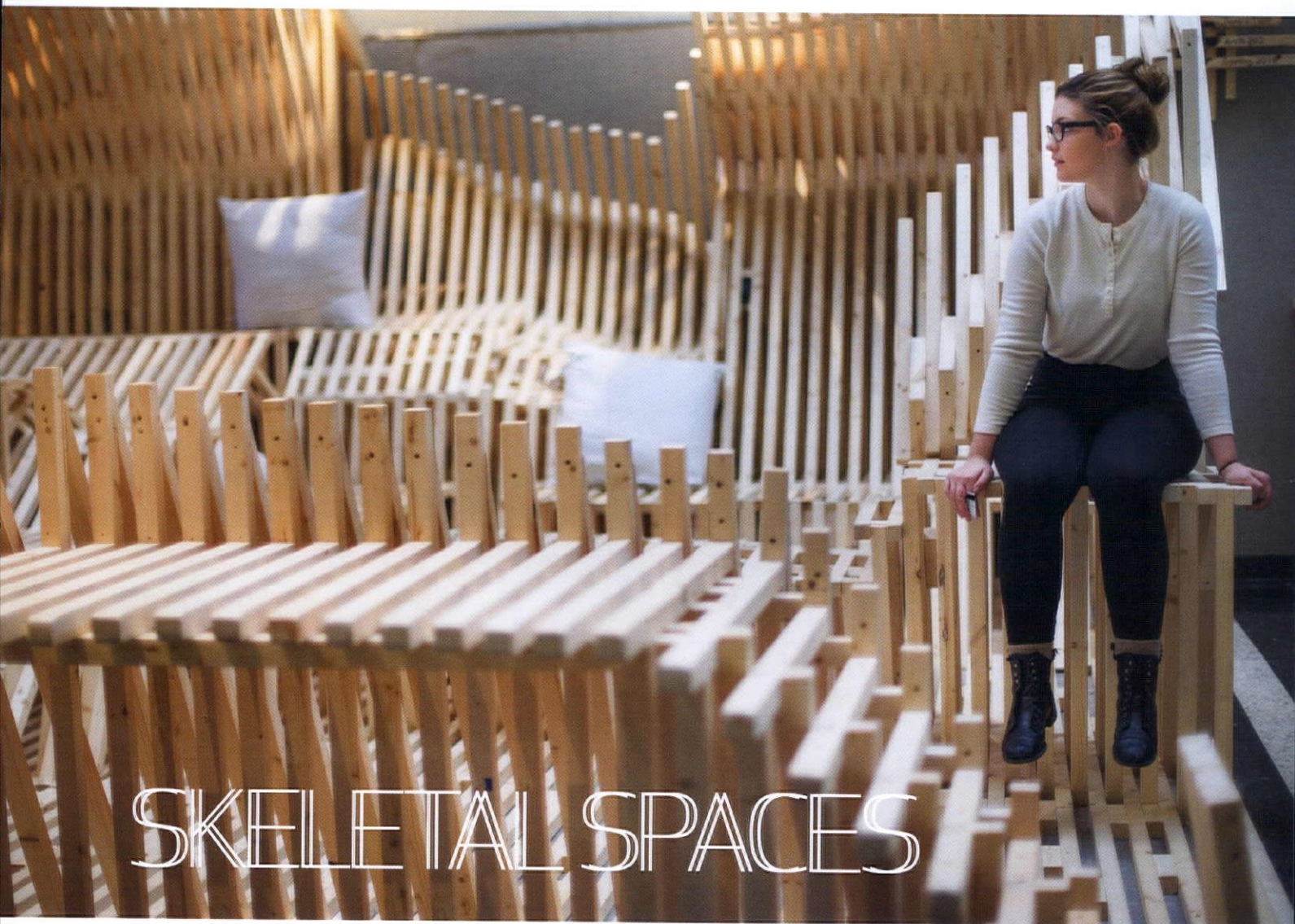
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Attendees

Des Moines, Iowa



[AIAIowa.org/2016Convention](http://AIAIowa.org/2016Convention)





**WORDS:** COLE NORUM  
**IMAGES:** CHRIS GANNON, ALISON WEIDEMANN

Seventy-seven built TwoXTwo with 2x2's. Rough translation: 77 Iowa State College of Design students created a dynamic social space out of 2x2 lumber. They called it TwoXTwo.

The symmetry in the title belies the space's physical framework. A skeletal series of jutting angles and staggered platforms, the 25-by-20-foot installation is the real-life manifestation of Cosmo Kramer's plans to do away with furniture and fill his apartment with "levels."

While his designs never materialized, the work of the 77 sophomore architecture

students in their second design studio did. But their efforts didn't stop when the last slab of lumber was screwed into place. The students documented how the space was used and surveyed people about their experiences with the project.

The project transformed the College of Design's atrium for three weeks in February and March. It introduced new sightlines, and encouraged new activities. The exhibit will be on display at Rieman Gardens on Iowa State University's campus through mid-October 2016.



**Above:** The Design/Build TwoXTwo on display in the College of Design (top) and Rieman Gardens (bottom) at Iowa State University.



# on the boards

**Projects  
In Progress**

## Des Moines Metro Opera Addition

Indianola / OPN Architects

In 2014, OPN Architects was hired by the Des Moines Metro Opera to assess and evaluate the non-profit arts organization's administrative offices in the 108-year-old Carnegie building, with dual goals of restoring the property and designing an addition for rehearsal and performance spaces. A library from 1904 to 1984, the building has been home to the opera company for more than 30 years; the historical integrity of the 4,000-square-foot building is important to Indianola and the opera. Since moving into the space, the organization



promised to maintain its historic integrity, and thus the exterior and interior, including the original layout, have been untouched for more than a century. OPN worked with the organization to envision an addition that would respect the history of the original building as well as meet the modern needs of a performance group. The project has completed schematic design and is currently seeking funding.



## Gordon-Van Tine Lofts: Harborview Building Conversion

Davenport / Shive-Hattery Inc.

The historical, early 20th-century Gordon-Van Tine factory, warehouse, and office building, situated along the Mississippi River, is undergoing restoration and renovations. Designed by Shive Hattery, Inc., the three-building, 230,000-square-foot project will be converted to a mixed-use building, with leasable residential and business spaces. Once complete, two of the three buildings will offer 113 residential units with amenities including a rooftop pool and observation deck, a five-story atrium space lit by skylights, a fitness center, on-site parking, storage space, and a dog park. Original concrete floors, ceilings, and columns will be exposed



within the common spaces and units. The final building will house street-level retail space, third-floor office spaces, and the rest will be historically preserved, with tours of the manufacturing areas offered.





# perspectives

Guest  
Thoughts



## PRESERVATION 101: An English Lesson in History

WORDS: STEVE KING, AIA

This year, the nation is celebrating the 50th anniversary of the National Historic Preservation Act. It's a time to recognize that everyone has a preservation story, even if it's still waiting to be told.

Place is inextricably linked to our individual memories and collective histories. Recent psychological research suggests we lock in memory by linking it to a location, and that our physical surroundings influence how we learn and process stimuli. So, the National Trust for Historic Preservation's tagline, "This Place Matters," may actually matter more than we realize.

