



DLR Group inc.
a Nebraska corporation
6457 Frances Street, Suite 200
Omaha, NE 68106

May 29, 2024

AIA Nebraska
355 N 8th Street, Suite A
Lincoln, NE 68508

Re: 2024 AIA Nebraska Young Architect Award Nomination

Dear 2024 AIA Nebraska young Architect Award Jury Chairperson and Jury Members:

It is my honor as an AIA member and Architect at DLR Group, to recommend Heather Hughes, AIA, for the 2024 AIA Nebraska Young Architect.

I have had the opportunity to work closely with Heather for the past thirteen years. I have truly enjoyed watching her grow as an architect, leader, and working mother. Her ability to balance is remarkable.

Serving as Project Architect, Heather's impact can be seen in numerous education projects for DLR Group's K-12 Sector. Most recently, Heather was the Lead Project Architect for Gretna East High School, a \$120 million 361,000 square foot facility. Heather's attention to detail is second to none. She executes project vision and design inspiration into each detail, bringing the building to life. Following a tour of Gretna East, DLR Group's K-12 Global Sector Leader said it is the best detail-oriented high school he has ever seen.

In addition to being an amazing Architect, Heather is committed to serving our community. She currently serves as AIA Nebraska's President Elect and has been on the board since 2021. She is a member of the Architecture in Schools Committee and mentor for the AIA's Mentorship Program. She serves on the Mayor's Resilient Lincoln Roundtable and is an active member of the U.S. Green Building Council.

Heather is an absolute asset to our profession, and I look forward to the impact she will have on our community.

Sincerely,
DLR Group

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Vanessa Schutte', written over the typed name.

Vanessa Schutte, AIA, ALEP
K-12 Education Leader | Principal

Heather Hughes, AIA, LEED AP, LFA, NCARB

Principal | Architect | Climate + Environment Leader | Lincoln Office Leader

Growing up in Lincoln, Heather spent her early years playing outside with neighbors and making lifelong friends. She attended the local early childhood center, where her mom was the director. Her interest in the design process emerged when her mom opened a new early childhood center when Heather was 10. Heather's mom engaged her in the design process, bringing her along to meetings with the architect. This interest in design continued to grow as her family built a new house, she took a CAD class in high school, and was one of three females in a woodworking class. Upon graduation, Heather made the decision to attend the University of Nebraska – Lincoln's College of Architecture. One of the highlights of her college experience was the opportunity to study abroad in London, furthering her love for exploring new places. She spent summers working at her mom's early childhood center, which inspired her architectural thesis. It focused on how the built environment can have a positive impact on a child's learning and development.

After earning her Master of Architecture in 2011, Heather was hired as a summer intern at DLR Group in the Omaha office. That's right, a summer internship was all that was available at this time, even though she obtained her graduate degree. Following a great summer, including highlights of winning an Honorable Mention in the 'Construction' Competition and helping set a world record for the tallest structure built out of Lincoln Logs at the Lincoln Children's Museum, she was hired on full time and has never looked back. After six years of soaking up as much knowledge as she could from some incredible mentors, serving different sectors, including K-12, Sports, Workplace, and Higher Education, respectively, she transferred to the Lincoln office and began to focus her career on her passions for K-12 and sustainability.

Since moving back to Lincoln in 2017, Heather has immersed herself back into the design community of her hometown and environmental stewardship in particular. She is involved with USGBC's Women Green, serving as Co-Chair to events in the past few years, and serves the Mayor's Resilient Lincoln Round table. Heather also stays active with the College of Architecture at UNL, hosting a group of mentees this past year through the AIAS Mentorship Program, she attends the Career Fair each year to cultivate talent, and participates in design critiques as a guest critic. She served as President-Elect this year for AIA Nebraska and was involved in the Architecture in Schools Committee. It is an important part of Heather's involvement in the community, the impact of which ranges from the advocacy efforts in the industry to bringing concepts into the classroom to help connect with K-12 students.



As a Principal in the firm and now Office Leader, Heather's passions and focus continue to evolve. She serves as a mentor to others while maintaining the never-ending learning process and personal career growth. Her commitment to design is driven by her love of creating spaces that positively impact end users as part of integrated design teams for projects across DLR Group. Heather is a champion of environmental stewardship, serving as a member of the firm's Climate + Environment Forum. Throughout each project, she strives to inform clients on the depth of benefits of sustainable design, from economics and reduced environmental impact to impact on healthy living.

