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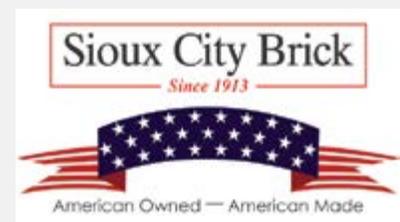
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editor's letter



Welcome!

My family and I recently made a shift in our typical Saturday routine. As on most weekends, we bought groceries, played at the park, and went out for lunch. But what made this Saturday different is that the mix of errands, chores, and recreation was accomplished without setting foot in our car and without leaving our neighborhood. Our No Drive Saturday experience was possible because many common amenities are a short and pleasant walk from our home.

Walkability is an important element contributing to vibrant and sustaining communities. As a quality of life measure, it has proven to retain and attract citizens, increase economic development opportunities, and improve the health of people and the environment. Creating a walkable community is a holistic concept involving density, variety in the use of buildings and spaces, and a system of connectivity that includes bicycles, transit, and pedestrians in addition to cars.

In this issue, we look at the role architecture plays in supporting the vibrancy of the pedestrian experience. We explore five projects that uniquely contribute to the activity, vitality, and connectivity on the street level, and, hopefully, encourages more No Drive Days.

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Editor, Iowa Architect

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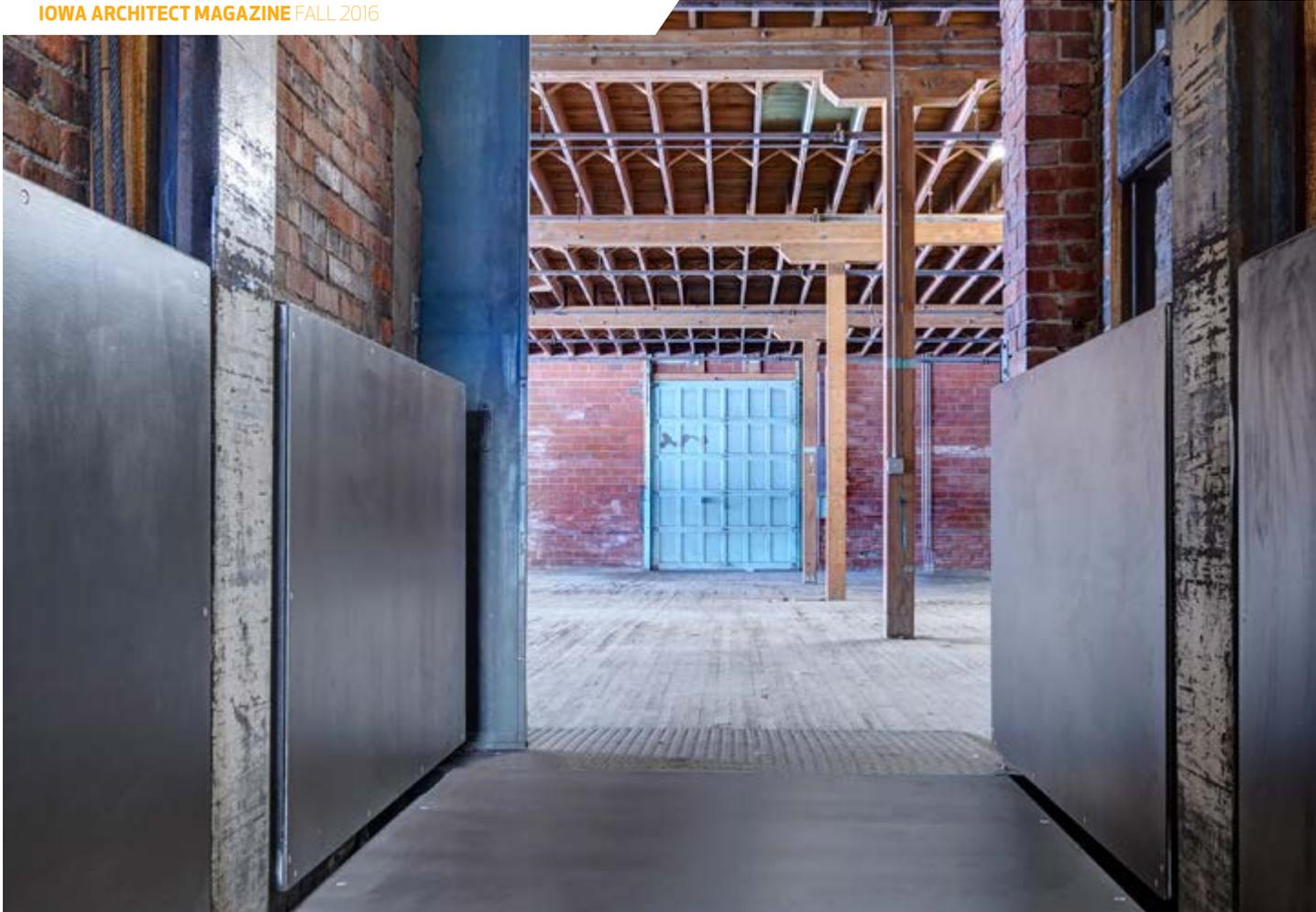
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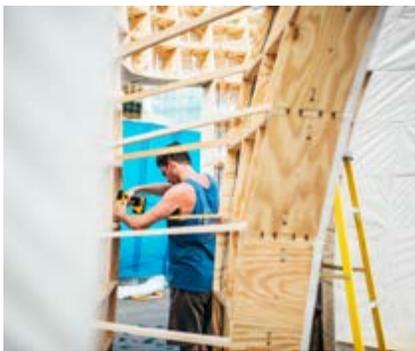


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80/35 Flux Pavilion

Students from Iowa State University partnered with OPN Architects on the Flux Pavilion at the 80/35 Music Festival.

WORDS AND PHOTOS: LIZ BROWN



The Decemberists had taken the stage and true to its indie-darling reputation, the crowd was mesmerized and smitten. Their melodies drifted across into the city of Des Moines: “and I am nothing of a builder, but here I dreamt I was an architect...”

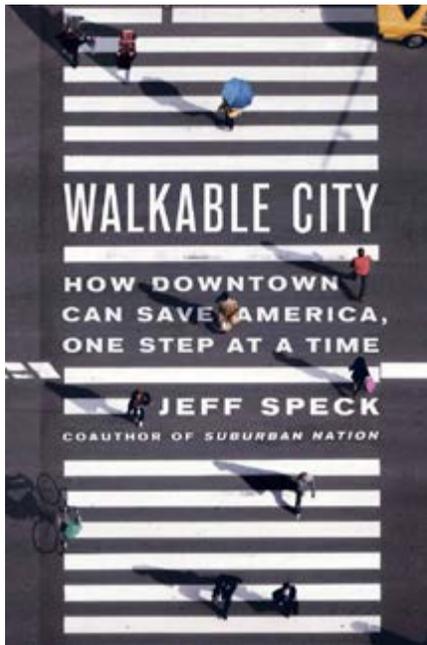
On the western side of 80/35 Music Festival was indeed a group of architects doing more than just dreaming. Architects from OPN Architects and Shelby Doyle, AIA, architect and assistant professor of architecture at Iowa State University College of Design, guided a team of 16 students from the interdisciplinary

Fabrications Potentials Studio in creating the mesmerizing Flux Pavilion that glowed just past the lights of the stage. The 30,000 festival attendees meandered around and through the two hallways in the S-shaped structure, pausing, snapping photos, and sitting together, the LED lights changing with the music, lighting up their faces. Student Kyle Vansice explained: “We wanted the pavilion to be a kind of whimsical spectacle that plugged into the energy and ethos of the festival.”

Rahul Attraya, Student Affiliate Member of AIA Iowa, detailed the process,

explaining the pavilion was “built entirely out of plywood, Tyvek, and embedded LED strips in each module.” The whole structure, Vansice described, is “essentially a giant low-resolution television screen (or) an LED field,” consisting of more than 6,500 pieces, some of which were donated after the festival to central Iowa high schools for use in technology classes.