A good story requires a common vocabulary. Too often, the most well-intentioned preservation efforts are derailed by misinformation, miscommunication, and misunderstanding. The following definitions won't be found in a dictionary, but may be useful for your next preservation story:

**Preservation** is simply having the good sense to hold on to things that are designed well, link us with our past in meaningful ways, and have plenty of good use left in them.

**Preservationists** are advocates for the unique, human-scaled places that lend themselves to a varied activity.

**Preservation Economy** is part of the overall construction industry, in which 61 percent of all projects are retrofit projects. Current market trends suggest developers will invest an estimated \$960

billion between now and 2023 in existing built infrastructure (although not all of it is historical). In Iowa alone, there's more than \$200 million of rehabilitation activity each year.

**The National Register of Historic Places** is the official list of historic places worthy of preservation. Maintained and administered by the National Park Service and coordinated through the State Historic Preservation Office, the listings are important designations but not guarantees of permanent protection.

**Historic Places** are objects, structures, buildings, or landscapes that are at least 50 years old and demonstrate both historical significance and integrity.

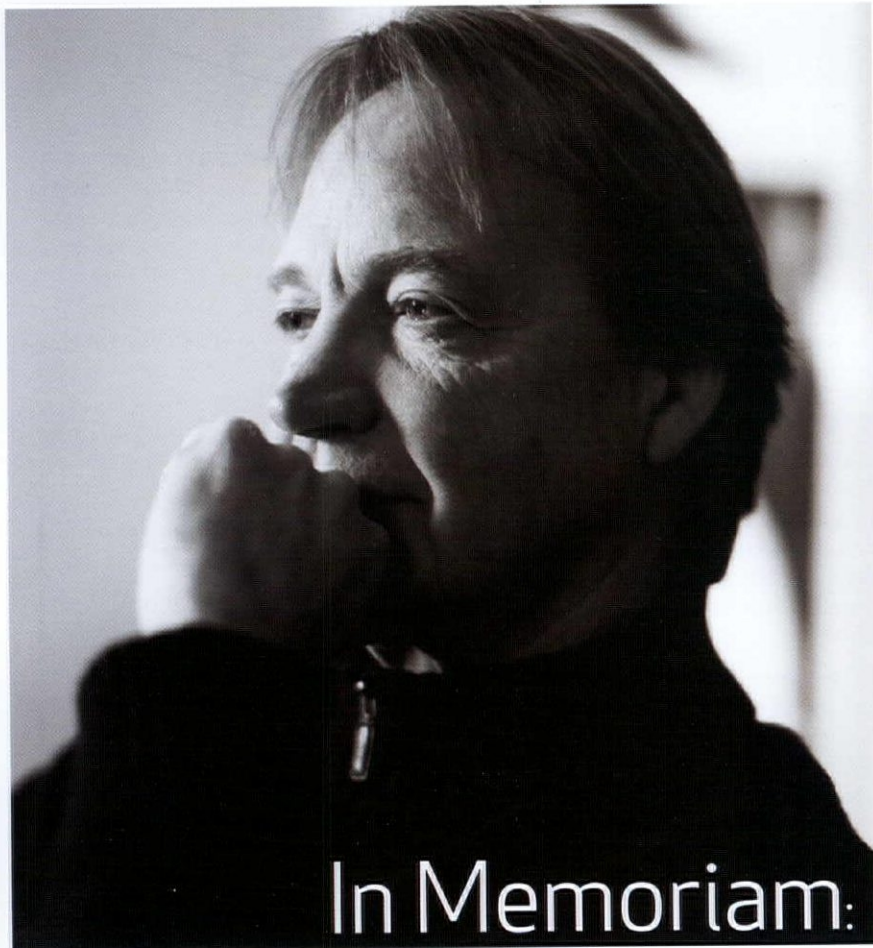
**Historical Significance** can be associated with historical people, groups, or events; archaeological discoveries; or an array of noteworthy art, architecture, landscape, or engineering characteristics.

**Lost Opportunities** comprise one billion square feet of buildings that are demolished and replaced with new construction each year.

"Reinventing the Classics" focuses on just a few of Iowa's preservation stories. It's worth noting that not all preservation stories end as well as the projects featured here, but it's even more important to view the work not as an end, but a new beginning.

pres·er·va·tion /prezər'vāSH(ə)n/ is simply having the good sense to hold on to things that are designed well, link us with our past in meaningful ways, and have plenty of good use left in them.





## In Memoriam: Kirk V. Blunck, FAIA

Former Editor of  
Iowa Architect magazine  
1980-1989

WORDS: CHANNING SWANSON, AIA

It is no small thing to cut one's own trail through life. To know who you are. Kirk Blunck, FAIA was one of those people. A trailblazer.

It is also no small thing to pay tribute to a person's life and work. For some, those two factions – work and life – are inextricably coupled in such a way as to actually define a person. It is seemingly easy to talk about a person, yet, put pen to paper, and those words gain importance. Their very physical presence imbues them with significance, with a type of permanence. Those words become a marker. A marker, unfortunately, at the end of the trail.

### Enigma

Kirk was always comfortable in the margins. He had no problem leading large groups of people, speaking publicly, or working alongside business and civic leaders. Yet, he undoubtedly preferred to work in small groups in a more direct and visceral setting. It was also impossible to classify Kirk. He was equally comfortable – and effective – at a Des Moines Art Center Gala or on a stool at a dive bar. This versatility could be the true beauty of the man.

### Eloquent

Kirk had a quiet, confident presence. Even off the cuff, he carried himself and spoke succinctly in a way I could only hope to be able to someday. He was structured and sophisticated, yet, I know for a fact, he appreciated a questionable joke. Despite his many gifts and his successes, Kirk was a humble person. As his business partner, Stephen Knowles remembers, "he truly did not care if you were the CEO or the janitor; he treated you the same no matter your personal circumstances or station in life."

### Wicked Smart

Whether you met Kirk only a single time or knew him well for many years, you could not help but know this was a man of intelligence. Kirk was not only book smart; he had street smarts as well. He was graced with the best of both worlds: massive intellect and the ability to maneuver and apply that gift.



You see, clarity seemed easy for Kirk. He could cut through the clutter to the root of an issue in a way in which few people can. I can still recall the first time I worked with Kirk on a project. As I explained my work, he smiled in a way that could only be described as a grin ... or a smirk. If you knew him, you know what I mean. It was unnerving at first. Then, about three or four months into my tenure at Herbert Lewis Kruse Blunck Architecture, the reason behind the grin became clear to me. Kirk already knew how to solve the problem, or how to proceed, or what he wanted to say. He was simply waiting for me to catch up. Since I was never able to prevent him from grinning, I can only assume that I never succeeded in catching up with him. Being humble, he was always gracious enough to allow my mental processes to run their course.

#### **Unconventional**

I don't think he cared much for the status quo. Convention was simply opportunity that had not yet been liberated. The spirit – and the struggle – of the artist coursed through his veins.

#### **Fallible**

Kirk understood that the long-term trajectory of a person's path mattered more than the minor bumps along the way. Potential mattered. Like his mentor, the late Charles "Chick" Herbert, FAIA, Kirk knew quality human relationships (and humans, for that matter) develop through gentle guidance and positive reinforcement. Kirk knew instinctively that life – and architecture – is about people.