Heather's highly collaborative nature establishes an engaging team environment that facilitates integrated design. Her continual focus on client goals and how every project, large and small, can contribute to a student-centered campus results in highly-satisfied clients who repeatedly ask for her services. In addition, her detail-oriented nature and highly-focused work ethic result in quality documents that contractors and her fellow teammates greatly appreciate.

Outside of work, Heather enjoys spending time with her family. She and her husband, Troy, immerse themselves in all the adventures that come with having two girls, Bryar (8) and Harlow (4). While they enjoy watching them play soccer, volleyball, dance, and swimming, they also strive to slow down at times to enjoy nights outside in their cul-de-sac full of kids. The Hughes also enjoy taking their dog, Ace, on walks around the lake and traveling to new places whenever they get the chance.

Statement of Contributions

Heather is dedicated to serving her community, her firm, and industry through her passions for environmental stewardship and educational design.

Licensing, Registration, & Affiliations

Registered Architect, Nebraska No. A-4550

2015 - Present

As a Registered Architect in the state of Nebraska, Heather remains informed of state laws and requirements of the profession through the State of Nebraska Board of Engineers and Architects.

American Institute of Architects - Nebraska Board

2024 - President Elect

2023 - Treasurer

2021 & 2022 - Director

2021 - Present - Architecture in Schools Committee

As a member of this group, Heather focuses on collaborative efforts with an emphasis on creating ties to the K-12 education community, and bringing architectural ideas and concepts into the classroom.

American Institute of Architects (AIA)

National, Nebraska and Omaha

2011 - 2017

National, Nebraska and Lincoln

2017 - Present

As an AIA member, Heather stays informed of national and local issues that affect the architecture profession.

Living Future Accreditation (LFA)

2024 - Present

As an LFA, Heather holds the professional credential that recognizes and rewards proficiency in the most ambitious, advanced, and holistic sustainable design standards available.

LEED Accredited Professional (LEED AP)

2009 - Present

As a LEED Accredited Professional, Heather is distinguished as having advanced knowledge in green building, denoting proficiency in today's sustainable design, construction, and operations standards.

National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB) - Certified National Member

2009 - Present

As a member of NCARB, Heather stays up-to-date on the national policies and trends affecting the profession of architecture, including changes in educational and training requirements.

Community Involvement & Volunteering

Tau Sigma Delta Honor Society - Psi Chapter

University of Nebraska - Lincoln, College of Architecture

2024 - Tau Sigma Delta Silver Medal Award Recipient

Tau Sigma Delta is an honor society in architecture and allied arts that recognizes academic excellence, creative achievement, and leadership and community engagement. The Silver Medal is awarded for distinguished achievement in design and engagement by professionals in the field.

Mayor's Resilient Lincoln Round table Member

2023 - Present

The City of Lincoln's Chief Sustainability Officer invited Heather to the round table, as a representative of the architectural industry and a like-minded environmental steward in the community. The group's extended network and mission of the bettering our city continues to grow and bring about positive change within our community.

American Institute of Architecture Students (AIAS)

Mentorship Program University of Nebraska Lincoln, College of Architecture

2023 - Present

Heather serves as a mentor for architecture students at the University of Nebraska Lincoln to share her knowledge and learn from an up and coming generation of architects.

Leadership Lincoln; Lincoln, NE

Fellows Class 36

2020 - 2021

In Leadership Lincoln, Heather actively participated in opportunities that helped grow her leadership experience and benefit the community. Her project team hosted a menstrual hygiene product drive to help spread awareness on period poverty.

U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) Nebraska

Women In Green Co - Chair

July 2019 and October 2022

Women in Green provides a space for leaders who are shifting the narrative on empowerment, access, and impact. As Co-Chair of the local events, Heather gathered female leaders and allies for powerful discussions and networking, while celebrating individual empowerment through collective opportunities.

Green Apple Day of Service Volunteer

November 2017

Teamed up with the UNL, Heather participated in the Green Apple Day of Service volunteer event at Everett Elementary. Together, they cleaned up their three courtyards and installed bird and insect habitat items in each courtyard.

