

DESIGN GROUP

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DESIGN GROUP FIFTY YEARS

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129



 BUTLER HEALTH SYSTEM



WELCOME!

CMAA

Columbus
Museum of Art





Take a moment to think about architecture. The enormity of vision, the precision of detail, and the complexity of everything in between. Imagine the number of decisions, choices, voices, users, partners, contractors, deadlines, budgets, and reviews required to design a building. Now multiply that over the countless projects designed, managed, and built by DesignGroup over the last half century. You begin to get a sense for how we all feel about this awesome, humbling moment.

Our 50th anniversary is an opportunity to look back on our roots, our founders, and the many influences and milestones that brought us to today. As I reflect on it, I'm struck by several ideas that have made DG the unique and lasting institution it has become. In speaking with more than a dozen current and past associates, including three of our founders, the themes of humility, service, and collegiality are undeniable. When asked to recount an award-winning project or achievement, individuals immediately shifted credit to the vision of the client, the brilliance of the team, and the effectiveness of the process. It's that tone – established by our founders, and extended by our people – that makes it a joy and privilege for me to be part of DesignGroup.

And wow – so many ideas. For this special occasion, we chose 50 specific project stories to illustrate the breadth and depth of our portfolio across five decades.

And again, only when looking back does one realize the magnitude of work, the diversity of categories, and the strength of our client and consultant partnerships. These projects alone represent nearly 8 million square feet of space designed and \$3.6 billion in client investment. And that's just a fraction of the work we've had the honor to deliver: from nonprofit projects of just a few thousand square feet to a hospital totaling more than a million under one roof. It's been an honor to help them achieve their visions, and it's impossible to fully express our gratitude to them.

A quick Google search will tell you that second-generation businesses have a 60 percent failure rate, and third-generation firms fare even worse. Like any business that celebrates 50 years, there are plenty of stories of both prosperity and perseverance (many recounted in this book). As DesignGroup's third-generation leader, I look ahead with great optimism. I have no doubt the training, mentoring, and elevation of our fourth-generation leaders will continue our reputation for market leadership, innovation, and growth.

To my mentors, peers, and partners in this journey, thank you for your ingenuity, hard work, hustle, and, above all else, commitment to clients and one another. It is truly worthy of celebration.

- Sherm Moreland -

Chief Executive Officer



Hear more from Sherm and others as they reflect on the last 50 years of DesignGroup.



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01





OUR HISTORY

Sometime in late 1971, four architects at a large firm started wondering what their careers might look like in a small firm. A firm of their own.

They mused about having closer contact with clients and forming more collaborative relationships with them. They thought how liberating it would be to stretch their skills beyond the task-specific constraints of their current roles. They wondered how it would feel to create a distinct point of view and see projects through from start to finish. And how thrilling it would be to pursue projects closer to their hearts.

A few months later, they acted on their instincts.

The first to leap was **Clyde Gosnell**, leaving the comfort of the Karlsberger firm to stake a claim in the high-risk, high-reward world of independent architecture. The other three – **Jim Essinger**, **Harold Rettstatt**, and **Harry Weithman** – soon followed. On February 21, 1972, the four colleagues signed articles of incorporation, changing their lives, and those of countless others,

forever. This was the creation of **Gosnell, Essinger, Rettstatt, Weithman Architects, Inc.** (GERW) and the first step in the remarkable, five-decade journey of DesignGroup.

Their core concept for the business was simple, yet essential: to create a different kind of firm, one that integrated all disciplines of architecture and design, provided exemplary service to clients, and committed itself to both the profession and the community. That vision continues to drive and define DesignGroup to this day.

They established the firm with equal vested ownership, compensation, and fiscal responsibility. They set up shop in a 2,400-square-foot office on Singletree Drive in the Busch Corporate Center, secured a \$50,000 line of credit (signed by all four), contacted friends, family, and prospective clients to announce their new practice, and waited for the phone to ring.

It didn't take long. Thanks to their connections, reputations, and discipline, GERW was busy from the start, landing project work with Grant Hospital and the National Board of Boiler and Pressure Vessel Inspectors in the first year alone. It was the start of an experiment that would surprise the competition, inspire myriad clients, spur constant innovation and early adoption, and leave an indelible mark on not just the

BUSY FROM THE START



Top

Bob Vennemeyer (Left)

Retired CEO

Mike Whaley (Right)

Project Architect

Left

Bob Vennemeyer (Left)

Retired CEO

Harry Weithmann (Right)

Co-Founder

built environment of Columbus, but on cities large and small throughout the Midwest.

From the outset, GERW offered planning and programming, landscape architecture, interior and exterior architecture, and contract administration. At the heart of every project was a broader vision that went beyond design excellence, one that anticipated every aspect of the finished experience. All of which was supported by an intangible factor that truly set the firm apart: an unyielding commitment to meaningful, lasting client relationships. From the very beginning, that was the true differentiator, the foundation for 50 years of success.

Though they didn't realize it at the time, what the four founders created was different, even revolutionary. Small architecture firms simply weren't expected to leap ahead so quickly with major clients, large projects,

and steady growth. The firm did in years what it took most others decades to achieve. Traditionally, there were two models for architectural success: You were either a large national firm with hundreds of people spread across multiple states, or a smaller practice with reputation and commissions derived from a single, known figurehead.

GERW was different. It was never intended to be a large firm. Nor was it rooted in the identity of any one architect. It was a culture defined by the phrase "big enough to be expert, small enough to care." In the hands of a less sincere group, the idea might ring hollow. But countless trusting, long-term clients bore it out. As bold as their concept was in terms of modest size, design excellence, and exceeding expectations, the truly radical aspect was humanity. And it's as present in the firm today as it was then. In speaking with dozens of people for this book, the common refrain – without fail – was the *people*: their expertise, their friendships,



Jim Essinger (Left)
Co-Founder

Dave Norris (Center)
Retired Principal

Bob Vennemeyer (Right)
Retired CEO



Jim Sauer
Project Manager

GERW was different. It was never intended to be a large firm. Nor was it rooted in the identity of any one architect. It was a culture defined by the phrase “big enough to be expert, small enough to care.”

their passion. While strategies, technologies, and awards were all vitally important, relationships were what made DesignGroup last.

So how does humanity (and humility) manifest itself in a client experience? In a single word, *curiosity*. The founders established a precedent to never start a project with a preconceived idea. They weren't limited by tradition or rote process; they were informed and inspired by the needs of the people who would use these buildings. Their creed was "listen and respect the client's needs and desires," and that's what the firm's current mantra, Design That Elevates, truly represents: client fulfillment.

Of course, success depends on structure and business acumen as well, and the founders each applied specific talents and attention to the fledgling practice. Harry Weithman's focus was design, and he championed creativity and innovation early on. Clyde Gosnell brought his skill in networking, business development, oversight of the firm's work, and quality assurance.

Project management and planning was the domain of James Essinger. And Harold Rettstatt supported all of the above with his expertise in contracts and financial management. The four founding fathers were equal in their ownership and distribution; no one person's departure could shake the foundation. This equitable approach, the founders believed, created shared responsibility for success. The company was set up for the long run.

Future firm Principal and CEO **Bob Vennemeyer** was recruited to join GERW in 1976. Two years later the partners further strengthened the firm's design capability with the addition of **Jack Hedge** and another previous Karlsberger architect, **Dave Norris**. (It was the start of a friendly rivalry over who worked for the firm longer; Dave's 38 years won out by mere weeks.) Like the founders' unique contributions to the company, each of these hires (and many others) brought something special and complementary to the company. Bob was known as a magnetic, humanistic voice in the business; Dave added empathy and compassion to the





RESISTANCE &

RESPECT

—
Mike Whaley (Left)

Project Architect

Harold Rettstatt (Right)

Co-Founder



Mike Whaley
Project Architect

mix, and Jack brought an eye for design excellence and an early belief in sustainability that served as an early firm differentiator.

When Clyde and Jim retired on December 30, 1979, it marked a transition to a new era and firm identity. Their retirement gave GERW an opportunity to adjust its approach to leadership. Harry and Harold now rotated the role of president, as younger staff were groomed for future leadership. For this reason, the firm renamed itself to the more inclusive **Design Group Inc., Architects & Planners** (DGI). These changes were timely and served the organization well in terms of staff advancement and stature in the design and building communities.

A significant addition was **Bill Orosz**, who joined the firm in 1987 as its first Marketing Director. Bill reflected the founders' emphasis on client relationships, but also elevated staff involvement in both design and civic communities. Bill set the bar high as an example

for other staff to follow; most notable was his active involvement in the formation of the Discovery District in downtown Columbus. His advocacy became a major factor in the firm's eventual move to downtown.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the practice grew steadily, with healthcare consistently comprising 70 percent or more of its commissions. DGI also developed a strong planning and design practice for libraries and higher education, as well as a passion for urban revitalization, preservation, and adaptive reuse. The firm brought an aesthetic emphasis to every project, driven by a belief that buildings of every size and scale, from administrative offices and hospitals to college dorms and museums, were equally deserving of innovation. Each could be a complement to the charm and elegance of a community.

