

## AIA Nebraska Honors Eight Projects

**Summary:** AIA Nebraska chose among 66 entries and presented two Honor Awards, three Citations, and three Honorable Mentions at this year's Excellence in Architecture Banquet, September 15, in Omaha. Jury members—Eddie Jones, AIA, Jones Studio; Jack DeBartolo 3, AIA, DeBartolo Architects; and Jay Silverberg, AIA, Gould Evans—all hail from Phoenix. AIA Nebraska's annual competition considers built and unbuilt projects in the categories of new construction, extended use, details, unbuilt, and masonry (sponsored by the Nebraska Masonry Institute).

### Honor Awards: New Construction



**Project:** 5550 McKinley House  
**Location:** Omaha  
**Architect:** Randy Brown Architects  
**Client:** Randy Brown  
A young couple with two children

bought an old farmhouse and 10 acres of property, with the intent of creating a perpetual "laboratory for architecture experiments" by living in the house and phasing construction projects. The first phase was to clean up the surrounding landscape and create outdoor play areas, which were completed a year ago. Phase 2 construction on a 3,000-square-foot living/sleeping vessel has reached substantial completion. The design is to explore ways to intertwine the man-made with natural. To achieve this, the land has been sculpted into different platforms with manmade geometries. A mowed grass lawn in the shape of a folded line runs throughout the site, acting as the string to tie the project together.

Photo © Randy Brown Architects.



**Project:** Monarch Place  
**Location:** Omaha  
**Architect:** Randy Brown Architects  
**Client:** Quantum Quality Real Estate  
The architects believe they answered the question: "Can a commercial retail building be beautiful?" Their challenge was to design a commercial retail building on the edge of Omaha, with the goals of drawing people's attention as they drive by, creating a public outdoor space, and incorporating plantings in artistic ways. Their

solution looked to the billboard as a conceptual starting point and "incorporated the billboard's structural steel pieces, skin, and lighting into the building design." Using steel stud skins, the architect aimed to "create the transparency of the old barns" that used to be on the site.

Photo © Farshid Assassi.

### Honor Awards: Unbuilt



**Project:** Allwine Prairie Research Center

**Location:** Bennington, Neb.

**Architect:** Randy Brown Architects

**Client:** University of Nebraska Department of Biology, Bennington, Neb.

The research center will be constructed on a native prairie site owned by the University of Nebraska at Omaha. The prairie is a research site for the biology department's focus on burning of native prairies. The program calls for spaces for labs, offices, and conferencing; a caretaker living space; and a large public space for community education and interaction with the prairie. The architects looked to grass plants as inspiration, noting how they grow in a telescoping manner. The open interior frames views to the prairie, while the research labs are located in a two-story space that can

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be viewed from the public space.

### Citations: New Construction



**Project:** Performing Arts Center

**Location:** Omaha

**Architect:** HDR Architecture Inc., in collaboration with Polshek

**Client:** Omaha Performing Arts

The Omaha Performing Arts Center is the next significant cultural centerpiece for the City of Omaha's ever-growing civic institutions, bringing an important focus and presence to the musical arts community across the Midwest. As an urban ensemble, the center reinforces existing patterns and connections with the community of Omaha while creating new possibilities for the development of the musical arts within a series of memorable spaces for both teaching and performance. These include a 2,000-seat major concert hall, a 450-seat flexible chamber music hall, and an outdoor performance venue within the center courtyard. (This project also won an Honorable Mention Award for Details.) Photo © Tom Kessler.



**Project:** Hidden Creek (Urban Development)

**Location:** Omaha

**Architect:** Randy Brown Architects

**Client:** Quantum Quality Real Estate

The challenge for this project, the architects say, is to create a new type of suburban development that both responds to the demands of single-family homebuyers and addresses the problematic nature of sprawling cookie-cutter housing developments. Each house will be designed with green technologies, including active and passive solar design, green roofs, and gray-water recycling systems. The Eco-Village offers 11 different custom architect-designed homes. Each plan will be unique based on its location on the site. Further, each house will be designed to allow views to the nature preserve or the tree-lined creek. Photo © Randy Brown Architects. Citation: Unbuilt



**Project:** The Salvation Army Omaha Kroc Center

**Location:** Omaha

**Architect:** HDR Architecture Inc.

**Client:** The Salvation Army

The Salvation Army Omaha Ray and Joan Kroc Corps Community Center. (RJKCCC) will serve as a community node, a gathering place where lives are transformed, the programs and mission of The Salvation Army are met, and the dreams of philanthropist Joan Kroc are fulfilled. The architects hope that the architecture will inspire, support, and serve the programs and provide an environment for individuals

to discover their gifts and realize their potentials and relationships to be built. Photo courtesy of the architect.

### Honorable Mention: New Construction



**Project:** Salon Gallerie

**Location:** Omaha

**Architect:** Randy Brown Architects

The architects say their challenge for this project was to create private rental places for entrepreneurs in hair styling, skincare, manicure/pedicure, and massage therapy. They strove to design creative space, especially in the public hallways and the variety of individual work spaces. The design creates unusual room shapes with large amounts of glass to expand space and make the rooms feel larger and open.

Photo © Farshid Assassi.

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### Honorable Mention: Masonry

**Project:** Ralston High School

**Location:** Ralston, Neb.

**Architect:** DLR Group

**Client:** Ralston Public Schools

This school—faced with inadequate wiring for computers, leaky roofs, poor acoustics, and various other problems—was a prime candidate for extensive renovations. In the course of renovation, the architects gave the school a new auditorium to be shared with the community, as well a media center, commons area, administrative offices, and an expanded kitchen and renovated pool. The jury was taken with the masonry on the wing walls as well as for the entry walk that ties wall and ground planes together.

Photo © Tom Kessler.”

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#### Reference:

*AIArchitect* thanks Sara A. Kay, executive director of AIA Nebraska, for her help with this article.

AIA Nebraska also was host to this year's AIA Central States regional awards, which can be viewed on the chapter's Web site. [[www.aiane.org](http://www.aiane.org)]