A CIVIC CENTER DESIGNED **FOR THE PEOPLE**

2026 AIA INDIANA COTE AWARDS
FISHERS CITY HALL + ART CENTER

Category: New Construction (>$5M)

Type: Municipal

Address: 1 Municipal Dr, Fishers, IN 46038

Substantial Completion: May 2024

ARCHITECT'S STATEMENT

Following structural assessments that determined the existing City Hall was no longer viable, the City of Fishers initiated a project that would not only replace the facility, but redefine its role within a rapidly growing community. Following nearly 700% population growth since the initial building was constructed, the Fishers City Hall + Art Center was conceived as a multipurpose civic building that supports government operations while expanding access to arts, culture, and public life, addressing both current demands and future growth.

A Building for the People

The project is organized to prioritize public access and community use. Primary public-facing programs are located at grade to create an active and accessible civic environment. A central breezeway establishes a clear public spine through the building, improving pedestrian circulation between Municipal Drive and Central Green while introducing daylight and visual connections into the core of the plan.

This organizing strategy allows the building to support a range of simultaneous activities, including performances, exhibitions, classes, and informal gathering. Transparency at the ground level reinforces visibility into these programs, strengthening the building's civic presence and establishing its role as a shared community resource.

Accessibility considerations informed both site and building design. The approach includes a gently sloped main entry walk, and interior spaces incorporate varied seating types and configurations to support a range of users. Assistive listening systems in the theater, gender-neutral restrooms, ADA showers, an adult changing table, and respite spaces are integrated to support broader access and inclusive use. These requirements shaped planning decisions and reinforce the building's role as a public-facing civic space.

A Prominent, Unique Site

The site occupies a central position within the City's civic campus, with direct proximity to Central Green, the Nickel Plate Trail, downtown amenities, and structured parking. Its high visibility and public frontage on all sides presented both an opportunity and a constraint, requiring a building that could respond to multiple edges while accommodating circulation, service, and landscape infrastructure.

The building form follows the curvature of Municipal Drive, with strategic shifts and setbacks to create space for pedestrian movement, planting, storm water management, and site access. The structure is elevated above grade to establish a civic presence and define the pedestrian realm along the street. Service functions and mechanical systems are integrated within the architecture and screened using consistent material strategies to maintain a cohesive exterior expression.

Because the building is visible from all sides, service and back-of-house functions are carefully integrated to minimize their impact on the public experience. These decisions ensure that the building maintains a consistent civic presence while meeting operational requirements.

Addressing a Gap in the Arts

Community engagement identified a need for expanded access to arts programming, including gallery space, instructional areas, and performance venues. The project addresses this gap by integrating arts and civic functions within a single facility, allowing the building to support a broader range of public activities.

The 250-person theater is designed as a multipurpose space capable of accommodating performances, city council meetings, lectures, and community events. Retractable seating and adaptable floor configurations allow the space to shift between uses, supporting long-term flexibility and efficient use.

Gallery spaces are organized to support a range of exhibition types, with both outward-facing and more controlled interior environments. Mobile display systems allow these spaces to be reconfigured over time, while adjacent classrooms and studios support ongoing educational programming. The placement of these functions at the ground level reinforces visibility and encourages public engagement.

Modern, Collaborative Workspace

Municipal office functions are located on the upper levels, providing a controlled and secure working environment while maintaining visual connections to the surrounding civic landscape. Generous glazing supports balanced natural daylight, with 85% of regularly occupied spaces providing views to the exterior. This approach improves visual comfort, reduces reliance on artificial lighting, and strengthens the connection between staff and the broader civic environment.

A central open stair connects office levels to shared amenity spaces, including a social hub and roof terrace. This vertical connection supports circulation, encourages movement, and facilitates informal interaction among staff. The workplace is organized to support both focused work and collaborative activity, with flexibility to accommodate future growth and evolving operational needs.

SUSTAINABILITY STATEMENT

The project integrates sustainable design strategies across site, building systems, and material selection to reduce resource demand and support long-term performance. Environmental considerations informed key design decisions from early planning through construction, with an emphasis on efficiency, durability, and integration with the surrounding civic context.

Water and landscape systems are designed to operate as an integrated environmental infrastructure. The landscape functions as a performative system rather than residual space, with bioswales and a rain garden managing storm water on site. Native and adaptive plantings reduce irrigation demand and support ecological performance within the constrained urban parcel. Additional strategies, including a green roof and connections to nearby detention systems, further reduce runoff and lessen impacts on municipal infrastructure.

Material selection reinforces durability and long-term performance across the building. At the ground level, masonry elements establish a civic base and provide resilience in high-traffic areas. Upper levels utilize metal panel systems and high-performance glazing assemblies to reduce weight while maintaining envelope performance and long-term durability. The overall material palette, brick, limestone, metal panel, concrete, and glass, was selected for its longevity, low maintenance requirements, and compatibility with the surrounding context.