The late 1990s was a time of additional refinement and restructuring as the business expanded. DGI was no longer a risk-taking adolescent – it was maturing, in

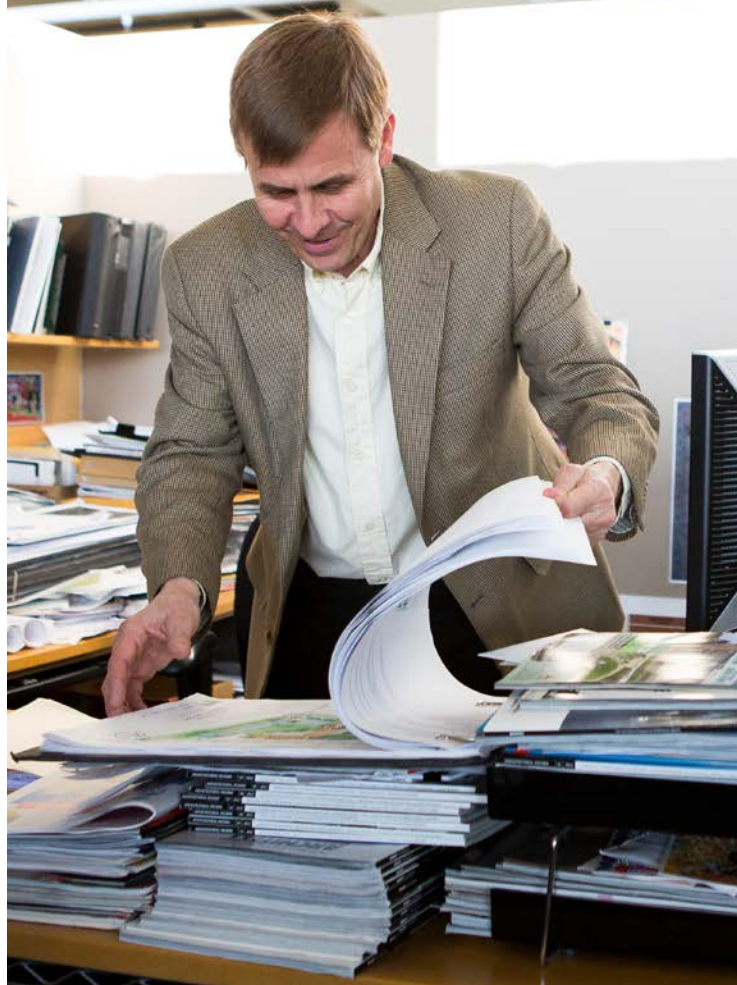
PLAN, DO,

terms of number of employees, scale of work, and interest in new managerial strategies. The firm began to consider a move downtown, and after Harry Weithman retired, Bob Vennemeyer was named DGI's first CEO. (The four original partners had managed by committee and a formal chief executive had never been established.) With three founders now retired, it was also a precarious time – for many firms, generational change often resulted, in the words of one founder, "in the death of the business." But again, DGI bucked tradition. Bob's promotion proved to be an influential and long-lasting success. He became known and admired for a management style of empowerment, placing responsibility into the hands of more people, fostering their growth through mentoring and professional development, and creating new internal structures. His encouragement and drive were balanced by a calm and approachable demeanor; his door, he liked to say, was always open. And he continued the founders' commitment to attentive, caring client service.

In 2000, the firm refined its name to **DesignGroup** (DG) and achieved a significant milestone that October when it moved from its suburban Worthington location to its new (and current) headquarters at 515 East Main Street in the Discovery District of downtown Columbus. The 62,000-square-foot, five-story One Market Exchange building was designed by the firm and is considered a "living portfolio" of DesignGroup and its emphasis on sustainable architecture. It proved to be a cornerstone in the revitalization along historic Main Street. DesignGroup was the building's major tenant, occupying two floors. The move was a symbolic commitment to downtown Columbus and embraced the social responsibility that comes with being a member of a larger urban community.

As DG settled into its new home, Bob's leadership championed listening and seeking additional input. He created the Strategic Action Committee (SAC), a cross section of staff that provided research and feedback

STUDY, ACT



Keith DeVoe
Principal, Project Manager

on various initiatives. Out of the SAC came the timeless Mission and Vision statements that still serve the company today, as well as the Practice Group structure that replaced a previous organizational matrix. The results reflected the firm's key areas of expertise: **healthcare, libraries, urban/civic, and education.**

The firm understood the value of systems thinking, and in 2007 established five "Plan, Do, Study, Act" initiatives to advance ideas in sustainability, client development, personal performance improvement, project management, and financial performance. When Bob transitioned the CEO role to **Sherm Moreland** in 2009, the firm's use of system thinking and the Deming Management Method was well established and gave DesignGroup even greater discipline and vision that further differentiated it. Sherm's savvy combination of business strategy, empathy, and drive proved to be the perfect fit for the CEO role, as he oversaw major growth and provided a steady hand during both a recession and the pandemic.

No business, of course, survives 50 years without challenges. There were partner retirements, which stressed the importance of continuity and succession planning; the recessions of 1975, 1989,

STUDY, ACT

and 2008; and the pandemic in 2020, which showed that even under duress, DesignGroup's culture, passion, and professionalism could overcome virtually any challenge. After every event that forced it to adjust, the firm emerged stronger – because award-winning design, commitment to quality, and collegial, collaborative relationships are timeless.

Today, DesignGroup is an organization of 60+ professionals with deep-seated beliefs in *Civic Responsibility, Healthy Communities, Lifelong Learning, Sustainable Architecture, and Design That Elevates*. As you'll see in the project examples throughout this book, DesignGroup has served these sectors well. The result is an extraordinarily diverse portfolio that has elevated the experiences of, literally, millions of students, workers, physicians, educators, leaders, patients, and patrons.

Thanks to the tireless dedication of its associates and its leaders, DesignGroup has left a legacy of architectural excellence in Columbus, Pittsburgh, and beyond. And it remains, to this day, the passion-driven firm the founders envisioned five decades ago.

Bill Miller (Left)

Retired Director of Design

Jack Hedge (Right)

Retired Principal, Designer





“

My favorite part about this job is meeting new employees. I get to talk to them about what is different and better about DesignGroup. **And that conversation usually starts with telling them we stand on the shoulders of a lot of very smart and talented people that came before us.**

”

– Sherm Moreland
CEO

“

There was certainly an element of risk for all of us. The future was unknown for a fledgling architectural practice, considering how many firms already existed in Central Ohio.

”

– Clyde Gosnell
Co-Founder



Hear more from Clyde and others as they reflect on the last 50 years of DesignGroup.



A JOURNEY THROUGH TIME

A chance meeting. A critique in architecture school. Even a cold call. It's impossible to anticipate moments that change the course of a company's future. What matters, though, is listening for those moments, accepting those conversations, and being open and available when needed.

DesignGroup's founders were adept at seizing opportunities and nurturing the networks and relationships that resulted in new and repeat opportunities. Only when looking back on 50 years of these moments do you realize there was nothing accidental about it. It was the result of professionalism, proven expertise, vision, and friendship – values still evident today.

Top Row

Dave Bowman (Left)

Project Manager

Harold Rettstatt (Right)

Co-founder

Bottom Row

Jim Essinger (Left)

Co-Founder

Harry Weithman (Middle)

Co-Founder

Clyde Gosnell (Right)

Co-Founder



72

Firm is Founded

By the four original partners, Clyde Gosnell, James Essinger, Harold Rettstatt, and Harry Weithman.



First Major Client

Grant Hospital landed roughly eight weeks after the formation of GERW.



First Project with Mary Rutan Hospital

Work on an addition for this city-based hospital was the start of a valued client relationship that is still in place.

1970

1972

1974

1976

First Office

A 2,400 SF suite at 6560 Singletree Drive, in Busch Corporate Center, Worthington, Ohio. The founders initially worked in just 600 SF while renovations were underway to accommodate future employees and growth.

Firm Code of Ethics

Written by Clyde Gosnell, they've been in place ever since. In fact, the original document is framed and in the offices to this day. "The apple hasn't fallen far from the tree," said Sherm Moreland.



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Robert J. (Bob) Vennemeyer Joins Firm

The future Principal and CEO would work for the firm for 33 years.



DETAILS MATTERED

Even in the early days, the company experimented with the smallest details, finding ways to do things differently and better. Instead of the traditional high drafting tables that required designers to stand or sit on a tall stool, GERW's earliest drafting tables were sit-down desks with sloped tops. "The firm was a trend-setter even back then," recalled Clyde Gosnell. The same was true of the construction documents they produced. "Although floor plans and elevations were formally drafted, details were sketched freehand," added Clyde. "New staff had to learn this technique – it was not a familiar practice at other offices."

Firm Changes Name

To Design Group, Architects and Partners Inc. (DGI).



1978



John F. (Jack) Hedge Joins Firm

This future Principal would spend 37 years with DG, the second longest tenure in company history. The founders met Jack several years earlier when he was a promising architecture student at Ohio State.

Office Expansion

The firm expanded into a larger building at 6600 Busch Blvd., across the street from the original office. For a brief period, while the new space was being completed, employees worked in a nearby former auto insurance claim office.



Scott Doellinger Joins the Firm

Scott was a Medical Planner and served as a Principal from 1989 to 2013.

79

Clyde Gosnell Retires

Having helped grow the firm from four partners to a staff of 26 architects and support staff, Clyde was the first of the four founders to retire. But Clyde never fully stepped away from the practice, contributing time, insight, and direction on an advisory basis for the next 40 years.

EARLY ENTHUSIASM FOR CAD

Given the firm's innate curiosity and willingness to learn, it's no surprise it was a very early adopter of computer-aided design.