“I hope it inspired at least a few young people to engage with architecture and engineering for fun now, and maybe for a career later,” says Vansice.



Walkable City: How downtown can save America, one step at a time

WORDS: A. GRANT NORDBY, AIA

“It only takes a few blocks to create a reputation. The lesson of LoDo is to start small with something that is as good as you can make it,” writes Jeff Speck in *Walkable City* (2012), and many Iowa metros are listening. Speck – who 10 years ago co-authored *Suburban Nation* with Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk – argues that people want walkable urban living so badly, they’ll pay a premium, flocking to the few American cities cultivating it. But, he says, other cities’ downtowns could be revived by reintroducing urban housing and by getting a few other ingredients right.

Walkable City is the primer on building

blocks that planners, transportation engineers, and citizens have forgotten. A walk must be useful, safe, comfortable, and interesting. This entails putting cars in their place, mixing uses, getting parking right, letting transit work, protecting pedestrians, welcoming bikes, shaping spaces, planting trees, making “friendly and unique faces,” and picking winners. Most ingredients are needed simultaneously before streets are walkable; Speck’s examples of professional wishful thinking are painfully familiar. This book will be valuable to those interested in crafting vibrant cities.

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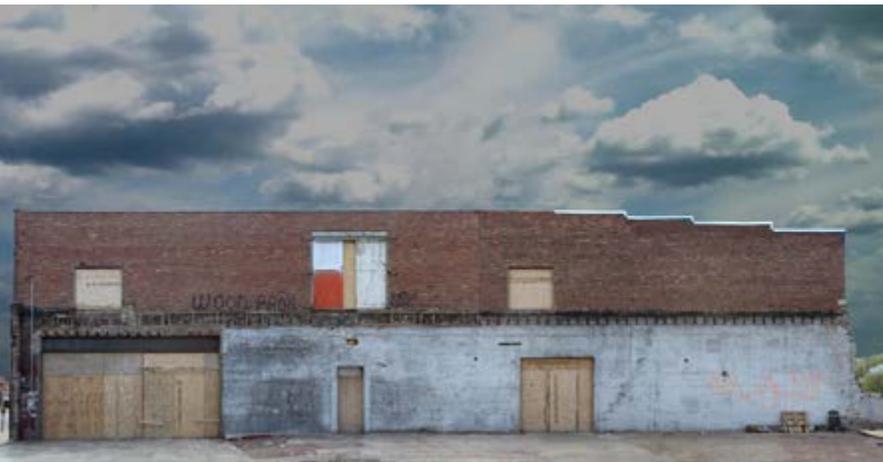
on the boards

Projects
In Progress

Dwell

Des Moines / Slingshot Architecture

Situated across from the Des Moines Social Club, Dwell will add 62 apartments at the corner of 9th and Mulberry streets. The apartments are situated around a second-level courtyard, with a common room for events, visually connecting with the activities across the street. At the north end of the courtyard, an installation of art lighting will activate the courtyard and offer an opportunity for movie nights for the tenants. Patterns in the windows and metal panels reflect the motion of commuters leaving downtown via 9th Street, while the remainder of the building becomes integrated into the urban fabric.



IBC Building

Sioux City / PLaN Architecture

IBC Insurance moved into its newly renovated warehouse on the west end of downtown Sioux City just four years ago, and now having doubled in size, the company is moving to a new home: a long-vacant 11,000-square-foot, two-level building just two blocks away. The structure is the remainder of a recent demolition project. Its north and west facades illustrate the process of erasure around it with rough openings, cut connections, jagged masonry edges, and loose rubble surrounding it. The design scheme does not restore or hide those elements behind layers of opaque new construction. By contrasting planes and layers of new construction – such as glass – with the existing construction, the process of erasure will be put on display, creating a sort of still life of the passage of time.



Sleeping Giant

Cedar Rapids / Shive-Hattery

Sleeping in the Cedar River in Cedar Rapids are giant remnants of an abandoned 150-year-old railroad bridge. The Sleeping Giant will be a visible connector for trails, neighborhoods, and people. Once complete, the bridge will complement 89 continuous miles through the beauty and

culture of Eastern Iowa communities, encouraging bike and pedestrian traffic through the Czech Village, New Bohemia, and Oakhill Jackson neighborhoods of Cedar Rapids. A diverse group of community advocates and leaders have provided collaborative input to Shive-Hattery, with the support of HNTB, to develop conceptual 3D renderings, engineering designs, and cost estimates for the proposed bridge, gathering plazas, and trail connections.



5Fifty5 Townhomes

Des Moines / Slingshot Architecture

Slingshot Architecture is working with Hubbell Realty to bring a unique urban living opportunity to downtown Des Moines. The 47-unit development will create a dense urban neighborhood offering iconic views of downtown and the Raccoon River. The neighborhood invites the public in from 7th Street to link into the Central Iowa Trails system. Taller units are situated around the perimeter of the site to establish the neighborhood scale surrounding lower two-story structures, allowing each unit to have a prime view. Outdoor spaces were captured between units on the roof of the garage or were carved into the top floor to create a vibrant life within the neighborhood.



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Sleeping Giant Pedestrian Bridge | Cedar Rapids, IA

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CAPITAL CROSSROADS

Iowa Architect sat down with Meg Schneider, senior vice president of Greater Des Moines Partnership and co-founder of Urban Land Institute Iowa, and Larry James, co-founder and past president of Urban Land Institute Iowa, to get the low-down on the latest effort to transform the capital city.

Iowa Architect: *Tell us a bit about the individuals sitting at the table.*

Meg Schneider: It's a totally collaborative partnership. So, the three at the table really are the City of Des Moines, Urban Land Institute Iowa, and Greater Des Moines Partnership.

Larry James: All of these different disciplines are involved: architects, builders, developers, bankers, attorneys, landscape architects, engineers, planners, elected officials, non-profit members – anyone who touches the development business in some way, shape, or form is involved. And what's really cool is it allows us to collaborate on issues facing the region or state or city without having specific projects in mind. As an architect, your job is to design a building for a client ... and you're basically at odds at some point with city officials on different issues, whether you're going through the permit

process or what have you. But here, you get the chance to sit across the table from somebody and really get to know them, and it allows all these different disciplines that approach these issues from different angles to come together to try to solve these problems.

IA: *And, at the moment, that problem is making Des Moines a safer, more interesting place for pedestrians and bicyclists via the Capital Crossroads initiative. How did that come about?*

LJ: It was a decision from the ULI management committee, which encouraged a look at how downtown Des Moines right-of-ways are designed, and determine if the current design is the best it can be. There are things we can do to make downtown more vibrant, to connect all of these things we've done as a city to really increase economic development at the street level, and to make it safer

for pedestrians and bicyclists. Really, the heart of everything is connectivity: Trying to connect all of these things we've created the last 25 years downtown and really improve the public realm to increase private development. What's holding us back right now is traffic; car traffic going too fast through a downtown grid full of pedestrians that is not designed to handle traffic at high speeds, and as a result we have a really unsafe situation. Not to mention, when you're going fast down an urban street, you're not likely to stop your car and look around to see what types of shops are there, what restaurants are there.

MS: Today, people decide where they want to live first and then they look for a job, which is not how it was 20 years ago. So the question cities are having to ask is how to create a metro area that is desirable, that has amenities people are interested in, that has connectivity. How do you create an elevated quality of life



Diagrams from Capital Crossroads show how simple changes to street-scaping can transform a city block from a car sewer (top) to an active space (below).

to be competitive against other cities in the United States? And one of those key components today is very much walkability, being able to not be car-reliant, to have a more urban experience if you want to opt-in to that.