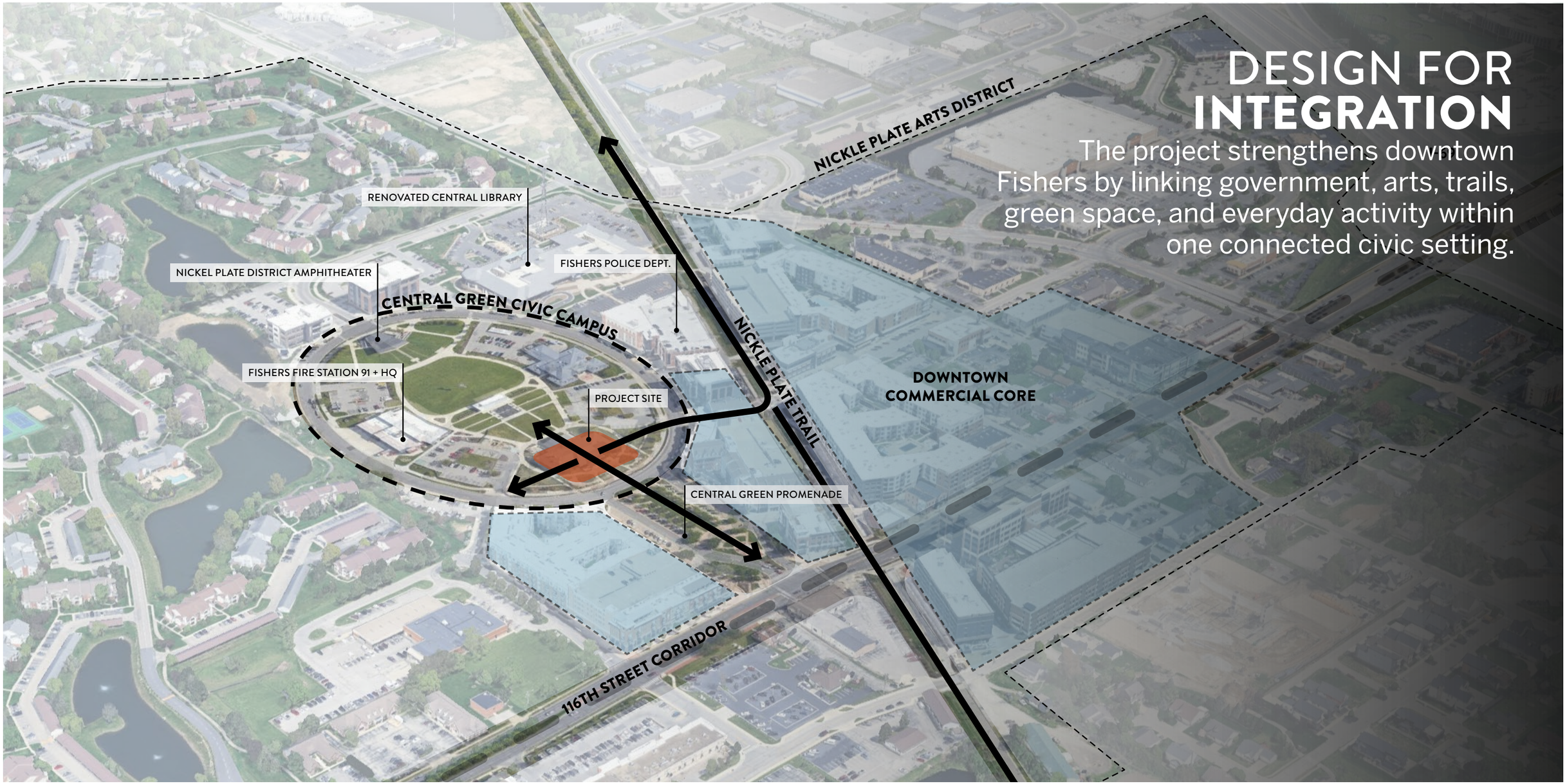
Energy performance and indoor environmental quality are addressed through an integrated approach to envelope design, lighting, and mechanical systems. Wall assemblies exceed code minimum insulation requirements, and glazing is carefully balanced to provide daylight while limiting heat gain. Daylighting strategies extend across public and workspace areas, enhancing visual quality while reducing reliance on artificial lighting, with a majority of regularly occupied spaces receiving natural light and views to the exterior. A reflective roof surface further reduces heat absorption, and all-LED lighting minimizes electrical demand. Mechanical systems support occupant health through strategically located outdoor air intakes and MERV 13 filtration, improving indoor air quality and contributing to a more comfortable and well-performing interior environment.

The project's downtown location supports walkability and access to existing infrastructure, including Central Green, the Nickel Plate Trail, and nearby civic amenities. This siting strategy reduces reliance on vehicular travel while strengthening connections between public, cultural, and recreational systems. Additionally, electric vehicle charging infrastructure supports lower-emission transportation.

Together, these strategies establish a coordinated approach to sustainable and environmental design, aligning building performance with long-term civic use, operational efficiency, and environmental responsibility.

DESIGN FOR **INTEGRATION**

The project strengthens downtown Fishers by linking government, arts, trails, green space, and everyday activity within one connected civic setting.



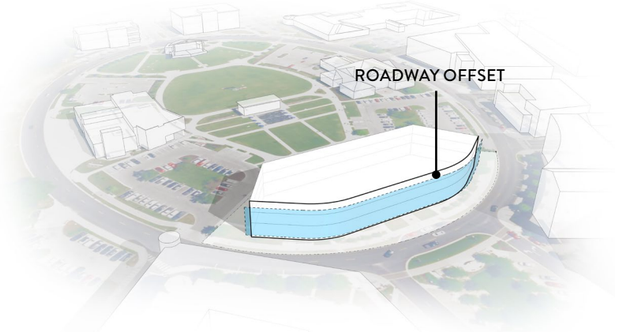
AT THE CROSSROADS OF CIVIC LIFE

The project advances Design for Integration through a site strategy that reinforces what already exists. Located within the Central Green civic campus, it transforms a constrained infill parcel into a highly connected civic and cultural anchor rather than pushing development into a new greenfield area. This decision strengthens downtown density, preserves other land, and situates the building within an active network of public institutions, amenities, and shared spaces. The form and placement of the project respond directly to the surrounding context, allowing the building to participate in the larger civic framework of Fishers. Its impact is amplified by its proximity to the Nickel Plate Trail, downtown commercial core, structured parking, public events, and nearby green space. Together, these connections bring multimodal access, cultural programming, government services, and daily community life into one walkable district. In this way, the project is not simply placed within downtown Fishers—it helps unify the many parts of it, strengthening the relationship between people, place, and public life.

