

A CAMPUS BUILT TO BELONG

PROJECT NAME **NCAA Headquarters and Hall of Champions**
SUBMISSION CATEGORY **25-Year Award**
PROJECT TYPE **Mixed-Use Civic/Institutional and Historic Preservation/Adaptive Reuse**
PROJECT ADDRESS **White River State Park, 700 W. Washington St., Indianapolis, IN 46204**
DATE OF SUBSTANTIAL COMPLETION **April 2000**

THE CAMPUS INDIANAPOLIS NEEDED TO BUILD

Indianapolis had spent two decades calling itself the nation's amateur sports capital before it had a building to prove it. When the NCAA went looking for a new national headquarters in the late 1990s, the city didn't offer land, it offered an argument: that a governing body built on competition, history, and public access deserved a home inside a city's daily life, not isolated from it.

The NCAA agreed. What resulted is three buildings that behave like one campus—headquarters, conference center, and public museum, organized around a shared plaza open to the Central Canal and White River State Park. More than 25 years later, it still runs exactly as designed: the offices are full, the conference center still hosts national meetings, and the Hall of Champions still opens to the public every day.



The Hall of Champions announces itself before you reach the plaza—banners in five colors, one name, since opening day.

THREE BUILDINGS, ONE PLAZA

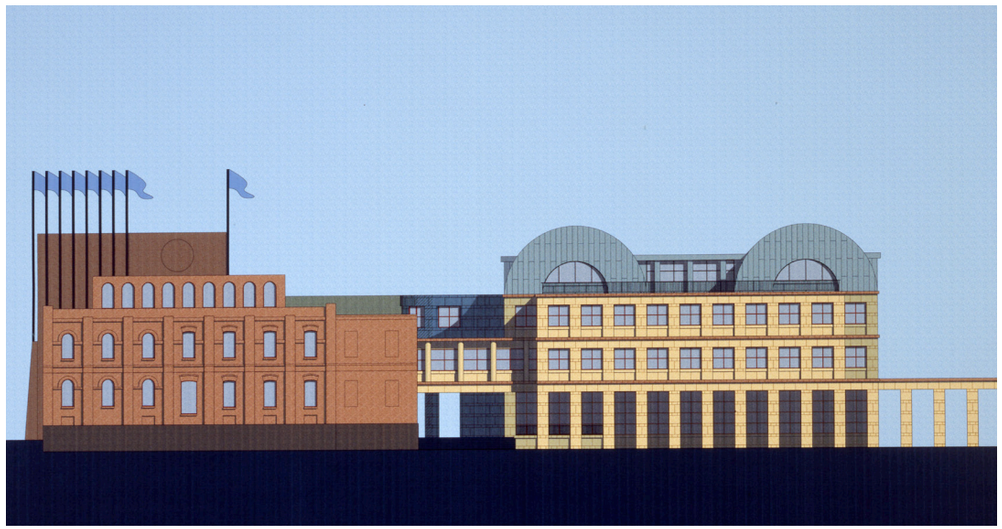
The challenge wasn't ambition, it was reconciliation. A national headquarters, a conference facility, a public museum, and a historic structure all needed to share one prominent park site without any one function overwhelming the rest.

The response: three buildings arranged like furniture on the campus carpet, with the plaza between them as the room that holds the arrangement together—turning three functions into one address.