IA: *So this study is the first step in enacting those changes. What's the status?*

LJ: We're out raising money right now to hire an engineering firm called Nelson Nygaard, which focuses on multi-modal transportation. They're experienced in developing street networks that serve all types of users, not just cars, and so their task is redesigning the street network from Martin Luther King Jr. on the west, East 14th on the east, and the river on the south, and University Avenue on the north. It's a huge area that encompasses all of downtown and parts of surrounding neighborhoods, and when they're done, they will have a design for every street that

will have been plugged into this transit model to make sure it works. Assuming we get the buy-in from the stakeholders, the city council will also adopt this next year as the plan going forward with how the city will, over the course of several years, transform these streets. The goal is to increase pedestrian traffic, increase bicycle traffic, which, in the end, will attract street-level retail and restaurants back to downtown. It's something that has been done all over the world. Just a little data we have so far is that we have a lot of overcapacity in the system, so there are ways for us to use the right-of-way and still offer ways for commuters to get through promptly.

MS: And that's the balance, right? If you take away a lane to make a bike lane, you still have two or three lanes for cars. You have to ask if that can be done without severely compromising the commute. Because that's one thing people will pay

attention to. If it adds 30 seconds to your commute but it has all these other great ripple effects, OK, that's valuable. If it adds 20 minutes, probably not. But somewhere in there is a balance of being able to have all of these great things in exchange for an extra 30 seconds.

LJ: Let's see how it works. Let's narrow these lanes, let's bump out this corner with paint and a couple of plastic cones so it makes it easier to cross for pedestrians. It's a good temporary fix. We don't have to totally redo the sewer line, we don't have to completely rebuild the sidewalk. And if it works, and everyone's happy with it, maybe we'll find a way to make that more permanent change. It's not all going to happen at once. It's going to be several years. It's always something that, if it doesn't work, you can put it back. There's nothing that says this has to be done overnight and has to be a permanent solution.

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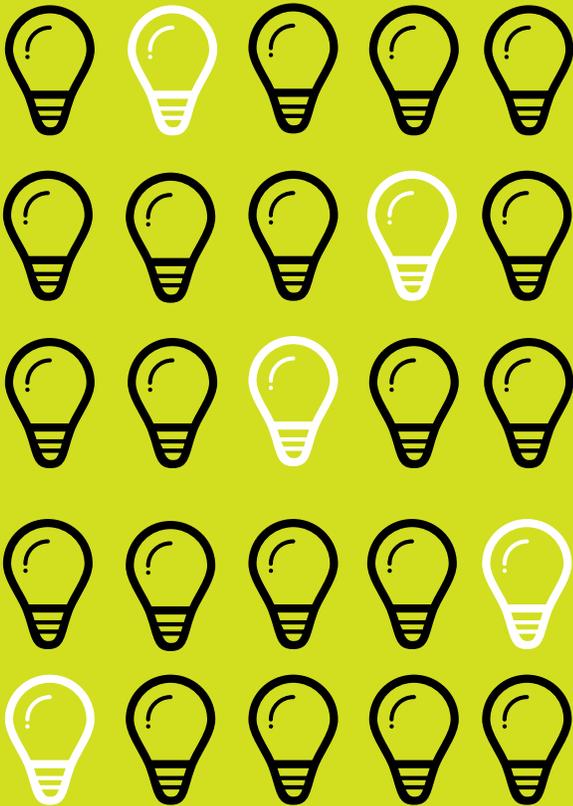
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People of Interest



Noce

DES MOINES' FIRST DEDICATED JAZZ AND CABARET CLUB FURTHERS DEVELOPMENT IN THE WESTERN GATEWAY

WORDS: ABBY GILMAN
PHOTOS: EVA LEWIN PHOTOGRAPHY

When Bob and Maria Filippone walked up to a nondescript building on the 1300 block of Walnut Street two years ago, it was hard to imagine the desolate street as a bustling retail district. At the time, the only attraction was a pint at Exile Brewing Company. Then a temporary office space for the Democratic party, it was difficult for the husband-and-wife duo to look beyond the stale linoleum flooring, boxed-in cubicles, and bowing front wall. But Bob had a vision.

“My husband is the dreamer,” says Maria, co-owner of Noce, the jazz and cabaret club located at 1326 Walnut Street. “We’d gone through renovating Des Moines Onstage a few years before that, so we kind of knew what it would take, but this was a whole new beast.”

The Filippones called up their friend Evan Shaw, AIA, then an architect with Knowles Blunck Architecture, to scope out the site and inspect the infrastructure. Deemed structurally sound, Bob and Maria jumped on the opportunity to purchase the space. “We

felt like this was a little diamond in the rough,” says Maria.

Two years later, this small section of Walnut Street – just one block south of the Sculpture Garden – is full of construction equipment; just across the street and a few skips west from Noce, an old tire shop is being renovated into four ground-level retail bays and six second-floor condos. To the east, a long-vacant service shop is being renovated into a draught house.

“We feel like pioneers on this street,” says Max Wellman, general manager of Noce and local musician. “There was no action when Bob and Maria bought this building, and now with each new thing that goes in on Walnut, there’s definitely a pick-up.”

The restoration and renovation efforts underway on Walnut Street call to mind a similar effort years ago, which saw the resuscitation of the East Village. Just as was done in the East Village, the work along Walnut Street has focused on preserving the facades and taking the renovations to the interiors. Shaw and the team at Knowles Blunck Architecture kept the exterior



Top to bottom: Patrons are met with a custom-made sculpture hanging over the front desk; the back hallway is lined with thrifed brass instruments and painted-navy mirrors; the bar makes a subtle, classic statement; a custom-made sculpture hangs above bar-height seating along the eastern wall. **Opposite:** A crowd fills the space for its opening night on New Years Eve.

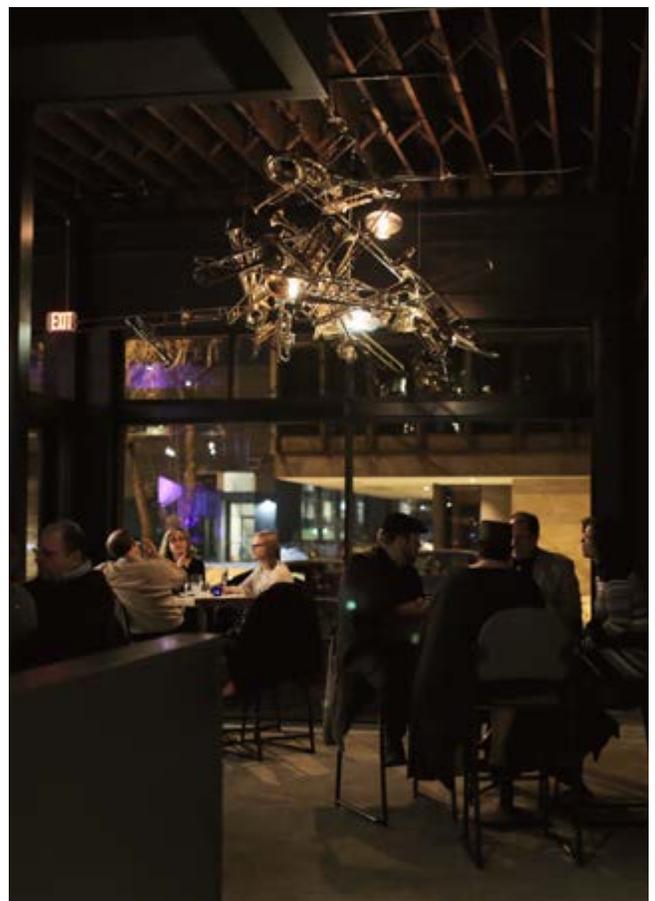
simple, focusing on restoring – including the original floor-to-ceiling windows – to the original character, while giving it a modern twist. The brunt of the work went into demoing and fitting out the interior.

“If you go to a jazz club – a properly designed one – the experience should not be about the architecture, it should be about the show you’re watching,” says Shaw. “That’s why, at Noce, all of the finishes are purposefully dark and muted and become the backdrop to the show.”