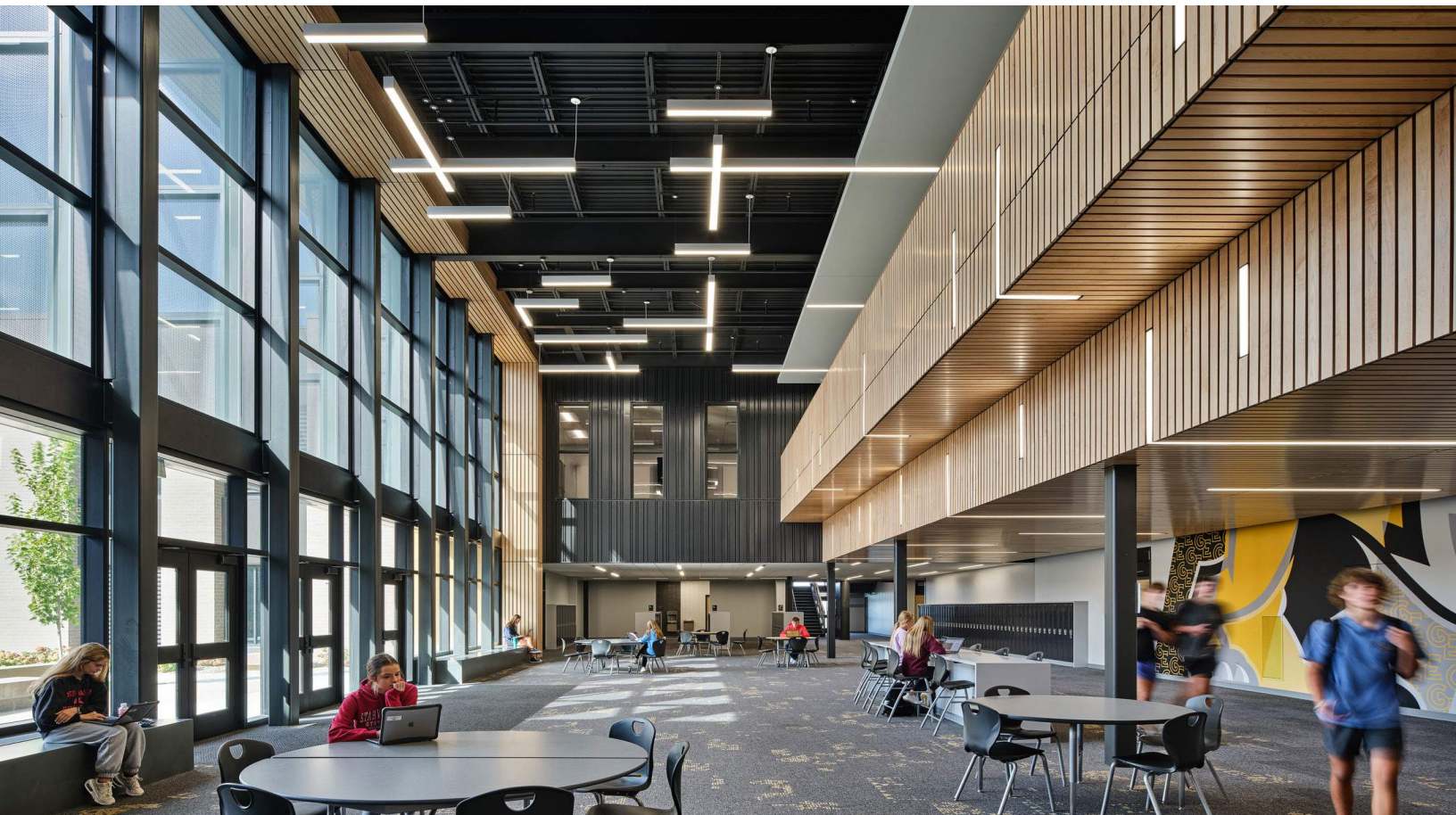
Gretna East High School

| Gretna, Nebraska

Architect of Record

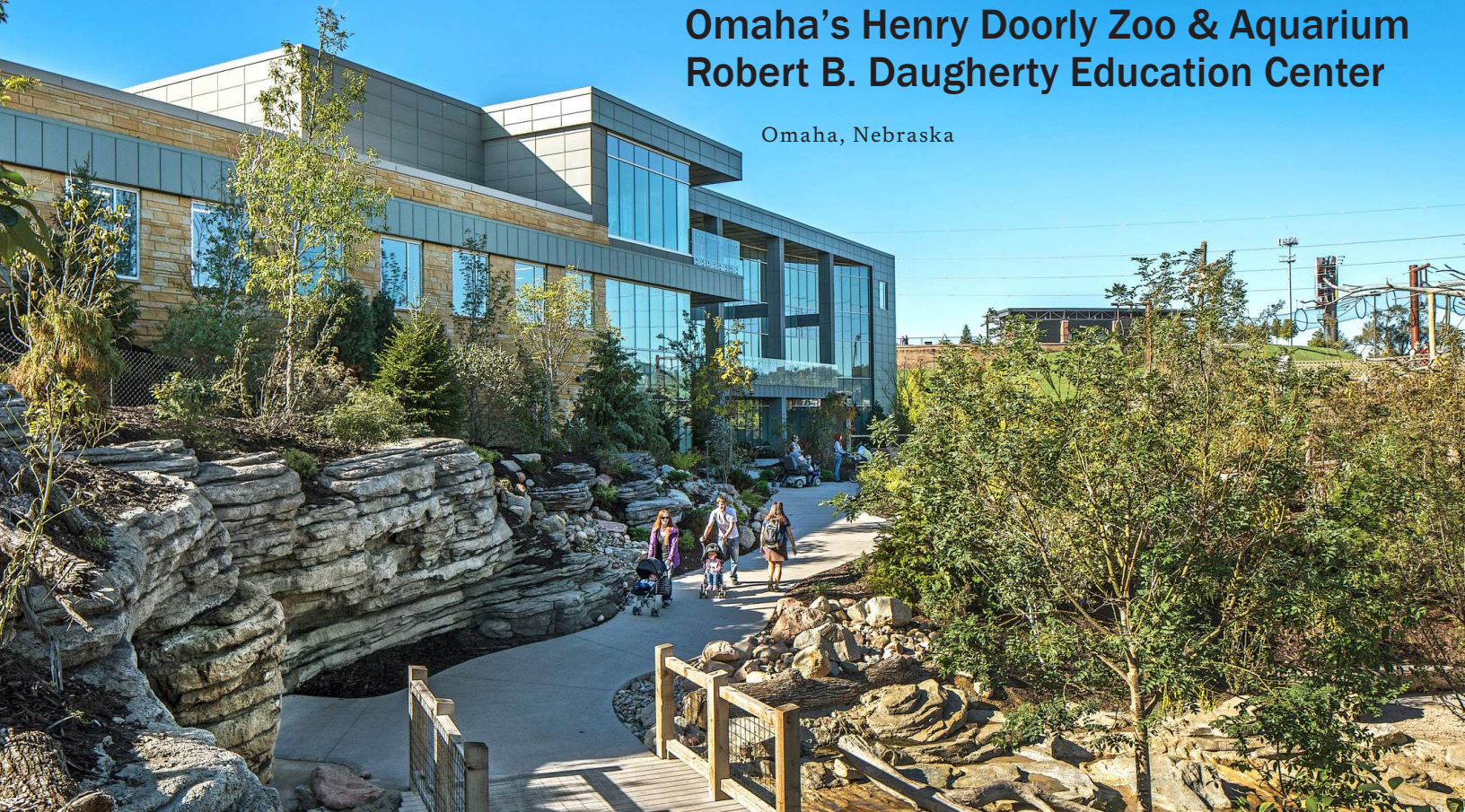
Completion 2023

The design for Gretna East High School centers on connections, with special focus on site organization, building orientation, and access to exterior spaces and programs. The 361,000 SF campus eases capacity issues at the existing high school and serves 1,600 students grades 9-12.



Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo & Aquarium Robert B. Daugherty Education Center

Omaha, Nebraska



Architect of Record
Completion 2017