#### **Pioneer**

Many people in the community have described Kirk as a visionary. While this is high praise, I feel it is only a partially accurate description. You see, being visionary requires only ideas. Kirk, however, was compelled into action as well. Discourse had its place, but making was, by far, more rewarding. Nowhere is Kirk's pioneering spirit more evident than in the neighborhood of Des Moines' East Village. When Kirk took a leap of faith in the mid-90s in purchasing the beautiful, prominent yet abused Teachout Building, the East Village was still the East Side. It was derelict and dangerous at times. Local leaders and civic groups had talked for years of revitalizing the East Side neighborhood between the Des Moines River and the Capitol. Kirk had listened as good intention after good intention fell by the wayside without action or result. But this was not Kirk's way. He proceeded to walk the walk when others only talked the talk. The Teachout Building became the spark that ignited investment in the East Side, and the revitalization of what is today a vibrant, eclectic East Village neighborhood. I think, maybe, sometimes those remarkable and unrewarded moves are forgotten due to the success they generated.

Kirk was a pioneer in the revitalization of historical buildings in Iowa. Under his guidance, a great number of historical buildings were successfully renovated utilizing state and federal historic preservation tax credits. Kirk's natural sensibilities were perfectly tuned for renovating these once-great buildings. The hallmark of Kirk's renovations were meticulously faithful restoration work of original building fabric paired with pragmatic, simple, minimalist insertions that in no way confused original with new. Spectacularly, each seemed to make the other better, more complete. Kirk proved modernist architects are wonderfully

He truly did not care if you were the CEO or the janitor; he treated you the same no matter your personal circumstances or station in life.

STEPHEN KNOWLES, AIA

sued for historical renovations because of the unbridled love and appreciation for how things are made combined with reverence for both the original and the intervention.

#### **Maker**

Kirk was a maker. He had an acute sensibility for simple beauty. His work was about the beauty of common, everyday things articulated well.

#### **Inventor**

His sensibilities as a maker led Kirk to invent details that so many others imitate today. But make no mistake, a Kirk Blunck detail was well considered, born out of the materials from which it was fabricated, and simplified to its essence in a way that gave the work a spirit.

#### **Humanist**

I dare to say that I have come to appreciate Kirk as a humanist. His love of small-scale projects allowed him to invent at the scale of the person; to concentrate on the things we interact with and the things we touch. His work afforded us the experience of interacting with his inventions to enrich our lives in the most subtle of ways. Those inventions were powerful, yet graceful. Perhaps even like Kirk: quiet.

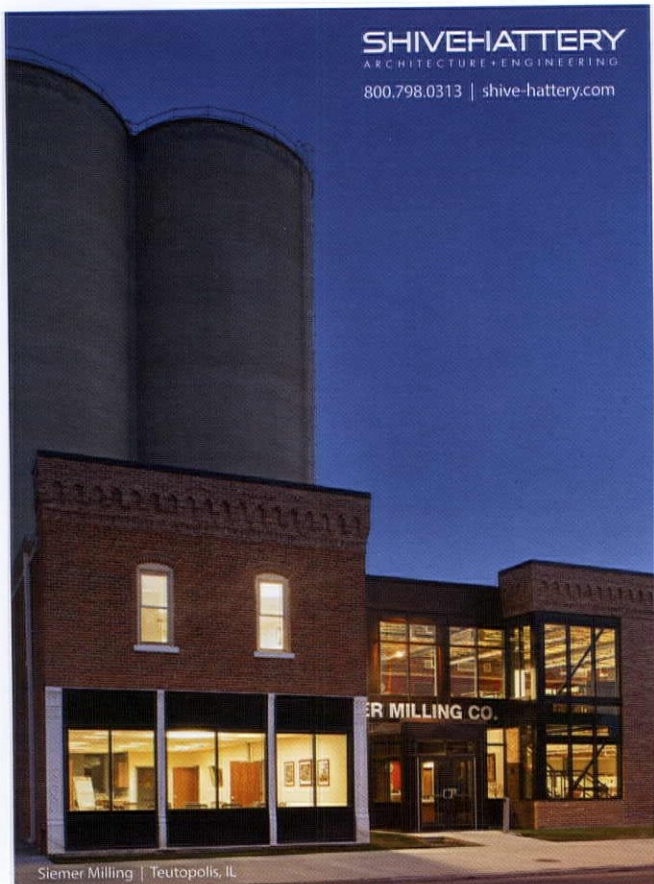
#### **Detail**

I believe Kirk is embodied by his details. By the inventions he fabricated with generally no more than a notepad sketch. A Kirk detail is simple. It is elegant. Most were unfinished so you could see and feel the material and the craft in their true, sometimes raw, state: never smoothed, glossed over, or hidden.

In this way, the details were organic. Kirk's hand allowed each material to be exactly what it was and to do the job for which it was best suited. His details showed you how they were made and celebrated that expression as an art. They were, like Kirk, authentic. Unfinished.

It is with these words that I choose to remember my friend and sometimes collaborator, Kirk V. Blunck, FAIA.

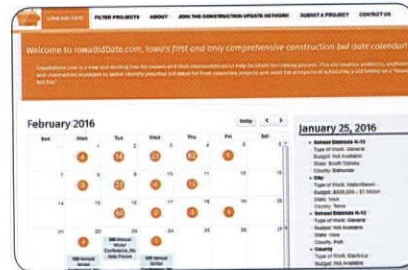




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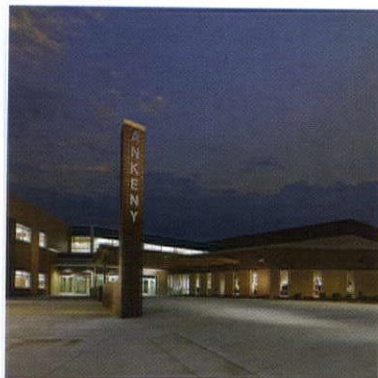
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AEG's end facades drew comparisons to filing cabinets, but they also provided a subtle link between the grain of the building and that of the surrounding city.



# NO FAT

BNIM renovates  
a classic design  
by Gordon Bunshaft,  
showing that Brutalism  
wasn't always cold-hearted.

**WORDS:** THOMAS LESLIE, AIA  
**IMAGES:** NICK MERRICK, HEDRICH BLESSING  
**ARCHITECT:** BNIM ARCHITECTS



The American Republic Insurance Building in Des Moines drew immediate attention when its design was proposed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill in 1961. In the era of derivative glass boxes, a proposal by Gordon Bunshaft, FAIA, for a minimalist concrete box set atop four giant steel pins reflected a desire for more monumental expression. Along with the Beinecke Library at Yale (1963), the Lyndon Johnson Library in Austin (1971), and the Hirshhorn Museum on the National Mall (1974), American Republic represented the SOM partner's interest in concrete solidity, sculptural form, and expressive – even dramatic – structural detailing.

Such substantial ideals often found an indifferent audience, but Bunshaft and others picked up on the ethic of Brutalism that emerged in the 1960s. While the style evaded simple definition, it was best described by British critic Reyner Banham as having, as its fundamental tenet, “sheer bloody-mindedness.” That is, the materials could be coarse or fine, the massing symmetrical or irregular, but the sheer commitment to an initial idea and to an all-encompassing diagram marked Brutalism's greatest strength and its worst shortcoming. Legible, articulate, organized almost to a fault, many of Bunshaft's buildings and those of his contemporaries drew their formal strength from a complete indifference to context that bordered on neurosis.