Rich woods and velvety drapes are softly lit from above by incandescent lights, which, during shows, are cut to allow the interiors to fall dark and the spot-lit stage to be the point of focus. The bar is simple, classic, with under-lit shelving and bottles purposefully displayed alongside interspersed brass instruments and bubbled blown-glass lamps to offer dim light just above the bar stools. The only attention-seeking displays in the space, in fact, are the two sculptural fixtures hung above the western and eastern vestibules. Tim Wisgerhof, local set designer and interior stylist for Noce, created both specifically for the space: The western sculpture is made of foraged branches painted and arranged to create a nest-like shape; the eastern a cascade of myriad thrifed brass instruments and blown-glass lamps.

The space feels natural and laid back. It’s as upscale as any jazz cabaret the world over, yet remains unpretentious and accessible. The building plays well with its neighbors; it respects the past, yet pushes downtown Des Moines toward a greater, more connected future.

“I try to promote downtown as a destination,” says Wellman. “I’ve got this whole dinner-and-a-show thing going, where we’re trying to promote specific shows through restaurants that are located downtown, offering, say, if you go to Americana and come here, we’ll give you half off your ticket. Just encouraging people to stay downtown, get out, and check out something else. This neighborhood is going to be a thing for a long time.





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PAYING RESPECT TO THE HISTORICAL BONES OF THE 1800S-ERA STRUCTURE, INVISION HELPED BRING THE ONCE-OVERLOOKED DILLEY BUILDING TO THE 21ST CENTURY — ALL WHILE CELEBRATING ITS STORIED PAST.

WORDS: HANNAH GILMAN

IMAGES: CAMERON CAMPBELL, AIA, INTEGRATED STUDIO

ARCHITECT: INVISION ARCHITECTURE





Seventy-some years ago, at the corner of Des Moines' East Third Street and East Court Avenue, Beal's Lithography & Printing Co. was churning out World War II propaganda. In 2016, at the very same spot, Iowans are working in modern offices and sipping locally brewed beers on the those old paper-manufacturing warehouse floors.

The secret to its success? Blending the old with the new, says Laura Peterson of INVISION, who project-managed the rehabilitation. Alongside INVISION interior designer Julie Stegeman, Deal Berkenne Construction, and Christensen Development – who also happened to be the developers, contractors, and new tenants – Peterson was able to strike a perfect balance as they transformed the 35,000-square-foot warehouse into a combination commercial office space and restaurant with room for expansion.

Today, the north, one-story portion houses the Iowa Taproom, a local craft beer hall and restaurant boasting an impressive spread of Iowa beers. The south, two-story side houses the offices of Beal Derkenne Construction and Christensen Development.

The building's owners, Beal Derkenne Construction and Christensen Development, love old buildings, says Peterson, but they also love clean, modern design. "They looked to us to make it a blend of the two," she says. "While we were working on the project, there wasn't a large concentration on the history of this specific building, but instead on exposing the historical structure that's typical of the East Village and creating modern insertions in the space."

Throughout the project, the team was able to reuse many of the materials native to the building. Highlights include the manufacturing floor's steel plates, which were repurposed into guardrail panels at the egress stair; the timbers, which were

The primary west elevation from 3rd Street – you can see the wood-wrapped elevator insertion through the photo, as well as the new second floor tenant space. Steel panels from the existing floor were use on the façade.

rehomed through the monumental stair; and the marble panels from the original entryway, which make up the new reception desk.

The elevator shaft, which is no longer in use, serves as a passageway from the Iowa Taproom's dining hall to the restrooms as a reminder of what once was. Past tenant improvements, finishes, and alterations to the structure were removed to preserve the integrity of the space, as new ideas were ushered in. That meant creating spaces that took advantage of natural daylight, exposing brick walls, and reusing fire doors for the main doors of the tenant space, while introducing glass and drywall as modern



Clockwise above: New two-story entrance lobby with wood-wrapped elevator, reused timbers on the stairs, and the modern inserted spaces on second floor; private office space; existing elevator, which was secured in place at the first floor and is now used as a pass-through between the Iowa Taproom and building entrance.
Opposite: Open office space of Beal Derkenne Construction – exposed wood structure with low partitions inserted.



materials. “It’s easy for historical projects to become kitschy, so we tried to use historical materials in a meaningful way,” says Peterson. “By using a more restrained approach, I think the project presents an interesting juxtaposition between the old and new.”

The exterior, which, in its long history, was once painted white, was completely stripped of paint, cleaned, and taken back to its original brick. New windows were installed throughout the building, and the second story of the south side of the building was partially reconstructed. “We took the building down to its original shell,” says Peterson. “The building has always housed different manufacturing and commercial tenants – it was built to be a shell space that different tenants could occupy.”

Before the Dilley Building’s current tenants moved in, the shell housed manufacturing and printing companies, such as Jaeger Manufacturing, Hawkeye Cord Tire Co., Beal’s Lithography and Printing Co., Dilley Manufacturing Co., and, in a premature nod to the Iowa Taproom, Old Style Lager. “There wasn’t really an attempt to honor the original function of the building,” says Peterson, “but instead to honor the building by revitalizing it and bringing it back to life as a commercial space.”

They were able to accomplish that, thanks to the shared vision and unique partnership. “It was a great experience to work hand-in-hand with the construction team and owner – from schematic

design through occupancy – to create a space they could be proud of,” says Peterson. “There was great trust and communication throughout the project between all parties, which made for a space that met their needs, aesthetic, and budget – and a happy owner.”

And a happy community, too. Now that the Dilley Building – which is on the fringe of the East Village – has become home to a new sort of local landmark in the Iowa Taproom, the neighborhood has expanded as diners, shoppers, workers,

and residents venture farther to support it. “This project, because of its location, helps expand the East Village development into the surrounding manufacturing and warehouse areas,” says Peterson, noting that the Dilley Building is very much in step with the one- and two-story buildings that surround it, some of which have been rehabbed, others of which will likely soon be.

The Dilley Building, once unknown to many, is now a beacon on the outskirts of the East Village — a sign of growth and renewal, which have become synonymous with Des Moines over the last decade.

“The Dilley Building wasn’t a significant historic place, an architectural masterpiece, or a local landmark like many of the architectural historical rehab projects that we feature, but it has a story and charm that new construction can’t replicate,” says Peterson. “You can’t recreate the character of an existing building.” The hope of many Des Moinesians? That more of these storied, charming buildings get their chance at new life, and that the revitalization of the East Village and Des Moines over the last decade continues.