In a world filled with technology, the Robert B. Daugherty Education Center offers a space for students to connect with the natural world, providing opportunities for “adventure education” that enhance their understanding of and relationship with the animals and ecosystems around them. Offering full-time high school, preschool and kindergarten classes for up to 220 students, the 42,000 SF Education Center exemplifies the Zoo’s education mission to enhance the public’s knowledge in all areas relating to the natural world.

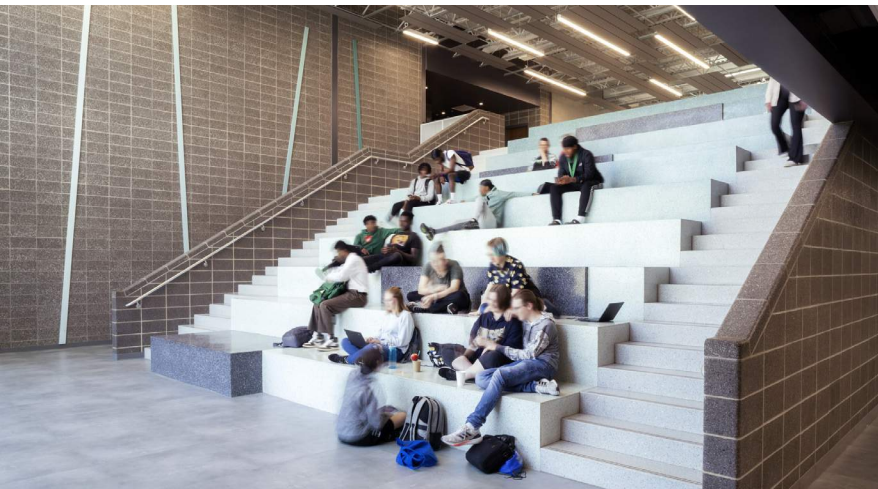


2019 LE Solutions Planning and Design Award
Exceptional Planning Recognition
Association for Learning Environments (A4LE)