DESIGN FOR **INTEGRATION**

RESPONDING TO MUNICIPAL DRIVE

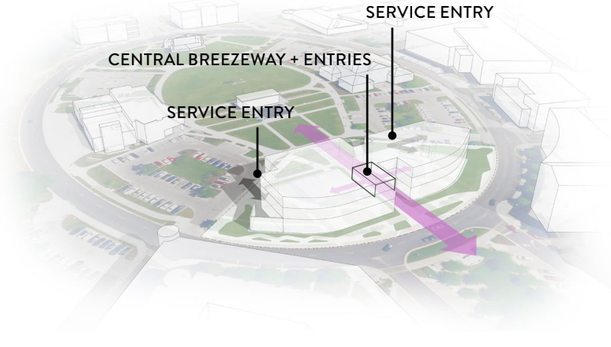
In the heart of the city's center and cultural district, the site was perfect for its visibility and walk-ability. Yet, there were some significant challenges to overcome. The chosen plot of land features a dramatic curve and the desired public-facing nature on all sides was difficult to achieve. Optimizing the lots square footage, the building follows the curved municipal drive. It is intentionally shifted back to make space for critical site infrastructure and amenities including public landscape areas, a rain garden, bike parking, and various pathways for circulation.



DESIGN FOR **INTEGRATION**

INVITING THE PUBLIC TO AND THROUGH

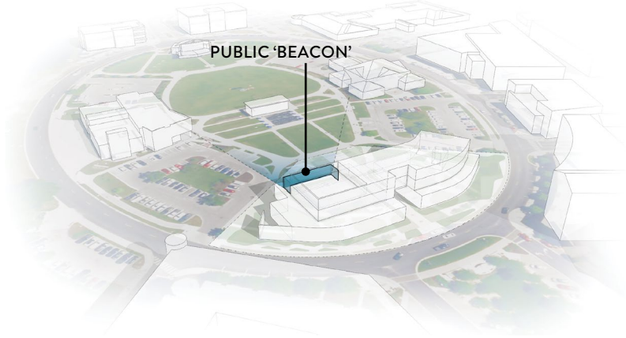
An inviting breezeway with primary entry points was incorporated to allow activity to flow through and to the Central Green. This improves pedestrian circulation, brings daylight and views into the building, and can serve as space for events, classes, or as an extension of the lobby spaces for theater events.



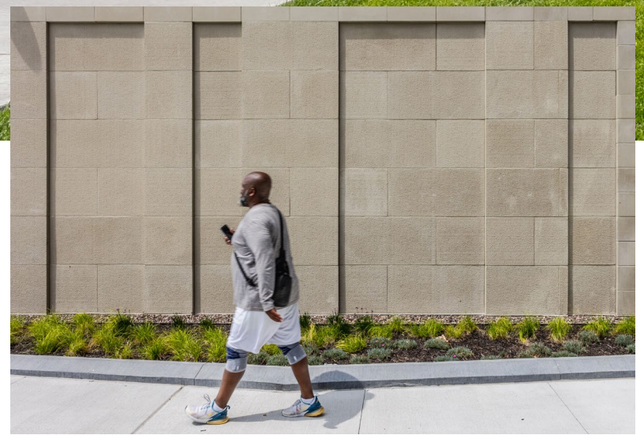
DESIGN FOR **INTEGRATION**

A COMMUNITY BEACON

A color-changing beacon transforms the theater into a civic landmark that connects design, identity, and public life. Positioned above the theater, the illuminated beacon unites placemaking, way-finding, and community engagement in a single architectural gesture. Visible from the surrounding public realm, it signals the theater as a destination and creates a memorable civic presence after dark. By adapting its color to reflect city events, performances, and moments of community significance, the beacon allows the building to participate in the life of the city in real time.



DESIGN FOR **INTEGRATION**



CREATING VISUAL CONNECTIONS + INTEREST

With the site building fronted by a primary roadway to the south and the Central Green to the north, careful consideration was taken to create moments that would connect interior spaces to the exterior. Glazing along the breezeway connects lobby and gallery spaces to passersby, while the large expanses of glazing at levels two and three provide views and connection for city staff to the area they serve. When opaque exterior walls for security and privacy purposes were needed, subtle rhythms of texture were introduced to create visual interest and “artful” detailing to the building.

DESIGN FOR **EQUITABLE COMMUNITIES**

The project re-imagines City Hall as an open, inclusive destination where government, arts, and community life are designed to be shared.

A FLEXIBLE CIVIC FOYER

Both the naturally daylit city hall lobby and the theater serve as a pre and post function area for events while also hosting rotating community galleries and programming. A cultural concierge desk within the lobby provides a welcoming information center for visitors while also being designed to be a ticketing or refreshment counter for various shows

OPEN TO ART AND COMMUNITY

On the east side of the breezeway, a lobby space is anchored by two gallery spaces: one open and visible to the public through windows, and one internal and more intimate to serve a multitude of exhibition types throughout the year. Mobile art walls allow for the galleries and lobby spaces to be used in a variety of ways, displaying a breadth of artwork.

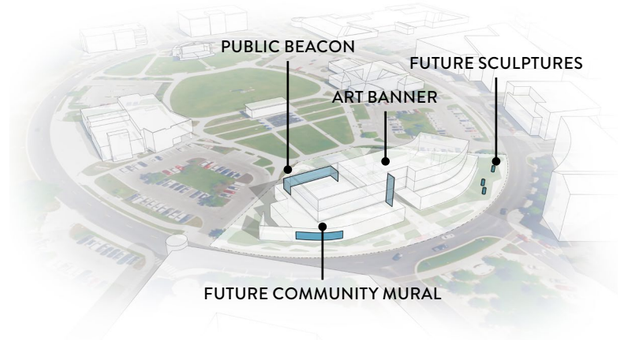
DESIGN FOR **EQUITABLE COMMUNITIES**

DESIGNED FOR DIGNITY AND ACCESS

The project advances accessibility by creating a civic and cultural environment that is welcoming, usable, and supportive for a broad range of users. A gently sloped main entry walk improves access to the building and public realm, while varied seating types and designated companion spaces support comfort and choice throughout shared spaces. Inside, assistive listening support in the theater, gender-neutral restrooms, ADA showers, an adult changing table, and respite or mother's rooms help remove barriers and better accommodate different physical, sensory, and care giving needs. Together, these features reinforce the project's larger goal of making participation in civic and cultural life more inclusive.