DesignGroup first experimented with it in the mid-'70s, and like any major shift in an industry, there were differing opinions about its value and use. To test it, leadership came up with an ingenious plan. They created two teams and gave each the same assignment and time allotment to complete the task. One worked with traditional drawing tools, the other with CAD. The end result: while the time difference was insignificant between the two teams, it showed CAD wouldn't inhibit their work, validating its potential. The firm steadily incorporated CAD into its standard process, years ahead of many peer organizations.

1979



David Norris Joins Firm

This Principal and Project Manager was the single longest-serving employee in company history, retiring 38 years later in 2016.



James Sauer Joins Firm

He worked as a Project Manager for 28 years.



Albert Sedeen Joins Firm

This Architect and Project Manager retired as a Principal in 1991.

Iconic Project

Design for the **Whetstone Branch Library** of the Columbus Metropolitan Library begins. This was the first project to incorporate Jack Hedge's energy-conservation design ideas. This branch remains one of the most energy-efficient projects in the Columbus Metropolitan Library system.



1980

1982

Jim Essinger Retires

He was the second of the four founders to step away from the firm.

"Although our legal name was Gosnell, Essinger, Rettstatt, Weithman, Architects, Inc, we often referred to ourselves as GERW to save time answering the phone – and save ink on documents."

- Clyde Gosnell, Co-Founder

KARLSBERGER ROOTS

The four founders previously worked for the **Karlsberger firm**, as did other **future leaders**, including Sherm Moreland, Elliott Bonnie, Scott Doellinger, Dave Norris, and Jane Peters Janowitz. In fact, the founders were jokingly referred to as "The Four Horsemen" by their colleagues at Karlsberger – the start of a friendly but competitive rivalry rooted in mutual respect.

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Iconic Project

Design of the **State Teachers Retirement System (STRS)** headquarters was the start of a multi-phase development plan that stretched into the 1990s. The project won two Ohio Governor's Energy Awards.



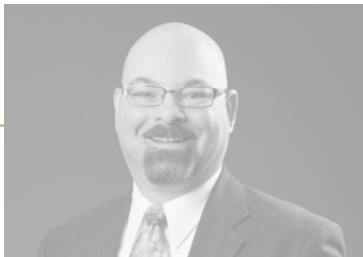
John Schilling Joins Firm

He served as a Project Manager for 32 years. He became a Principal in 1995 and was known for his gracious, steady hand-on-the-wheel style. Notable projects for John included the renovations to Ohio Stadium and the new Franklin County Courthouse.

1984

1986

1988



Eric Lipschutz Joins Firm

This Senior Interior Designer contributed his skills for 32 years with a focus on libraries.

A Big Move

The firm relocated to a new office it designed and constructed at 7600 Olentangy River Road, at the bottom of Worthington Hills. Continued firm growth required additional subleased space in an adjacent building.

UNCOMMON TRUST

Over the years, DesignGroup relationships became so collegial, clients would often welcome the architects into their homes.

Dr. Bob Bowers of longtime client State Teachers Retirement System celebrated project successes by inviting the DG team to his home, a renovated schoolhouse in Pickaway County. Another client, Fairfield Medical Center CEO Mina Ubbing, lived close to the hospital and often included DG leaders in key senior strategy sessions held in her home. And Ewing (Butch) Crawfis, CEO of Mary Rutan Hospital, asked DG to design his home in Bellefontaine. "It's a reflection of the time, who we were, and why the relationships were so deep and lasted so long," said Managing Principal Jennifer Horvath.



Mark Anderson Joins Firm

Now a Principal, he has been with the firm as a project manager for 31 years, 3 months, and counting.



Louise Mathys Joins Firm

She rose to the position of Controller in her 31 years with the firm.



Iconic Project

The design process for the **Ohio Stadium Expansion** begins, with construction occurring over 2000 and 2001. John Schilling was Project Manager on this project, "a role no one else could have done as well," said Dave Norris. "John kept the team focused on goals under the pressure of a critical schedule and high expectations."

1990

1992

1994

1996



Elliott Bonnie Joins Firm

Now a Managing Principal, this true design leader has been with the firm for 31 years, 10 months, and counting.



Lorne Eisen Joins Firm

This Principal and Project Manager is passionate about collaboration – and meeting deadlines.

92



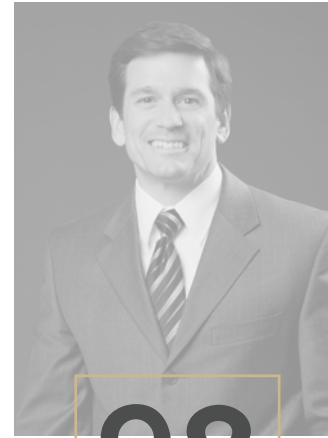
Iconic Project

DG begins the design process for major renovations and expansion at both **Doctors Hospital North and West**. Rick Vincent was CEO at Doctors; later he became President of the Osteopathic Heritage Foundation, hiring DesignGroup time and time again. The project included working around a large tree at Doctors Hospital West that is still standing.



A Very Busy Period

During the late 1990s, the firm had the massive OSU Stadium, STRS, and SERS projects occurring at the same time, a uniquely intense period of activity. Twelve-hour days were not uncommon.



98

Sherm Moreland Joins Firm

"One of my first memories was Bob stopping by my desk and chatting with me," Sherm remembered. "The CEO knew my name, knew what I was working on, and took time to stop by and talk to me." Sherm would be promoted to CEO in 2009.

1997

1998

2000



Award

DesignGroup wins Ohio Governor's Energy Award for Architecture, for the Ohio Medical Indemnity Building. DG also won the Governor's Energy Award two years in a row for STRS projects.

Bob Vennemeyer Named CEO

He served in this role from 1998 to 2008. When Sherm Moreland was named as his successor, Bob remained for a year to ensure a smooth transition, retiring in 2009.



Decision Time

After consideration of various site options, the firm decided to relocate to downtown Columbus. The design process began for its new office building at the present Main Street location.



Firm Moves to 515 E. Main Street

Designed in-house by Lead Designer Jack Hedge. The new office open house, held early the following year, was titled "2001: A Design Odyssey."

2000



DesignGroup Awarded AIA Firm Gold Medal

2002

DG Organizes into Four Main Practice Groups

The change solidified the firm's increasingly focused expertise.

- Healthcare led by Sherm Moreland
- Education led by Carol Pavsek
- Libraries led by Jack Hedge
- Urban and Civic led by Dave Brehm

2004

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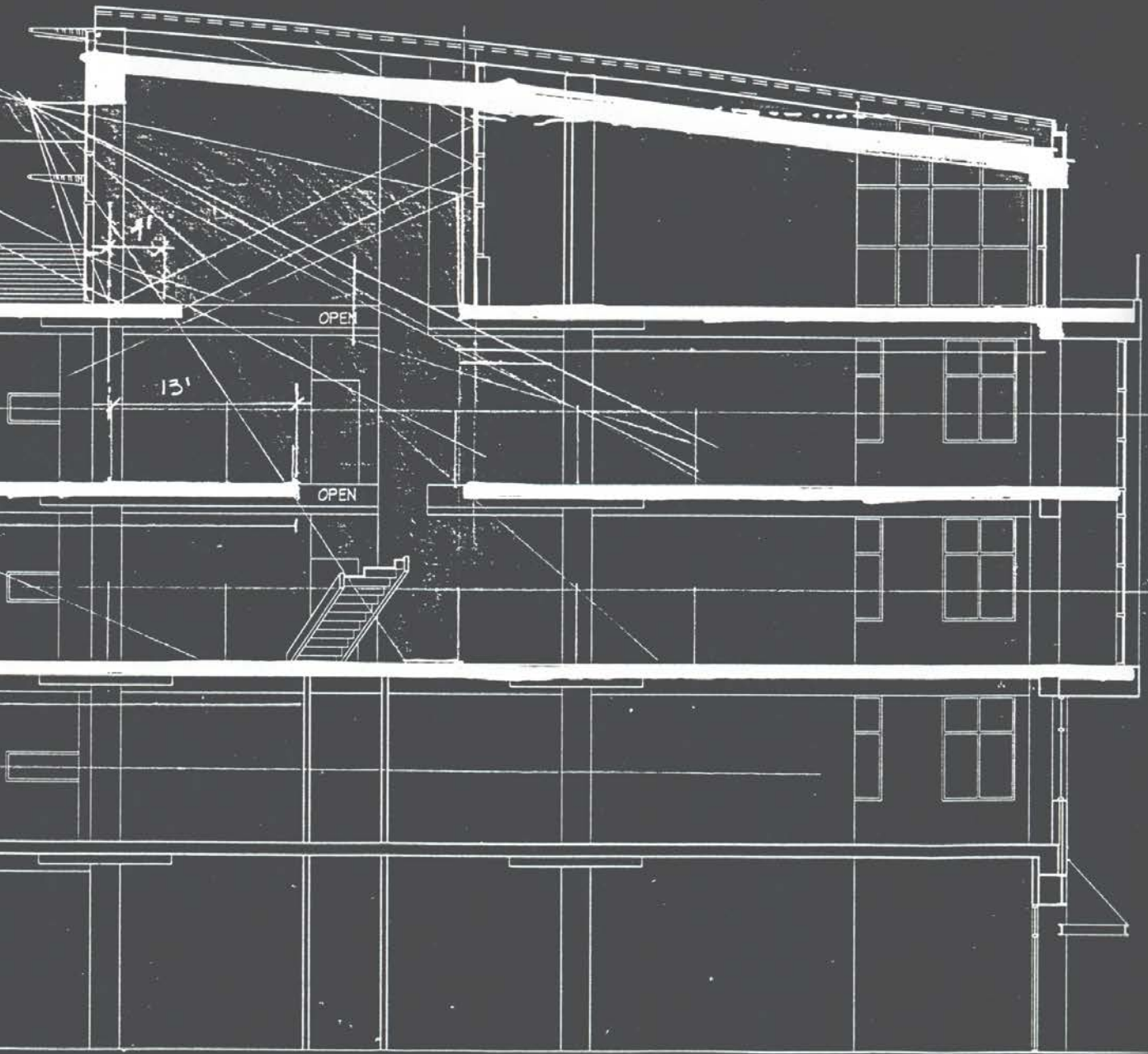


Breakthrough Revit Use

DG's design of the Sawmill Orthopedic facility (now Orthopedic One) was, at the time, the largest Revit building model in the world. Which, ironically, exceeded the capacity of hardware at the time to efficiently run the 3D designs.

