

Hemmens Cultural Center North Addition

Elgin, Illinois

ICivic108-01

Category: Institutional – Civic, Municipal (Addition)

Project Data:

16,477 gsf

Site Size: ~ 1.5 acres

Date of Completion: 2025

Program Statement:

The project consists of a three-level, 15,000 SF addition with a lower-level green room. Dressing rooms, lockers, and storage, a new north side main entry lobby with a new box office, main level gathering space, larger elevator, receiving room, coat room, and restrooms. Improved ADA access, along with a heightened guest experience, were top priorities. A large, second-floor wrap-around outdoor balcony is another new design feature that connects the existing 1,200-seat auditorium house balcony and Hemmens' grand lobby stairway. Approximately 2,400 SF of flexible meeting space equipped with built-in bars is utilized for events. The question as to whether The Hemmens should be renovated or rebuilt had been debated for years by the City of Elgin.

"This renovation and expansion project will continue to make The Hemmens an attractive venue for the community and the region for decades to come," said Amanda Harris, the city's director of cultural arts and special events. "It will further solidify Elgin's burgeoning reputation as a city of the arts."

The new structure echoes and complements the original building's midcentury modern vocabulary—steel, glass, and clean lines—while providing a deliberately contemporary new main entrance. The strategic integration of new elements into older buildings offers a powerful means of revitalization. Rather than erasing the past, it honors it, bringing new life into aging structures, allowing them to serve modern purposes while preserving their historical and cultural significance. This method is also deeply sustainable: Repurposing this existing 56-year-old building avoids the carbon costs of demolition and new construction, conserves embodied energy and reduces waste. It is a form of architectural recycling, merging stewardship of the past with innovation for the future. Here the architectural grafting of new onto old provides a dialogue across time, a way of saying that what was once new can continue to serve, inspire, and adapt—without being erased.

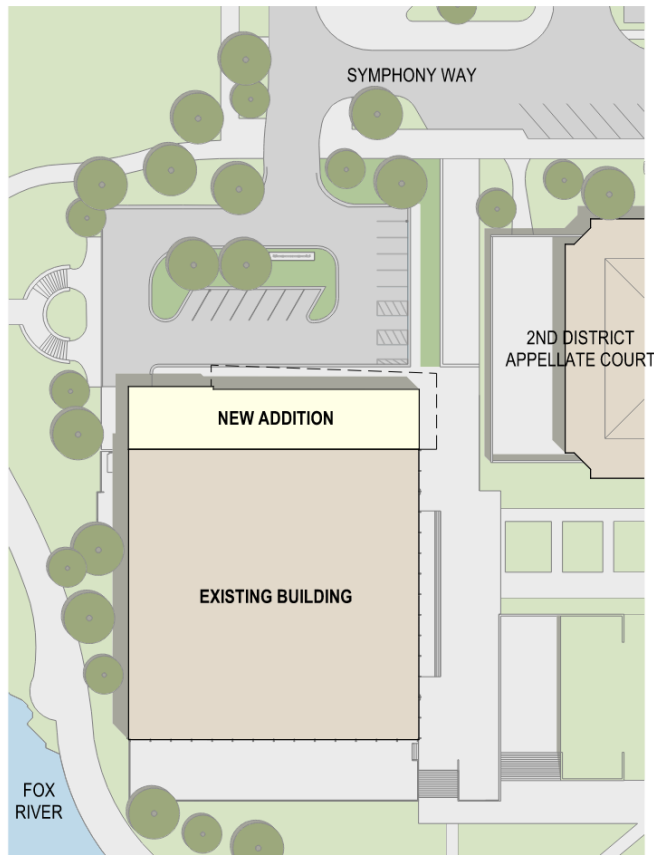
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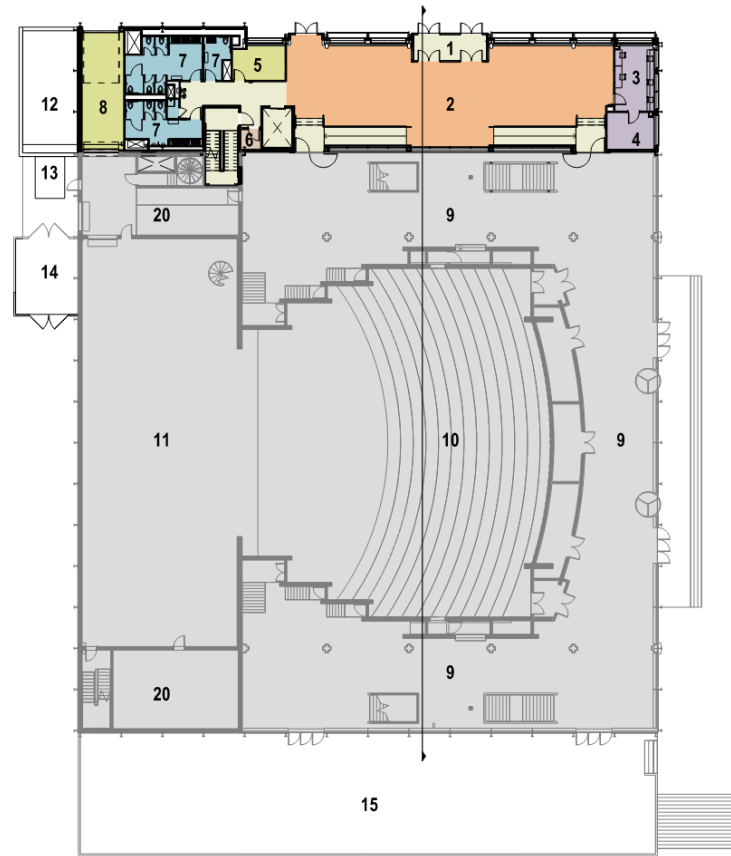
ICivic108-02

The new addition to the Hemmens Cultural Center in Elgin, Illinois brings new life to this important midcentury-modern civic building.

