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High Performance:
Specialized Places for Higher Endeavors

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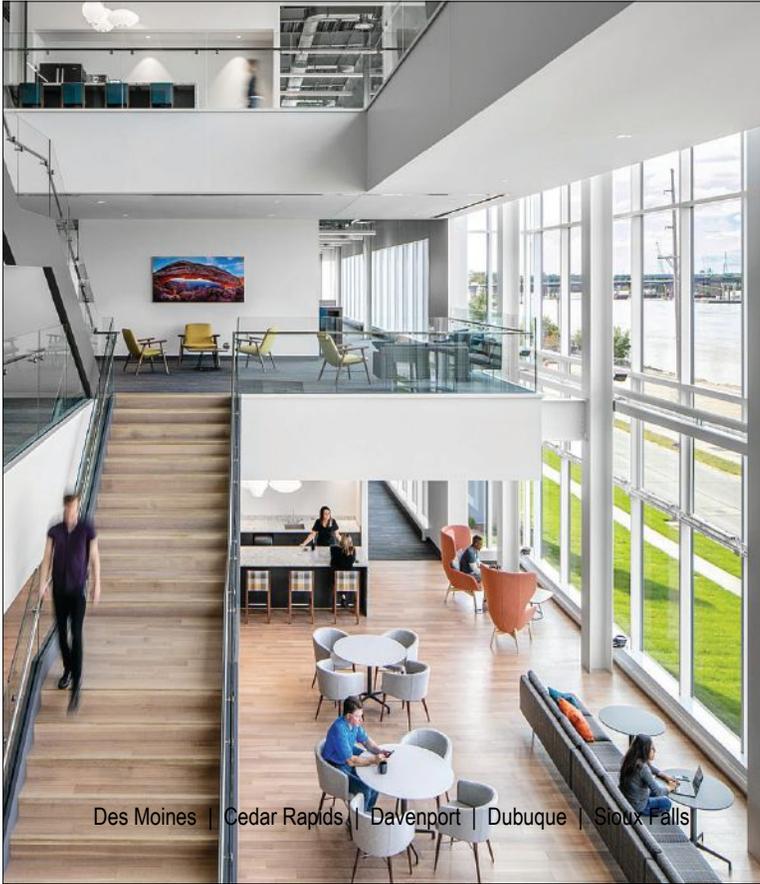
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editor's letter



Grant Nordby, AIA
Editor, Iowa Architect

In 2010, cycling coach Dave Brailsford famously took the British cycling team from obscurity to victory through a specialized program of the “aggregation of marginal gains.” Since before the Industrial Revolution, specialization has taken human performance to levels previously unknown, lifting billions out of poverty in the process. Increasing specialization has been accompanied by increasingly specialized *spaces* toward that end—a trend that continues to this day. Education spaces, particularly, have seen rapid evolution, eking out higher performance by matching customized facilities to new areas of specialty.

Expanding a story begun in our Fall 2024 *Room for Improvement* edition, this issue looks at “high performance” places: facilities dedicated to increasing human performance in a specific area of endeavor. In what ways does giving time and space for focused performance unleash it? What new kinds of custom facilities are developing, and what does that teach us about our own priorities and potential?

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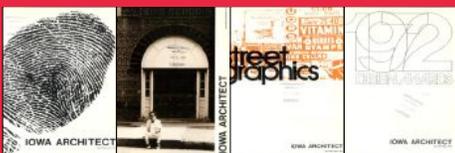
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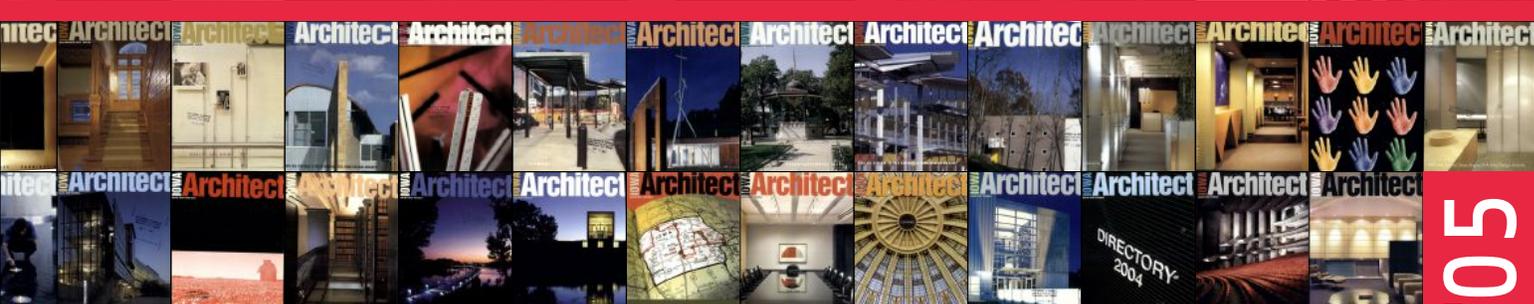
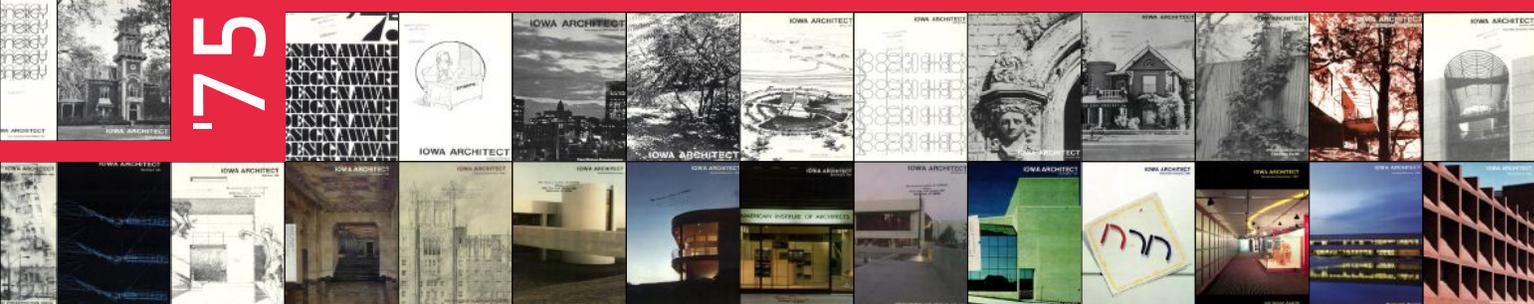
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70 Years of *Iowa Architect* Magazine A Reflection on the Past and Inspiration for the Future

WORDS : CURTIS EHLER, AIA

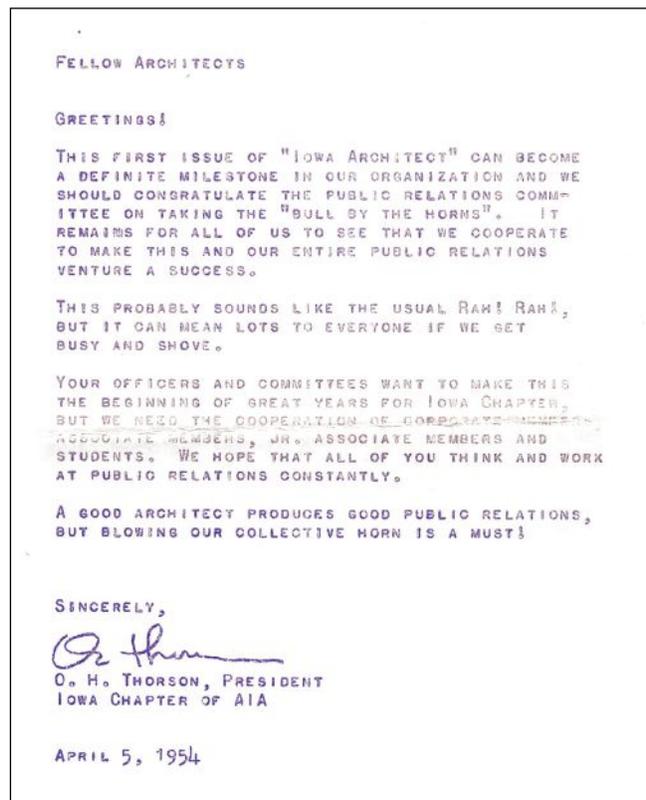
Our magazine is one of the longest-running state architectural publications in the country. As we turn 70, let's reflect on the significance of this milestone.

The first issue of *Iowa Architect* arrived in mailboxes a mere nine years after the end of World War II. Much of the geopolitical landscape was shifting, with many countries still rebuilding as others strode into the future. Our society faced many of the same challenges and had similar ambitions as we do today. Competition between the United States and other world powers was creating significant national unrest, post-war leaders were reshaping foreign trade, and businesses were developing new domestic opportunities. At the same time, the country was becoming more aware of racial inequalities, and a new era of leaders was stepping up to call for change.

It was a time of transition, reinvention, and discovery. Austria was being reestablished as a country, Albert Einstein passed away, and the world's first nuclear submarine slipped into the sea. The Korean War had just ended, while a new conflict in Vietnam was just beginning. The United States evacuated nationalists from mainland China, with Congress authorizing military protection of Taiwan. The U.S. and Soviet Union were deadlocked in an arms race, and within a few short years, a beachball-sized satellite named Sputnik would send the world into the space age. At home, Dwight D. Eisenhower announced his "Grand Plan" for U.S. highways, which ignited a massive reinvestment into the country's roadways and public infrastructure; *Brown vs. Board of Education* successfully ended racial segregation in public schools; and a woman named Rosa Parks refused to give her seat up on a bus in Alabama, effectively beginning the Civil Rights movement.

Iowa Architect Volume 1, Number 1, wasn't flashy. It was merely a pamphlet-sized newsletter, written on white typewriter paper with a staple binding. It included chapter and committee updates, an "ARCH-TICKLES" joke section, and even several congratulations welcoming the newborns of member architects. In reading the list of past editors and editorial board members, I was impressed by the names and humbled by our legacy. I was surprised to see that my former neighbor, the late Eugene O'Neil, AIA Emeritus, of Woodburn and O'Neil Architects, was on the chapter's executive committee, and that Robert Savage, AIA Emeritus, co-founder of SVPA, was the magazine's first chairman. While it lacked the professional photographs, vivid colors, and crisp fonts, the publication's goals in the mid-1950s were nearly the same as they are today: to help increase public appreciation for architecture, showcase good design, and bring the chapter closer together.

Oswald H. Thorson, AIA Emeritus, the AIA Iowa chapter president at the time, included an encouraging introductory letter, the words of which are as relevant now as they were then:



Our magazine is not simply a collection of great work; it is a permanent record of our state's architectural history and a chance to highlight our abilities to the public. Bound into these pages is a statement of our challenges and a celebration of our successes. Over the years, our world has seen economic strain, ecological change, and political unrest. It is notable that the struggles of our past are in many ways still present today. As architects, we have the ability to respond through design, but it will take careful planning, bold moves, and cooperative effort. This magazine presents an opportunity to come together as a chapter and demonstrate how our work can be used to support fiscal responsibility, encourage sustainable design, and remove societal barriers.