Harry Weithman Retires

Founder and President from 1985 to 1997, Harold oversaw DesignGroup's largest growth during that time, capping 25 years with the firm.



BUILDING THE PERFECT OFFICE

The site of DesignGroup's new office in the Discovery District was previously used as a gas station and was owned by J. Daniel Schmidt, who owned a nearby Oldsmobile dealership. Schmidt and several firm principals developed the site. While other DG staff participated in the design of the new building and interiors, Lead Designer was Jack Hedge. Many energy-saving features were incorporated into the new building, which led to lower consumption and served as a learning lab for staff and clients. The extensive, south-facing exterior windows provided the vibrant work environment with natural, shaded light.



East Coast Library Push

DesignGroup made a big move from local/regional to national projects, starting largely with library design.

All In On LEED

Continuing DG's strong commitment to sustainability, the firm mandated that all technical staff become LEED Accredited Professionals. (By 2017, all staff would be LEED trained.) This was the first of many related milestones to come.

“DG’s role in developing the Discovery District, and commitment to the city, led us to design and build our current Columbus location at 515 East Main Street. This was a big deal in elevating both the internal and external stature of DG as a firm, and getting us closer to many of our clients. And it allowed staff to become more involved in city, state, and professional organizations downtown.”

- Sherm Moreland, *CEO*

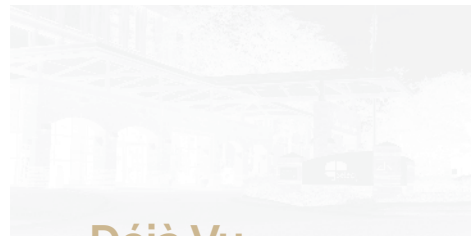
2004

2006

2008

Bill Orosz Departs

After 17 uniquely positive and influential years with DesignGroup, Bill left to join The Ohio State University; Drew Vennemeyer succeeded him as Director of Development.



Déjà Vu

While there are many examples of DG spaces being rehabbed or repurposed by the firm, one of the most significant was the previously designed Doctors Hospital North, which was redesigned as Select Medical Center.

07

Harold Rettstatt Retires

After 35 years with the business. In addition to his role as CEO, Bob Vennemeyer served as CFO as the search began for the next CFO.



CROSSING BORDERS

Out-of-state healthcare projects grew during the 1990s and early 2000s, including:

- St Joseph's Healthcare
Lexington, Kentucky
- St Joseph Hospital & Health Center
Kokomo, Indiana
- Good Samaritan Hospital
Kearney, Nebraska
- Morris Hospital
Morris, Illinois
- Memorial Hospital
Rock Springs, Wyoming
- Rochester General Hospital
Rochester, New York

Each of these projects had decision makers who had worked previously with DG at other hospitals, emblematic of the firm's many lasting client relationships.

08

The Covington Office Opens in Kentucky

Under the leadership of Doug Spies. Unfortunate timing and the tremendous economic pressures of the Great Recession proved too much to sustain this office. However, the many lessons learned served DG leadership in the future success of the Pittsburgh office.

The DG Revit Mandate

The firm fully migrated to Revit as its Building Information Modeling (BIM) software platform in 2008. BIM is the process of creating and managing information for an intelligent, cloud-based building model. It integrates multi-disciplinary data to produce a digital representation across an asset's life cycle, from planning and design to construction and operations. The move paid off: when clients started requiring Revit use around 2011, DG was ready – and has led the industry in digital model creation ever since. Indeed, the firm's technical preparedness often served as a competitive advantage during leaner, recessionary times.

2008

2010



Iconic Project

The multi-award-winning **Grange Insurance Audubon Center** was a catalyst for revitalizing a physically and aesthetically deficient urban brownfield site.

Larry Mead Joins Firm

Initially hired as a consultant, Larry served in the role of CFO from 2009 through retirement in 2021. He became an invaluable member of the Leadership Team.



Bob Vennemeyer Retires

Bob left after a remarkably influential 33 years with the firm. Sherm Moreland is named CEO soon after.

2010

11

Up to the Challenge

DG adopted the AIA 2030 Challenge for Sustainability. Three of DG's five LEED projects already met the criteria.

Jennifer Horvath Joins Firm

As Managing Principal and Business Development Leader, she was the first person to serve this new role.

Jim Essinger Passes Away

DesignGroup mourned the loss of one of the four original founders.

2012



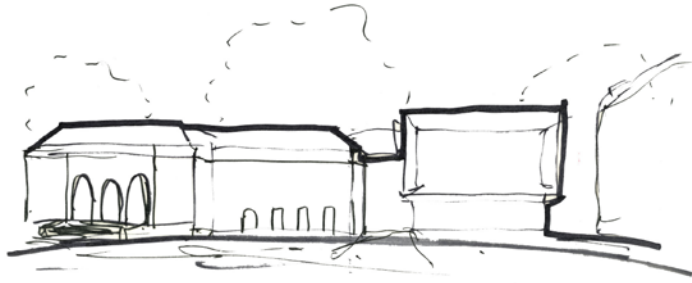
Two Green Achievements

DG designed Ohio's first LEED Gold healthcare facility (Diley Ridge Hospital) and Ohio's first LEED Platinum higher-education facility (Hocking Hills Energy Institute).



PATIENCE AND HARD WORK

After Kim Shemenske joined DesignGroup in 2008 as a Project Coordinator, she put herself through night school to earn a degree in Human Resources. As a result, she grew into a supporting HR role at the firm. When she left DG for an HR position at another company, she quickly discovered the grass was not greener there. Kim returned to DG, taking the only position available at the time: Front Desk Administrator. She accepted the role, and over time gradually took on more and more HR leadership. Today she is DG's Director of Human Resources and an invaluable member of the Leadership Team. Kim created DG's intern and mentorship programs and worked tirelessly to streamline HR operations and create a staff experience that accomplishes DG's mission of being "the firm of choice for talent."



Iconic Project

The Columbus Museum of Art Margaret M. Walter Wing is one of the highest-profile projects in company history, nearly 100,000 SF of new or renovated gallery space and almost 5,000 SF of special event space. The Wall Street Journal declared it among the best architecture of 2015.

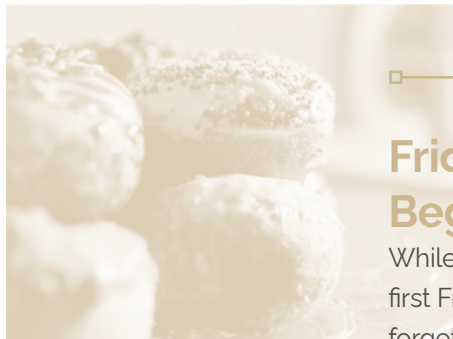
Advisory Board Event Held in Pittsburgh

This invitation-only industry meeting brought special attention to DG's new office and expertise in healthcare design. It was aligned with Pelotonia, the large Columbus-based cycling fundraiser. A team of riders from DesignGroup has participated in Pelotonia for the last six years, raising more than \$120,000 for cancer research at The Ohio State University.

2014

2016

2018



Friday Treats Begins

While the specific date of the first Friday Treats has been forgotten, the tradition lives on. Principals provided donuts and other treats on a rotating basis each Friday - and lived in fear of forgetting their turn.



Pittsburgh Office Opens

This 3,000 SF space, designed by the firm, represented the most ambitious expansion of the business. Located in Nova Place in the city's North Shore neighborhood, its central location provides convenience and connections to clients.

Harold Rettstatt Passes Away

DesignGroup mourned the loss of one of the four original founders.

New Associate Principals Named

Chris Haedt (Designer), Angela Kolosky (Healthcare Planner), Joe Mayer (Designer), Ben Niebauer (Education Market Leader), John Ryan (Project Manager/Architect), and Nikki Wildman (Project Manager).

21

The Pittsburgh Office Flourishes

In just four years, the office grew from one person to 15, and accounted for 30% of firm revenue thanks to robust relationships with clients UPMC and ANH.

A Commitment to Thought Leadership

As the pandemic prevented in-person interaction with peers and clients, an effort was made to create a stronger presence online. DesignGroup staff contributed more than 30 articles published to the firm's website, gaining thousands of reader impressions and keeping DG's name consistently mentioned on social media.