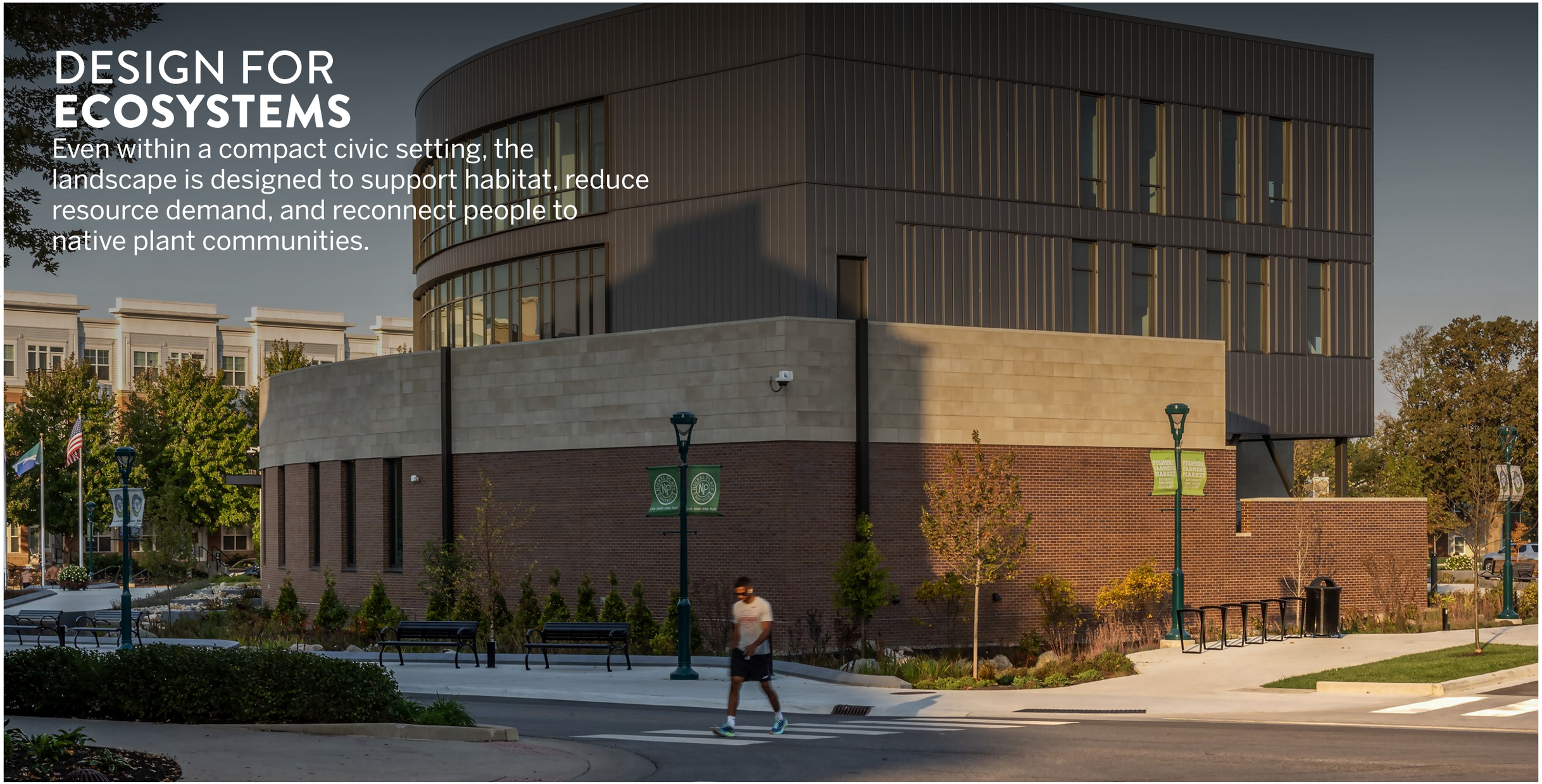
EMBRACING THE ARTS

On the exterior, various locations were developed with elevating the arts in mind. Along the breezeway, a 40-foot banner creates a moment for large city messaging or art. Landscape sculpture pads were located throughout the rain garden for a future installments by community artists. At the north side of the building, color changing glows up-light the white metal panel that clads the second floor of the theater, creating a "community lantern" that can be programmed to various evening events within the Central Green and Amphitheater.



DESIGN FOR **ECOSYSTEMS**

Even within a compact civic setting, the landscape is designed to support habitat, reduce resource demand, and reconnect people to native plant communities.