Let's use this occasion to look back, celebrate what we've achieved, and explore how we as Iowa architects, associates, students, allies, and affiliate members can work together to solve problems and make an even bigger difference over these next 70 years!



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LET'S CONNECT!

Iowa State University Student Innovation Center (Left)
UI Campus Recreation and Wellness Center (Bottom)



Philip & Jerry Miller Library



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I collected

The Search for Shelter Design Charrette

WORDS : TONIA HOUSEHOLDER, AIA



The life of a nonprofit organization can be a challenging and delicate balance. It must balance social mission and financial stability, meeting clients' needs while securing donations and grants. When planning to accommodate growth, nonprofits can be stretched thin by design costs, making pursuit of these dreams difficult. How might the architectural community help?

The American Institute of Architects, Iowa Chapter (AIA Iowa) and its Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee (EDI) looked to our northern neighbors, AIA Minnesota, for inspiration. Its Search for Shelter Design Charrette program began in 1987.

What originally formed as a nationwide AIA program continues to be championed in the Midwest to the present day by AIA Minnesota. Its annual event brings together architects, interior designers, landscape architects, and architecture students who spend two days partnered with a nonprofit housing agency. Volunteers work in teams to create pro bono design solutions and graphics that serve as communication tools for agencies when pursuing project funding, promoting their organization, and in preliminary planning.

AIA Iowa and the EDI Committee drew from AIA Minnesota's experience to set the framework for a pilot program, leading to a search for a housing nonprofit partner. Humility Homes and Services Inc. (HHSI) was ultimately selected for this trial run. They requested help reimagining their properties and capabilities to provide even more outreach in the community.

Through a unique blend of more than 150 individual supportive living housing units, the only low-barrier emergency shelter in the region housing 88 beds, and a clothing resale and household essentials store, Humility Homes serves a broad range of needs in the homeless and transitional population. Their combined services are dedicated to ending homelessness in the greater Quad Cities.

Co-chairs Tonia Householder, AIA, and Jenna Weigand, AIA, researched the organization and talked with staff. This narrowed the focus to the 88-bed emergency shelter, which assists participants in their transition from homelessness to permanent housing. Program volunteers worked with Humility Homes to obtain existing drawings and photographs. Organizing this content beforehand allowed for the event to remain focused on design solutions and content creation.

On March 7, 2025, seven architects and AIA Iowa staff gathered at the Iowa Center for Architecture. The day was divided into three tasks: programming, design iterations, and content production. Megan Brown-Saldana, chief development officer of HHSI, walked the team through operations, specific uses of the emergency shelter facility, and the surrounding

property context. Visual listening boards showing existing conditions provided more context.

Once design volunteers understood the facility and program, they split into two groups. The first focused on renovating or expanding the existing shelter facility, while the second evaluated options for building additional facilities on the site to expand future services. In just three hours, the two groups worked through numerous design options, providing small-, medium-, and large-scope programs for both areas. This offered flexibility in future discussions around expansion.

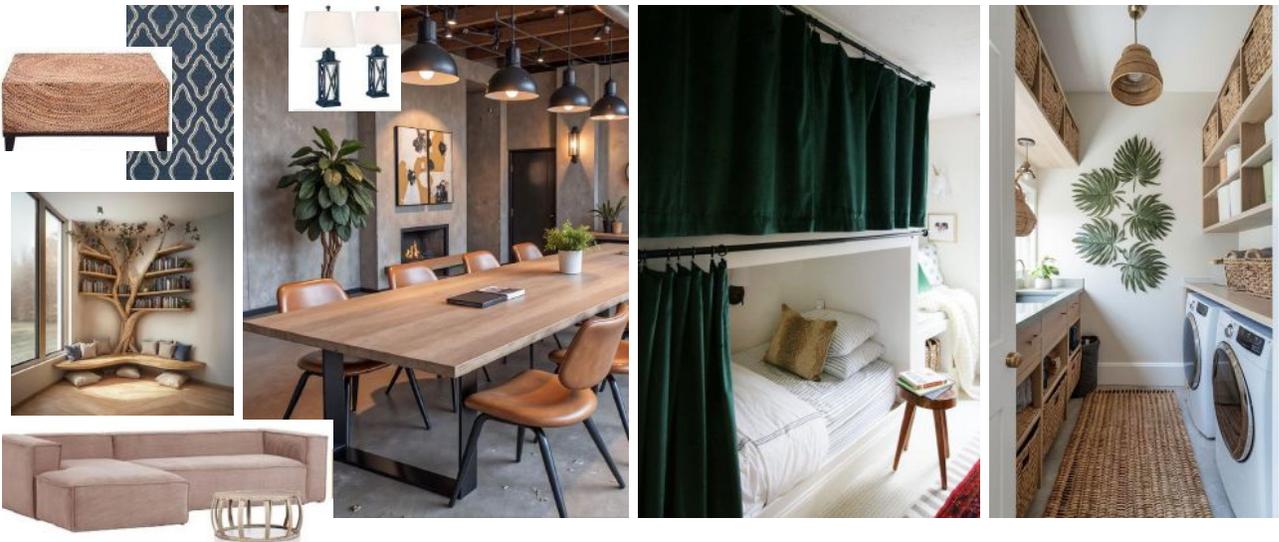
The final stage: deliverables! Each group leveraged its members' skills to create floor plans, site plans, and design graphics helping Brown-Saldana explain design concepts to her board of directors and the community. At the charrette's end, she rejoined the team to hear a summary of solutions, including low-cost, near-term ideas as well as grander future visions to inspire prospective donors.

AIA Iowa's inaugural Search for Shelter event was well received by both HHSI and by design volunteers. Brown-Saldana later shared that HHSI has already introduced several donors to the property, describing how the design charrette helped

them realize numerous opportunities presented by the site. HHSI is now considering using the house adjacent to the shelter as emergency family housing, enabling them to grow capacity without sacrificing space or beds at the shelter, while also ensuring that parking and future expansion plans remain secure. With the city, they've begun exploring the possible use of Vine Street for parking or property integration—an idea generated during the charrette.

The architectural profession is charged with providing for the safety and welfare of the community. Offering our services to organizations supporting vulnerable populations is a tangible way to give back to our communities and ensure safe environments. As shared by Brown-Saldana, "Amidst the challenges posed by the current political climate, your vision has provided us with a sense of hope. Even in the face of potential financial hardships, your plans empower us to move forward with sheltering some of the most vulnerable members of the Quad Cities community."

What's next? AIA Iowa looks forward to making the Search for Shelter program an annual event. If this account has inspired you to put your skills into action in the next Search for Shelter charrette, contact AIA Iowa to receive more information.



"Mood board" developed by charrette volunteers to invoke the desired feel and configuration of living spaces.

on the boards

Projects
In Progress



MidAmerican Energy Co. RecPlex



West Des Moines, Iowa
ISG

The MidAmerican Energy Co. RecPlex in West Des Moines is poised to expand by 100,000 square feet with a 3,000-spectator capacity, evolving into a premier destination for large-scale events such as hockey tournaments. This expansion will not only enhance the facility's capacity to accommodate the Des Moines Buccaneers ice hockey team but

will also boost tourism and regional spending, providing a significant economic boost to the local community. A third sheet of ice will provide more opportunities for metro residents to participate in skating and hockey activities, enhancing recreational options within the community. The facility's expansion aligns with broader development efforts in the area, ensuring the RecPlex plays a central role in fostering long-term growth for West Des Moines.





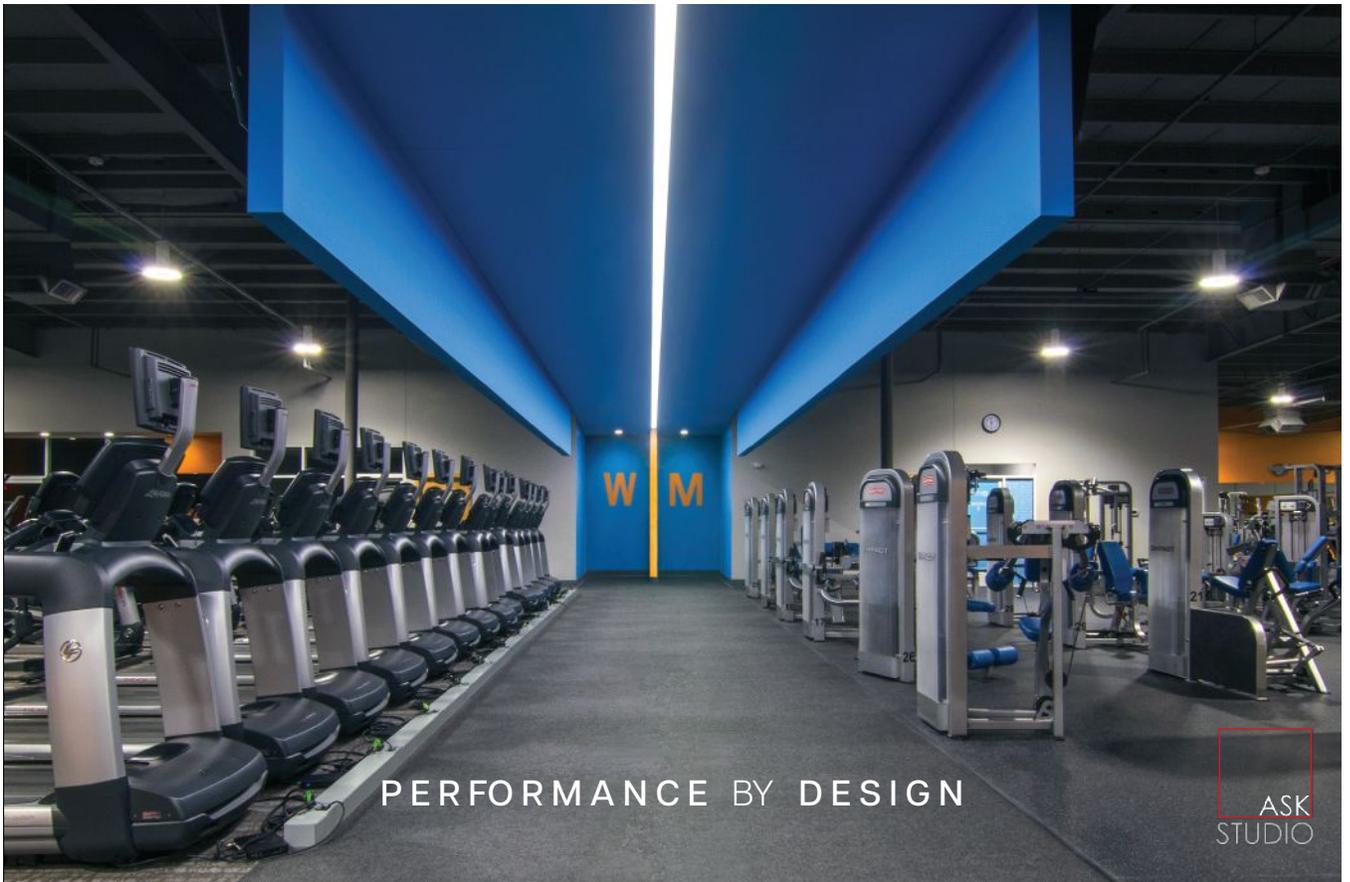
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RAISING THE BAR