2019 John Shaw Award
Excellence in Design and Functional Planning and
Innovative Solutions to Programming Challenges
Association for Learning Environments (A4LE)
Midwest Great Lakes Region

Jefferson High School

Sioux Falls, South Dakota



Lead Project Architect
Completion 2021

The design of Jefferson High School incorporates imagery of the nearby waterfall that gave the city its name, with depictions of water movement through rocks and boulders. Transparency is also a key aspect of the design, as the district sought to provide outdoor areas for students to access throughout the day. The 326,000 SF facility serves 1,800 students, grades 9-12. The scale of the building breaks down into 5 multi-disciplinary learning suites, each housing 360 students.

Riverside Community School District Middle/High School

| Oakland, Iowa



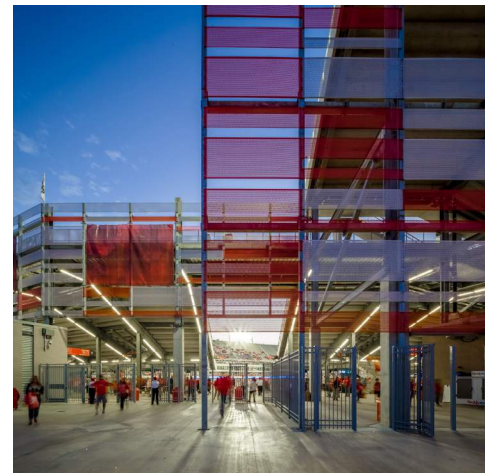
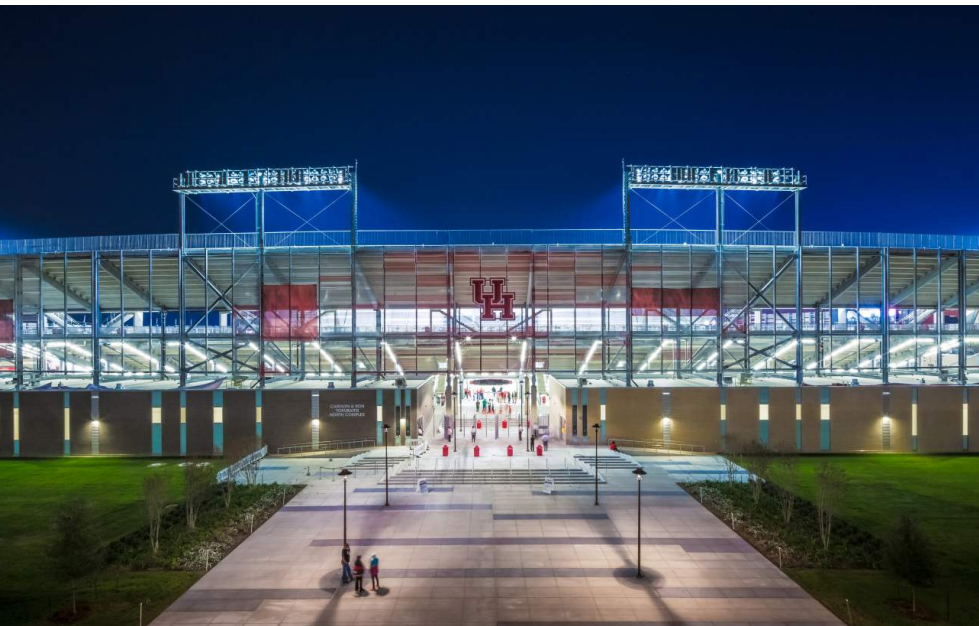
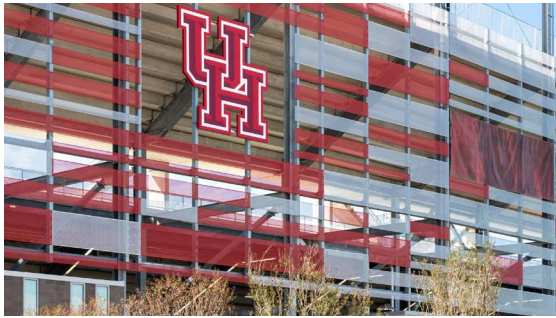
Lead Project Architect
Completion 2016

TDECU Stadium

| University of Houston | Houston, Texas

Architectural Designer
2014

TDECU Stadium is designed to elevate the Cougar football program and provide an authentic game day experience for fans and student-athletes at the University of Houston. The new stadium has initial seating for 40,000, with a phasing plan allowing for expansion up to a capacity of 60,000 fans.