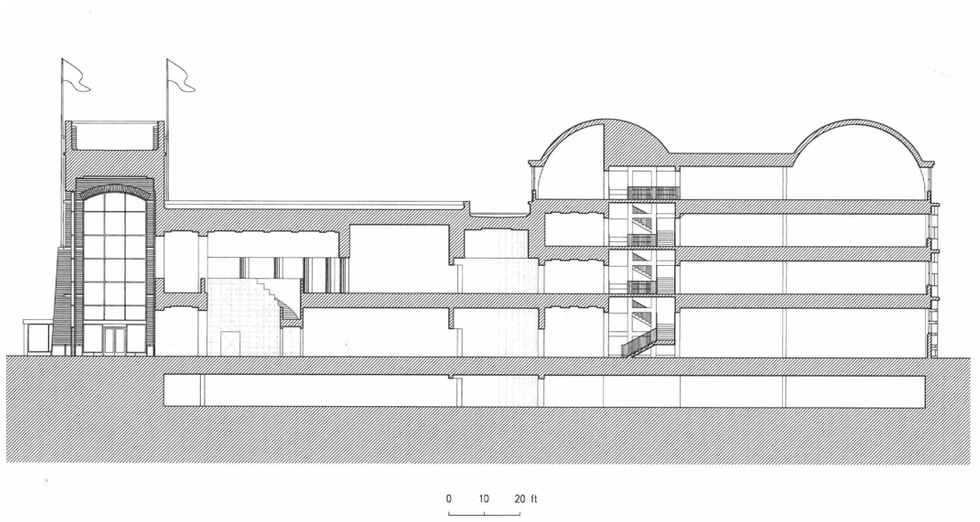
The four-story headquarters anchors the north edge, open-plan and organized around a full-height atrium facing the plaza and park. The conference center is the threshold between headquarters and museum, letting the two run independently or merge for events. The Hall of Champions enters through an arcade borrowed from collegiate athletic facilities, drawing visitors in from the park rather than a parking structure.



Seen from the plaza, the campus reads as a series of distinct forms—the brick headquarters and its flagpoles, the arched brick of the historic Acme-Evans building, the copper-vaulted roof beyond it, and the round glass pavilion marking the stair — never one building, always several.



NCAA Headquarters & Hall of Champions—Central Canal Elevation



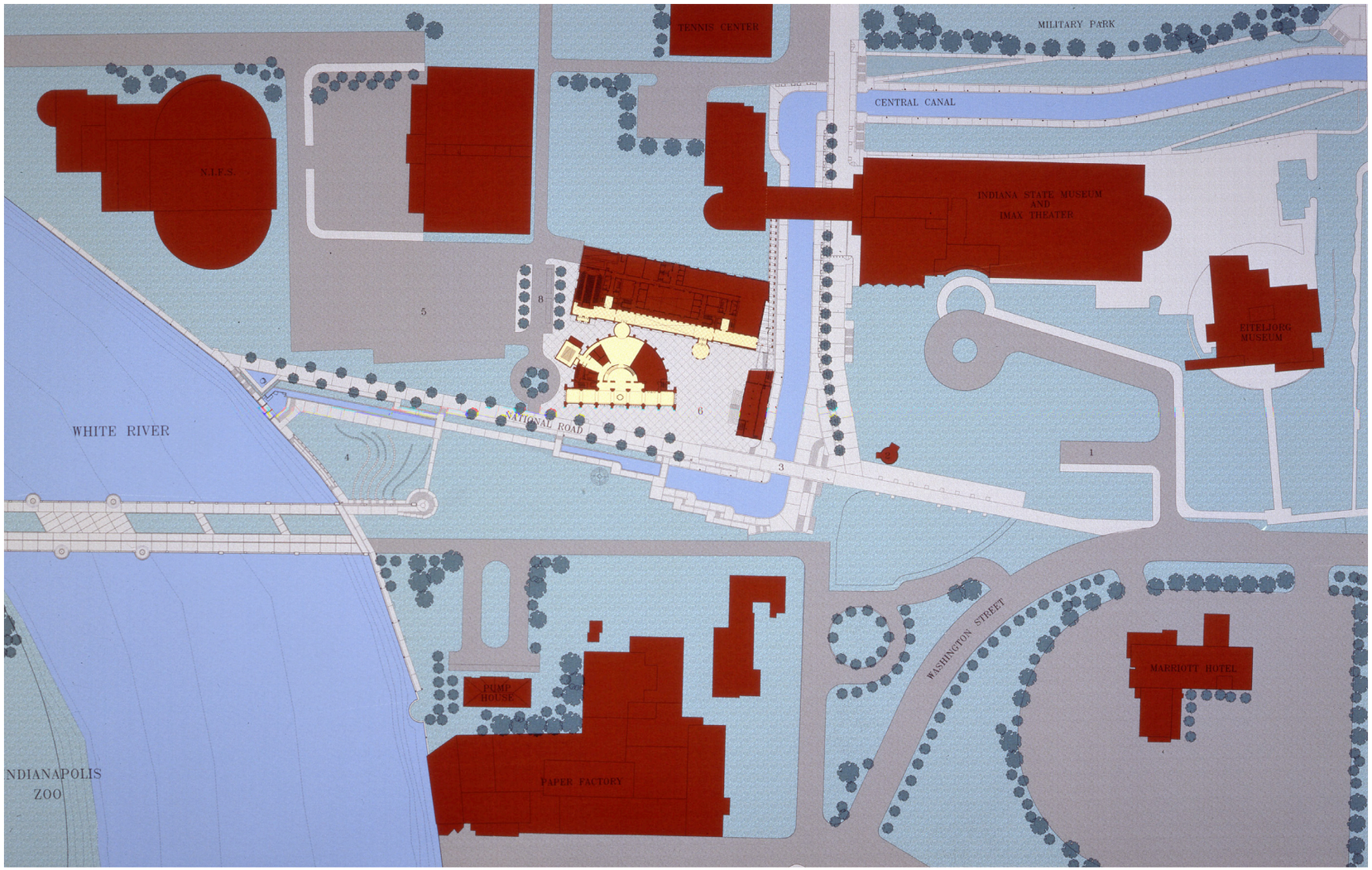
NCAA Headquarters & Hall of Champions—Section Looking West