Stark Performance Center

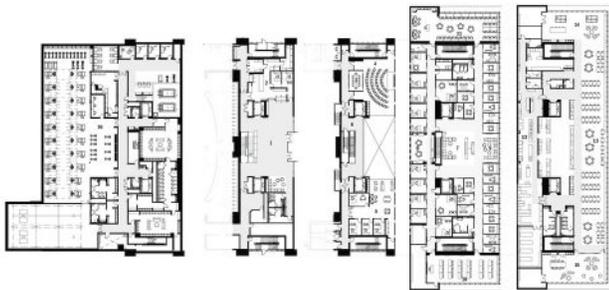
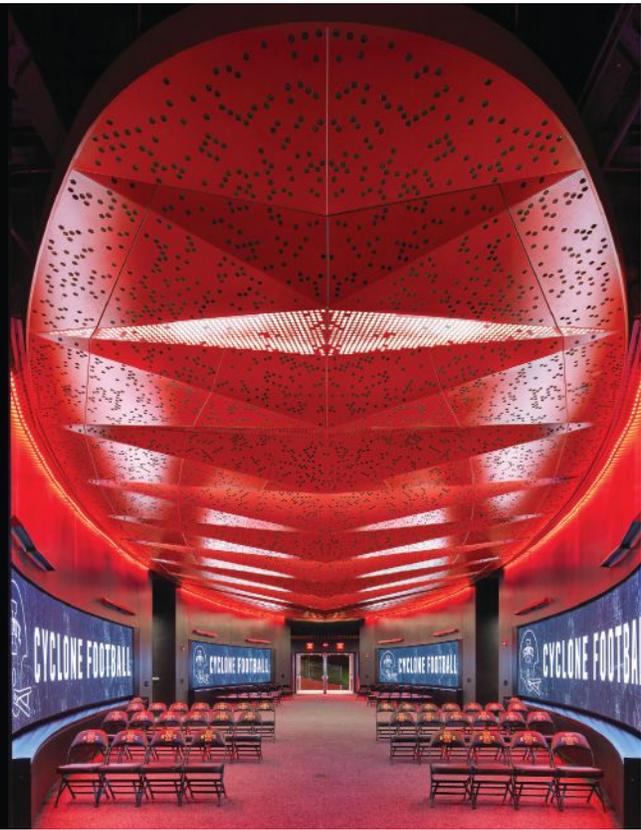
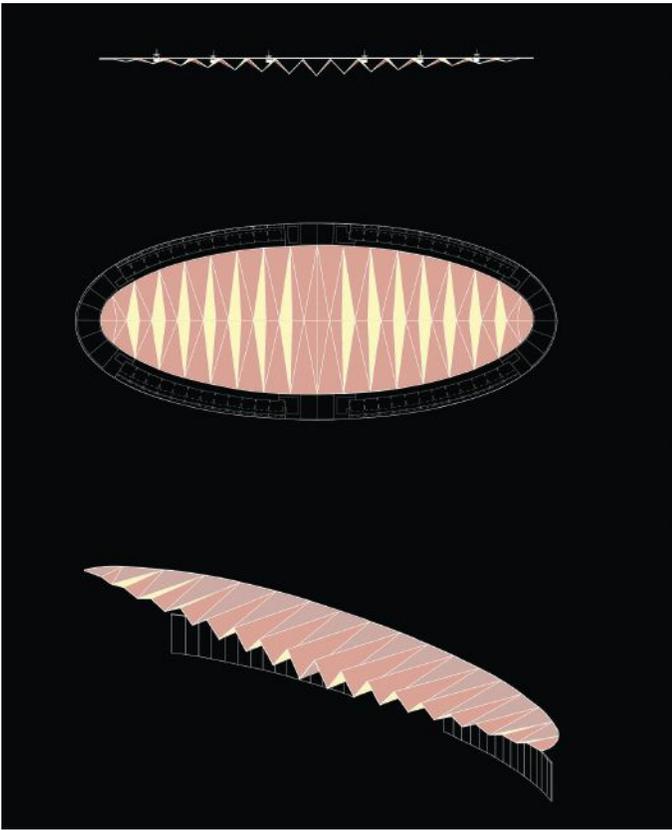
WORDS: ANNA AVERSING, ASSOC. AIA **IMAGES:** COREY GAFFER **ARCHITECT:** SUBSTANCE ARCHITECTURE

Upon approaching Iowa State University's Jack Trice Stadium, the adjoining Stark Performance Center commands attention. It represents a belief that enabling peak human potential demands not just space but specificity. That conviction is transformed into a 130,000-square-foot statement of integrated performance. Every square foot is devoted to making athletes stronger, scholars smarter, and fans more connected.

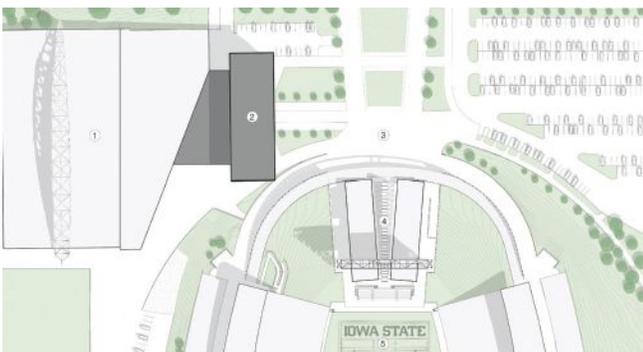
Athletics Director Jamie Pollard envisioned a facility that would "provide the same level of amenities [commonly reserved for high-revenue teams] for *all* athletes." That vision sparked a two-and-a-half-year design effort by an architectural team including project architect Kevin Wagner, AIA. They were supported by as many as 40 specialists—ranging from kitchen planners to acousticians. Pollard's program was simple: "This building [supports] not just athletic performance but also academic, nutritional, and life skills development."

The Stark Performance Center represents a belief that enabling peak human potential demands not just space but specificity. That conviction is transformed into a 130,000-square-foot statement of integrated performance. Every square foot is devoted to making athletes stronger, scholars smarter, and fans more connected.





- | | | |
|-------------------------|------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 LOBBY | 7 ACADEMIC LOBBY | 13 DINING |
| 2 FUELING | 8 ACADEMIC STAFF | 14 PLAYER LOUNGE |
| 3 CONFERENCE ROOM | 9 TUTOR SPACES | 15 DONOR SUITE |
| 4 PRESS CONFERENCE ROOM | 10 CLASSROOM | 16 OLSEN OLYMPIC SPORTS |
| 5 LIFE SKILLS | 11 COMPUTER ROOM | |
| 6 LOBBY | 12 KITCHEN | |



- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 BERGSTROM FOOTBALL COMPLEX | 3 PLAZA |
| 2 STARK PERFORMANCE CENTER | 4 JACOBSON ATHLETIC BUILDING |
| | 5 JACK TRICE STADIUM |

From that notion sprang two architectural forms: the inward-facing “box” for high-intensity athletic space and the light-filled “bar” for academic, communal, and dining functions.

The box’s three stories and 20,000 square feet house football locker rooms, weight rooms, showers, and mechanical support-areas that demand privacy, controlled climate, and high-volume usage. These spaces prioritize function: locker rooms with high air exchange rates to combat odor, climate controls that keep temperatures at a crisp 65 degrees Fahrenheit even in summer heat, and specialized systems to choreograph 150-strong rosters. Wagner notes that “everything is centered around the players’ experience,” emphasizing both privacy and performance focus, while shared resources—like the weight room—serve non-football athletes equally.

Contrasting the box, the bar cantilevers north, east, and south via a massive two-story truss, wrapped in a transparent curtainwall on three sides. Inside lie more than 30 tutor rooms, a classroom, computer lab, and dining hall. Here, natural light and openness support cognition, community, and nutritional education. “It supports holistic development ... [yielding] better athletes and better students,” says Wagner—a melding of mind and muscle essential to high-performance learning environments.

The building connects to the existing Bergstrom Football Complex—part of a comprehensive athletic master plan consolidating sport spaces around the stadium. Demolition of the Olsen Building made way for a revitalized north plaza,

“This building [supports] not just athletic performance but also academic, nutritional, and life skills development.” From that notion sprang two architectural forms: the inward-facing “box” for high-intensity athletic space and the light-filled “bar” for academic, communal, and dining functions.

easing circulation and fostering fan engagement. Now, a single broad gate replaces two cramped ones, framing interactive public artworks and video-ribbon boards that activate game day experience. Fans move freely, pause at the Jack Trice memorial sculpture, mingle near the bar's glazed heart, and witness athletes at work and rest.

Every department—including coaches, trainers, dining staff, sports medicine, and student-athletes—contributed “comprehensive wish lists.” Wagner recalls that even the “crazy” ideas—like a cryotherapy chamber—were included because they served the athletes’ recovery and performance. These features demanded technical finesse: Cryotherapy needed locked rooms, nitrogen infrastructure, and ventilation; six hydrotherapy pools with underwater treadmills had to be zoned to avoid inter-sport clashes. Circulation was choreographed to enable football flows without hindering shared spaces for other sports and to maintain separation where identity and focus were essential.

The Stark Performance Center earned a 2022 Honor Award from the Chicago Athenaeum and the European Centre for Architecture. It is LEED certified, with high-efficiency destratification fans in large assembly spaces and solar shading to control glare and energy use. Materials—like precast concrete, insulated metal panels, and glazed facades—were chosen for durability, economy, and visual clarity.

Since opening in 2021, the facility has galvanized stakeholder communities. Athletes call it their “home away from home,” praising the integrated lounges, nutrition café, and academic hub. Coaches use it as a recruiting showcase. Wagner, recalling football players lined up for burritos in the kitchen, shared early athlete reactions: “This is the best thing ever!”

The Stark Performance Center illustrates the design evolution of high-performance spaces. First, specialization demands integration: Housing athletics, academics, nutrition, and recovery under one roof raises the baseline of excellence across domains. Second, flexibility is essential: Future-ready structures, coupled with adaptable programming, respond to shifting priorities. Finally, public engagement is integral: Success cannot be measured solely by internal metrics; facilities must also activate campus and civic life.

