

SOM in Colorado Springs, Colorado

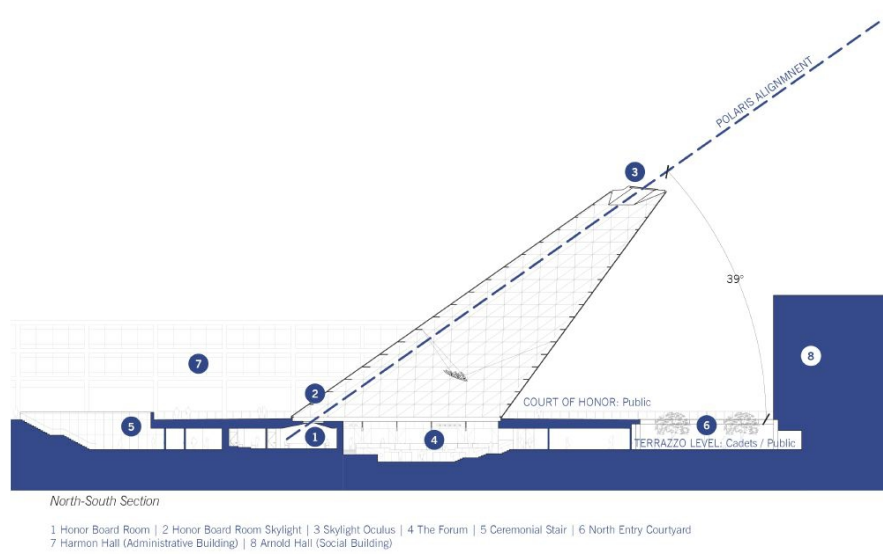
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The tapered glass-and-steel skylight of the [Center for Character and Leadership Development](#) (CCLD) is aligned with the star Polaris. Image: SOM

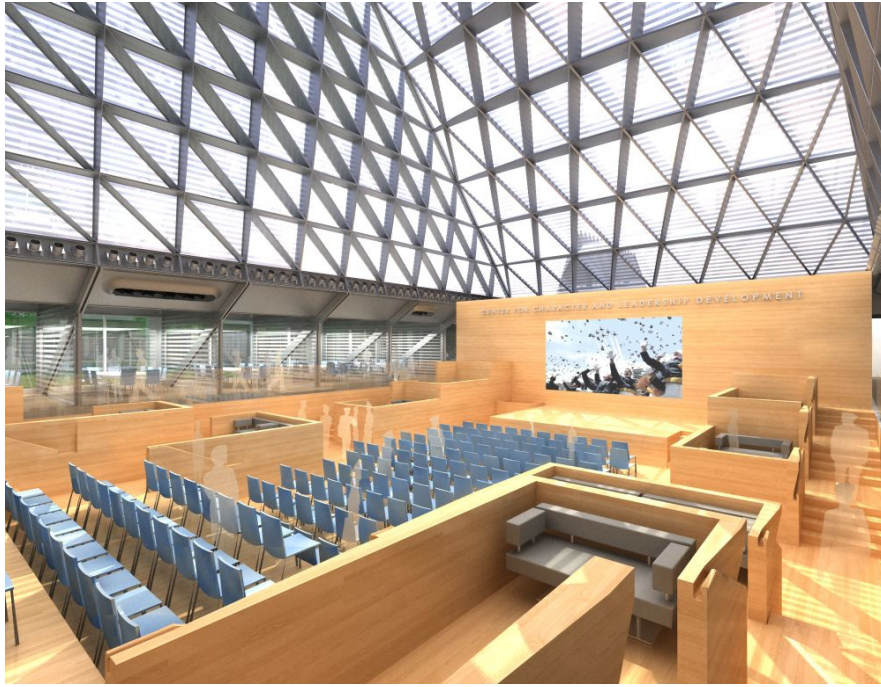
Ground has broken on a new facility on the campus of the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado. The [Center for Character and Leadership Development](#) (CCLD) was designed by [Skidmore Owings & Merrill LLP](#) (SOM) and will serve a central role in the training of all of the academy's cadets.

The 46,5000-square-foot (4,320-square-meter) building, which was recognized in an unbuilt category of the [2012 AIA Education Awards](#) earlier this year, will be largely subterranean. The central rectangular meeting space, called the Forum, will feature an angled steel-and-glass prismoid skylight, whose orientation is in line with the star Polaris. The Forum's skylight tapers as it rises to a height of 105 feet (32 meters), and cantilevers at 39 degrees over the northern portion of the building. According to the Air Force Academy the alignment with Polaris is intended to be a symbol of navigation to the cadets.



CCLD section drawing looking west. Image: SOM

The building is accessed from the south at ground level by a descending ceremonial stair that is also in line with the Forum space. A subterranean public courtyard surrounds the building on its three other sides, providing connection with adjacent academy buildings.



The Forum is a central gathering space located beneath the cantilevered skylight of the CCLD. Image: SOM

The building will include classrooms, meeting rooms, and offices that all face into the east and west courtyard spaces, as well as other ceremonial spaces for cadets. LEED Platinum certification is anticipated for the CCLD.



The CCLD will be built adjacent to the [Air Force Academy Chapel](#) (1962). Image: SOM

SOM was responsible for the original design of the Air Force Academy campus master plan, in the mid-1950s. The CCLD is the first building to be added to the campus "terrazzo" in 30 years. SOM describes the building a logic-centered counterpoint to the adjacent [Air Force Academy Chapel](#), a faith-based campus focal point designed by noted SOM architect [Walter Netsch](#) in 1962.

Construction of the \$40 Million building is expected to require 22 months.