

Downers Grove Civic Center

Downers Grove, IL

ICivic107-01

Category: Institutional - Civic

Program Statement

The Downers Grove Civic Center (DGCC) realizes this community's bold vision for a vibrant shared facility that houses its Village Hall, Police Department, and School District 58 administration. Instantly recognizable as a center of local government, the DGCC design achieves three critical goals: Celebrating community heritage and pride; providing a warm, welcoming environment that enhances productivity; and demonstrating the community's commitment to sustainability.

Located on a transformed 6.5-acre site, the DGCC is a gateway to Downers Grove's revitalized downtown district. Two outdoor plazas complement the building design. The northwest plaza connects commuters to regional train service and is also a well-used pedestrian pathway. The Blackburn Civil Rights Plaza honors the legacy of Israel Blackburn, a formerly enslaved person and one of Downers Grove's original founders.

DGCC's exterior design balances tradition with progress. Timeless brick and stone materials combine with a wealth of glazing, canopies and overhangs to provide both natural light and critical shading. The space design of the three-level facility (including the basement) provides safe and functional workflows that enhance productivity and a positive experience for building visitors.

The DGCC's most prominent interior space is the two-story, light-filled atrium which connects most public spaces including the Council Chambers, used for Village meetings, trainings and community gatherings. The chamber's flexible layout features an operable partition that can divide the space. The first floor also contains secure transaction windows for Village services and key police department functions.

DGCC's second floor houses Village departments, police functions and school district staff in dedicated areas. Within departments, individual workspaces are designed for comfort and productivity with high-quality, durable materials. Large perimeter windows ensure abundant natural light, while automatic shades, linked to programmable lighting controls, offer flexibility in managing light levels. Customized audio-visual systems further support a range of activities, including broadcasting, training, and virtual or hybrid meetings. A prominent feature of the second floor is the shared staff hub, a centrally located zone for shared meeting rooms, break areas, a kitchen area, wellness room and outdoor green deck.

The DGCC is a visible manifestation of the Village's commitment to sustainability. The design team reviewed a range of sustainability options including maintainability, first cost, long term operating cost, and carbon footprint. Site enhancements include permeable pavers, rain gardens, and bioswales to support best practices in stormwater management. Design enhancements include an efficient building envelope, laminated glazing units for both acoustic and solar performance, and photovoltaic panels on the carport structures.

Significantly more efficient than the buildings it replaced, the DGCC's system has an EUI of 54.6, a 60% EUI savings over the old buildings' EUI of 137. The new building also achieves a 31% EUI savings over the CBECS 2003 baseline. Annual energy costs are expected to be 61% less in this single new structure compared to the previous 3 buildings – saving approximately \$168K annually. Carbon dioxide (CO2) savings are estimated at more than 37%.

The DGCC cost was \$60 million including \$52 million for construction and \$8 million for soft costs.



A beacon of excellence and civic engagement, the Downers Grove Civic Center is the new home for this community's Village Hall, Police Department and School District 58 Admin offices. The horizontal lines of the council chambers and lobby atrium roof canopies along with abundant tall window systems were inspired by prairie style architecture.



Balancing tradition with innovation, DGCC's exterior design palette includes a custom brick blend, manufactured stone accents, metal trim, wood-look soffit panels, and rain chains leading into rain gardens as visitors approach the southeast entry plaza. Permeable paver parking spaces can be seen in the foreground which help reduce stormwater runoff.



A detail of the west elevation highlights the two-story entry into the public lobby with its asymmetrical civic canopy providing extra depth to shade the south curtainwall system.



Separate public entries for Village and Police services are located along the primary public plaza which serves as a flexible gathering space for both informal and formal events such as the police memorial ceremony shown in the inset image.

The DGCC has become the eastern gateway to the Village's revitalized downtown district and borders the adjacent Metra tracks. The northwest corner of the building contains a light filled stair tower with village signage and a special canopy overhang to protect waiting train commuters in bad weather.

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DGCC's public lobby consists of a light-filled atrium with wood tones and vertical strips that echo the feel of a grove of trees from which the village draws its name. Other lobby features include ballistic protected customer service windows, comfortable seating, and large video monitors to display various information.



The Betty Cheever Council Chambers features a raised, curved dais with a wrapping wood wall / ceiling element overhead. Large AV screens allow easy content sharing for the audience.



The police public lobby has the same welcoming material palette as the village lobby including ballistic protected customer service windows to ensure safety for all and comfortable seating.



Within all departments, individual workspaces are designed for comfort and productivity. Within Community Development, a stylized wall graphic of the Downers Grove village map adds interest while also serving a functional purpose to orient staff to new development locations.



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Left: A dynamic secured staff stair with perforated risers and linear lights leads up to the second-floor shared staff social hub. Right: The shared staff social hub, at the center of all three second floor departments, has a large island and kitchen that invites conversation and connections with views beyond towards the exterior roof terrace.



The shared staff hub includes multiple seating zones with comfortable furniture giving people the choice for privacy, socializing or collaboration all with expansive natural light and views out to the roof terrace.



The second-floor staff outdoor terrace over the police garage includes a 1,700sf flexible seating area and a 1,800sf intensive green roof system. The shared social hub break area and training room both overlook this space.



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The Blackburn Civil Rights Plaza pays tribute to Israel Blackburn, a formerly enslaved person who served in the Union Army and was one of the village's original founders. The plaza celebrates different periods of his life through custom place-making sculpture elements cast from bronze or laser cut from steel plates set at different planes for his abstract portrait.





Design for Water

Permeable pavers for most parking stalls help manage 55% of stormwater on site. Rain gardens help manage stormwater runoff and enhance local biodiversity. Intensive green roof systems on the council chambers roof and staff roof terrace help reduce stormwater runoff.



Design for Economy

Bringing Village, Police, and School District Admin services together under one roof allows for shared resources, 10% less building area (80,180sf), and savings of \$168,000 in energy costs annually.



Design for Well-Being

The second floor staff roof terrace and the Blackburn Civil Rights Plaza provide spaces to connect with nature to support healthier lifestyles. Light filled offices and common areas along with dedicated wellness rooms also promote well-being.



Design for Energy

The solar PV array on the carport will offset 8% of annual building energy use. The main building roof also has been designed to accommodate PV panels in the future.



FIRST FLOOR PROGRAM PLAN

38,520 sf

- PUBLIC ACCESS AREAS
- SECURE STAFF SHARED AREAS
- POLICE PROGRAM
- VILLAGE HALL PROGRAM
- SCHOOL DISTRICT PROGRAM
- BUILDING SUPPORT AREAS



0' 10' 20' 40'