As high-performance design evolves, support spaces are increasingly customized: neural-training labs for cognitive athletics, integrated mental health studios, biomechanical analysis suites, and immersive esports arenas. But the Stark Performance Center already heralds a critical shift: from fragmented excellence to holistic performance ecosystems. It’s a composition not only of concrete and glass but of ambition and community.

Iowa State’s Stark Performance Center redefines what specialized infrastructure can achieve. By uniting athletics, academics, wellness, and fan experience in one architectural statement, it sets a precedent for high-performance spaces that propel individuals and institutions alike. As demands on human performance become ever more nuanced, such specialized environments will chart new horizons, melding purpose, place, and potential in service of higher endeavors.

The box’s three stories and 20,000 square feet house football locker rooms, weight rooms, showers, and mechanical support— areas that demand privacy, controlled climate, and high-volume usage. These spaces prioritize function: locker rooms with high air exchange rates to combat odor, climate controls that keep temperatures at a crisp 65 degrees Fahrenheit even in summer heat, and specialized systems to choreograph 150-strong rosters.



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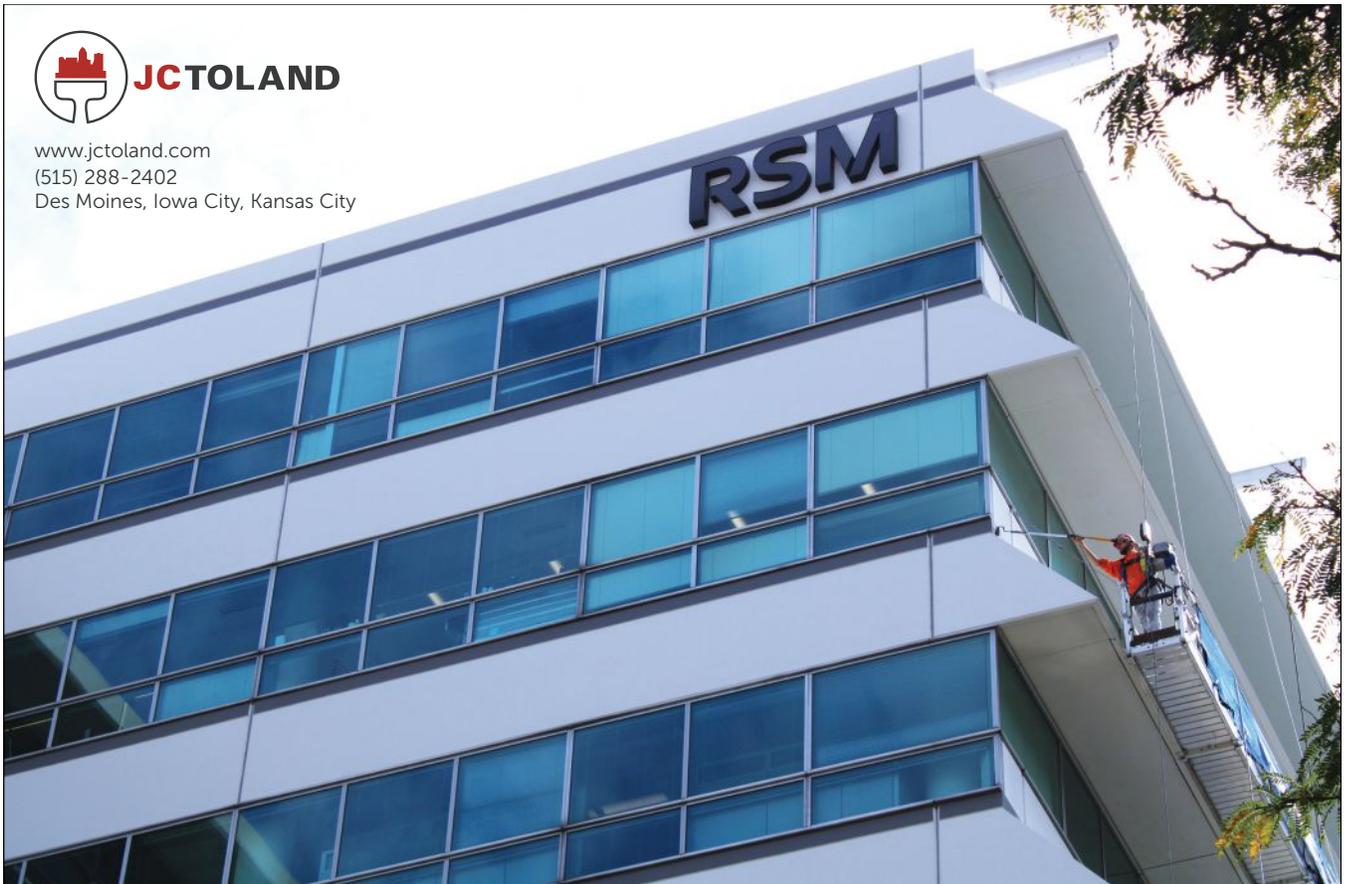
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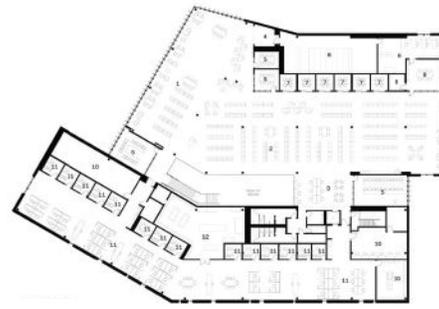






GROUND FLOOR

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 LOBBY | 9 STORY TIME ROOM |
| 2 FIREPLACE | 10 CONFERENCE ROOM |
| 3 LEARNING COMMONS | 11 INFORMATION SERVICES |
| 4 CHILDREN'S COLLECTION | 12 LOADING/RECEIVING |
| 5 STUDY ROOM | 13 BREAK ROOM |
| 6 EVENT HALL | 14 BOOK SORTING ROOM |
| 7 STORAGE | 15 BOOK DROP |
| 8 OFFICE SPACE | 16 PLAZA |



SECOND FLOOR

- | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 DEN | 7 STUDY ROOM |
| 2 ADULT COLLECTION | 8 MEDIA LISTENING ROOM |
| 3 PUBLIC COMPUTING | 9 LOCAL HISTORY READING |
| 4 USED BOOK SALE | 10 STORAGE |
| 5 CONFERENCE ROOM | 11 OFFICE SPACE |
| 6 LOCAL HISTORY/ARCHIVES | 12 COMMUNITY RELATIONS WORK ROOM |

Opening spread: The building's exterior is wrapped in corrugated and flat weathered steel panels. The material was selected for both economy and striking appearance, rendering elevations "dynamic in the light" and "absolutely stunning in the snow." **Above:** After operating for many years in a converted 1970s big-box grocery store, the Philip & Jerry Miller Library in Castle Rock, Colorado, now serves library patrons in a brand-new 63,000-square-foot building that is more conducive to contemporary library services, aligning with Douglas County Libraries' brand and service delivery ideals.

Libraries are special places where communities gather and all people are welcome to work, play, linger, and learn at no cost. Much more than repositories for books, today's libraries are alive with programs and events, a myriad of print and digital resources, and opportunities for serious study or simple pleasure. Modern, community-minded design allows libraries to maximize their impact. After operating for many years in a converted 1970s big-box grocery store, the Philip & Jerry Miller Library in Castle Rock, Colorado, now serves library patrons in a brand-new 63,000-square-foot building that is more conducive to contemporary library services, aligning with Douglas County Libraries' brand and service delivery ideals. OPN Architects designed a library that is unique and modern, yet it remains considerate of the surrounding built environment and is aesthetically tied to the other libraries in the seven-location system.

The building's exterior is wrapped in corrugated and flat weathered steel panels. The material was selected for both economy and striking appearance, rendering elevations "dynamic in the light" and "absolutely stunning in the snow," according to Toby Olsen, AIA, associate principal at OPN Architects. The weathering steel, known for its strength and protective patina, responds to contextual elements in nearby public facilities and parks and evokes a modern Western aesthetic. Because the Castle Rock area has about 300 days of sun annually, outboard sunshades and porch overhangs provide solar control on the building's glazing systems, offering shade and comfort for library patrons both outdoors and indoors.

Although renovating the existing building was considered initially, hydrological issues at the floor slab would have been expensive to remedy, so the library's new building is situated on the location's old parking lot. When the former grocery store was built, the area included single-story development. But now, multistory mixed-used buildings stand around the library, with more growth and development expected in coming years. The library's two-story frontage completes the urban edge along Wilcox Street in Castle Rock's rapidly expanding downtown to make the location feel more urban and walkable. "This building had to be beautiful and work well today but also be sort of a

centerpiece of a larger and more densified neighborhood in the future," Olsen says.

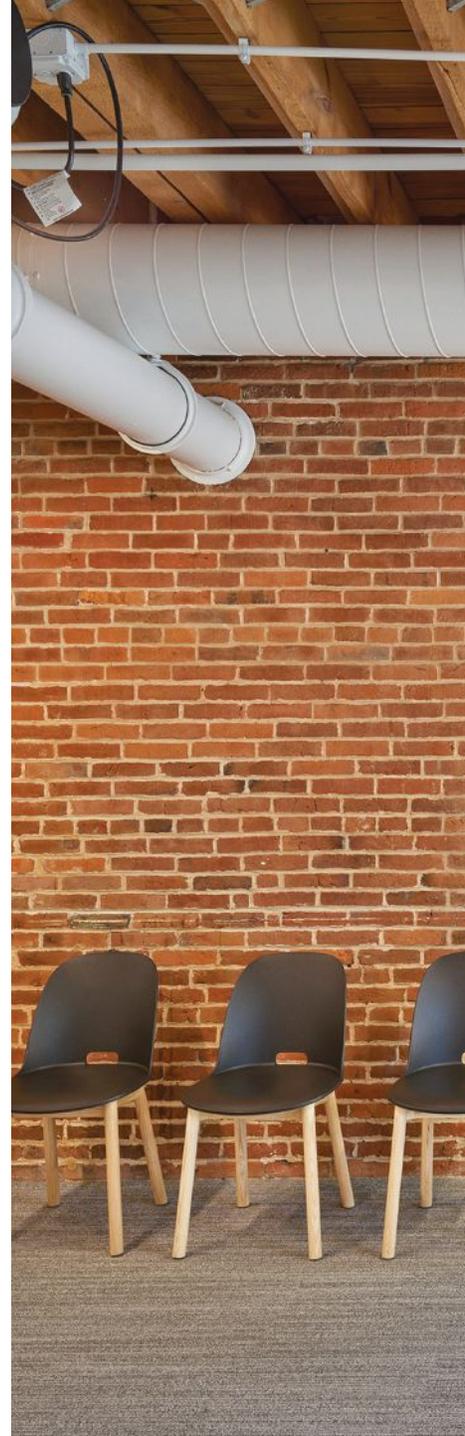
Higher-rise buildings will view the library from all angles, so the building was designed to be accessible and to have an attractive appearance from all sides. Vehicular traffic around the library for a drive-up book drop and deliveries is separated from pedestrian traffic, with each approaching on a different side of the building. Regardless of library patrons' mode of transportation, they are directed to two primary entrances. The building's hub-and-spoke model allows patrons to enter from any direction and arrive at the same central point, then navigate their way through the library from there.