2020

2021

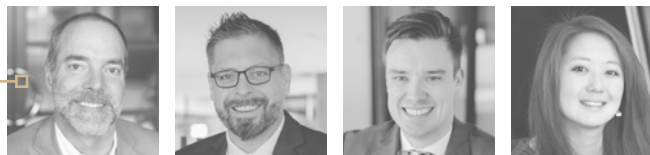
2022

Firm Manages Coronavirus Crisis

Despite a worldwide shutdown and new workplace precautions that challenged businesses of all types, DesignGroup discovered new ways to collaborate while working from home. Team members became adept at Zoom meetings with clients and each other, and progress was made in all segments of the business. Indeed, DG's work in healthcare felt more relevant than ever.

Next-Generation Leadership

Tom Chidlow of the Pittsburgh office named a Managing Principal, and Chris Haedt, Joe Mayer, and Alana Haslow named firm Principals.



DesignGroup Celebrates 50th Anniversary

AN IMPRINT ON A CITY AND REGION

DesignGroup's prolific architectural presence cannot be contained on a single map. Here's a look at a just a portion of our work in Columbus and beyond; this map (and the one on the following page) represents only the "50 projects for 50 years" profiled in this book. DesignGroup's work in the city and region extends well beyond what's listed here.

It's unusual for a firm to choose a neighborhood for its headquarters in anticipation of it becoming something special, then helping that neighborhood achieve the vision. But that is exactly DesignGroup's influence on Columbus' Discovery District. "We were the authors of the Discovery District," said former Marketing Director Bill Orosz, an early champion of DG's efforts in the area. "We brought together the arts and education organizations, the historic, urban churches, and others based in this area. We helped them to think of partnership and crafting an urban plan for it, which is now among the most vibrant spots in Columbus. Today there's the thriving **Columbus State Community College, Columbus College of Art and Design, Capital University Law School, and Columbus Museum of Art**, which people forget was within an eyelash of relocating before DesignGroup's award-winning addition. All of that original planning was gratis. All of it. It was a commitment to the community and our great customers. When the book is written on architecture in Columbus, you cannot escape DesignGroup and its impact."

“
**DesignGroup and this
community are one and
the same. When people
take an architectural tour
of Columbus, Ohio, you cannot
escape DesignGroup.**”

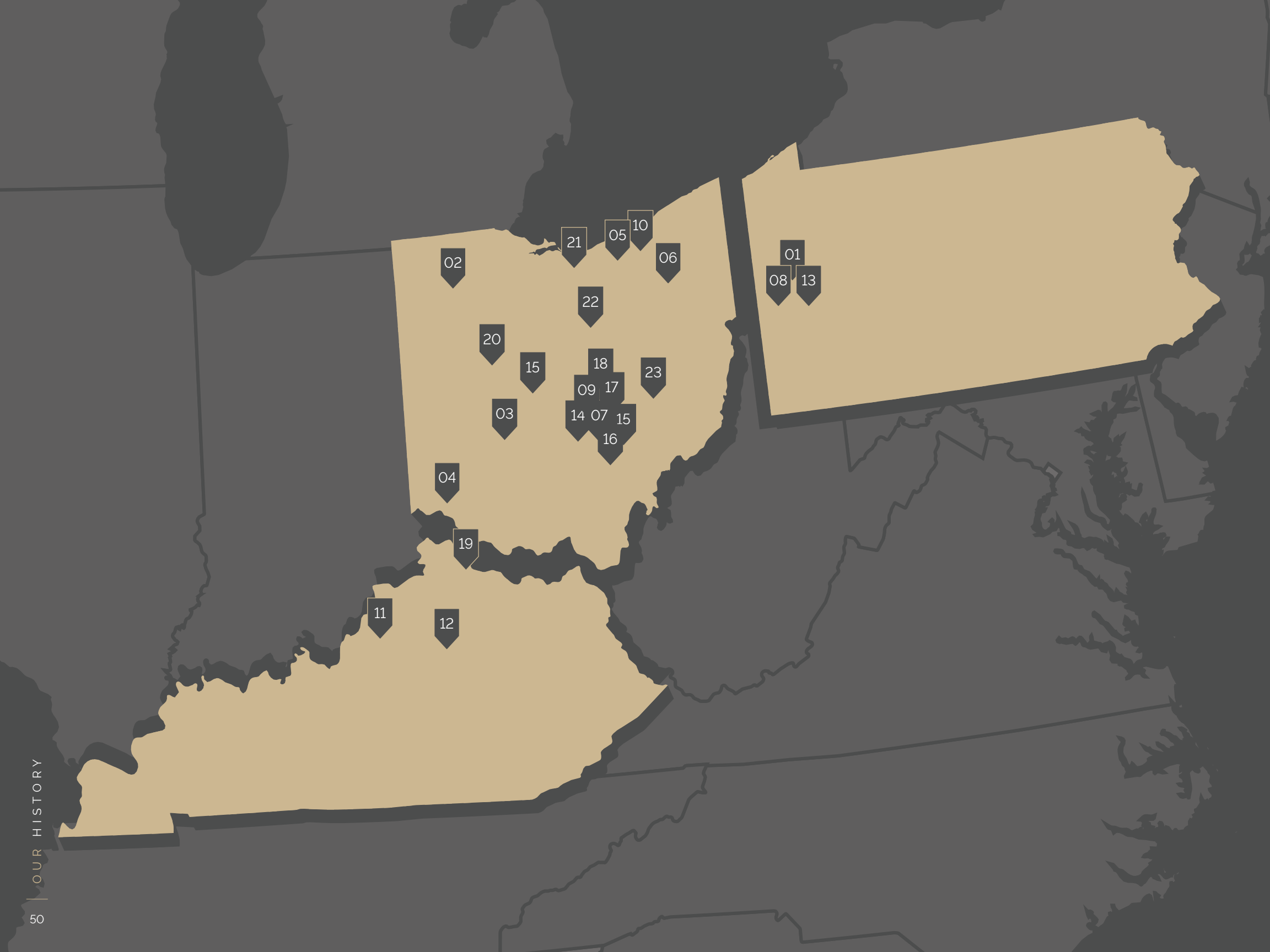
- **Bill Orosz**
*Former Principal,
Director of Marketing*





FEATURED COLUMBUS PROJECTS

1. Columbus Metropolitan Library, Hilliard Branch
2. Franklin County Courthouse
3. The Ohio State University, Richard M. Ross Heart Hospital
4. The Ohio State University Jameson Crane Sports Medicine Institute
5. The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center Brain and Spine Institute
6. Columbus State Community College Mitchell Hall
7. Columbus Museum of Art Margaret M. Walter Wing
8. Grange Insurance Audubon Center
9. J. Leonard Camera Residence Hall and Rehabilitation Center
10. Grant Medical Center
11. The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center West Campus Ambulatory Care Center
12. The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center Inpatient Hospital
13. OhioHealth Riverside Methodist Hospital NICU
14. Spanish Immersion Academy
15. Columbus Metropolitan Library, Northern Lights
16. Columbus School for Girls
17. City of Columbus Michael B. Coleman Government Center
18. The Ohio State University Ohio Stadium
19. Peggy R. McConnell Arts Center
20. West Side Family Health and Wellness Center
21. Franklin Park Conservatory and Botanical Gardens
22. DesignGroup Columbus Main Office
23. Leading EDJE Company Headquarters
24. Rev1 Ventures Gateway Campus Offices
25. National Board of Boiler and Pressure Vessel Inspectors
26. State Teachers Retirement System



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FEATURED

PROJECTS OUTSIDE COLUMBUS

1. *DesignGroup
Pittsburgh Office
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania*

2. *Bowling Green
State University
Moseley Hall
Bowling Green, Ohio*

3. *Cedarville University
Cedarville, Ohio*

4. *University of Cincinnati
Langsam Library
Cincinnati, Ohio*

5. *Ohio University
Heritage College of
Osteopathic Medicine
Warrensville Heights*

6. *University of Akron
Residence Halls
Akron, Ohio*

7. *Adena Health System
Cancer Center
Chillicothe, Ohio*

8. *Allegheny Health Network
West Penn Hospital
The Imaging Institute
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania*

9. *Fairfield Medical Center
River Valley Campus
Lancaster, Ohio*

10. *Cleveland Clinic: Fairview
Hospital Emergency
Department and ICU
Cleveland, Ohio*

11. *Norton Healthcare
Brownsboro Hospital
Bed Tower
Brownsboro, Kentucky*

12. *Saint Joseph
Healthcare Hospital
Lexington, Kentucky*

13. *UPMC Mercy Hospital
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania*

14. *Adena Health System
PACCAR Medical
Education Laboratory
Chillicothe, Ohio*

15. *Battelle Darby Creek
Metro Park Nature Center
Galloway, Ohio*

16. *Hocking College
Energy Institute
Logan, Ohio*

17. *Ohio University
Heritage College of
Osteopathic Medicine
Athens, Ohio*

18. *Shepherd's Corner
Administrative Center
Blacklick, Ohio*

19. *Kenton County Public
Library, Covington Branch
Covington, Kentucky*

20. *Mary Rutan Hospital
Bellevue, Ohio*

21. *Ohio Veterans Home
Senator Secrest
Nursing Home
Sandusky, Ohio*

22. *Shelby Mutual
Insurance Company
Shelby, Ohio*

23. *The Ohio State University
And Central Ohio Technical
College, McConnell
Residence Hall
Newark, Ohio*



THE POWER OF PURPLE

Long before DesignGroup settled on its final name, it went by the 13-syllable tongue twister of *Gosnell, Essinger, Rettstatt, Weithman Architects, Inc.* Which was dutifully (and some would say, entertainingly) spoken in rapid-fire precision by Mavis Baker, the company's legendary administrative assistant/office manager/keeper of all things.