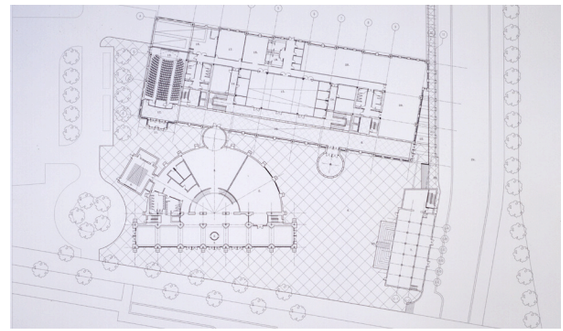
NCAA Headquarters & Hall of Champions—Entrance Facade



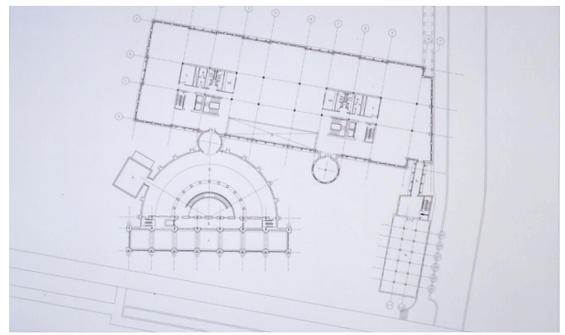
NCAA Headquarters & Hall of Champions—Rear Elevation



The site plan puts the campus among White River State Park's civic neighbors—the Zoo, the Eiteljorg, Military Park, public ground on every side, not a corporate campus set apart from it.



NCAA Headquarters & Hall of Champions—Ground Floor Plan



NCAA Headquarters & Hall of Champions—Second Floor Plan

BUILT ON WHAT WAS ALREADY THERE

The site hadn't always been empty before the NCAA arrived, it had been a power plant and coal yard. The Acme-Evans Superintendent's Building, a heavy timber masonry structure left from that industrial past, was preserved rather than cleared, and its brick and proportions set the material language for everything built beside it.