With a wood soffitt "porch" beneath the overhanging second floor, "they really are leveraging this notion of a front porch to their library," Olsen says. Front porches, outdoor plaza spaces, event spaces, and fireplaces are Douglas County Libraries brand features appearing in the building's design and will provide open space relief and flexible programming space as the community grows and changes. This building's indoor-outdoor, double-sided fireplace allows patrons to sit by the fire outside on the front porch or inside in an area called the "den." The design team pulled in colors and brick from other libraries to make this building feel like a sibling to other locations within the Douglas County Libraries system but also unique and of its time.

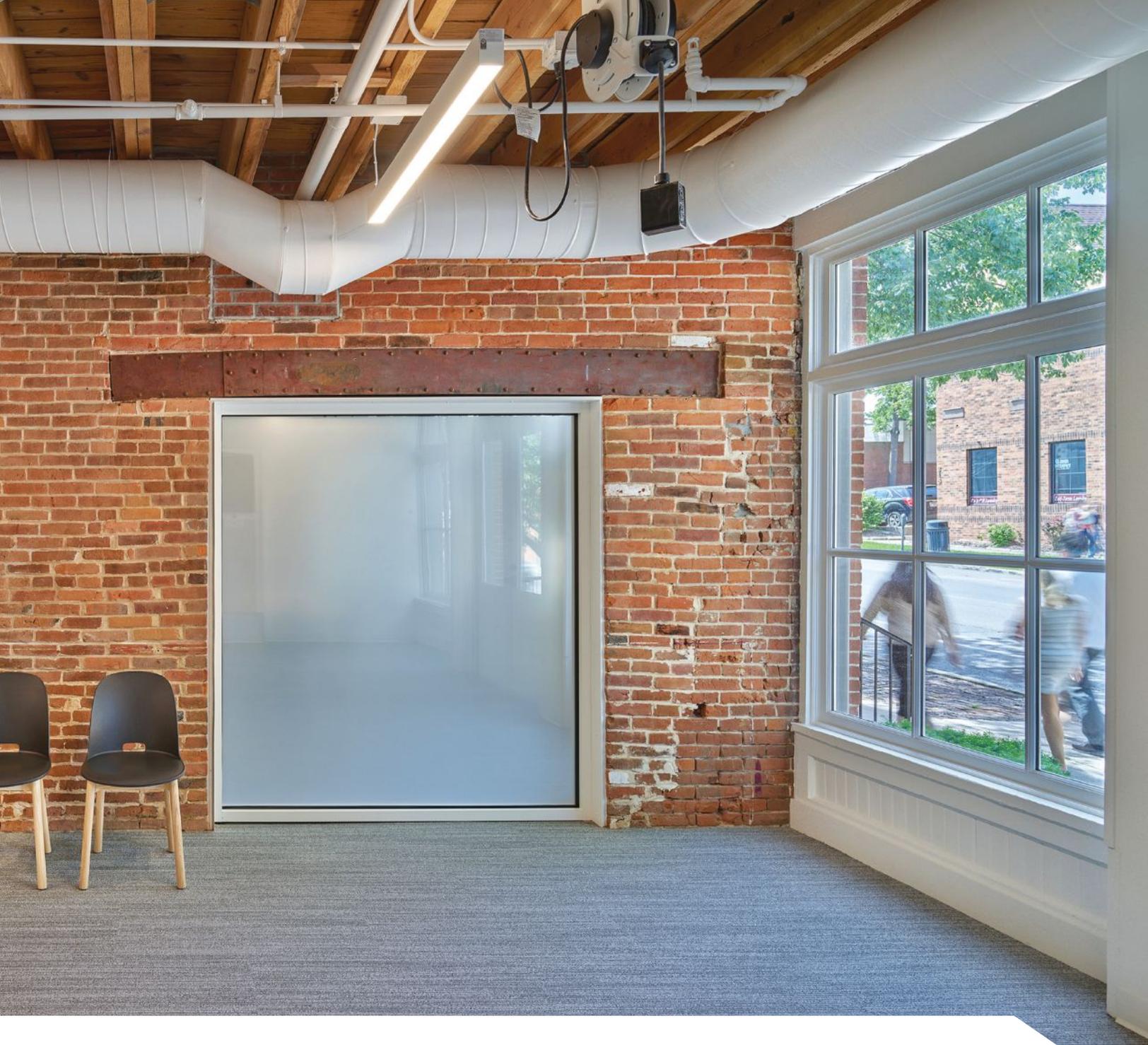
The main level of the building, which is home to children's spaces and event spaces, is a vibrant, active, family-focused, and sometimes boisterous place, while the second level offers patrons respite and quiet to do focused work in study rooms, meeting spaces, and public computing areas. Two-thirds of the building houses library collections, meeting/gathering spaces, and the county's archives and reading room, while the remaining one-third houses efficient and flexible back-of-house administrative workspaces for staff members of both this library and the entire Douglas County Libraries system. "We were able to create modern spaces ... [conducive] to how they are working," Olsen says. "This particular library system is very sophisticated in how it delivers customer service, so their buildings have to be emblematic of that quality of service to their people."



Clockwise from top: Higher-rise buildings will view the library from all angles, so the building was designed to be accessible and to have an attractive appearance from all sides. Two-thirds of the building houses library collections, meeting/gathering spaces, and the county's archives and reading room. The second level offers patrons respite and quiet to do focused work in study rooms, meeting spaces, and public computing areas. The main level of the building, which is home to children's spaces and event spaces, is a vibrant, active, family-focused, and sometimes boisterous place.



On a modest budget of \$110 per square foot, the designers of Neumann Monson created beautifully restrained spaces that combine the utilitarian heavy timber and exposed red brick of a historic warehouse shell with the insertion of crisp white walls to delineate practice and learning studios in a variety of sizes.



ARTISTIC ICON

IOWA CONSERVATORY

WORDS: STEVE KING, AIA **IMAGES:** CAMERON CAMPBELL, AIA, INTEGRATED STUDIO **ARCHITECT:** NEUMANN MONSON ARCHITECTS



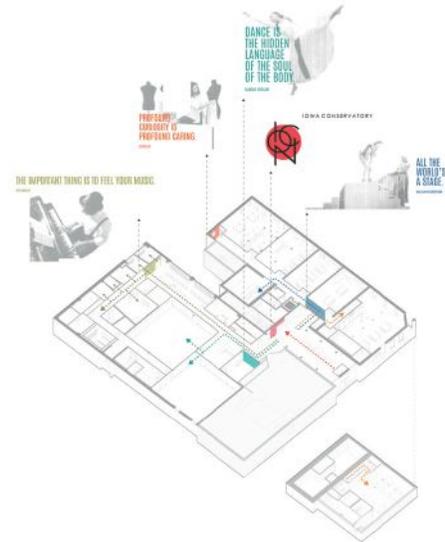
FIRST FLOOR

BASEMENT FLOOR



EXISTING
NEW

- | | |
|------------------|--------------------|
| 1 ENTRANCE | 10 PIANO HALL |
| 2 ATTENDANCE | 11 DANCE STUDIO |
| 3 THEATER STUDIO | 12 VOICE STUDIO |
| 4 COMMONS | 13 ARTIST'S LOUNGE |
| 5 LIBRARY | 14 FLEX SPACE |
| 6 CLASSROOMS | 15 COSTUME LAB |
| 7 ART STUDIO | 16 DYE ROOM |
| 8 STAFF LOUNGE | 17 STORAGE |
| 9 PRACTICE ROOM | |



Music and dance can captivate with grace, strength, and expressive movement. A careful composer or choreographer can tell a story or elicit an emotional response from an audience. When the built environment manages to create a similar response, we call it architecture and capitalize the “A.” Like dance, Architecture requires tremendous discipline, physical rigor, and years of practice. The expressive qualities of music, dance, and Architecture invite people to interpret and engage with the embedded narratives and emotions within these allied art forms. At the Iowa Conservatory in Iowa City, designed by Neumann Monson Architects, these allied disciplines come together with great effect.

Purposefully located between the dance studios at the University of Iowa and a recently shuttered local theater, Iowa Conservatory founder Leslie Nolte is determined to create Iowa’s first high school with performing and visual arts at the core of its curriculum.

Familiarly known as ICON, the conservatory combines accredited online academic coursework with in-person arts-focused classes each day from 9 to 5. Students can choose between the boarding program or the “local day school option.” The school hosts students from across the country and around the world, while students from rural Iowa—where cash-strapped school districts find it difficult to fund arts education—find a welcoming place to learn and practice.

On a modest budget of \$110 per square foot, the designers of Neumann Monson created beautifully restrained spaces that combine the utilitarian heavy timber and exposed red brick of a historic warehouse shell with the insertion of crisp white walls to delineate practice and learning studios in a variety of sizes. The Architecture is accented and illuminated throughout by thoughtfully selected light fixtures and furniture pieces that provide color and a place for the eye to come to rest. Well-placed

At top and bottom right: Familiarly known as ICON, the conservatory combines accredited online academic coursework with in-person arts-focused classes each day from 9 to 5. **Bottom left:** Well-placed wall graphics provide an additional splash of color while celebrating each of the school’s disciplines and featuring quotes from luminaries from each.



wall graphics provide an additional splash of color while celebrating each of the school's disciplines and featuring quotes from luminaries from each.

The designers addressed two primary challenges: spatial organization and structural limitations. Common areas and performance rooms on the main level are strategically arranged for optimal proximity to academic spaces. Located beneath existing offices, quieter classrooms are located on the school's north end, while noisier music and dance studios are located in the one-story volume to the south.

Daylight is provided in the dance studios by a single north-facing sawtooth skylight. Access to daylight is greatly appreciated by the student dancers. The natural daylight helps establish a sense of time and place when spending extended hours practicing for recitals.

Rehabilitating and repurposing the historic Brewery Square Building in the midst of post-pandemic inflation proved a good solution. The structure originally housed an 1800s brewery and an early 1900s print shop using a heavy timber frame with columns on a 20-by-20 grid spacing. To provide the necessary clear floor area for dance, the architects eliminated an existing column by sistering two deep steel channels to either side of the existing heavy timber beams to create a single 40-foot span for the larger two dance studios.