American Republic, though, was different. Unlike the Beinecke, which sits aloof from its academic surrounds, or the Hirshhorn, where a circular plan prevents any real engagement with other structures or routes on the Mall, American Republic's massing along the north-south artery of Sixth Street aligned with the grain of Des Moines. Bunshaft's structural scheme consists of two giant concrete walls, each of which functions like a six-story deep beam set atop pin connections. These walls run parallel to Sixth Street, and frame long-span, column-free office space





**Top to bottom:** The key to BNIM's 'invisible' renovation lies in a concealed detail above Bunshaft's relentlessly deployed light troughs. Above the circular light baffle, updated lighting and services remain hidden from the eye, allowing the structural and planning grid of the ceilings to dominate interior views.

AEG's renovation allowed more space for the company's art collection, which highlights public and conference areas of Bunshaft's design.

**Opposite:** BNIM's subtle, thoughtful weaving of new services into a building that had, in Bunshaft's words, "no fat" has maintained the crisp, diagrammatic nature of the original, highlighting the contrasts in textures that were hallmarks of SOM's work in the early 1960s.

on each floor that is oriented between the giant walls toward recessed glazing on the north and south ends of the building. Exposed post-tensioned concrete beams show off the structural heroics on these facades, revealing the horizontal and vertical organization of the building. When it opened, American Republic was referred to as the "file cabinet," a jab at the actuarial nature of the work within, but also an acknowledgement of the building's powerful directionality; one could imagine tugging on the expressed edges of the spanning beams and finding a drawer of insurance agency workers sliding out behind. At the base, Bunshaft perched the building over a delicate glass lobby and a raised sculpture garden that meets the street with a low, unrelieved concrete wall – not street-friendly in the traditional sense, and yet an elegant extension of the building's grain and a fitting plinth for a piece of genuine urban sculpture itself.

The lean, diagrammatic nature of the building – Bunshaft described the scheme as having "no fat" – meant renovations and retrofits were difficult as standards for electrical and mechanical services changed. Over the course of 50 years, office dynamics changed, too, meaning that furniture and fittings were out of date. Yet, the building's powerful form did not lend itself to additions, and the clean, open spaces within meant that any alterations would be too apparent. BNIM and Ryan Companies had initially proposed as members of separate development teams when the renovation was first discussed in 2014, and while they were ultimately selected separately, Carey Nagle, AIA, associate principal at BNIM, recalls they agreed about the approach needed for such a forceful but thoughtful building. "American Enterprise Group [parent company of American Republic Insurance] cherished the building. As an architect who also cherishes it, maybe in a slightly different way, that empowers you to go to work and do the things you'd be passionate about anyway," says Nagle. In this case, that meant a shared vision that "employees should come back to the building and not recognize that anyone had been there," producing a "continuity of experience." In practice, this meant finding the logic that drove Bunshaft, developing details that supported that logic, and then staying out of the way.

The building's repetitive, modular nature lent itself to this approach. Most of the building's performance issues had to be solved by a more controlled mechanical system, which meant replacing the original ductwork and adding VAV boxes throughout. "Employees said that the building







had the experience of all four seasons in one day,” Nagle recalls. The new controls had to be integrated within mechanical spaces that were modular but tight; Bunshaft’s “no fat” approach left little space for new services. BNIM, the Baker Group, and Ryan Companies all worked to develop and test prototype assemblies that set the bar for compactness and integration. “Once we understood the diagram, understood how that resolved itself in the details, and figured out how we were going to integrate it, we’d solved most of the building,” Nagle says. The new ductwork and structure module had to combine many functions into one design: mechanical systems and control, lighting, acoustics, and data. But once this complexity had been resolved, it became a solution that populated all of the workspaces. The solution was to replace the circular ductwork with a truncated section that allowed space for new lighting and services, while remaining invisible from eye level.

While this solution was designed to be invisible, the retrofit’s approach to the building’s furnishings was radical. The building had undergone a “bare bones” refit in the early 2000s, populating the broad spaces with incongruous modular office furniture. Where employees had once exited the elevator shaft to see panoramas of Des Moines’ downtown, they had for the last decade “been faced with a six-foot beige panel.” New furniture, including sit/stand workstations, have brought back natural light and have

re-opened the building’s walls for the company’s art collection, a particular source of pride.

The process to achieve such an integrated, invisible retrofit showed not only a dedication to Bunshaft’s clear vision, but a commitment to an integrated approach. Nagle says the process was “pretty intense,” as the project was commissioned in June 2014 and the client reoccupied in August 2015. Such a short timeframe meant all parties had to be agile and engaged; the project was designed in weekly roundtable meetings in which every organization’s expertise was available. “That doesn’t always happen as much as you’d like it to,” Nagle notes. “One of the things that makes the building unique is the total integration of services and structure with architecture,” a reflection of just how effective those roundtable meetings were.

It’s a testament to the painstaking job carried out by BNIM that an invisible renovation of a lean building produced a project that seems timeless and has garnered nationwide attention. The 2015 Honor Award, given by the American Institute of Architects to the project, is the fifth given to an Iowa project, joining Saarinen’s dormitories at Drake, the I.M. Pei addition to the Des Moines Art Center, Carver Hawkeye Arena by Caudill Rowlett Scott, and – surprisingly – itself. The original American Republic building received the recognition after its completion, in 1967.



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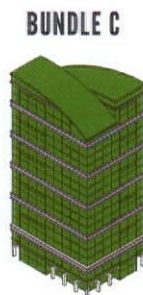
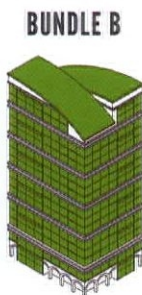
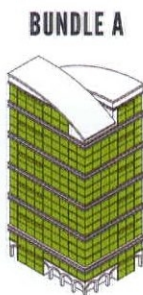


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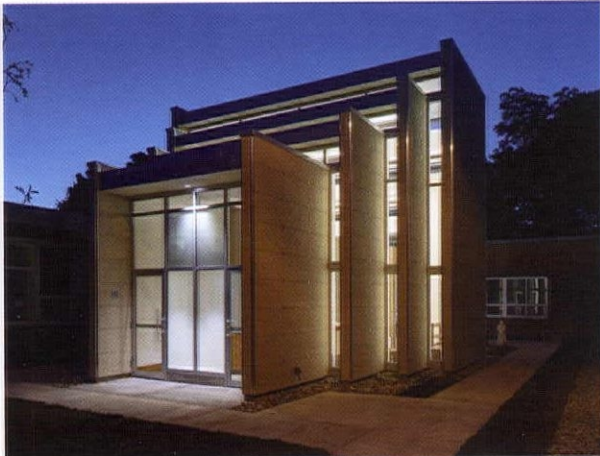
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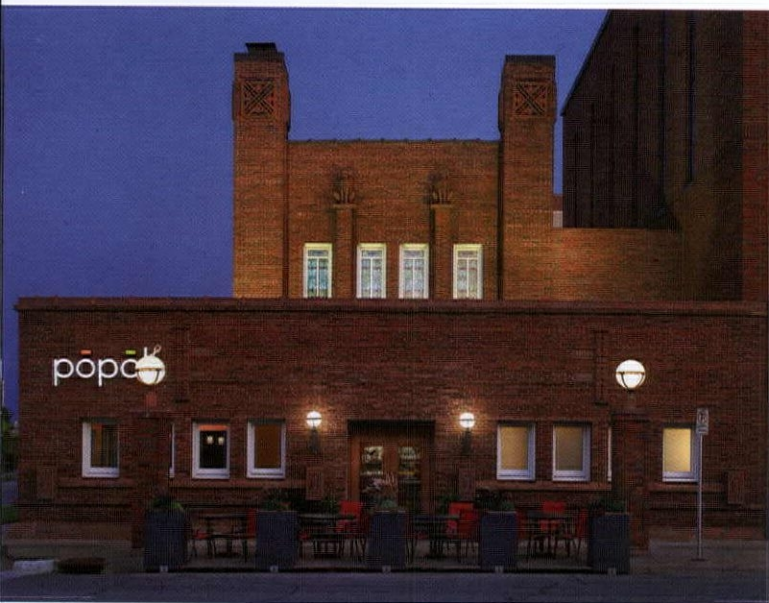