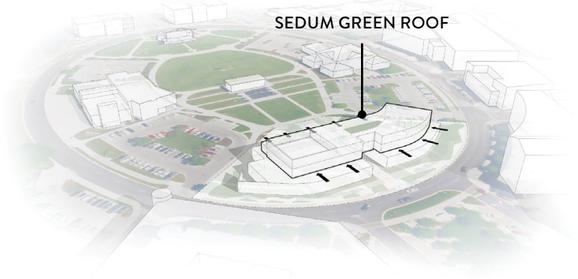
ECOLOGICAL PERFORMANCE IN A HIGHLY URBAN SITE

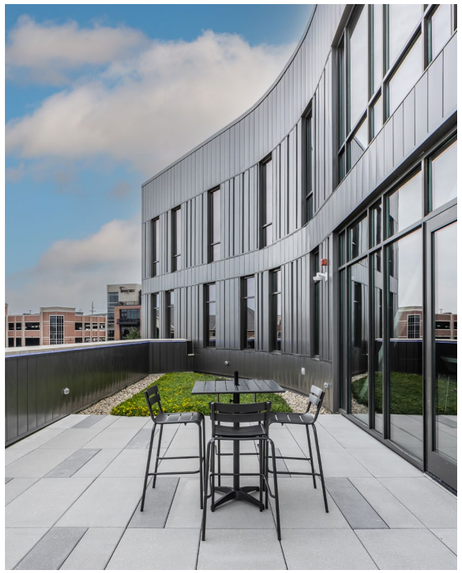
The project advances Design for Ecosystems through a landscape strategy that pairs public use with ecological value. Because the site is limited in size and fronted on all sides, planted areas were intentionally designed to work hard, supporting civic identity while also contributing to habitat and biodiversity. Minimized turf areas, pollinator planting in low-traffic zones, reduced irrigation demand, and a green roof all help extend ecological performance across the site while reinforcing a more resilient urban landscape. The result is a public realm that supports a richer ecosystem and creates a stronger connection between the building, its users, and the natural character of place.

DESIGN FOR **ECOSYSTEMS**

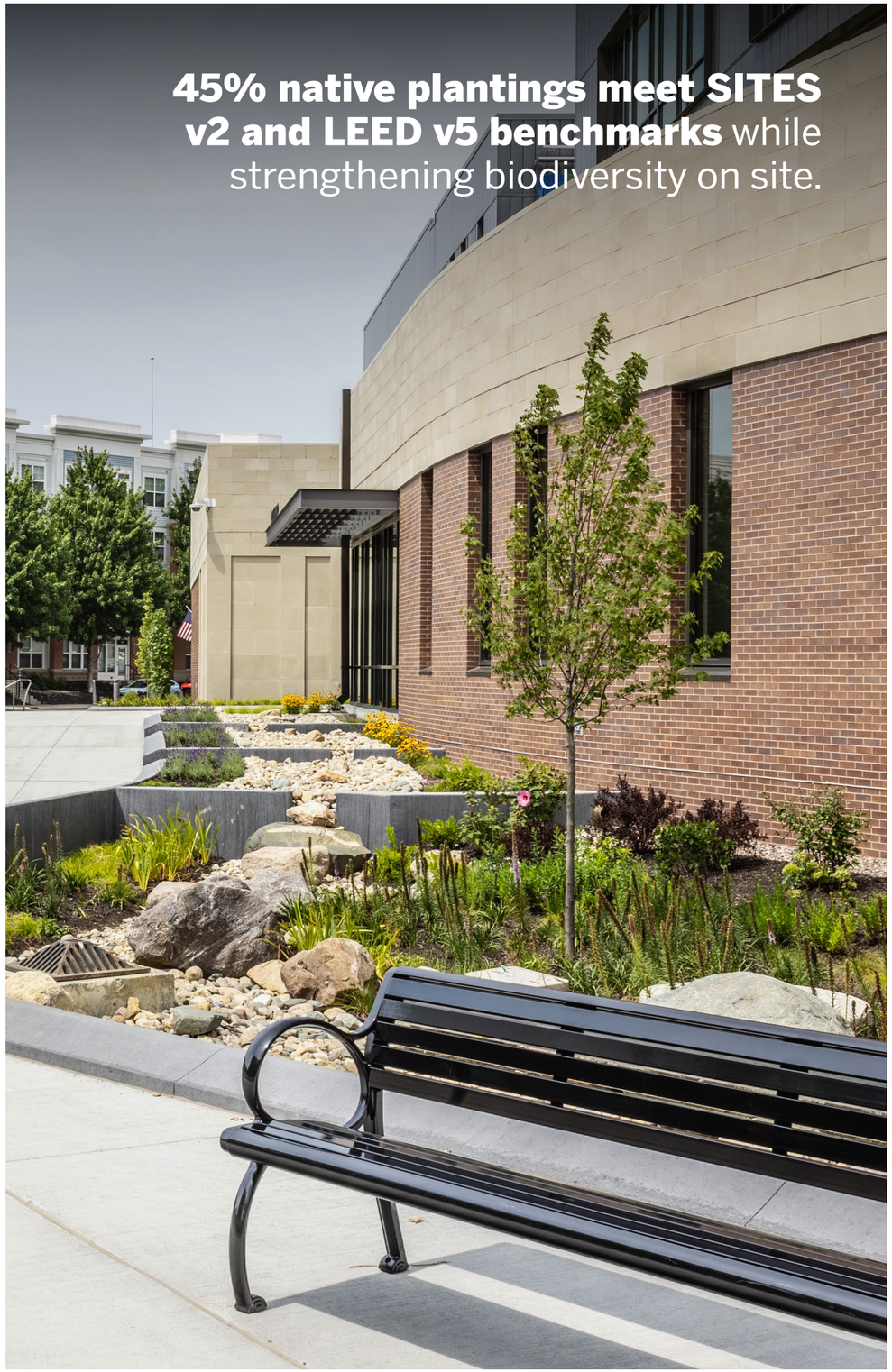
A PURPOSEFUL LANDSCAPE

Due to the limited site area and being a building with frontage on all sides the landscape had to be designed with careful coordination with the building and context in order to fit seamlessly into the surroundings. A rain garden located at the southeast corner of the building creates a natural landscape buffer to the roadway for the building, while also providing storm water infrastructure for the building and site. Other site features include a north plaza space designed for art classes and future farmers market programming, areas for bike parking, a sloped walkway, and stair along the south of the building that provides a civic presence for the building will also being universally accessible.





45% native plantings meet SITES v2 and LEED v5 benchmarks while strengthening biodiversity on site.



DESIGN FOR **WATER**

Low-flow systems, reduced irrigation demand, and on-site storm water treatment help the project conserve potable water and lessen its impact on municipal infrastructure.