A member of the firm from the beginning, Mavis' skill with the telephone wasn't all that set her apart. Equally memorable was her purple chair and matching purple IBM Selectric typewriter, which she asked for on day one – and which, the founders loved to say, “she could make sing” with speed and accuracy. The firm even painted a column near the front lobby purple to match.

“Mavis proved to be the most capable, long-term, dedicated person one could ever wish for,” said one founder. “And she had an innate ability to adapt to technological change.”

EARLY PROJECTS

A foundation is set. A business begins to grow.

DesignGroup's earliest projects demonstrated its core values and target markets. Many of these initial wins were the start of decades-long client relationships.

These projects also provided opportunities to experiment with new ideas, such as thoughtfully improved guest and patient experiences, early energy efficiency concepts, and the trademark approachable, collaborative culture that would become part of the firm's core identity.

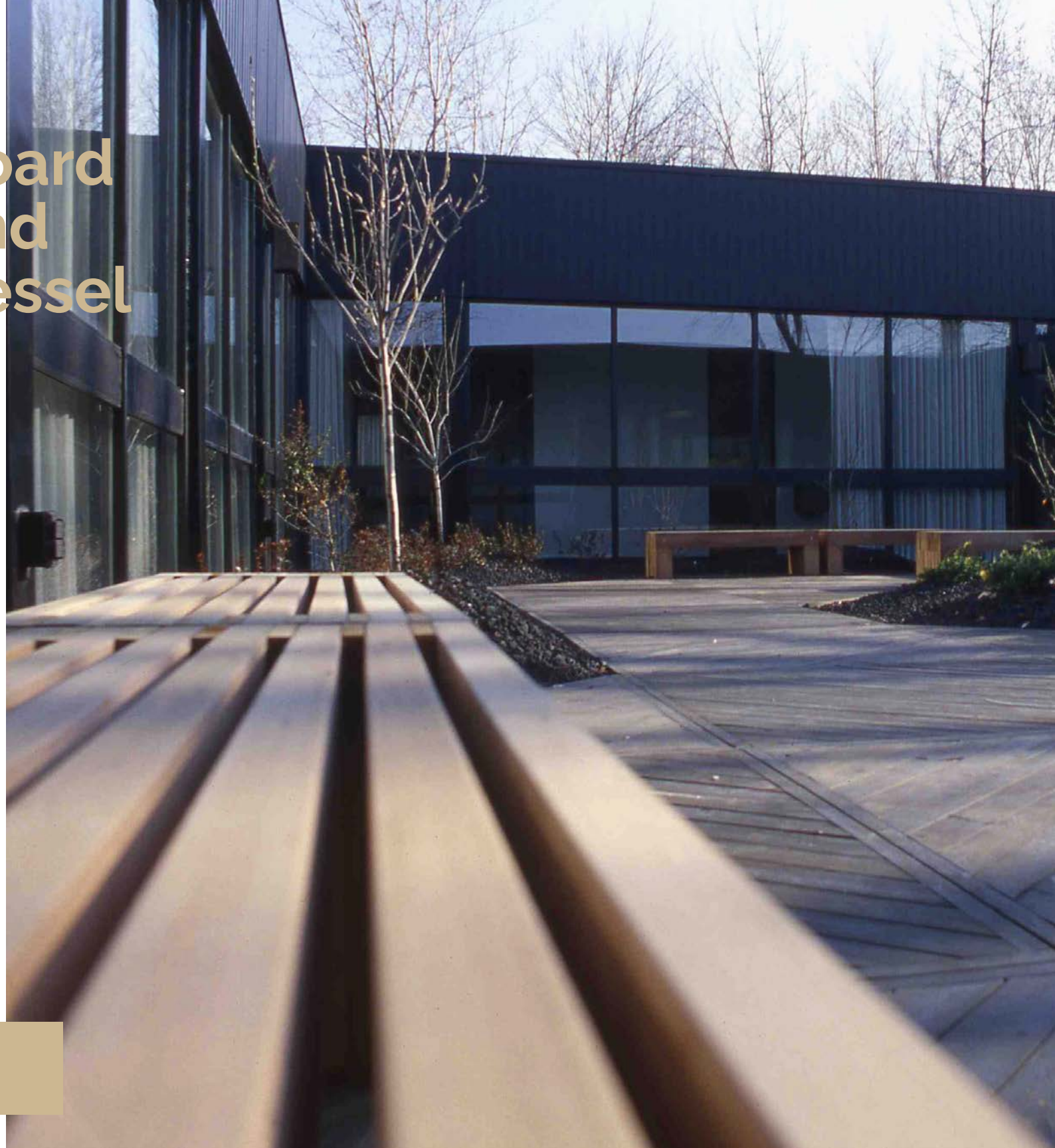
“

We were four guys who had a lot of respect for each other. We appreciated each other's talent and goals. So it really wasn't hard to meld that group together. To see the next group be more successful today than we were makes us very proud. It's just gotten better and better. ”

– Harry Weithman
Co-Founder

National Board of Boiler and Pressure Vessel Inspectors

Columbus, Ohio





AIA Design Award Winner

Designed for one of the firm's earliest clients, the project was very personal for the founders – and an important stepping stone for their image in the design community.

Located in the Busch Corporate Center, the National Board was virtually a neighbor to DesignGroup's first office. It became a convenient stop for potential clients – one of the young firm's most significant references. An international organization, the National Board project gave the architects credibility beyond the immediate market. This was the firm's first AIA award-winner and – like many projects to follow – won on the merits of sustainable design.

Project Size:
11,400 SF

Project Cost:
\$1.1 million

Completion:
1973

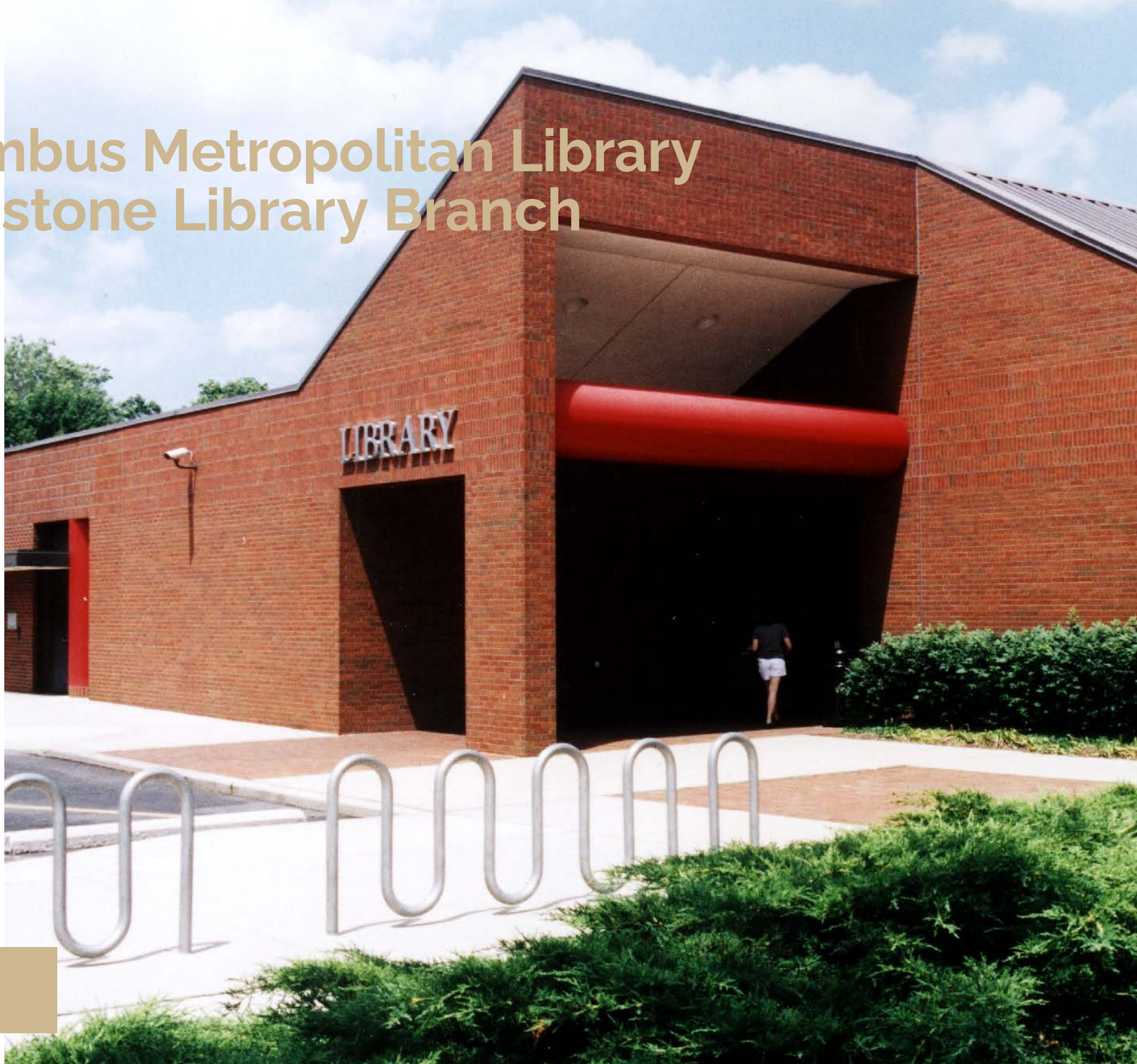


- The plan and design included unique features that used the earth for sustainability, including on-site ponding for stormwater conservation with complementary landscaping.
- An interior open court provided natural lighting to all interior offices and occupied spaces.