Architecture, as the art of shaping our physical environment, needs to go beyond the construction of buildings. It also requires the orchestration of spaces that inspire and engage us. When architects carefully consider how something as mundane as hours of rehearsal can be enlivened by the spaces they inhabit, the next generation of creators gets to discover the profound connection between, light, movement, and Architecture.

Common areas and performance rooms on the main level are strategically arranged for optimal proximity to academic spaces. Located beneath existing offices, quieter classrooms are located on the school's north end, while noisier music and dance studios are located in the one-story volume to the south.



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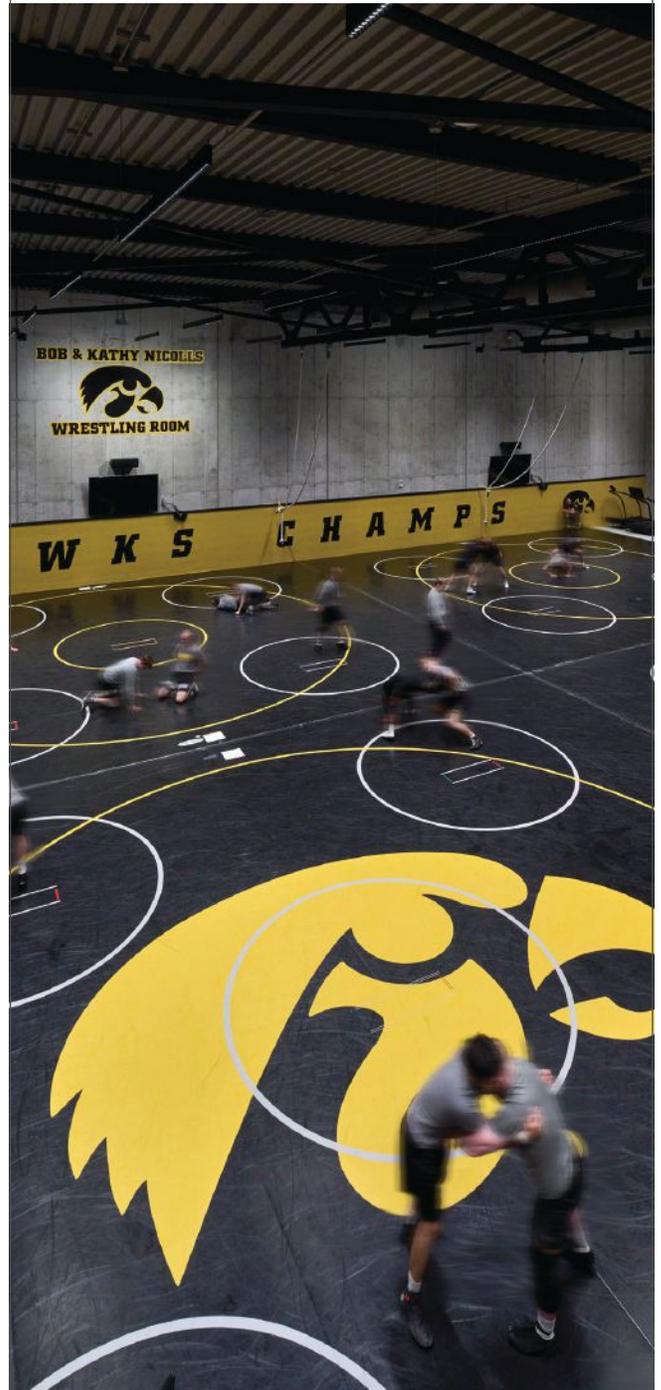
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IOWA CITY | DES MOINES



DESIGNED TO DOMINATE





LEVELING UP WAUKEE CDS NATATORIUM

WORDS : MEG KENNEDY IMAGES : IRIS22 PRODUCTIONS ARCHITECT : RDG PLANNING & DESIGN



In the new Waukee Community School District (CSD) Natatorium, water provides the basis for both form and function. The facility, located in northwest Waukee, serves the general community and the swimming programs of both Waukee High School and Waukee Northwest High School. With nearly 3,000 high school students combined, the schools reflect the rapid population growth in Waukee (nearly 30 percent in the past five years) and in Waukee CSD, the state’s fastest-growing school district. Before RDG Planning & Design completed the natatorium project in December 2023, the swimming programs of both schools had utilized the Waukee YMCA for training and competition—and were overflowing the space.

As the schools’ swimming programs thrived, gaining more swimmers and spectators, the previous facility faced issues with congestion. Athletes struggled with limited pool size and tight locker rooms, and spectators shuffled among the competitors for viewing space. For the swimming programs to perform at the highest level and continue their growth, Blaine Perau, AIA, partner at RDG Planning & Design, understood that a specialized space was needed—one guided by the community and sport it serves.

“RDG [Planning & Design] relied heavily on a deep and thorough understanding of the vision that Waukee Community School District had for this facility,” says Perau. “Our design process began with a series of facility tours involving a select group of decision-makers from the school district as well as members of the local community. An essential part of this process was observing examples of success and, perhaps even more importantly, learning from past mistakes and understanding what not to do.”

Learning from the challenges of the previous facility, the concept of flow guided the design. Like water itself, the space needed to allow for smooth circulation of all users of the natatorium. “This facility is shared, and the design challenge was to create a welcoming environment for Waukee High School, Waukee Northwest High School, and the broader Waukee

At left: Whether for the high school programs or the wider community, water represents the primary function of the space, and RDG Planning & Design let the movement of water guide the aesthetic of the exterior.

Opposite, at left: The relationship between the exterior and the interior of the facility is characterized by flow as well, with natural light pouring into space and playing against the water. **Opposite, at right:** The cladding moves away from traditional orthogonal constraints to subtly reinforce the concept of motion. Varying fin angles and their specific alignment reveal the flow and ascent of spectators.

community,” says Perau. “All users have access to uniquely designed spaces that cater to their individual needs. The design prioritizes equal and immediate access to water, high-quality materials, and overall space quality, resulting in a cohesive design that brings together a diverse group of users.”

Entering the Waukee CSD Natatorium, the flow of the space smoothly guides student athletes to the performance space, while spectators are seamlessly directed to the viewing areas. The facility is comparable to some of the nation’s best collegiate aquatic venues, with a 50-meter stretch by 25-yard fast water competition pool that can support two full 25-yard-by-8-lane competitions simultaneously.

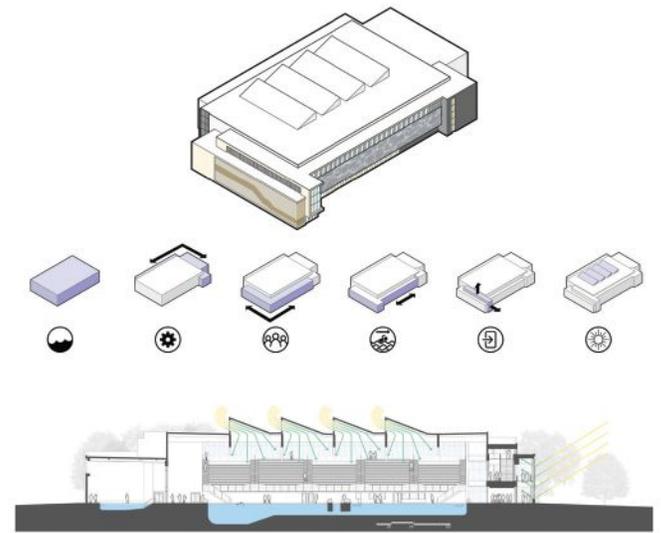
“We specifically designed the facility to meet the needs of two separate high schools while also considering future flexibility,” says Perau. “We believe this venue could potentially accommodate an additional high school if necessary. Furthermore, community use was a top priority in our design.” Community use is accommodated with extra general locker room space, individual-use locker rooms and restrooms, and a 25-yard-by-4-lane warm-up pool for general lap swimming and swim lessons.

Whether for the high school programs or the wider community, water represents the primary function of the space, and RDG Planning & Design let the movement of water guide the aesthetic of the exterior as well. “Graphic representations of an active water surface suggest the dynamic nature of the facility,” says Perau. “The cladding moves away from traditional orthogonal constraints to subtly reinforce the concept of motion. Varying fin angles and their specific alignment reveal the flow and ascent of spectators.”

The relationship between the exterior and the interior of the facility is characterized by flow as well, with natural light pouring into space and playing against the water. A high level of natural light was a request from the Waukee CSD—and one that RDG Planning & Design’s expertise could accommodate. “Managing natural light in this setting can be challenging,” says Perau, highlighting concerns about glare off the water’s surface, lifeguard visibility, glare on technology, and heat gain or temperature balance.

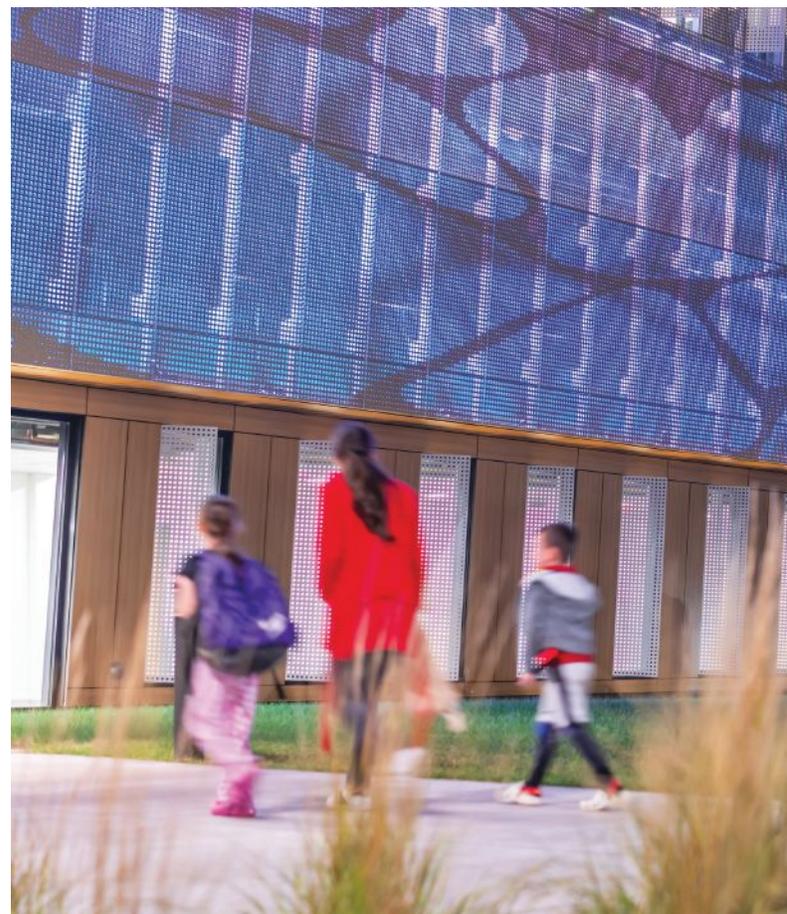
The quality of the space and thoughtfulness behind the concept allow the natatorium to bring together two flourishing swim programs alongside the local community. The impact of the facility’s flow is connection—and the Waukee CSD Natatorium has already connected its swimming programs with the Missouri Valley Conference Swimming Championships, successfully hosting the Division 1 championship swimming event in 2025, with many more events scheduled into the future.