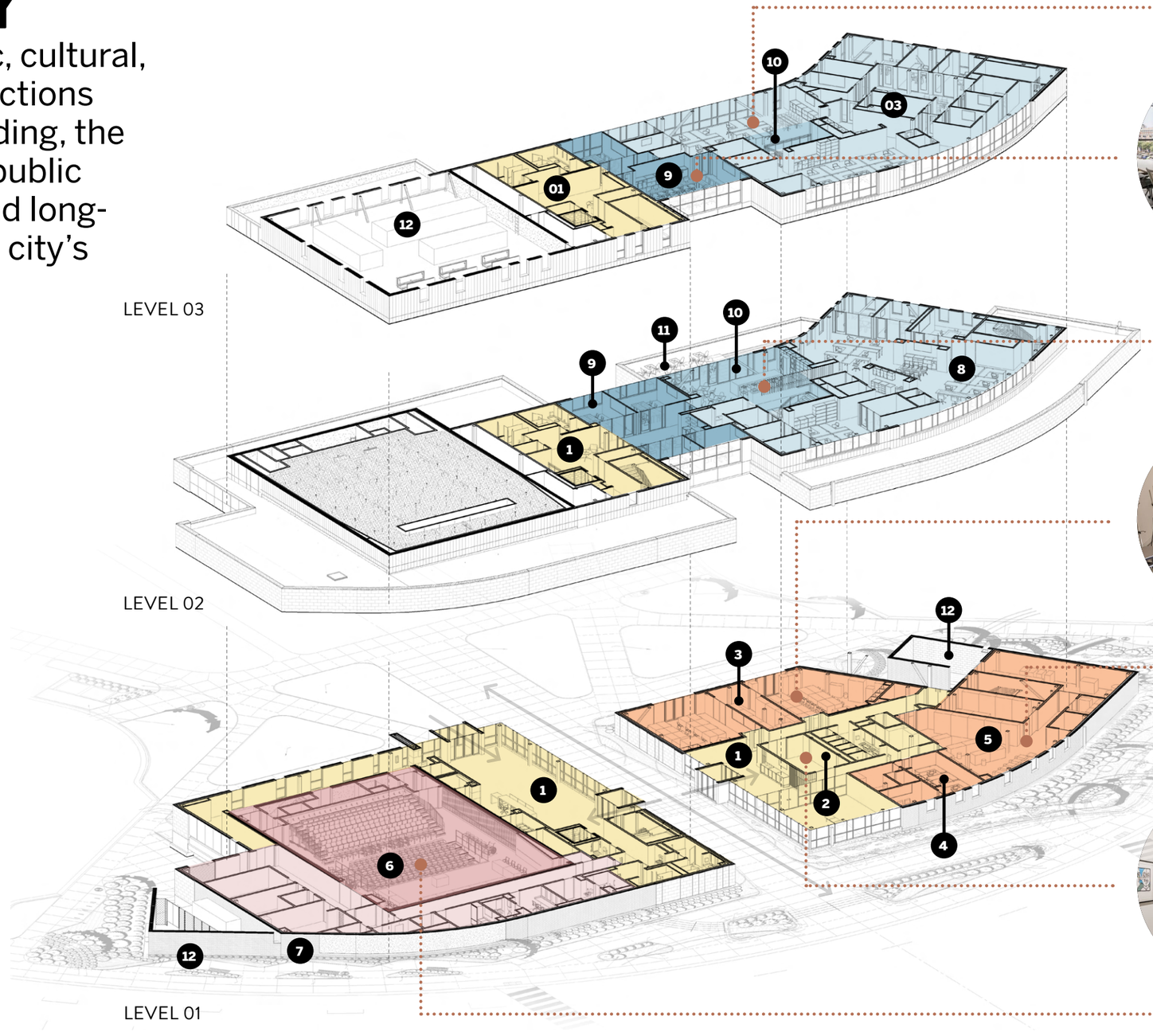
At 5 GAL/SF the project achieves a **50% reduction in water use** relative to the typical office benchmark of 10 GAL/SF.

USING WATER WISELY

The project reduces both indoor water use and outdoor water demand while treating storm water as a site resource. Low-flow plumbing fixtures help lower potable water consumption, contributing to water use of just 5 gal/SF—well below the typical range for office buildings. Outside, native and adaptive plantings reduce irrigation demand, while irrigation for the surrounding public green is supported by water drawn from nearby detention ponds rather than relying solely on potable supply. Bioswales and the rain garden treat storm water on site, helping slow runoff and improve the performance of the landscape. A sedum roof further reduces water impact while contributing to occupant well-being and the overall resilience of the building envelope.

DESIGN FOR **ECONOMY**

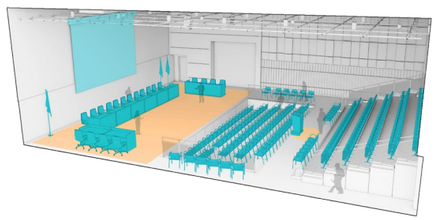
By combining civic, cultural, and workplace functions in one flexible building, the project increases public value, daily use, and long-term return on the city's investment.



DESIGN FOR **ECONOMY & CHANGE**

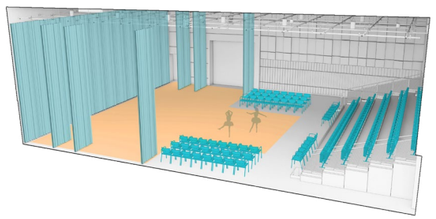
The project re-imagines City Hall as an adaptable civic destination where government, arts, and community life can share space, resources, and future possibilities.