Columbus Metropolitan Library Whetstone Library Branch

Columbus, Ohio





From the very beginning, the client asked DesignGroup to incorporate passive solar features into the design of this new library branch. Which was significant, because it had never been applied in this category. The resulting design was a major success: the new building used less energy per square foot than any other branch in the system. In fact, a paper presented at the National ASES Conference 20 years after completion showed a 36% energy savings over a conventionally designed branch in the system. The project won over skeptics of passive solar features in institutional projects and inspired the firm to embrace energy-efficient design in all categories.

Project Size:
17,000 SF

Project Cost:
\$1.35 million

Completion:
1974





“

The success of the Whetstone project prompted us to require energy-efficiency guidelines on all of our library projects.

”

– **Larry Black**
Library Director
Columbus Metropolitan Library

- Passive solar design took into account the sun's location, with the goal of working with it, rather than against it.
- The solution incorporated a long east-west orientation, with optimized south glazing, minimal east glazing and no west glazing.
- A center spine clerestory provided daylighting supplemented by fluorescent lights controlled with daylight sensors.
- All south glass was sun screened with large steel tubes spaced away from the building so warm air would not be trapped.
- The energy efficiency was so surprising to the HVAC engineers, they needed to rebalance the system in response to it.

Hear more from sustainable design advocate and Retired Lead Designer Jack Hedge and others as they reflect on the last 50 years of DesignGroup.



Grant Medical Center

Columbus, Ohio





DesignGroup began work with Grant Medical Center in 1973, the young firm's first major healthcare win in Columbus – and a shock to the local architecture community.

The project was a major expansion and renovation of the entire original hospital, which was built in 1959. It reoriented the reception and main hospital entry to the northeast intersection of Grant Avenue and 6th Street and added new ancillary services. The design also provided a new multi-level public parking garage connected to the hospital, accessible from the new main entry plaza. This linked patients and the public directly to the medical complex, a major feature that eliminated long walks in inclement weather.

This was the start of a pivotal client relationship that lasted more than 30 years and continues to the present. The firm would go on to design additions and renovations in 1983, 1985, 1986, 1989, 1991, 2005, and 2009. These early projects cemented DesignGroup's credibility in healthcare design.

Total Projects:

230+







- Grant Medical Center needed more space, so a land acquisition plan was designed around an eight-block landscape on Town, State, Sixth, and Grant Streets. Grant acquired several sites and completed land trades that benefitted both the hospital and nearby Franklin University, and allowed Grant to establish a major presence downtown.
- Early projects included linear accelerator and oncology spaces, which gave Grant a comprehensive cancer center well before its competitors.
- The MRI suite renovation for Sports Medicine Grant & Orthopaedic Associates in 2005 included a new registration area, waiting and dressing rooms, and better overall integration with the existing facility.
- Completed in 2009, the \$7 million, 52,000 SF Ann Burba Crane Center for Women and Babies included special rooms for LDR, C-sections, high-risk patients, postpartum needs, and associated support spaces. A Special Care Nursery was established with assistance from Nationwide Children's Hospital.



Mary Rutan Hospital

Bellefontaine, Ohio



04
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This was another of DesignGroup's early hospital projects – and the start of the longest ongoing client relationship in company history. Success with Mary Rutan established several important themes. It proved the firm could successfully complete ambitious projects on a large scale. It demonstrated that smaller, community hospitals were every bit as deserving of innovation as those in larger cities. And it integrated sustainable building practices so early the trend hadn't been named yet. Initiated in 1974, DesignGroup's relationship with Mary Rutan has lasted longer than any single client – 48 years and counting. And it all started with an impromptu visit by Clyde Gosnell – a cold call – with the hospital's CEO as the firm was just getting off the ground.

Total Projects:

200+



- In the first project, DesignGroup reinvented the patient entrance experience, improving access to the main entrance, emergency and radiology departments, and much more.
- An early heat recovery system lowered the facility's release of carbons into the atmosphere, well before sustainability was a driving factor in architecture.
- Projects since that time included expansions for emergency, obstetrics, and other departments; hundreds of beds; updated operational practices in response to privacy, HIPAA compliance, and infection control; improved wayfinding; and use of natural light.
- Most recently, the firm designed the three-story, 75,000 SF Mary Rutan Hospital Health Center, a local urgent care alternative to traditional emergency medical care. It serves as a catalyst for Bellefontaine's growth and an anchor for surrounding commercial development.

“

These hospitals are so important to the social and economic vitality of their communities. Our unique expertise in the planning and design of community hospitals has been the driving force behind our 48-year relationship with Mary Rutan. ”

– **John Schilling**
*Retired Principal,
Project Manager*

Ohio Veterans Home Senator Secrest Nursing Home

Sandusky, Ohio



05
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Harold Rettstatt heard about this project's budget approval on the radio in April 1975.

He arranged a meeting with Robert H. Borders, Commandant of the facility, to learn more about it. After reviewing a preliminary list of architectural firms the State Architect had prepared, Harold recognized that none of the firms had medical project experience. He shared this observation with the Commandant, stressing the importance of design services that addressed the needs of current and future resident veterans. That meeting, and the selection of DesignGroup as the firm of record for the project, established a relationship that would last two decades.

Bob Vennemeyer was hired by DG as a part-time employee in the summer of 1976 to assist in the completion of the working drawings and bid documents for this project. Four months later he was hired full-time as employee No. 34 and became the Project Manager, from contractor selection to project completion.

Project Size:
105,000 SF

Project Cost:
\$9.5 million

Completion:
1979



- The original Ohio Soldiers and Sailors Home (OSSH) was created by the State of Ohio to provide care for Civil War veterans. It opened in 1888 on a beautiful 100-acre site in Sandusky.

- By 1975, the State recognized the need to provide skilled nursing care for an increased number of veterans and especially for aging veterans. Prior to that, the Home offered only independent and assisted-living accommodations.

- The plan provided 300 skilled nursing beds and expanded physical and occupational therapy departments.

- It also included a kitchen/dining room with capacity to provide for the entire population of 650 veterans and a new multi-purpose room with a capacity to seat 275.

- The three-story masonry facility used a post-tensioned concrete floor structure to allow the large assembly areas to be column-free.



Shelby Mutual Insurance Company

Shelby, Ohio





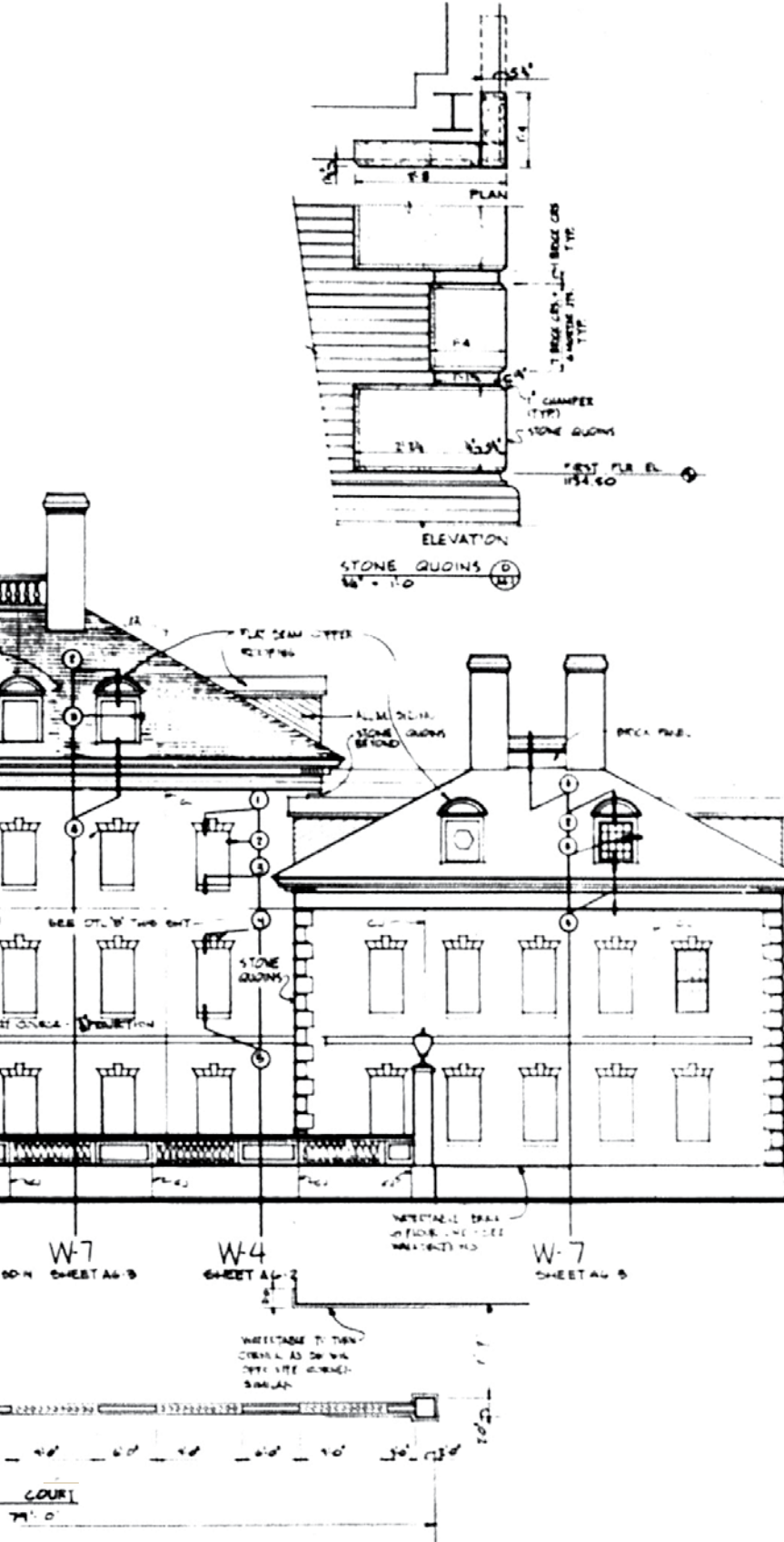
At a time when much of DesignGroup's work focused on healthcare, this was an early, and significant, contribution to the firm's diversifying project portfolio.

