

Breaking Ground

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GREEN GOES MAINSTREAM

GREEN BUILDING UPDATE

2009 BUILDING EXCELLENCE AWARDS

CHANGES TO LEED ACCREDITED
PROFESSIONAL ARE COMING

IS THE INSURANCE MARKET
TURNING HARD?

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Cover Photo:

CMU's Resnick Café
Rycon Construction, Contractor
Pfaffmann + Associates, Architect
Photography by Ed Massery



MBA

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IBC CLOSING OUT

USGBC's Rebecca Flora.



(photo by Ed Massery).

CARNEGIE MELLON'S *Resnick House Café*

During the past decade or so the administrations at Carnegie Mellon have worked very hard to create a physical environment that matched the school's burgeoning international academic reputation. One area in which its students felt CMU lagged behind was in its dining facilities. And one particular facility that was universally panned by the students was the dining hall at Resnick House.

"The space was absolutely abandoned by Housing and Dining for use by the students," remembers Vice Provost Ralph Horgan. "There wasn't anything to attract the



Removing eight-foot thick brick columns allows the separate café seating to open to the larger room (photo by Ed Massery).

students to use it. It was closed down except for use by the summer camps, so we could feed soccer or basketball players in a buffet."

The situation wasn't helped by the fact that Resnick is situated at the eastern end of the campus, adjacent to Gesling Field, and the furthest dining facility away from the 'The Cut' and 'The Mall.' The dormitory was a five-story structure with dining facilities that had separate cafeteria serving and seating areas across the hall from each other.

PROJECT TEAM

General Contractor
HVAC Subcontractor
Plumbing Subcontractor
Electrical Subcontractor
Fire Protection Subcontractor
Casework Subcontractor
Structural Subcontractor
Architect
Food Service Consultant
Mechanical Engineer
Structural Engineer

Rycon Construction
Heritage Mechanical Contracting
Manion Plumbing
Hanlon Electrical
Scalise Industries
Master Woodcraft
Seech Industries
Pfaffmann + Associates
Connor Architecture
Bert Davis Associates
Atlantic Engineering

"THE PROJECT HAD TO BE A SUSTAINABLE PROJECT, AND HAD TO INCORPORATE A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO ACCOMPLISH THE SUSTAINABLE GOAL," ... "WE THINK THE GREENEST PROJECT YOU CAN DO IS AN EXISTING BUILDING, ONE THAT DOESN'T ADD SOMETHING MORE TO THE ENVIRONMENT."

"We inherited a space that had been designed for a similar use but it wasn't set up for an ideal adaptation," recalls Greg George, project architect from Pfaffmann + Associates. The architect had been hired to do a master plan for redesigning the entire food service facility in Resnick. "The space was programmed to be dining space only with the cafeteria where you got the food still across the hall. We were proposing putting another dining space within the existing so we were using three areas." George was convinced the effort was needed, however. "We saw that we had to reinvent the space and make it alive again, so that it would become a destination spot for students."

Carnegie Mellon's staff had reached a similar conclusion. "The Housing and Dining management decided that we would use design as a way to attract students to go along with a major menu change," says Ralph Horgan.

What the dining area did have going for it was a significant architectural focal point, an atrium that extended up from the center of the space. Although the atrium was flanked by eight-foot wide masonry columns, it was discovered that the structure was actually just one-foot steel columns behind the brick cover. Removing the brick instantly opened up the entire central space, giving more room and just as important, creating sight lines that didn't exist previously.



(photo by Ed Massery).

**“WE SAW THAT WE HAD TO
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“CMU wanted a spot for the students to hang out, plug in and talk, something like a Starbucks,” explains Lou Fabrizi, project manager for contractor Rycon Construction. “But the existing space was two stories and very cold, very noisy with all the brick and quarry tile.”

Pfaffmann’s architects saw the atrium area as the key to the new design. “What students want in a hang out space is a place to see people, but also to be seen,” says Greg

George. “Our design called for building a café at the center since there was now 360 degrees of visibility. It was what Frank Lloyd Wright would call the project’s fireplace, and would also give visibility and access to the outside.” The architect thought this element still fell short of the goal though. “We believed that the café needed to have a sort of theatrical transformation to create the attraction, and we were able to convince the client of that.”