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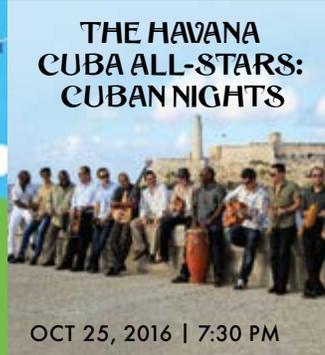
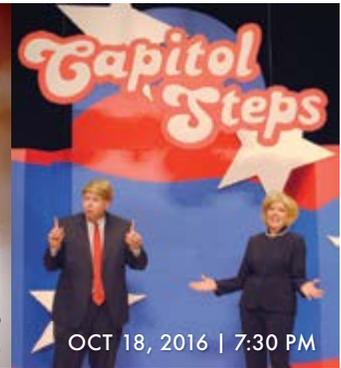
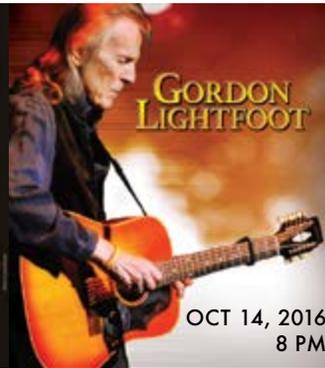
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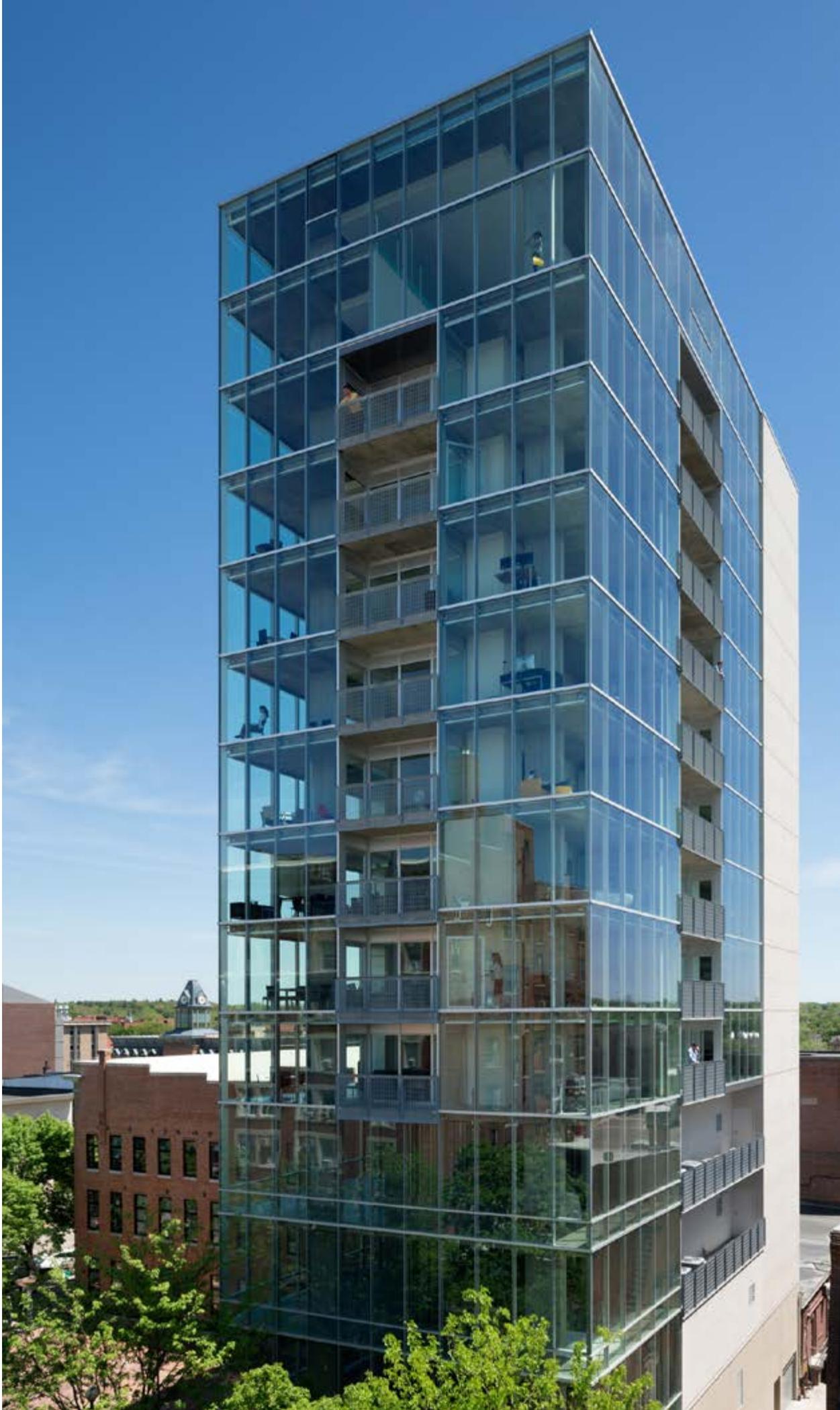
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life of a city

An infill project in downtown Iowa City makes a notable statement about urban living.

WORDS: KELLY ROBERSON

IMAGES: ASSASSI PRODUCTIONS AND WAYNE JOHNSON, MAIN STREET STUDIO (TOP OF THE FOLLOWING PAGE)

ARCHITECT: NEUMANN MONSON ARCHITECTS

The idea of a walkable city isn't new: It's how cities were originally conceived, before horses and cars and interstates swung the pendulum away from foot power and toward motor power. While the car isn't going away anytime soon, that drive pendulum has taken a decidedly firm shift back toward middle ground. Urban living is as in vogue as it's been in recent memory, and with that has come an increasing clamor for navigable, safe, beautiful center-city spaces.

Jane Jacobs famously recognized this dichotomy in her landmark book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. "There is no magic in simply removing cars from downtown, and certainly none in stressing peace, quiet, and dead space,"

Opposite: Balance is key in the Park@201 building: A glass facade offers residents lofty views over the Iowa City street-scape. **Left:** Stairs in an interior office space.

Jacobs writes. "The removal of the cars is important only because of the great opportunities it opens to make the streets work harder and to keep downtown activities compact and concentrated ... The whole point is to make the streets more surprising, more compact, more variegated, and busier than before – not less so."



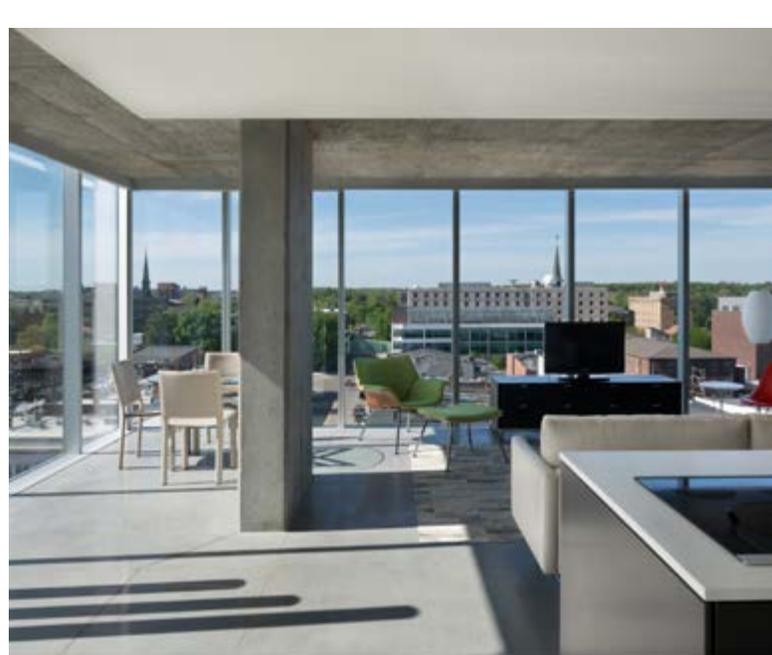
Top: An outsize overhang enabled the architects to grab a few extra feet for floors above the retail space. **Opposite Left:** Support spaces live away from the windows, which means the architects had space to play with outdoor living areas, including balconies inset on each unit. **Opposite Right:** Blocks of windows transform the condos into light and airy living spaces. **Opposite Bottom:** Concrete and glass equal both contrast and balance in the interior spaces at Park@201.

It's a lesson that Neumann Monson Architects took to heart when faced with a design challenge from developer Marc Moen in Iowa City: How could they transform a 40-foot-by-80-foot slice of land in the heart of downtown Iowa City into a vibrant urban infill project that respected the existing pedestrian-friendly culture? In addition, how does such a project respond to the existing eclectic architecture – some of it historic – without blighting the skyline?

Located on the Dubuque Street section of the pedestrian mall, that proposed niche occupies a uniquely visible sliver of covetable real estate that's now known as Park@201. Moen's request called for a trio of retail, office, and condo spaces. What was already on the site – a one-story concrete building nearly devoid of windows – wasn't worth saving, and Moen had other ideas for the potential of the property anyway. "The goal was to maximize the property by taking the building to the maximum height allowable," says Tim Schroeder, AIA, vice president, Neumann Monson Architects.