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# SULLIVAN'S TRAVAILS: *banking to baguettes*

**WORDS:** MARK E. BLUNCK, HON. AIA IOWA  
**IMAGES:** WAYNE JOHNSON, MAIN STREET STUDIO  
**ARCHITECT:** OPN ARCHITECTS

In 1991, this Louis Sullivan-designed bank underwent a thorough restoration that returned the building to its original configuration as created by the famed architect. The renovation architect was Hasbrouck Peterson Zimoch Sirirattumrong of Chicago, with OPN Architects of Cedar Rapids as architect of record. The two firms collaborated on a splendid project that revived the building and rectified several grievous alterations. The most significant was the removal of a lowered ceiling to reveal the beautiful stained art glass windows that brought abundant natural illumination back into the space.

The restoration and reconstruction of various interior and exterior components also returned the bank to its essential historic significance. OPN project architect Bradd A. Brown, AIA, recalled, "The restoration was an incredible experience. I remember how impressed I was at the time with Norwest Bank and their commitment to restoring the building and their realization as to what a treasure it really is." Seventeen years later its fate was determined by a catastrophic weather event.

The Great Flood of 2008 completely decimated the downtown district of Cedar Rapids with hundreds of buildings destroyed by the ironically named 500 Year Flood – the 1993 Flood was a recent memory for many Iowans. "When the 2008 floods hit my first thought was of the Sullivan Building," notes Brown.

View more Louis Sullivan  
projects in Iowa at  
[IowaArchitecture.org](http://IowaArchitecture.org)

"I was worried that it may signal the end of this amazing piece of architecture. Was it possible to save and restore the building once again?" The dedicated enthusiasm and interest of a local developer effectively resolved that critical issue. The building had been acquired by Wells Fargo who owned another bank in the flooded central business district. They negotiated with GRR-DTE, LLC, and sold the Sullivan building to this entity founded by Fred Timko and Gary Rozek. The developers were committed to the restoration and renovation of this important building and truly believed in its vital importance to the city and its architectural heritage.

The developers contacted OPN Architects and the arduous process of repairing, restoration, and renovation was set in motion. Principal and project manager Wesley Reynolds, AIA, and the developers now had a major task before them. Since the building is directly adjacent to the river, it was in some of the deepest flood depths of this ruinous weather event. The water reached the top of the number "6" on the highly placed wall clocks, but the ultimate saving grace was that Wells Fargo had executed several critical measures to preserve the building. They did a wonderful job of cleaning the place and stripped the damaged part down to the structure to maintain building integrity, both Timko and Reynolds acknowledged, so it really became a 10-feet-and-down renovation.









**Previous pages:** Exterior - Patio seating has been added, featuring column-mounted globe lights that were knocked down during the flood. The materials were subsequently retrieved from storage and rebuilt in their original positions and reconstructed in the same manner as more than 100 years before.

Interior - The ornate light evergreen interior columns with blue and orange artwork at the capitals were refinished in their original colors and are now fully exposed throughout the space. The hanging globe lights are impressive works of art and were restored with selected new materials when needed to retain their original remarkable aesthetic quality. The four murals had been sealed with preservation paper by Wells Fargo after the 2008 flood and when revealed, were in the same magnificent condition as after the 1991 restoration.

**Left:** Vault is private dining room - The imposing vault now functions as a private dining room with original materials and matching new flooring. A lighted back wall of polished ceramic tile provides surface variation and establishes a connection with the textural quality of the copper and brass components.



OPN Architects collaborated with local successful restaurateur Brandon Godwin to develop a contemporary conceptual plan for this century-old building. This now became an ambitious intellectual exercise to preserve the interior and reconfigure spaces to accommodate a significant number of sitting restaurant patrons instead of standing-in-queue bank customers. "The project was architecturally challenging to take a Sullivan masterpiece and turn it into a restaurant," Reynolds noted, "and how do you contextually redesign an open central interior into a built center core with other spaces wrapping around it?" This conversion of a traditional formal banking space into a modern restaurant configuration involved a complete revamping of existing spaces.

The open and spacious waiting area is now occupied by a major bar installation that nearly fills the previous space. An ambience of quiet and calm banking customers waiting their turn to complete a financial transaction has been replaced by a lively environment of patrons drinking and anxiously awaiting a sit-down dinner. The creamy white marble walls of the teller stands were marked and labeled, significantly lowered, and then topped by etched glass partitions enclosing table and banquette spaces. On the opposite side, the previously enclosed space has been opened and includes informal bar and table sitting. The most dramatic space conversion is at the end of the restaurant. The imposing vault with its heavy, massive blast-proof door now encloses an intimate private dining space for six to eight patrons with a contextually redesigned interior.

According to Reynolds, "Popoli's does a fantastic business and they are known for their fresh pastas and high-quality ingredients. The project has been very successful and the restaurant received many nice accolades after opening." Equally significant is this observation from Brown: "What I find interesting with the new restaurant is that, for many of the clientele, it is the first time they have experienced the magical space, the murals, and the stained glass windows."







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# WRIGHT on a NEW VIEW

WORDS: KELLY ROBERSON

IMAGES: DANA MILLER

ARCHITECT: BERGLAND + CRAM

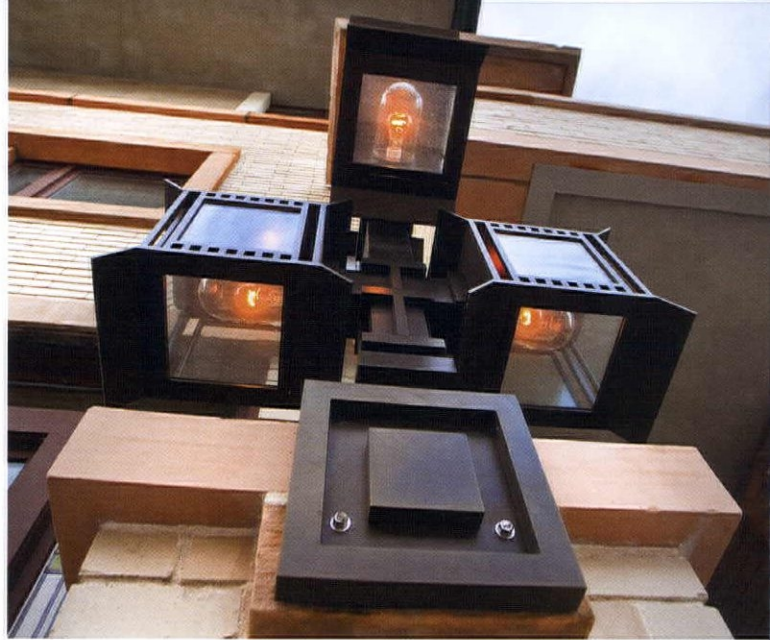


There are few architects, past or present, as lionized as Frank Lloyd Wright. His fame, his contributions, have proved remarkably resolute. Today, the structures he designed – those that were lost, those that still exist – find themselves the subject of study and glorification. But at about the time Wright received a notable Mason City commission, his status, career, and future were all in jeopardy. As the fates would have it, a century later, both Wright's reputation and the city's Park Inn were rescued from an otherwise ignominious fate.