CITY HALL MEETING



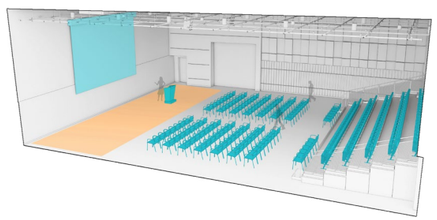
Configuration Elements:
- Retractable seating
- Pit deployed with projection monitor
- Movable podium and counsel tables as needed

THEATRICAL/PERFORMANCE



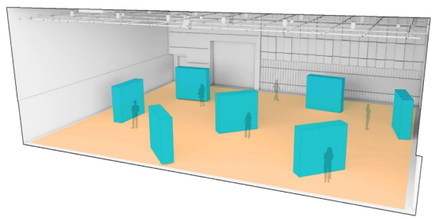
Configuration Elements:
- Retractable seating
- Theatrical curtains
- Loose seating as needed

LECTURE PRESENTATION



Configuration Elements:
- Retractable seating
- Projection monitor
- Loose seating as needed

ART SHOW



Configuration Elements:
- Seating and pit in flat floor mode
- Movable walls brought in for display

A SHARED CIVIC, ART & PUBLIC RESOURCE

A 250-person multipurpose “courtyard” theater with retractable seating and pit area anchors the west side of the public breezeway on the ground floor. From a traditional proscenium theater to hybrid layouts to a completely flat floor configuration that city staff or community groups can utilize, this highly flexible design approach enables the space to host a broad variety of uses including dance performances, city council meetings, ‘town-hall’ discussions, music ensembles, art galleries, lectures, and more.

DESIGN FOR ENERGY

From facade design to lighting and rooftop reflectance, the project uses layered strategies to improve efficiency and reduce operational energy use.

Envelope upgrades **improved thermal performance by 30%**, while a **32% window-to-wall ratio** and **0.43 W/SF lighting power density** balance civic openness, daylight, and envelope performance.

AN ENVELOPE-FIRST APPROACH TO ENERGY PERFORMANCE

The building design prioritizes long-term energy performance by reducing future operational demand through an envelope-first strategy. Insulation was increased throughout the wall and roof assemblies, with exterior walls designed to achieve an effective R-value of R-27 compared to the code minimum of R-20.5, and roof assemblies designed to achieve R-36 compared to the code minimum of R-20. Together, these improvements strengthen thermal performance by approximately 30%, helping lower future energy costs while improving overall building efficiency.

Window area was carefully managed to support daylight, visibility, and transparency without overextending the facade beyond recommended performance targets. A 32% window-to-wall ratio balances civic openness with envelope performance, helping provide daylight and views while limiting unwanted heat gain. Additional strategies, including a white roof to reduce heat gain, all-LED lighting fixtures, achieving a lighting power density of 0.43 W/SF and electric vehicle charging infrastructure, extend the project's performance goals beyond the envelope and support cleaner long-term operations.

DESIGN FOR **WELL BEING**

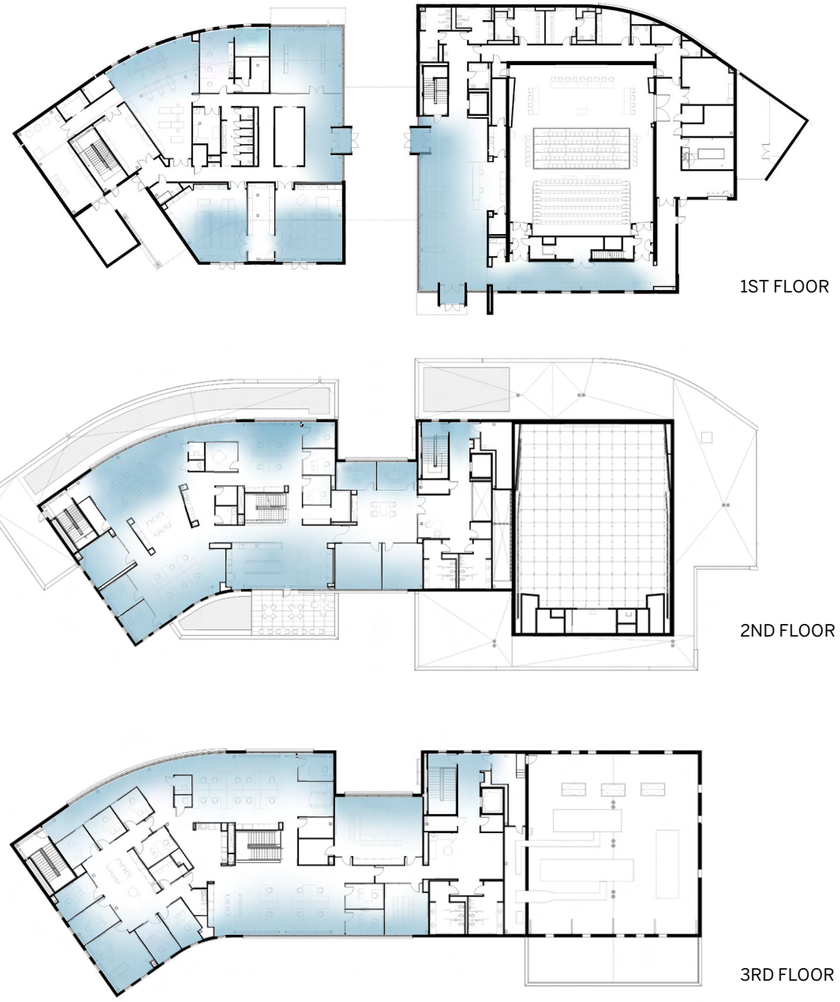
Access to daylight, views, clean air, and active public space supports comfort, connection, and everyday health inside and out.