The stately, authentic Williamsburg character of this building expressed the image Shelby Mutual desired to project to the insurance industry and local community. In fact, the client insisted on the Williamsburg design, which required additional research and project cost. When Clyde Gosnell mentioned how the added effort could impact the budget, the company CFO stated "there is *no* budget," giving the team carte blanche to get it right. "A project with no budget was unheard of," recalled Clyde. It allowed the team to experiment with building orientation and passive solar features, which controlled transfer of heating and cooling relating to time of day and exposure to solar gain or loss.

Project Size:
164,000 SF

Project Cost:
\$11 million

Completion:
1980



The Cold Call Corvette

En route to a prospective client interview in northern Ohio, Clyde spotted a sign for Shelby Mutual and pulled over to see its building. The company's CEO spotted Clyde's turquoise 1960 Corvette and made a point of speaking with him – the CEO had owned one years earlier and asked if Clyde would take him for a spin. Clyde agreed, and, during the drive, introduced himself as an architect. The CEO then mentioned that his company had just purchased an additional 25 acres and asked if Clyde would be interested in helping plan new office space. Clyde's response: "When do we start?"



- The HVAC system was advanced for its time in terms of efficiency and variable operation.
- The lighting system used troffers that captured lighting heat and transferred it to other parts of the building.
- Decades after the project, Shelby Mutual was sold and the building now serves as the North Central State College Kehoe Center.

“

If we didn't come out of a project with a friendship, we had to evaluate what went wrong. ”

– **Clyde Gosnell**
Co-Founder

State Teachers Retirement System

Columbus, Ohio



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Columbus Chapter AIA Sustainability Award

Governor's Award for Excellence in Energy Efficiency

The constraints of urban projects pose distinct challenges, especially when prime frontage and a tight job site make construction a public exhibition. The State Teachers Retirement System required a dynamic new space to meet their evolving technology needs, and additional construction a decade later to expand the original project. Exterior cladding materials of limestone, black and gray granite, and polished stainless steel were used on both the office space and parking garage, blending both into a cohesive composition. A multilevel internal atrium integrates old and new with a durable design and forward-thinking approach that serves the present and the future.

Project Size:
166,000 SF

Project Cost:
\$81 million

Completion:
1990 and 2000



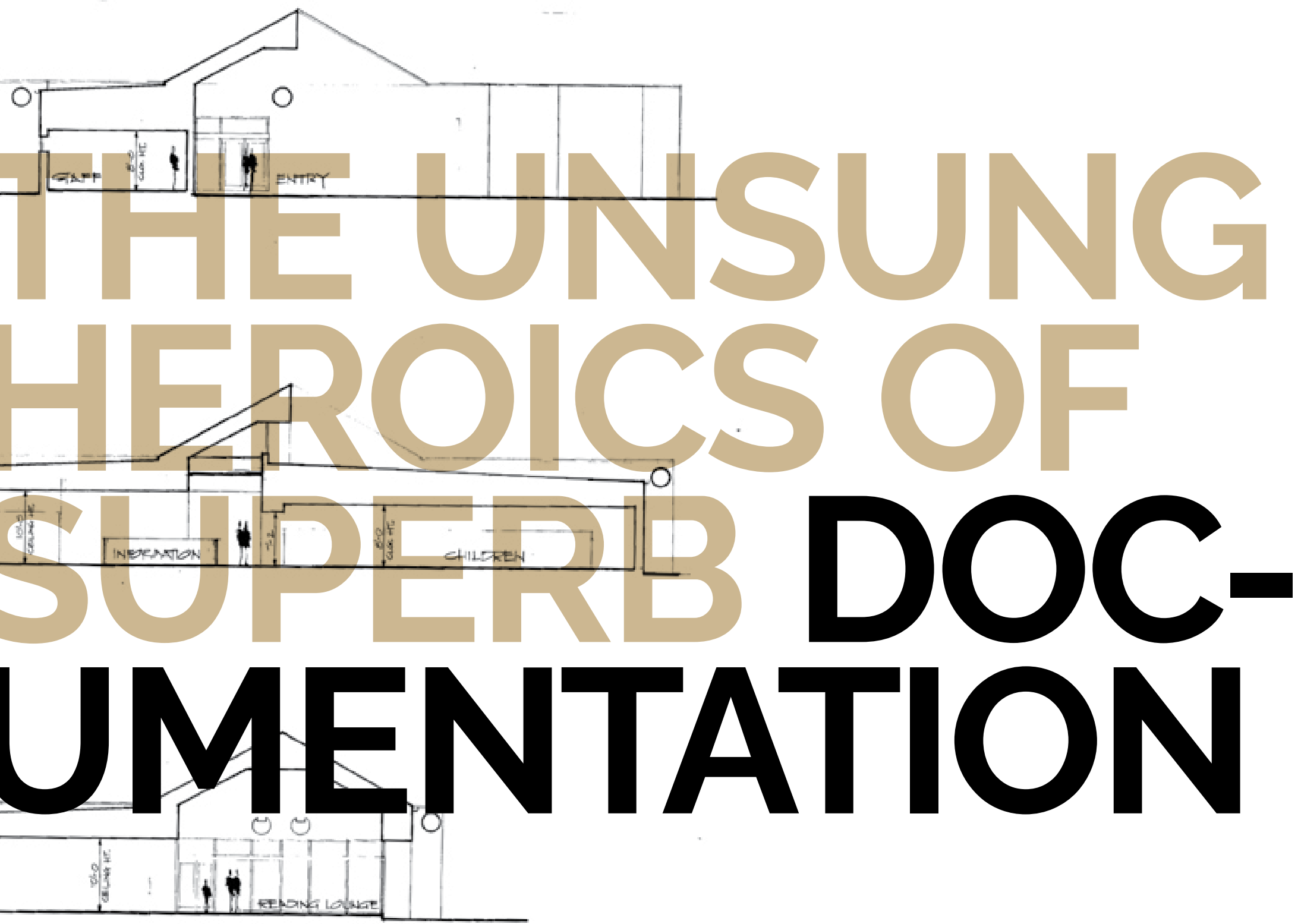
- Efficient building design and extensive incorporation of natural lighting reduced annual energy costs by more than \$113,000.
- Workstations accommodated the sophisticated technology requirements and networking demands of a modern financial organization.
- The new 538-car parking structure seamlessly integrated with the seven-story expansion, making the entire site look and feel as though it was always one project.
- Added safety elements incorporated into the garage included security cameras throughout and glass-enclosed stairways on the exterior walls.

“

STRS needed to recruit the best and brightest to serve their growing membership. We knew we had to create a new dynamic facility that would inspire the best to work there – and be a good investment for the future.

”

– Jack Hedge
Retired Principal, Designer



THE UNSUNG
HEROICS OF
SUPERB DOCUMENTATION

"Design is the DNA of the firm – always has been and always will be," said Bill Orosz. **"But equally important are the innovations by those who've worked in the technical services side of DesignGroup."**

Well-coordinated document sets are how the firm communicates with teams that ultimately implement the projects. These documents are, essentially, the language through which communication occurs with customers, owners, partners, and builders. "Everything the firm does is facilitated by a well-orchestrated architectural process," said Bill. "And solid documents."

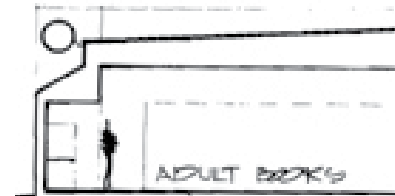
"Quality documentation is vital to project success," said Senior Project Architect, Tom Gerken. "It brings

so much value to the client and the process of transitioning from design to construction. And no one does it better than our team."

The technical documentation specialists at DesignGroup had the bar raised high and early, thanks to the unique, two-generation team of Tracy Van Neil and her father, George, who preceded her at DG. They're the ones responsible for a project's spec book, the incredibly detailed manual that specifies every detail of a design. It's the lingua franca used by vendors, installers, contractors, and partners. "It's incredibly important," said Principal Jennifer Horvath. "The spec book is the glue, the translation of design intent to building construction."

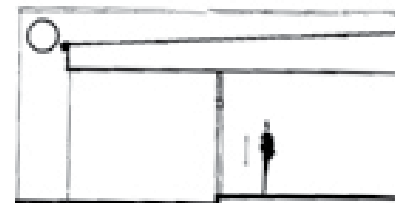
SECTION A

1/8" = 1'-0"



SECTION B

1/8" = 1'-0"



SECTION C

1/8" = 1'-0"