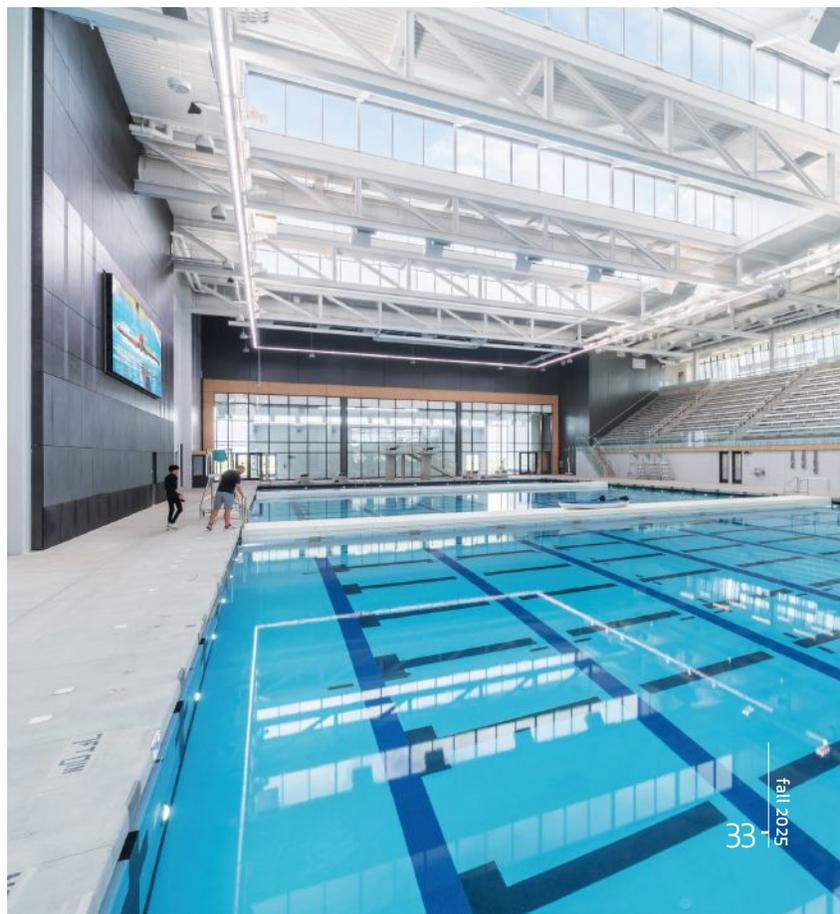
At top: The facility, located in northwest Waukee, serves the general community and the swimming programs of both Waukee High School and Waukee Northwest High School. With nearly 3,000 high school students combined, the schools reflect the rapid population growth in Waukee (nearly 30 percent in the past five years) and in Waukee CSD, the state’s fastest-growing school district. **At bottom:** Entering the Waukee CSD Natatorium, the flow of the space smoothly guides student athletes to the performance space, while spectators are seamlessly directed to the viewing areas. **Opposite, at top:** The design prioritizes equal and immediate access to water, high-quality materials, and overall space quality, resulting in a cohesive design that brings together a diverse group of users. **Opposite, bottom right:** The facility is comparable to some of the nation’s best collegiate aquatic venues, with a 50-meter stretch by 25-yard fast water competition pool that can support two full 25-yard-by-8-lane competitions simultaneously.



NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

- | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 NEW AQUATICS CENTER | 5 TRACK & FIELD |
| 2 8/9 SCHOOL | 6 SOFTBALL |
| 3 6/7 SCHOOL | 7 BASEBALL |
| 4 PRACTICE FIELD | 8 RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT |







FORM BUILT FOR FIGHT

GOSCHKE FAMILY WRESTLING TRAINING CENTER

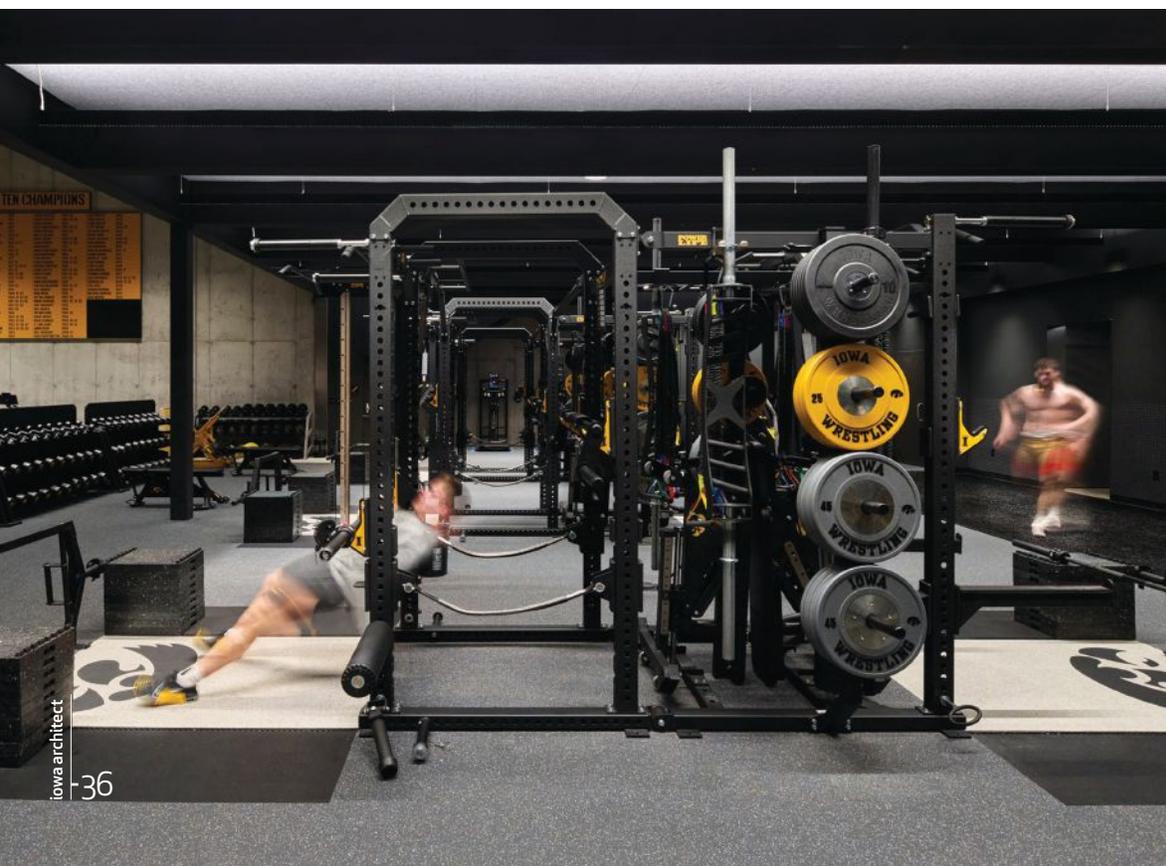
WORDS : MICHAEL FOLSOM, AIA IOWA STUDENT AFFILIATE **IMAGES :** CAMERON CAMPBELL, AIA, INTEGRATED STUDIO **ARCHITECT :** NEUMANN MONSON ARCHITECTS



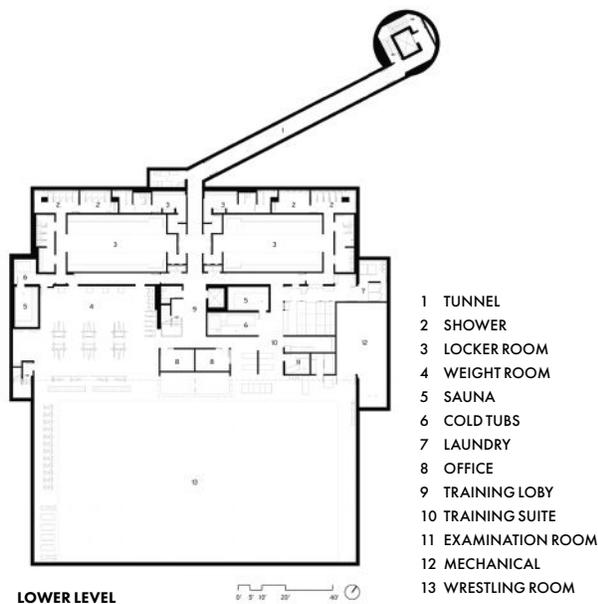
Grounded, gritty, and refined—the Goschke Family Wrestling Training Center, designed by Neumann Monson Architects, embodies a new chapter in the University of Iowa’s athletic architecture. Geared for performance, the 38,500-square-foot facility stands just south of Carver-Hawkeye Arena and now anchors the athletic complex as a structure that is deeply intentional and visually commanding.

From the outset, the building’s approach is deliberate and composed. Visitors are led down a pedestrian concrete path flanked by native grasses and gravel beds—carefully crafted landscape elements designed in collaboration with landscape architects at Shive-Hattery, Inc. These moves serve as calculated and constrained features reinforcing the building’s grounded presence.

Top left: Visitors are led down a pedestrian concrete path flanked by native grasses and gravel beds—carefully crafted landscape elements designed in collaboration with landscape architects at Shive-Hattery, Inc. These moves serve as calculated and constrained features reinforcing the building’s grounded presence. **Top right:** As visitors near the entrance, expansive rhythmic glazing wraps the corner of the building, folding the glass facade in a gesture that transforms the building’s end into an invitation, not a boundary.

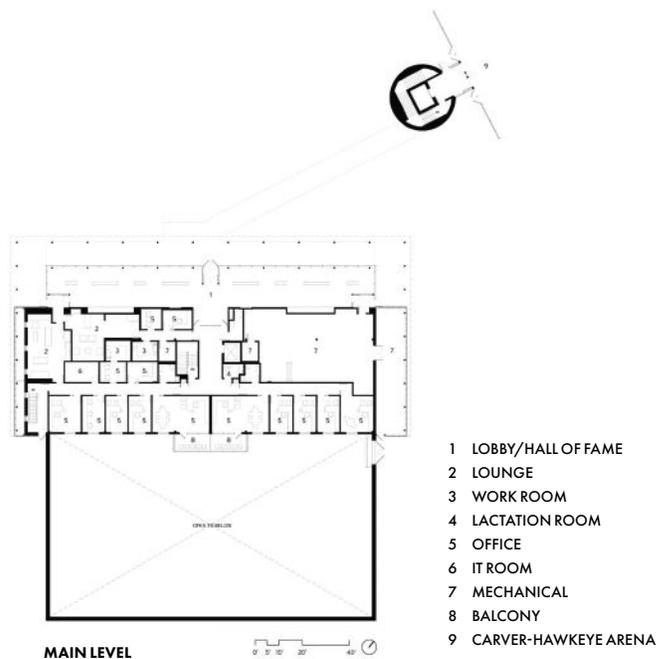


At top: A dark metallic canopy and thin black mullions bring a sleek formality to the exterior. **At middle:** The public-facing glazing allows natural light to flood the lobby during the day, enhancing connectivity and reinforcing ideals of performance. **At left:** The lower level is designed for performance: wrestling mats, strength and conditioning zones, and locker rooms for both men's and women's teams form the foundation of daily training routine.