But maxing out vertically in an urban space, as any design professional would attest, isn't as simple as just going up and up and up. There are allowable building areas, maximum heights, and setbacks to consider – and those challenges became quickly apparent to the architects. "We had to develop a workable plan for three [livable] units on each level on that lot, as well as meet the exit separation requirements and have the project meet the budget," says Monson. A deft design solution – cantilevering four feet over the property line on the north and west facades above the retail level – helped, as did the purchase of air rights.

Some buildings pander to the surrounding architecture, but Neumann Monson's solution took a decidedly different approach. The ethereal glass-and-metal structure glides smoothly up, out, and over for 15 stories and 44,000 square feet. It has a solidity balanced with transparency: concrete-formed masonry clads circulation routes of the stair and elevator towers. It's melded



with a glass curtain wall that rises from ground level to roof plane, demarking the living spaces and divided at four-foot intervals by exterior metal elements. The geometry and material mix allows for distinct contrast – light/dark, height/width – that recedes into the surrounding cityscape.

Efficiency also held sway in the layout of the residential condo floor plans, which begin on the fifth floor and continue up for eight stories, as well as a top floor with two, two-story penthouses. By consolidating both stairs and elevators in the back of the building, the architects were able to eliminate shared hallways between units. That in turn allowed each of the three units per floor to maximize enviable natural light and views along the perimeter of living spaces, open kitchens and bedrooms, which prompted the architects to move support spaces such as storage and air-conditioning units to the interior, away from the windows. Each unit also has a private outdoor balcony, cleverly inset into the form of the building; the result maintains a degree of intimacy to exterior spaces that's often lacking in otherwise similar high-rise buildings. Even the bathroom spaces have gracious sunlight and interesting views.

In particular, the penthouse units on the top floor work hard to create both openness and intimacy, with two stories that open

up into unexpected loft areas. The payoff is one that any urban dweller would rightly covet: Beautiful, sweeping panoramas of Iowa City from the floor to ceiling. Inside, materials reflect both a practicality and lack of fussiness, with cast-in-place concrete columns and floor slabs that offer fireproofing, durability, soundproofing, and structural stability, as well as a color and texture that integrates with the aesthetics – unfinished, but highly composed.

On any given day, Park@201 serves as a backdrop to the street life below on what's known as the Blackhawk Mini Park. There are students and preachers, yoga practitioners and buskers. It's a vibrant, year-round scene that thanks to the thoughtful design of the architects, residents have full view of. It's a scene that Jacobs would recognize and admire. "Streets should play up their mixture of buildings with all its unspoken – but well understood – implications of choice," she writes. "The best way to plan for downtown is to see how people use it today; to look for its strengths and to exploit and reinforce them. There is no logic that can be superimposed on the city; people make it, and it is to them, not buildings, that we must fit our plans. But there are things that are right about it too, and by simple old-fashioned observation we can see what they are. We can see what people like."



THE POWER OF A PUBLIC PORCH

HOW SUBSTANCE ARCHITECTURE CREATED COMMUNITY SPACE IN WINTERSET, IOWA

WORDS: MEGAN BANNISTER | IMAGES: PAUL CROSBY | ARCHITECT: SUBSTANCE ARCHITECTURE

When the Iowa Preservation Alliance hosted the 2015 Preserve Iowa Summit, organizers wanted to put the group's mission into action within the gathering's host community. So the group organized a competition to design parklets to bring innovative green space and pedestrian-friendly areas to Winterset.

Of the four entries submitted and displayed on the Madison County Courthouse Square, the project by Des Moines' Substance Architecture prevailed. Designed to fit in the space of a standard parking spot, the smocked porch is surrounded on all four sides by adjustable screen panels. Sunlight filters through a

skylight in the structure's roof above a small square of grass in the center of the wooden floor that adds a pop of greenery, and allows visitors sitting on the porch swings at either end of the parklet to dangle their feet in the grass below.

"A small group saw this as an opportunity to explore materiality and craftsmanship on a small scale, and volunteered our time toward the design and construction of the project," said Kevin Wagner, Assoc. AIA, at Substance Architecture.

Over the course of several weeks, the Substance team built the parklet after hours in their office workshop. The main structural frame of the porch was

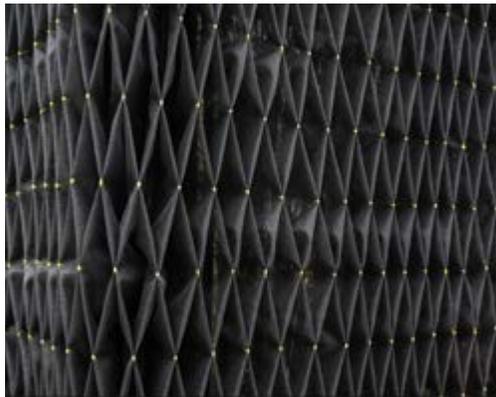
constructed using heavy timber salvaged from a demolished home while the cladding of the floor and roof is made from a deconstructed fence.

Because the team chose to embrace reclaimed materials, the existing sizes and flaws of the wood largely dictated the size of the structure. To ensure the structure was safe for continued public use, the Substance team modified and reused steel brackets from another project to accommodate the heavy salvaged timber.

Surrounding the porch's wooden frame are four 8-foot-by-50-foot panels crafted from pleated insect screens that act as curtains, and can be slid open or closed to



Top to bottom: A small square of grass in the center of the parklet's wooden floor allows visitors sitting on the porch swings at either end of the structure to dangle their feet in the grass below. Members of the Substance Architecture team work to create the parklet's unique smocked curtain. Created using pleated insect screens, the four 8-foot-by-50-foot panels took between six and eight hours each to complete. **Opposite:** The deployable smocked porch created by Des Moines' Substance Architecture sits on the Madison County Courthouse Square.



provide privacy and shade to its inhabitants. "In order to create the uniform smocking effect with the insect screen material, we tested and developed numerous stitching templates to help streamline the smocking process," Wagner says.

Each panel took six to eight hours to complete, and required careful, tedious effort from the team to hand-sew the 2,880 stitches required to give the screen its smocked effect.

Due to its compact size, the parklet can be transported, fully assembled, via tow truck and installed virtually anywhere. Its design also allows for the porch to be taken apart, transported to a new installation

site, and re-assembled in a matter of hours.

"The parklets attracted a great deal of attention from Summit attendees and local citizens, successfully raising the level of awareness about creative ways to incorporate green space and pedestrian-friendly space into the downtown business area," says Brenda Hollingsworth of the Madison County Historic Preservation Commission.

Substance's entry was even recognized by the American Institute of Architects as a 2016 Small Projects Award recipient, and was featured in publications like *Architectural Digest*, *Fast Company*, and *Slate*. While projects eligible for the award

in the porch's category were capped at \$150,000, Substance's pro-bono build had the lowest cost of the group at only \$900.

Locally, the parklet has spurred so much enthusiasm that Winterset is considering investing in even more public-conscious development.

"As a result, there is currently a project under consideration that would use the parklet idea to create pedestrian space in a vacant lot," Hollingsworth said. "It will direct attention away from the unsightly backsides of buildings, and at the same time provide seating and shade and a Winterset welcome to visitors."



mixing it up

At the center of the East Village renaissance, Neumann Monson's 350 East Locust helps bring new life to an old neighborhood.

WORDS: LEAH WALTERS
IMAGES: ASSASSI PRODUCTIONS
ARCHITECT: NEUMANN MONSON ARCHITECTS

On any given sunny afternoon, the patio at Scenic Route Bakery in Des Moines is dotted with customers. Twentysomethings plugged into laptops, families grabbing lunch, and East Village shoppers taking respite from boutique browsing activate the corner of Locust and East 4th streets just blocks from the state's shining Capitol.

That was precisely the goal of the Neumann Monson team and developers Tim Rypma, Paul Hayes, and Jim Cownie when they brought to life 350 East Locust, a five-story mixed-use complex rising from the heart of the historic East Village.