Varying brick tones tie new construction to Acme-Evans without uniformity. Copper roof forms, chosen partly for their echo of the Statehouse dome a half-mile away, add a second register and were chosen to age. Twenty-five years on, that aging is the point: the copper has taken its intended patina, the brick has weathered into the landscape. These materials were built to look better with time, not just survive it.



From the promenade, the campus reads as one material story, brick tying new construction to Acme-Evans, against a downtown skyline it was built to share, not compete with.

AIA FRAMEWORK FOR DESIGN EXCELLENCE

Design for Integration

No part of this campus makes sense without the others. Landscape, preservation, public access, and daily operations weren't layered onto a headquarters, they were its organizing logic from the start. Three buildings keep distinct identities while sharing one plaza, one material palette, and one relationship to the canal. Twenty-five years of operation confirms the integration was structural, not decorative.

Design for Equitable Communities

Moving from a suburban Kansas City office park to downtown Indianapolis was a decision about who the NCAA wanted to be. Inside White River State Park, the campus sits blocks from downtown hotels and directly on a public canal promenade used daily by people with no connection to the NCAA. The Hall of Champions turns that adjacency into an open door—free, public, and built for residents and school groups as much as association members. That relationship between a governing body and a city's public life is a decision an office park could never have delivered.

Design for Ecosystems & Water

The campus sits on a former power plant and coal yard, a brownfield returned to civic use rather than new construction on undisturbed land. The design made the Central Canal part of the building's address, not a backdrop: the shared plaza opens onto the canal promenade, the primary approach for visitors on foot, while employees look out on the water from the atrium. That relationship has only grown stronger as the canal corridor has become one of Indianapolis's most active civic landscapes.

Design for Economy

Long-term value came from coordination, not size. The headquarters, conference center, and Hall of Champions run independently on a normal day and merge for major events, avoiding the duplicated space a less integrated campus would need. That framework proved flexible enough for real growth: the 2012 expansion added a four-story office building finished in the language of the original campus, not bolted on as a separate project.

Design for Energy

For a project designed in 1999, the systems were ambitious: a district chilled water connection eliminated on-site chillers, variable-air-volume distribution with free cooling took advantage of Indianapolis's long shoulder seasons, and an integrated DDC system coordinated HVAC, lighting, emergency power, fire safety, and elevators across all three buildings. A quarter-century of operation without major mechanical overhaul is the clearest evidence those decisions were sound the first time. The campus was completed in 1999 and opened in 2000, before LEED and comparable third-party rating systems were in common use for institutional buildings of this type—no formal certification was pursued, though the mechanical strategy described above reflects the same performance goals those systems now measure.

Design for Well-Being

The move to Indianapolis let the NCAA change how its own staff worked, not just where. Closed Kansas City offices gave way to an open plan built around a full-height atrium, keeping every floor visually connected to the plaza and park. That connection extends past the building's edge—proximity to White River State Park, NIFS, and the canal promenade gives employees a daily, walkable relationship to the outdoors a suburban office park never offered. The Hall of Champions delivers its own version for visitors: the arcade entry pulls people in from the park, so they arrive already inside the landscape before they cross the threshold. Accessibility was designed in at both scales: the plaza and canal promenade connect all three buildings at grade, and elevators serve every level of the headquarters, conference center, and Hall of Champions, extending that same unobstructed movement from the exterior approach into the interior.

Design for Resources & Change

Preserving the Acme-Evans Building's timber masonry structure conserved the embodied value of an existing building instead of demolishing it for a clean site. The brick and copper chosen alongside it were selected to age with dignity, and 25 years later that choice looks correct, not optimistic. The same framework proved capable of growth on its own terms: the 2012 expansion matched the original brick, copper banding, and campus logic, extending the design rather than replacing it.

Design for Discovery

A building in continuous, unmodified use for 25 years is itself a finding. This campus shows that operational flexibility, public access, durable materials, preservation, and a real relationship to the surrounding landscape aren't competing priorities, they're what let a building keep working through change most buildings never get tested against.