## A Building, a Life in Ruins

Wright had solidified his approach to distinctive Prairie School architecture by the time attorneys James Blythe and J.E.E. Markley awarded him a commission for a mixed-use building on a downtown Mason City corner. Construction had just begun on what would be known as the Park Inn in 1909 when a scandal broke: Wright had decamped to Europe with his mistress Mamah Cheney, the wife of a client, leaving his wife and six children in Chicago. The public response was vicious, leaving Wright's practice in ruins.





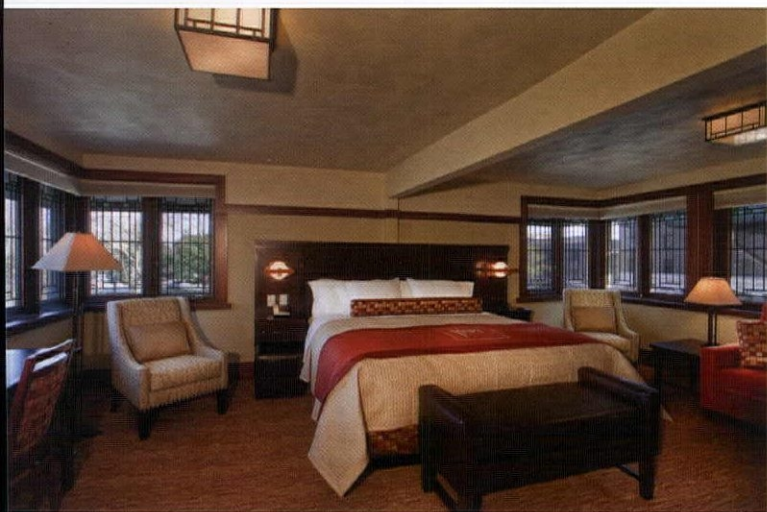
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**Top to bottom:** A luxurious lounge exudes warmth and retro-modern style, with a wood-paneled ceiling, Prairie School-style light fixtures, and early 20th-century inspired patterns.

Rooms in the Park Inn benefit from plenty of windows as well as wood details and Wright-appropriate furnishings.

**Opposite page:** Above the hotel's lobby, a restored skylight gives visitors dramatic pause.



Wright's continued design output – with a little help from Father Time – resuscitated his career and reputation, but the intervening years were less kind to the Mason City building, which included both a bank and hotel. The 1920s signaled the start of its deterioration, with neglect and alterations, some of them drastic, battering both exterior and interior. By the latter half of the century, the structure was either abandoned or partially occupied, says Scott Borcharding, IIDA, interior designer at Bergland + Cram.

The building was eventually listed as one of Iowa's Most Endangered historical landmarks; renovation plans would start, then stall, then start again. Even so, some community members realized the Park Inn represented a notable piece of history, an essential element in Wright's legacy.

Still, there was the question of what to do with the structure and how to pay for what would, by all accounts, be an expensive preservation. Eventually, Wright on the Park (WOTP), a local non-profit citizens' group, received ownership from the city. Their intent? To turn the structure into a hotel that met the requirements of the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the National Park Service (NPS).

#### Reclamation

When Borcharding first stepped foot in the Park Inn, there was little of Wright left. Only the original bank section, which had been extensively altered, was occupied. "The second and third floors were abandoned," says Borcharding. "Upstairs, broken windows, a leaking roof, and vandalism had all taken their toll. Pigeons were everywhere. We'd wear masks to do site verification. Everything had been painted white. In some cases, even art glass windows were painted for privacy."

Even so, a few of Wright's touches shone through: There were some details like trim, louvered doors, and tile floors, and a few art glass windows. But there was little in the way of original documentation or photographs to guide the firm. "Perhaps the





biggest surprise was that Wright designed these buildings on less than 40 pages of drawings,” says Borcharding, who served as co-manager and interior designer for the project.

Bergland + Cram had few photos, so instead relied heavily on descriptions from newspaper articles. The firm issued more than 130 pages of drawings, not including subsequent details, and conquered numerous structural issues and accessibility requirements. For example, the foundation, sitting on sand, had to be rebuilt, and the mezzanine over the concierge desk failed very early on due to lack of structural integrity, says Borcharding. “As demolition happened, we found the pockets that held the original beams,” he says. “In order to span the distance, the ceiling height under the new mezzanine is actually one inch lower to accommodate the new beams.”

Scott Smed, AIA, current managing principal of Bergland + Cram, recalled that the most complex portions of the building, including details of casework, wood trim, light fixtures, and the failed mezzanine were not included in the drawings or were simply sketches added to elevations. “Most of these were probably figured out on site during construction. We spent several months looking at reduced size drawings through a jeweler’s loupe to determine what each simple line was intended to represent,” Smed said.

#### **Past is Present, Present is Past**

Today, the Historic Park Inn, as the renovated building is known, is the last Wright-designed hotel in the world. It opened in 2011, exactly 101 years after its original unveiling.

The classic Wright touches are all there: original window grilles, custom carpets, sumptuous woodwork, detailed windows,

a restored 25-panel skylight. The building boasts 27 rooms, an elegant bar, and a steady stream of tours by Wright enthusiasts. The hotel looks and feels very much of the era in which Wright originally created it. “There were elements and areas of the project that we were required to maintain in a historical manner,” says Borcharding. “All of the public spaces – the lobby and skylight room, the ladies parlor, the original law offices of Blythe, Markley, Rule & Smith, and even the corridors – are virtually true to Wright’s original intent. Beyond that, the guest rooms, the 1910 Lounge, and the 1910 Grille, were all designed in keeping with the ideals of Prairie School design.”

Its completion put to rest the skeptics, too. “On Labor Day weekend of 2011, WOTP hosted free tours, and had more than 1,500 people go through the building,” says Borcharding. “The reactions were worth the blood, sweat and tears. Something to the effect of, ‘Originally I didn’t think it was worth it, but I was wrong,’ may have been the best compliment. It’s an honor to say we worked on the project.”

Historical preservation is a tricky business, as is the preservation and recognition of an individual’s true legacy. Wright was, by all accounts, brilliant, albeit a narcissist. There’s danger in embracing just his genius and ignoring his humanity. The same can be said for buildings: The past is inspiring but can be confining. If we’re to truly understand Wright’s influence – why it was built, what it represents, how it can work a century later – projects and buildings like the Park Inn will help ensure design’s importance and influence well into the next century.