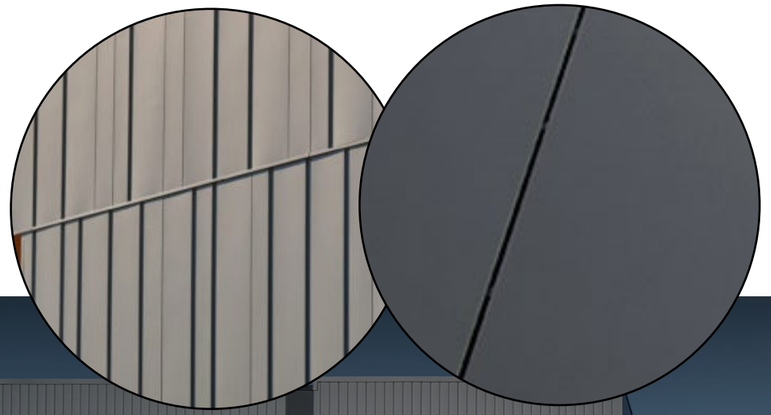
CONNECTED TO GREEN SPACE AND COMMUNITY LIFE

Access to Central Green and the adjacent amphitheater extends well-being beyond the building by linking daily civic life to nature, activity, and shared public experience. More than a passive open space, this public green serves as an active community hub for concerts, markets, festivals, and everyday gathering, bringing energy and connection to the heart of Fishers. By orienting the project toward this landscape, the design gives occupants and visitors a stronger relationship to the outdoors while reinforcing the role of public green space as an essential part of health, community, and quality of life.

DAYLIGHT, VIEWS, AND A HEALTHIER WORKPLACE

The project creates an interior environment that supports comfort, connection, and everyday health. Located on the upper levels, municipal office spaces are organized to maximize access to balanced natural daylight and outward views, with 85% of regularly occupied spaces connected to the outdoors. This access to daylight reduces reliance on artificial lighting while strengthening staff connection to the activity, green space, and civic life at the heart of Fishers. A central open stair anchors the social hub and roof terrace, encouraging movement, informal collaboration, and shared moments throughout the workday. Indoor environmental quality is further supported through carefully located outdoor air intakes, positioned away from exhaust sources, and MERV 13 filtration, helping provide cleaner air for occupants. Together, these strategies create a healthier, more collaborative workplace that supports both individual well-being and a stronger sense of community.



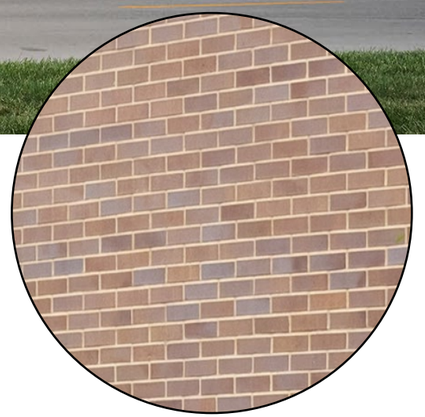


DESIGNED FOR DURABILITY AND LONG-TERM VALUE

The project prioritized materials that are durable, resilient, and appropriate for a long-lasting civic building. Brick, limestone, metal panel, and concrete were chosen for their ability to withstand heavy public use, support a long service life, and reduce maintenance and replacement over time. At the same time, the palette draws from the surrounding context, creating a building that feels rooted in place while expressing the innovation and identity of Fishers. Artful detailing with the exterior materials adds rhythm and texture without relying on short-lived decorative elements, reinforcing a resource-conscious approach that values permanence, adaptability, and long-term civic investment.

DESIGN FOR **RESOURCES**

The building's material palette balances civic character, contextual fit, and long-term performance through durable, resilient, and low-maintenance design decisions.



The project received the 2024 ICACI Project Award for Best Sustainable Use of Concrete.

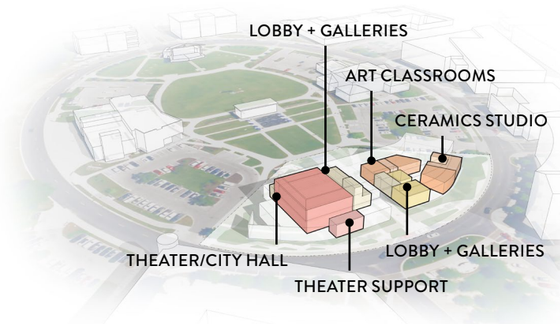
DESIGN FOR **DISCOVERY**

A civic building re-imagined as a place for creativity, learning, and everyday public discovery.

With 52% of the building dedicated to art and public space, the project turns city hall into a platform for learning, creativity, and civic discovery.

DESIGN FOR DISCOVERY THROUGH CREATIVE CIVIC PROGRAMMING

Through a partnership between the City of Fishers and the Indianapolis Art Center, the project launched IAC's first satellite location and transformed the building into a civic platform for art, education, and public discovery. The building invites residents, visitors, city staff, and civic users to engage with creative programming as part of everyday civic life. Flexible classrooms, a ceramics studio, gallery spaces, a theater, and a gallery lobby support art education, exhibitions, performances, lectures, municipal functions, and community events throughout the year. Visual and physical connections to the breezeway and surrounding site make art-making and civic activity visible, strengthening relationships between the city, the arts community, and the public.



PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

Envelope: R-27 exterior walls and R-36 roof, improving thermal performance by approximately 30%
Lighting Power Density: 0.43 W/SF, reducing electrical demand through efficient LED lighting
Window-to-Wall Ratio: 32%, balancing daylight, views, transparency, and envelope performance
Water: 5 gal/SF water use, representing a 50% reduction from typical office benchmarks
Landscape: 45% native plantings, minimized turf, bioswales, rain garden, and sedum green roof
Well-being: 85% of regularly occupied spaces have daylight and views to the exterior
Indoor Air Quality: MERV 13 filtration and outdoor air intakes located away from exhaust sources
Equity + Access: Assistive listening, gender-neutral restrooms, ADA showers, adult changing table, respite/mother's rooms, and varied seating types
Public Value: 52% of the building dedicated to art and public space
Adaptability: 250-seat multipurpose theater with retractable seating and flat-floor configurations for civic, cultural, and community use