01



02



03

Project List

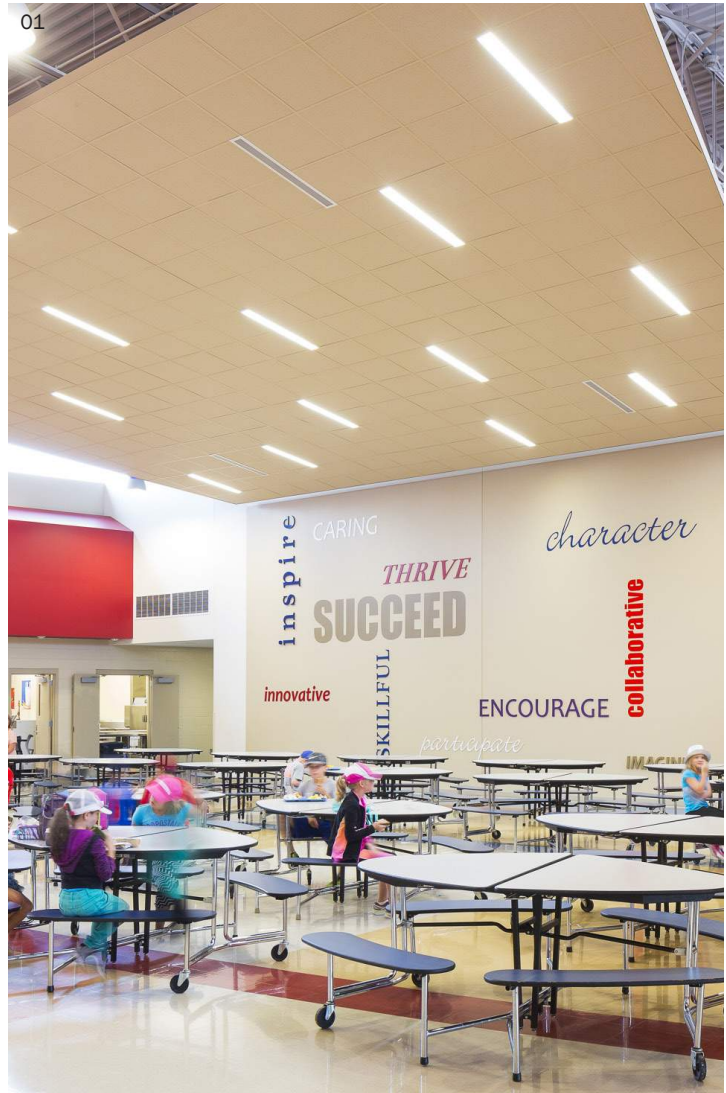
01. College of Saint Mary Fieldhouse, Omaha, Nebraska
- Project Architect
02. Columbus High School, Columbus, Nebraska
- Architectural Designer
03. Elkhorn North High School, Elkhorn, Nebraska
- Project Architect
04. Elkhorn Grand View Middle School, Elkhorn, Nebraska
- Architectural Designer



04

Project List

01. *Norris Elementary School, Firth, Nebraska*
- Architectural Designer
02. *Schoo Middle School Addition & Renovation, Lincoln, NE*
- Architect of Record
03. *Davenport Field at Disharoon Park, Charlottesville, Virginia*
- Project Architect



Professional Experience

DLR Group

Principal, Architect | Lincoln, NE | 2017 - Present

Senior Associate, Architect | Omaha, NE | 2011 - 2017

Teaching

University of Nebraska - Lincoln | College of Architecture

Teaching Assistant, Structures, | Lincoln, NE | 2009 - 2011

Education

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Lincoln, NE

Master of Architecture - 2011

London Study Abroad Program - 2010

Bachelor of Science in Design, Architectural Studies - 2009



Gretna Public School District #37

Office of the Superintendent

11717 S 216th Street
Gretna, NE 68028
www.gpsne.org

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P: (402) 332-3265
F: (402) 408-2534

May 23, 2024

AIA Nebraska

355 N. 8th Street, Suite A
Lincoln, NE 68508

Dear Members of the Young Architect Award Committee,

I am writing to offer my wholehearted recommendation for Ms. Heather Hughes for the Young Architect Award. As Superintendent of Gretna Public Schools, I had the distinct privilege of working closely with Heather during the design and construction of our new Gretna East High School, a project that spanned over four years from inception to completion. Her exceptional leadership, innovative design skills, and unwavering dedication have left an indelible mark on our community, making her a truly deserving candidate for this prestigious award.