## Historic Park Inn

Last remaining Frank Lloyd Wright  
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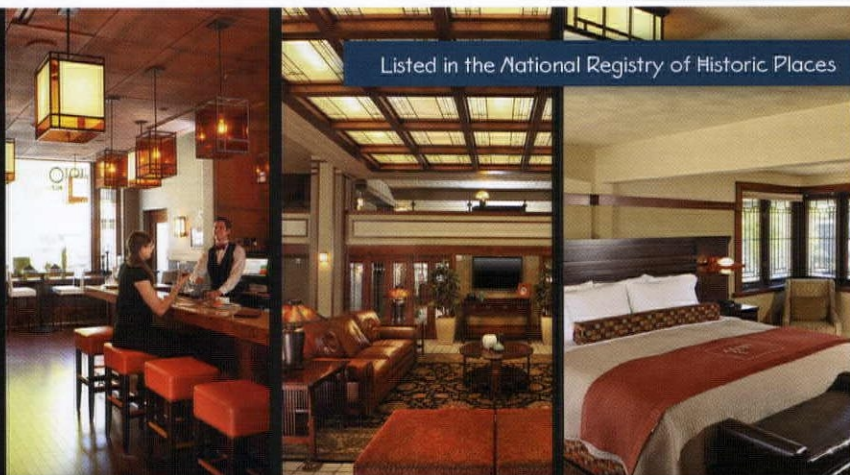
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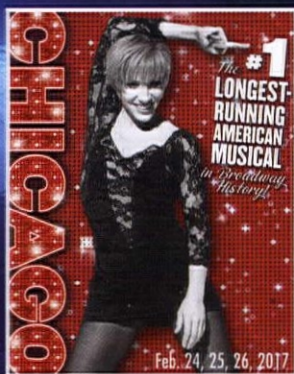
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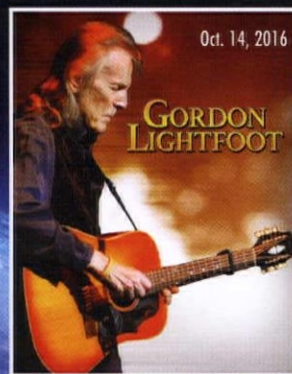
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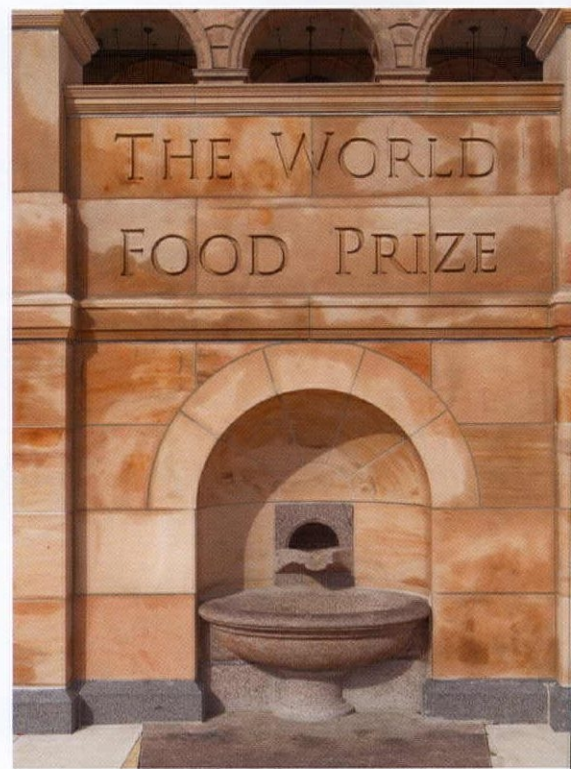
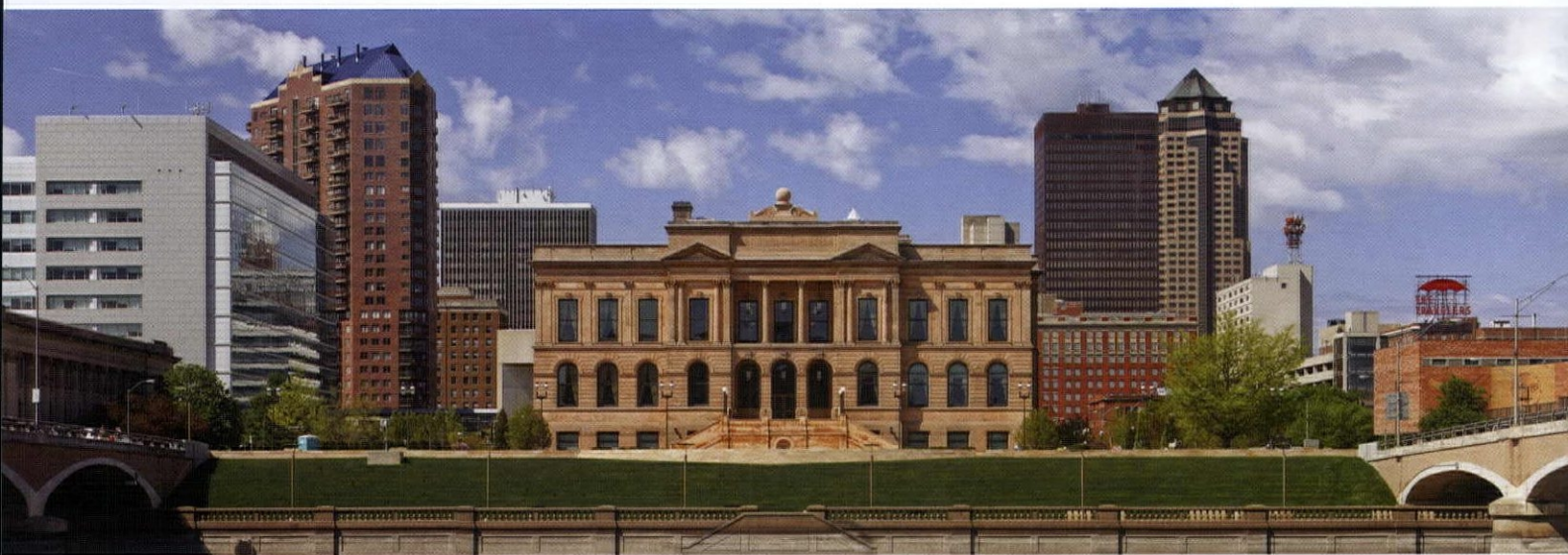
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# agreenrevolution

WORDS: HANNAH GILMAN

IMAGES: IRIS 22 PRODUCTIONS

ARCHITECT: RDG PLANNING & DESIGN

The year was 1970, when, in the fields of Mexico's Toluca Valley, Dr. Norman Borlaug got the news: He'd received the Nobel Peace Prize for his contribution to the green revolution – a revolution that increased agricultural production on a global scale. Dr. Borlaug had witnessed a hungry world, and, knowing the vital function of agriculture, set out to feed it.

His work – work that's credited with saving more than one billion lives – was born from years of helping on his family's 106-acre northeastern Iowa farm as a child, hunting and fishing and raising crops and livestock. Seventeen years later, he'd created his own version of the Nobel Peace Prize: the World Food Prize, which celebrates those outstanding individuals whose work has significantly improved the world's food supply.