Every headquarters floor looks into this atrium and out past it to the park, the daily view of office staff.

A VOICE FROM INSIDE

“We came to the Hall of Champions expecting to keep the kids entertained for a few hours, but the museum kept all of us engaged from the moment we walked in. It feels like a place designed for families to explore, compete, and make memories together.”

ANDREW WHEELER
LIFELONG SPORTS FAN AND IOWA FATHER OF TWO



The wrap-around video wall—144 monitors, installed in 2000—is part of what still holds families like the Wheelers for hours, not minutes.



The same barrel-vault language from the elevations, walked through daily on the ground floor.



Championship banners from decades of member schools hang over the Great Hall—history that keeps arriving, one season at a time.









Exhibits within the Hall of Champions tell the story of collegiate athletics—past, present, and future.



The **gymnasium,** a replica of one from earlier in the century, is used for special programs and clinics. Visitors can try out the sports equipment.



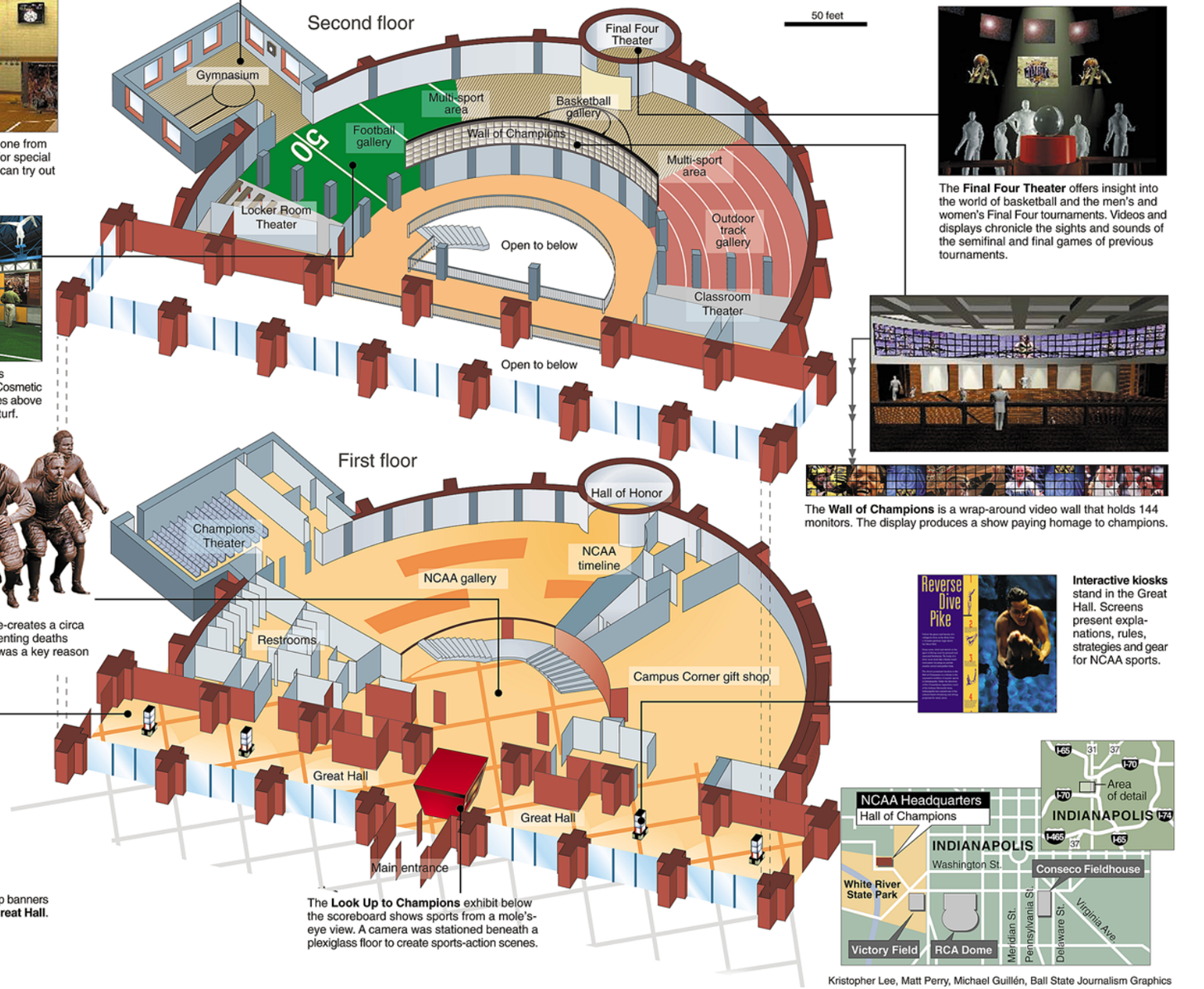
The **football gallery** highlights champion athletes and teams. Cosmetic rafters display statues of athletes above the exhibits. The floor is Astroturf.