From the outset, Heather demonstrated a remarkable ability to listen to and integrate the diverse needs and ideas of teachers, administrators and other stakeholders. This was no small feat, given the broad spectrum of requirements and expectations that came with creating a state-of-the-art educational facility. Her attention to detail, promptness, and positive attitude were instrumental in the project's success. Heather's leadership during the construction phase kept the project on track and within budget. The high school now stands as a testament to her talent and commitment to excellence, serving as a beacon of innovation in the entire regional area.

Heather Hughes embodies the qualities celebrated by the Young Architect Award. Her contributions to our project demonstrate her significant impact on the profession early in her career. I am confident she will continue to inspire and achieve great things in architecture.

Thank you for considering Heather Hughes for this honor. I am confident that she will be a most worthy recipient of the Young Architect Award.

Sincerely,

Travis Lightle, Ed. S.
Superintendent



The mission of Gretna Public Schools is to accept all students unconditionally and maximize their potential.

June 1, 2024

AIA Nebraska
355 N. 8th Street, Suite A
Lincoln, NE 68508

Re: 2024 AIA Nebraska Young Architect Award Nomination

Dear 2024 AIA Nebraska Young Architect Award Jury Chairperson and Jury Members,

I am writing this letter of reference for Heather Hughes, AIA, DLR Group, who has been nominated for AIA Nebraska's Young Architect Award for this year. I received the request and gladly agreed to provide a recommendation.

I have been in construction for over 35 years and have worked on a multitude of projects with various owners and architects. I can confidently say that my experience with the DLR Group and Heather Hughes at the Gretna East High School project was one of the best experiences of my career and Heather was key to that experience. The project was a \$120 million project on 75 acres with a 365,000 square foot school, 4 athletic turf fields, tennis courts and 7 support buildings on the site.

I felt that just having me write the letter would not do the reference justice, so I contacted other members of our MCL team and requested that they provide input as well. MCL Construction had a team of 4 superintendents, 3 project managers, a field engineer and 3 project engineers for most of the duration of the project so she had her work cut out for her to keep up with all of us.

Will Barton, Project Engineer, stated "Heather worked and lived in Lincoln yet was very active in trying to visit the jobsite as much as possible (45 min+ drive). She attended most weekly design & OAC meetings in person. I work with architects/engineers that will not voluntarily come out and walk the job. I never had an issue with having Heather out to the job, and if she could not make it, she was very responsible in finding someone that could take her place so that issues were resolved. She worked as a team player so that we could deliver a building that put the owners' wishes/concerns first. This led to a healthy team environment that built trust and allowed freedom for both the architect and the GC to do their job effectively."

Corey Golovich, Interiors Superintendent, stated " From my experience working with her I would say she was by far one of the most willing to listen to field problems and work with Contractor/subcontractors to find a solution that worked best for both the client and constructability architects I have worked with. I met with her specifically many times along with subcontractor Foreman to look at issues in the field and work through possible solutions firsthand. She was very interested in the problems the tradesmen were experiencing and finding a solution that fixed that. One specific example that stands out would be; Rulon & LMC pattern transitions – around corners, vertical to horizontal, spacing etc.. "

Jack Nelson, Site Project Manager, stated "Although the site outbuildings were very minimal, I would agree that she's probably one of the best architects that I've worked with to date. She was very workable when dealing

Jason Jacobs, Senior Project Manager for the School Building stated, “I can’t say enough good things about Heather. Her attention to detail is exceptional. It’s obvious that she genuinely cares about the client and works extremely hard to ensure that they are happy. She was great to work with throughout the project, and she was always very responsive to time sensitive matters, despite her obviously being very busy. When it comes to Architects that I’d like to work with in the future, she’d be at the top of my list.”