LOWER LEVEL

- 1 TUNNEL
- 2 SHOWER
- 3 LOCKER ROOM
- 4 WEIGHT ROOM
- 5 SAUNA
- 6 COLD TUBS
- 7 LAUNDRY
- 8 OFFICE
- 9 TRAINING LOBBY
- 10 TRAINING SUITE
- 11 EXAMINATION ROOM
- 12 MECHANICAL
- 13 WRESTLING ROOM



MAIN LEVEL

- 1 LOBBY/HALL OF FAME
- 2 LOUNGE
- 3 WORK ROOM
- 4 LACTATION ROOM
- 5 OFFICE
- 6 IT ROOM
- 7 MECHANICAL
- 8 BALCONY
- 9 CARVER-HAWKEYE ARENA

Geared for performance, the 38,500-square-foot facility stands just south of Carver-Hawkeye Arena and now anchors the athletic complex as a structure that is deeply intentional and visually commanding.

On the site, Lloyd Hamrol’s extant sculpture, “Stonerise,” subtly influences the building’s rotated massing and site circulation. The sculpture’s tilted ring of rough-hewn limestone suggests the ruins of an ancient arena. “We felt a need to respond to the existing artwork, which aligns with the story of the wrestling facility,” says Bill Hoefer, AIA, architect at Neumann Monson.

As visitors near the entrance, expansive rhythmic glazing wraps the corner of the building, folding the glass facade in a gesture that transforms the building’s end into an invitation, not a boundary. More than decorative, the transparency signals the spirit of the space: clarity, strength, and openness. The glazing, paired with aluminum and zinc paneling, forms a material palette that is raw and disciplined. A dark metallic canopy and thin black mullions bring a sleek formality to the exterior, while inside, unfinished concrete walls echo the grit and intensity of wrestling. Hoefer clarifies that the “Columns express its structure externally, complementing the exoskeleton spaceframe of Carver Hawkeye Arena.” These choices serve more than an aesthetic purpose; they ground the building in the physical intensity and mental clarity that the sport demands.

A compelling facet of the design is the role that light plays. The public-facing glazing allows natural light to flood the lobby during the day, enhancing connectivity and reinforcing ideals of performance. “The lobby pavilion can operate most days without need for artificial lighting,” says Hoefer. At night, lighting transforms the facility’s lobby into a glowing lantern. Large, illuminated letters spelling “IOWA” shine through the front glass, visible from a distance. Subtle lighting along the building’s perimeter and bright interior lighting creates a curious presence after dark. “As a winter sport with many evening competitions, most of Iowa’s wrestling meets occur after sunset,” says Hoefer, “It was imperative that the glowing lobby be showcased at night as fans approach the arena.”

Inside, spaces are organized for both inspiration and preparation. The upper level includes a lobby that honors the university’s storied wrestling legacy, along with student-athlete lounges and coaches’

offices—the latter overlooking the central practice room below. The lower level is designed for performance: wrestling mats, strength and conditioning zones, and locker rooms for both men’s and women’s teams form the foundation of daily training routine.

The new facility incorporates a tunnel, echoing ancient Rome’s Ludus Magnus—where gladiators trained before entering the Colosseum. The 110-foot tunnel directly channels Iowa’s wrestlers from their practice mats into the arena. Emerging through a portal rigged with music, lighting, and pyrotechnics, athletes trade quiet preparation for the roar of the crowd. This subterranean link also taps into the arena’s existing loading dock, “leaving the building’s entire perimeter available for pedestrian traffic,” says Hoefer. More than a back-of-house connector, the passageway forges a journey from training to spectacle, uniting the new facility and existing arena into a single high-performance ritual.

The facility, through both its prominent awards displays and material-driven grittiness, nods to the university’s storied wrestling legacy, including decades of dominance and global recognition. Its design, however, is firmly planted in cultivating the wrestling program’s future. That intent is clear in the inclusion of unfinished shell space, later transformed into locker rooms and training amenities for Iowa’s inaugural Power Five Division I women’s wrestling program.

“Iowa Wrestling has been a staple of success for decades,” says Hoefer. “We appreciated the chance to be a part of their team, helping create a facility to continue and further their success.”

Though minimal in material vocabulary, the facility feels far from sterile. Its controlled palette reflects the discipline and focus demanded by the sport of wrestling. Raw concrete walls evoke the wrestler’s brute strength, while the slender columns and expansive glazing convey the agility and precision essential to success. The Goschke Family Wrestling Training Center is a place of preparation, performance, and purpose. It’s an environment where physicality and architecture are fused, where design supports discipline, and where a legacy is not just remembered, but actively built.

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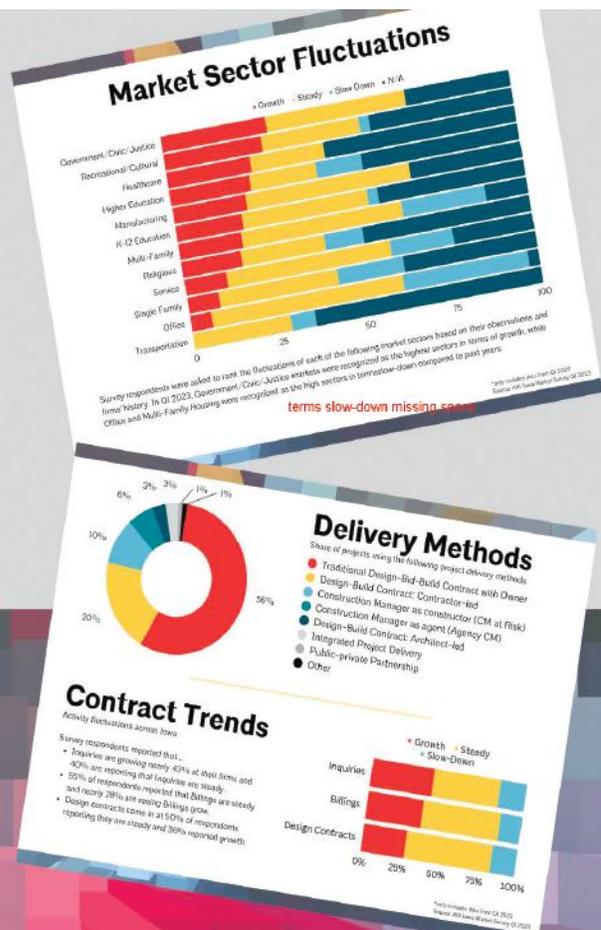


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Photographer: Corey Gaffer
Structural Engineer: Raker Rhodes Engineering

Philip & Jerry Miller Library

Location: Castle Rock, Colorado
Architect: OPN Architects
Construction Manager: Fransen Pittman
Photographer: Parrish Ruiz de Velasco

Iowa Conservatory

Location: Iowa City, Iowa
Architect: Neumann Monson Architects
Contractor: McComas Lacina Construction
MEP Engineer: West Plains Engineering
Photographer: Cameron Campbell, AIA, Integrated Studio
Structural Engineer: M2B Engineers

Waukee CDS Natatorium

Location: Waukee, Iowa
Architect: RDG Planning & Design
Contractor: Henkel Construction Company
Aquatic Design Engineer: Aquatic Design Group
MEPT Engineer: KCL Engineering
Photographer: Iris22 Productions
Structural Engineer: KCL Engineering

Goschke Family Wrestling Training Center

Location: Iowa City, Iowa
Architect: Neumann Monson Architects
Contractor: McComas Lacina Construction
Civil Engineer and Landscape Architect: Shive-Hattery Inc.
MEPT Engineer: Design Engineers
Photographer: Cameron Campbell, AIA, Integrated Studio
Structural Engineer: Raker Rhodes Engineering
Tunnel Structural Engineer: Brierly Associates

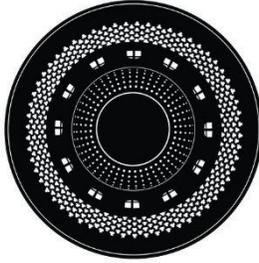
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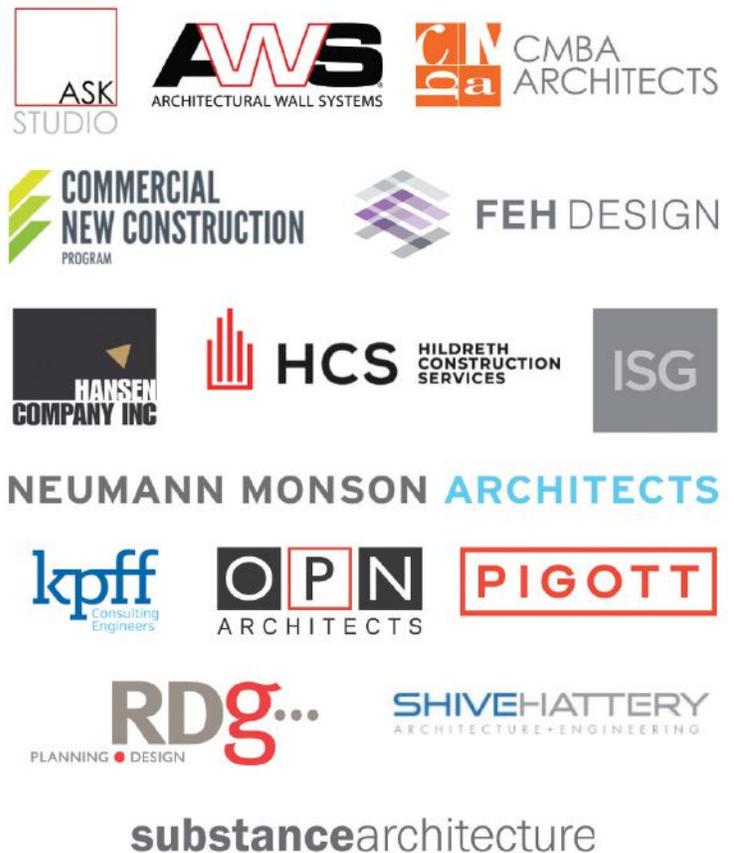
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