The **flying wedge** sculpture re-creates a circa 1906 football maneuver. Preventing deaths caused by the "flying wedge" was a key reason the NCAA was established.



Eighty-one NCAA championship banners hang 50 feet overhead in the **Great Hall**.



The **Look Up to Champions** exhibit below the scoreboard shows sports from a mole's-eye view. A camera was stationed beneath a plexiglass floor to create sports-action scenes.

The **Final Four Theater** offers insight into the world of basketball and the men's and women's Final Four tournaments. Videos and displays chronicle the sights and sounds of the semifinal and final games of previous tournaments.

The **Wall of Champions** is a wrap-around video wall that holds 144 monitors. The display produces a show paying homage to champions.

Interactive kiosks stand in the Great Hall. Screens present explanations, rules, strategies and gear for NCAA sports.

Kristopher Lee, Matt Perry, Michael Guillén, Ball State Journalism Graphics

The exhibit design as drawn in 1999—Hall of Honor, Great Hall, and galleries laid out almost exactly as they still operate today.

STILL THE ROOM COLLEGE SPORTS WALKS THROUGH

The Hall of Champions' wrap-around video installation was, at 144 monitors, ahead of its time when it opened. The exhibit-design graphic from that era, reproduced at left, shows the vision the space was built around. The photography below shows what the Hall of Champions is still delivering today.







The Acme-Evans Building's original masonry, re-pointed and reused rather than replaced—designed from the outset to house two national governing bodies, the NCAA and the National Federation of State High School Associations, side-by-side.



NFHS's own reception hall, planned alongside the NCAA's arrival in 1999—one preserved building, two national organizations, both still in their original space 25 years later.

CONCLUSION

There is a particular kind of architectural achievement that only time can validate. A building can receive recognition at its opening and still fail the most important test: remaining essential.

More than 25 years after completion, the NCAA Headquarters and Hall of Champions continues to serve its original institutional and public purposes. The campus retains the design principles that established its identity: the relationship between historic and new construction, the connection to White River State Park, the balance between public engagement and institutional function, and the use of materials intended to age with dignity.

The proof of the original design's strength is not only in what remains unchanged. It is also in how the campus has grown. Future expansion followed the framework established by the original architecture rather than replacing it.

The copper has found its patina. The brick has settled into the landscape. The Hall of Champions continues to welcome visitors. The NCAA remains rooted in Indianapolis.

Indianapolis needed proof that its sports-capital claim was real. Twenty-five years later, this campus is still that proof.

"Watching this city host the Olympic trials, put a pool in a football stadium and fill it with water from the White River—if the NCAA wasn't here, it should be here because the creativity and clarity and sense of purpose and belief in the power of sports that this community brings to everything it does is really special."

CHARLIE BAKER, NCAA PRESIDENT



Opening day, 2000—the balloon drop the campus has spent 25 years living up to.