To honor the Nobel Peace Prize winner and the World Food Prize Laureates, and to educate and inspire the next generation of change-makers, the World Food Prize Foundation found a home in the former Des Moines Public Library – a “majestic cultural icon,” says Michelle Sacco, AIA, architect at RDG Planning & Design, the architect-of-record on the \$29.8 million renovation.

“Our client wanted the building to be a memorial to Dr. Borlaug,” says Sacco, who was an intern when the project kicked off in 2009, “and they wanted the Hall of Laureates to serve as a landmark for those aspiring to the same achievements.”

The building, which sits at 100 Locust Street, first opened its doors – which faced east, to the Des Moines River, and up a staircase – to the public in 1903 as part of the City Beautiful Movement, which

aimed to bring buildings of monumental grandeur to America to increase the quality of life. The building, designed by the defunct Des Moines-based firm Gutterson and Smith, was a multipurpose cultural gem; a community building that housed everything from the Des Moines Women's Club to the Grand Army of the Republic to libraries to art galleries. Eventually, it would be the home of the World Food Prize Foundation.

“What was most remarkable as we walked through the space with President of the World Food Prize Foundation Ambassador Ken Quinn, was that the missions of the two organizations – the library and the World Food Prize Foundation – were so closely aligned,” says Dave Broz, AIA, principal at Gensler who was project manager for the renovation. “It's a different design concept when you're repositioning a building to a completely different use and purpose, but retaining many of the grandiose spaces that had such a rich tapestry of storytelling was a natural extension of the storytelling and generational passing down of history that the World Food Prize embraced.”

“From day one, we knew this project would mean a lot to the state of Iowa and everyone touched by agriculture,” Broz continues. “It was our responsibility to guide the design vision and create an appropriate home for the rich stories the World Food Prize Foundation has and needs to tell.”

Tasked with all sustainable and restoration aspects of the renovation, RDG worked to bring design architect Gensler's palatial vision to life, all while upholding the historical integrity of the building.

The east facade of the building faces the Des Moines River. The grand staircase was redesigned using time-appropriate stone from an abandoned railroad bridge. The new entrance faces west, and is surrounded by lush gardens. An ode to the World Food Prize, established in 1986. In a former life, the Borlaug Ballroom was filled with bookcases. Now an event space, it holds a portrait of Dr. Borlaug, tapestries recognizing various moments of his life, and ornamental bowls representing areas of work awarded by the World Food Prize.





"It was our intent from the beginning to build upon the history of the building," says Carlos Martinez, AIA, design principal at Gensler. "Every decision was made to respect the building, enhance the experience, and tell a compelling story about the World Food Prize."

"The goal was to maintain the original design, feel and materials of the building as much as possible, while also meeting the 21st-century needs of the World Food Prize Foundation," says Sacco. "We really wanted to keep the original plan intact so the amount of demolition and new construction was minimal, which helped a lot when it came to LEED points," she continues. "Reusing an existing building is a very green thing to do." The project earned a LEED Platinum certification, one of few in the country on the National Register of Historic Places, and the first in Iowa.

Perhaps the greatest aesthetic change to the existing building was bringing back the east staircase, which was demolished along with a fountain in 1956. For years, the building faced west. To return the building to its original grandeur and elevate the structure as a centerpiece of the Principal Riverwalk, RDG redesigned the east staircase, even collecting stone from an abandoned railroad bridge in Minnesota that would match the original stone quarried more than a century ago, a savvy move that met sustainability standards. Twenty percent of the materials used in the renovation came from within 500 miles of Des Moines.

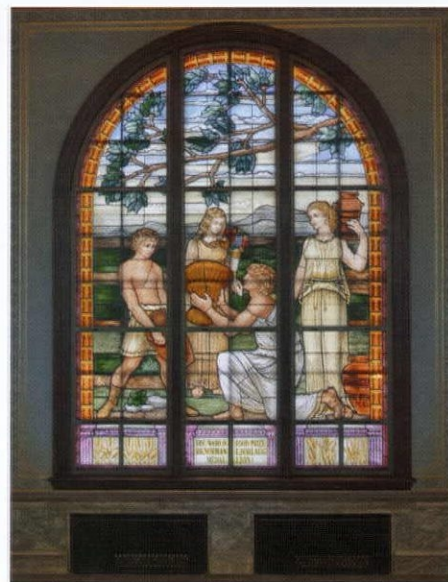
The original fountain, which had been buried under rubble and uncovered during an excavation in the early 2000s, was reinstalled after years of sitting in city storage. An acroterium, lost somewhere along the way, was designed and installed using historical photos for reference. Tucked behind it, out of sight, are 90 solar panels – touted as some of the most energy-efficient solar panels available – hidden from view in accordance to the State Historic Preservation Office. Just more than 100 geothermal wells were drilled under the garden – formerly a parking lot – to heat and cool the building, while an 8,000-gallon cistern beneath the east staircase collects rainwater that's used to flush toilets and irrigate the grounds.

New window sashes, with glass clear enough to maintain a historical look yet still meet the requirements of the energy code, were installed throughout. In the interior rotunda, which immediately transports visitors to the early 1900s, a 10,000-piece stained glass dome – framed by four dreamy lunettes portraying scenes from Dr. Borlaug's life – was dismantled, cleaned, repaired, and reinstalled.

By 2012, the building had been restored to its original, and, now, environmentally friendly grandeur.

"One can hardly drive by the World Food Prize on a weekend without seeing something going on in the building or the gardens," says Sacco, "and I think that speaks volumes of what our community thinks of this building."

"To be a part of a project that is not only locally important, but globally, is an experience that doesn't come around very often," she continues. "Being a part of a building that will continue to be enjoyed for generations to come is something I think all designers aspire to."



In the lower level of the building, the Mural Room boasts a 360-degree, 1,091-square-foot mural named "A Social History of Des Moines." At the top of the grand staircase, a 20-foot-tall stained glass portrait of harvest during classical times steals the show. The rotunda features a 10,000-piece skylight original to the building flanked by four lunette murals showing key moments of Dr. Borlaug's life.





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## project credits

### No Fat 18

**Architect:** BNIM Architects

**Location:** Des Moines, IA

**Contractor:** Ryan Companies US, Inc.

**Engineer:** Design Engineers

**Original Architect:** Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (1961)

**Photographer:** Nick Merrick, Hedrich Blessing

### Sullivan's Travails: Banking to Baguettes 24

**Architect:** OPN Architects

**Location:** Cedar Rapids, IA

**Contractor:** GRR-DTE, LLC

**Original Architect:** Louis Sullivan (1911)

**Photographer:** Wayne Johnson, Main Street Studio

### Wright on a New View 28

**Architect:** Bergland + Cram

**Location:** Mason City, IA

**Contractor:** Herikel Construction Company

**Engineer:** KJWWs

**Engineer:** Charles Saul Engineering

**Original Architect:** Frank Lloyd Wright (1910)

**Photographer:** Dana Miller

### A Green Revolution 34

**Architect:** RDG Planning & Design

**Location:** Des Moines, IA

**Secondary Firm:** Gensler (Design Architect)

**Contractor:** Neumann Brothers, Inc.

**Original Architect:** Gutterson & Smith (1899)

**Photographer:** Iris 22 Productions



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