The team thought of the project as an extension of the East Village.

"We asked, how do you introduce new materials and pay respect to the neighborhood?"

We wanted to create something that complemented the neighborhood and something that complemented the historic aspect of the East Village.

TIM RYPMA, DEVELOPER

A pallet of dark brick, clear glass, anodized aluminum, and weathering steel play together to seamlessly blend the neighborhood's classic aesthetic with the clarity and sustainability that epitomize modern design.

The Neumann Monson team, helmed by principal Khalid Kahn, Assoc. AIA, and intern architect Justin Burnham, Assoc. AIA, thoughtfully applied contemporary twists throughout the program to articulate a departure from the norm. But subtlety was key: A shifted window scheme on the south and east sides of the building challenges the tradition of symmetry, while the stacked panes on the west end are remarkably ordinary.

“Architecturally speaking, it is proof that contemporary design can be done in a range of materials, but also be neighborly when sited in a historical context,” says Kahn.

350 East Locust has proven neighborly in more ways than one. The design integrates mixed-use programming from top to bottom, cementing its status as a destination. At 45,000 square feet, the program includes 6,000 square feet of retail space at street level and 20 residential units, and is topped off with a penthouse office space.

Floating above the street, two terraces – one for residents and one for the office tenant – offer social spaces with west-facing views of downtown Des Moines.

Passersby on Locust Street are visually connected to the retail spaces through expansive 12-foot-tall panes of glass. Three locally owned boutiques are anchored by the bustling cafe, and have helped establish a hub of commerce on the westernmost edge of the neighborhood.

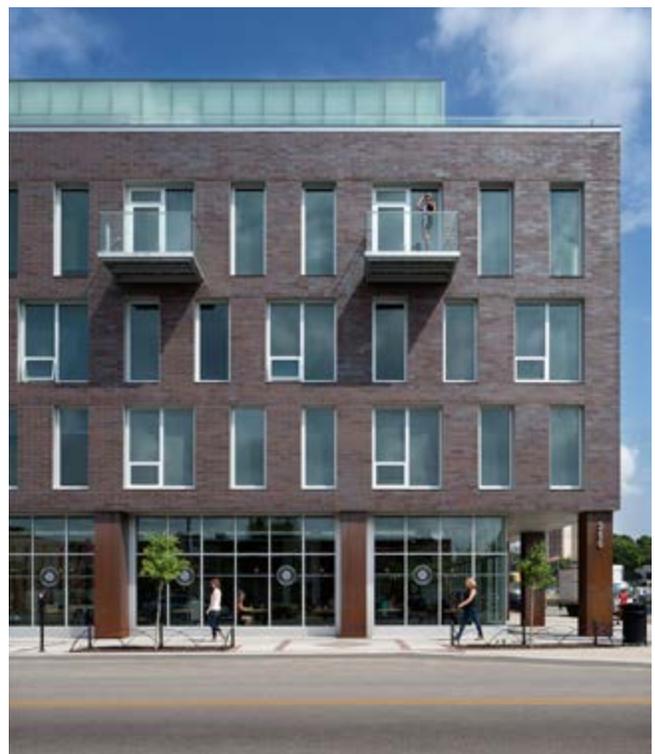
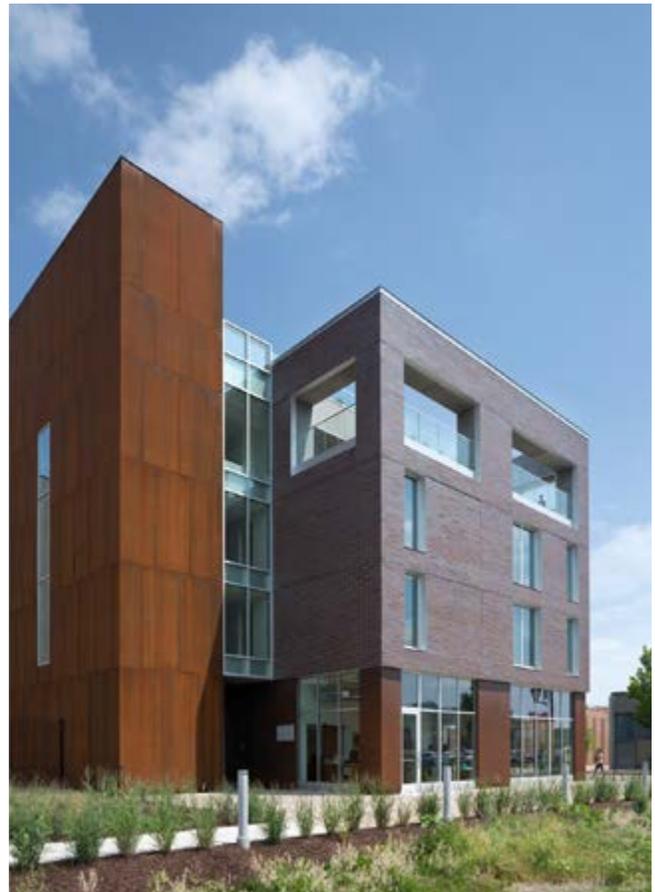
The success of the development has already stirred growth in the blocks between the Des Moines River and the established East Village. Steps from 350 East Locust, construction is underway on another Neumann Monson-designed mixed-use building. It's one of several forthcoming projects Rypma is involved with, and just the start of the push to turn empty, overlooked space into energetic cityscape.

“There was this gap between the East Village and the Riverwalk and 350 East is closing it,” says Rypma. “It's continued to grow the East Village and connect to the core of downtown, and that promotes walkability.”

As the Village expands, its center creeps closer to downtown's entertainment and dining attractions. The increased walkability, population density, and commercial life are exactly what one expects from a growing city, but the manner in which 350 East Locust contributed – by embracing historic context and enhancing a modern quality of life – sets it apart, and sets the bar.

Top to Bottom: A fourth-story patio provides residents space for socializing or seclusion. On the north side, the weathered steel façade feels strikingly urban. The offset window scheme breaks with tradition for a modern touch.

Opposite: The East Village cornerstone is anchored by transparent retail bays and crowned with a glass office.



TALLCORN CULTIVATES INTEREST

Once an eyesore, the Tallcorn is now a restoration success.

WORDS: MARK YONTZ

IMAGES: FARM KID STUDIOS

ARCHITECT: KNOWLES BLUNCK ARCHITECTURE



After years of wear and tear, the Tallcorn Building in Marshalltown is a great example of how restoration and revitalization efforts can not only add years to a building, but also positively impact a community.

First built in 1928, the Hotel Tallcorn building is a prominent, downtown fixture along Main Street and was once the crown jewel of the community thanks to its distinctive façade, unique lobby, and a stylish ballroom. Over its nearly 90 years, the once-high-end hotel was altered numerous times and eventually converted into low-income apartments, where drugs, crime, vagrancy, and pest infestations became the norm. The property remained occupied throughout its life, but it was a building on life support in desperate need of more attention and care.

Fortunately, the story of the Tallcorn improved. A new owner, CommonBond Communities, entered the picture with a vision to restore the structure and re-establish the building's reputation in the community.

“To say the living standards were sub-standard is to compliment it,” says Evan Shaw, AIA, a project architect and designer for INVISION, who previously worked in the same role for the obsolete Des Moines-based Knowles Blunck Architecture, which was hired for the Tallcorn's \$8 million redevelopment project in 2012. “I've



Clockwise: The famed ballroom was restored to its original glory, complete with a refurbished wood floor and stunning chandeliers. Once a dark basement, the area is now more open and benefits from modern finishes and lots of natural light. **Opposite:** The exterior of this historic hotel was cleaned and restored to its original grandeur.

never seen things that bad before ... it was completely derelict and unsafe.”