From my own perspective, Heather worked tirelessly to get answers to the questions that were addressed to the design team. She is always pleasant to work with and never gives the impression that she is overworked or not fully engaged in our project. I appreciate the way that she is open to the construction teams’ suggestions and is willing to consider alternate solutions to the original design or details. Heather was also great to work with during the punch list and close-out process. She took a very organized and intentional approach to the punch list and was reasonable with her expectations. Due to the size of the project, the punch list was completed in multiple phases and needed to be completed over several months. Her attention to detail and organizational skills helped us deliver an outstanding project to the Gretna School District.

In closing, Heather Hughes is an outstanding representative of the architectural community. As a candidate for the 2024 AIA Nebraska Young Architect Award, she is more than deserving of that honor and is skilled beyond her years. I would jump at the chance to work with her again in the future. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions regarding this reference.

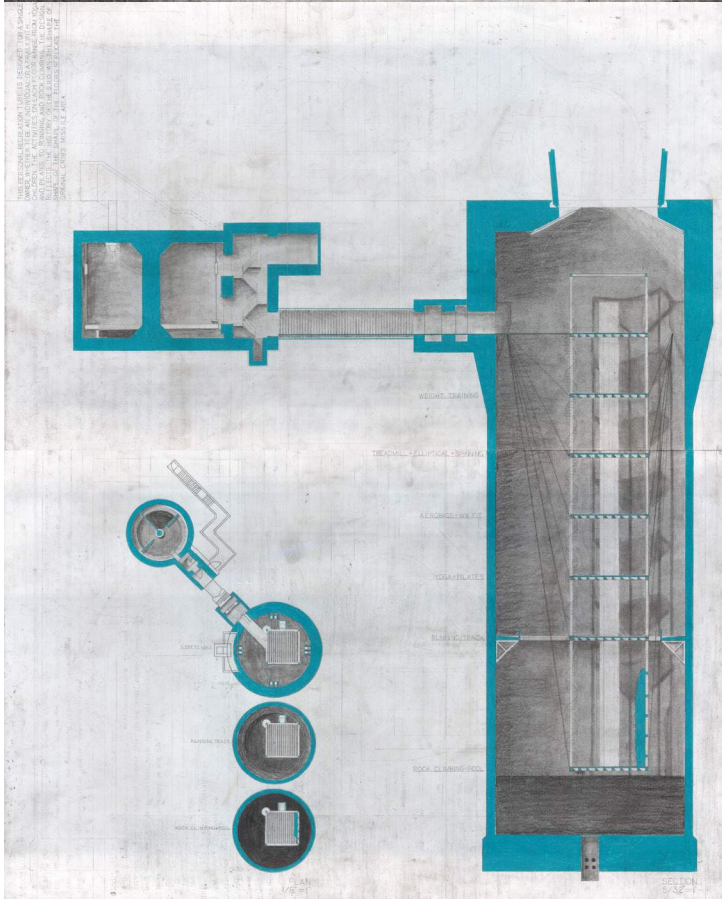
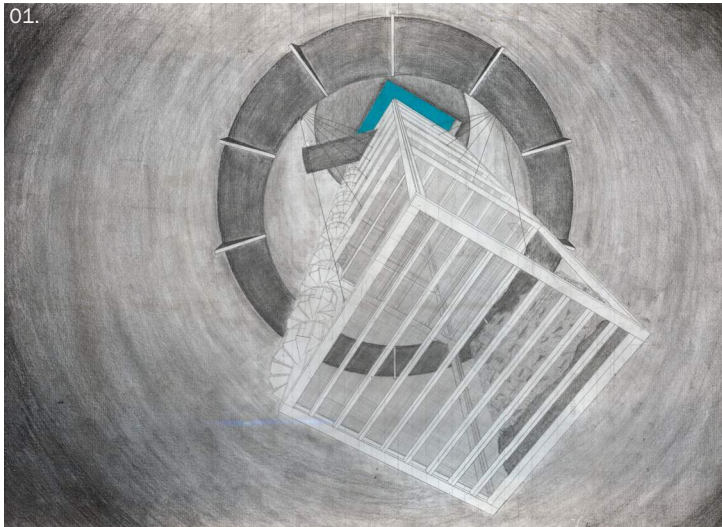
Sincerely,



Mike R. Heser

Senior Project Manager

MCL Construction
14558 Portal Circle LaVista, NE 68138
mrh@mclconstruction.com
402-670-5862



Hand Drawings

- 01. "Recreation Tube - Decommissioned Missile Silo," three 20x32", pencil and charcoal on paper using a palimpsest technique
- 02. "Troll," 32x40", charcoal on paper
- 03. "Pipes," 24x36", pencil on paper