The theatrical transformation also turned out to be one of the central parts of the sustainable design. “The architect came up with an ingenious idea of creating a dome inside the atrium, so it looks like you’re standing inside half an eggshell when you’re in the café,” says Lou Fabrizi. “The structure was made of curved glu-lam beams covered with recycled flexible panels that was backlit.”

“We designed an object within the atrium that had a theatrical feel, like a stage construction within the café, that we called the ‘pod,’” explains George. “The pod is covered with a translucent fabric made by 3form® of an ‘eco-resin,’ which is essentially ground up plastic beverage bottles. We liked the idea that the cone was made from

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materials that were being sold in the café.” The conical shape was inspired by the thistle that was part of the original Carnegie Mellon University logo, a touch that came from Andrew Carnegie himself. The translucent panels allowed for lighting to be focused on the pod for effect, and also diffused the natural light coming from the adjacent two-story windows, much like a lamp shade does. “The lighting was tied to a computer control which varies according to season, music, rhythm, or whatever,” says Fabrizi.

Completing the central room, called the ‘octagon room’ by the team, was perimeter seating that would be more intimate. “We used recycled wood benches covered with a fabric, and suspended panels above the seating to make these smaller seating areas that were located around the central seating area,” says Fabrizi.

Connected to the main room were two other spaces. The first was called the cruciform, a cross-shaped room that was open to allow dancing. This space got new lighting and flooring. And a rectangular open room received a similar treatment to prepare for what Lou Fabrizi called ‘video game pods.’ “You can actually climb into these pods and play whatever game is on them,” he laughed. The project also involved finish renovations to a small



Laminate columns from Seech Industries are covered with translucent ‘eco-resin’ from 3form® (photo by Ed Massery).



mezzanine space that is now used for exercise equipment. This space is located directly above the new café, but the lighting and cone structure proved separate spaces for eating and sweating.

To complete the transformation, attention was also paid to the exterior, renovating the entrance and adding neon signage that helps attract students. The signage, in particular, is meant to give the impression of a retail presence, something unique, even though The Café continues to be operated by the University Dining Services.

The overall project encompassed 9,400 square feet and construction was completed for under \$800,000. Including design fees, soft costs, furnishings, fixtures and equipment, the project came in at \$1.2 million, or roughly \$129 per square foot. The project also came in LEED Gold.

"The project had to be a sustainable project, and had to incorporate a holistic approach to accomplish the sustainable goal," says Greg George. "We think the greenest project you can do is an existing building, one that doesn't add something more to the environment. To work within this budget we had to take a surgical approach to what we could do sustainable. We were working with LEED for commercial interiors, which makes you look more stringently at materials than LEED NC."

Material selections included bamboo flooring, linoleum, low VOC fabrics, 'green' paints, recycled tiles, and of course, the recycled translucent fabric. George also was frustrated at the difficulty of finding green furniture. "LEED is way ahead of the furniture industry, it turns out," he said. "It was impossible to find anything but premium furniture that is green, but Continental Office Systems helped us get closer to the budget."

Another sustainable strategy that was employed to amazing success was the recycling of the project waste, or lack of it. "Less than 400 pounds of debris was sent to the dump," notes Lou Fabrizi. "The remaining material, including all that brick, was re-used or recycled or given to Habitat for Humanity. My guys (from Rycon) did a great job, plus the architect did a good job of planning for what was there to be re-use."



New signage and entrance renovations draw students to Resnick House (photo by Ed Massery).

The end result not only met the sustainability goals, but also the business plan of the university. The Café is now a destination, and is a place that sidetracks students heading to other parts of campus.

"It's close enough to attract students who live in the hill dorms along Margaret Morrison, and it's where they eat the food they buy from the food trucks that park along the street," says Ralph Horgan. "The transformation has been phenomenal." **BG**