Despite these conditions, Shaw says they “got lucky” because the building’s structure was in excellent shape. This allowed them to focus on updating the mechanical, electrical, plumbing, and finishes, all of which were part of an overall plan to turn the Tallcorn into a mixed-used building featuring 49 one- and two-bedroom units with modern finishes, a full range of amenities for residents, and commercial storefront space at street level. In the ballroom, the ornate plaster molding was restored with gilded accents, and chandeliers dripping with crystal hang over a parquet dance floor.

“If you really want to make a difference in the community, you sometimes have to tackle the biggest, most challenging projects. But you also have to be sensitive to what the building is and what it gives

you,” says Shaw.

Given the building’s visible downtown location and past history, Shaw indicated a major goal of the project was restoring the many features that had been modified or eliminated, especially those that made the building open and accessible at the street level when it was first built. The work included restoring 250 original window sashes and re-opening closed entrances. Apartments got a decidedly modern makeover with open living spaces, polished concrete floors, and large windows that flood the rooms with natural light.

“In a building like this, walkability and street presence were important aspects of its original use and design, so simply getting the building back to its original intent not only enhanced the value of the building, but also added value to the neighborhood,” Shaw explains.

The community has applauded the

If you really want to make a difference in the community, you sometimes have to tackle the biggest, most challenging projects.

EVAN SHAW, AIA

building’s transformation since it re-opened in 2015, and the success of the project has encouraged nearby property owners to start looking at ways to improve their own buildings.

“Many people still have memories from when the building was a hotel, so the transformation is beyond amazing,” says Michelle Spohnheimer, the housing and community development director for the City of Marshalltown. “The biggest benefit is the building is once again a source of pride for not only residents, but for everyone in the community.”

project credits

Past and Present 22

Architect: INVISION Architecture
Location: Des Moines, IA
Contractor: Beal | Derkenne Construction
Engineer: Tometich Engineering
Civil Engineer: Engineering Resource Group
Photographer: Cameron Campbell, AIA, Integrated Studio

Life of a City 28

Architect: Neumann Monson Architects
Location: Iowa City, IA
Contractor: McComas Lacinia Construction
Structural Engineer: M2B
M/E/P Engineer: Modus
Civil Engineer: Shive-Hattery
Photographer: Assassi Productions ; Wayne Johnson
MainStreet Studio

The Power of a Porch 32

Architect: Substance Architecture
Location: Winterset, IA
Photographer: Paul Crosby

Mixing it Up 34

Architect: Neumann Monson Architects
Location: Des Moines, IA
Contractor: Graham Construction
Structural Engineer: Raker Rhodes
M/E/P: Brewer Engineering
Civil Engineer: CEC:Urbandale
Initial conceptual documents for the City of Des Moines Block Grant application: Goche Inclusions, LLC
Initial conceptual documents for the City of Des Moines Block Grant application: Charles Saul Engineering
Photographer: Assassi Productions

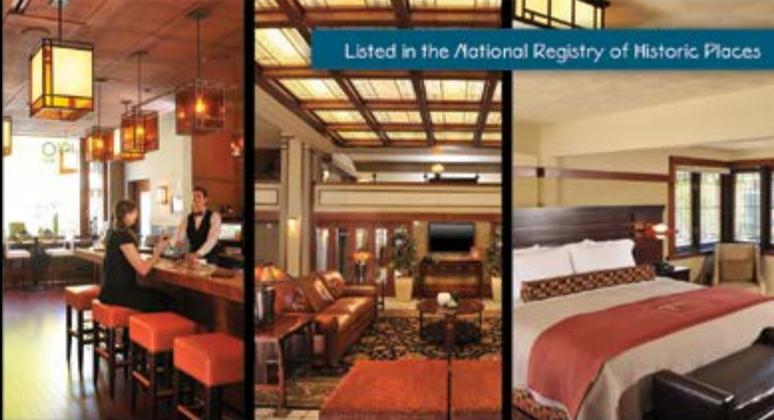
Tallcorn 36

Architect: Knowles Blunck Architecture
Location: Marshalltown, IA
Contractor: Frerichs
Engineer: JPSE
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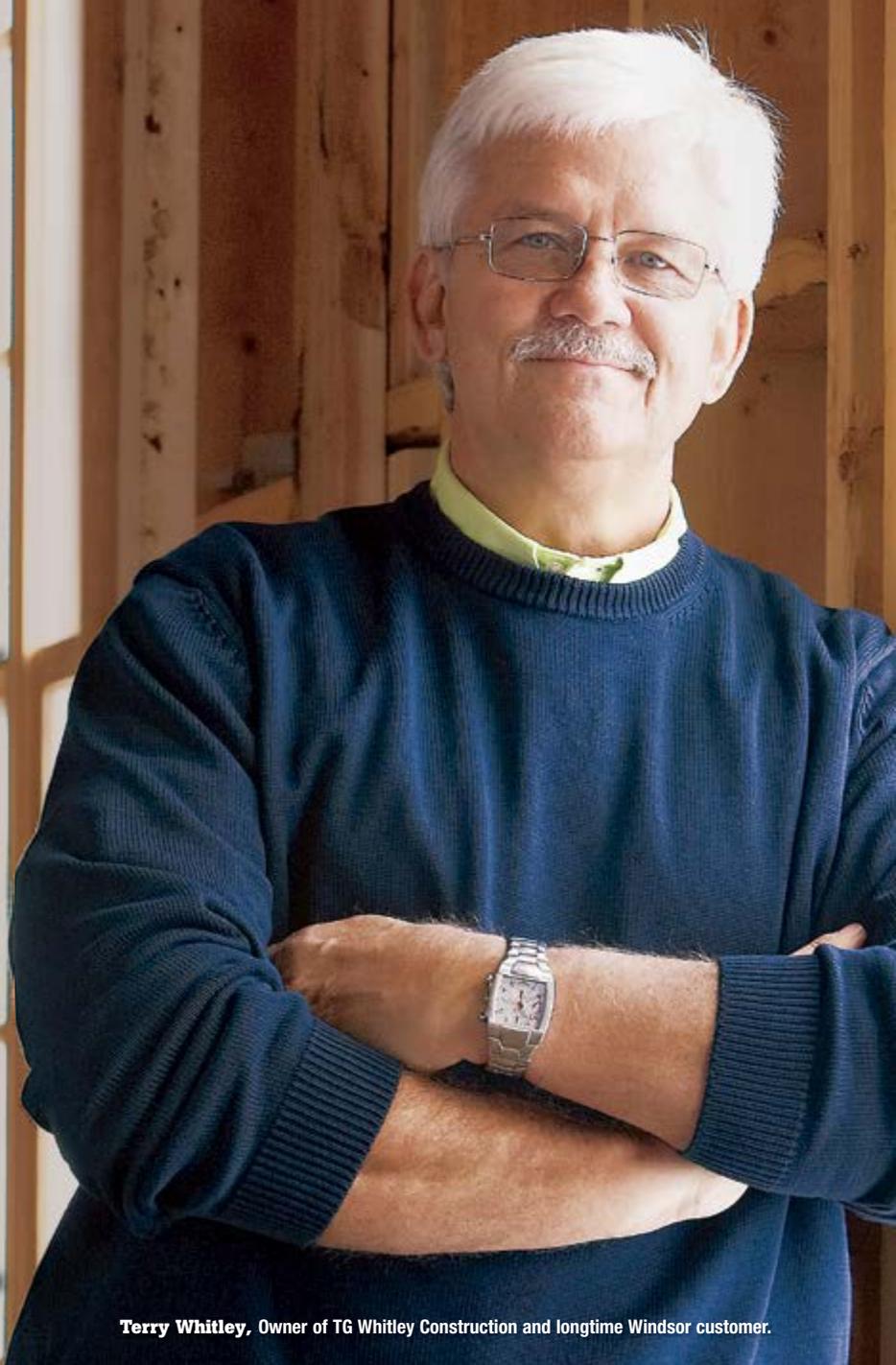
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