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SITE PLAN



FIRST FLOOR PLAN

DEPARTMENT LEGEND

- ADMIN. / OFFICE
- ASSEMBLY
- ASSEMBLY OUTDOOR
- CIRCULATION
- SUPPORT
- TOILET ROOMS / JANITOR
- OTHER
- EXISTING TO REMAIN

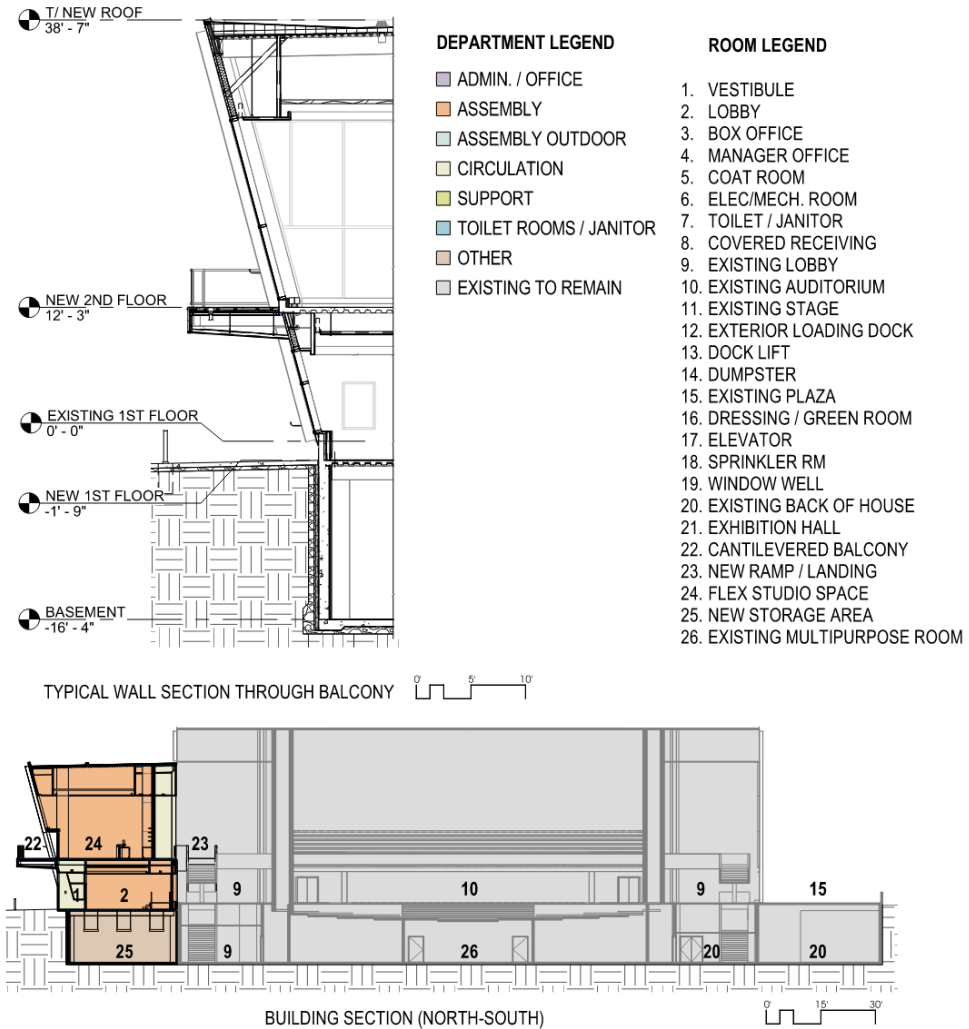
ROOM LEGEND

1. VESTIBULE
2. LOBBY
3. BOX OFFICE
4. MANAGER OFFICE
5. COAT ROOM
6. ELEC/MECH. ROOM
7. TOILET / JANITOR
8. COVERED RECEIVING
9. EXISTING LOBBY
10. EXISTING AUDITORIUM
11. EXISTING STAGE
12. EXTERIOR LOADING DOCK
13. DOCK LIFT
14. DUMPSTER
15. EXISTING PLAZA
16. DRESSING / GREEN ROOM
17. ELEVATOR
18. SPRINKLER RM
19. WINDOW WELL
20. EXISTING BACK OF HOUSE
21. EXHIBITION HALL
22. CANTILEVERED BALCONY
23. NEW RAMP / LANDING
24. FLEX STUDIO SPACE
25. NEW STORAGE AREA
26. EXISTING MULTIPURPOSE ROOM

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ICivic108-03



The expanded lobby creates a more welcoming and identifiable entrance, improving circulation for patrons while enhancing accessibility, flow, and first impressions. Accessible restrooms on upper and lower levels together with ramps and an elevator address long-standing ADA challenges, making the space inclusive for all visitors.

The new reception area / banquet rooms on the second floor with their outdoor balconies provide vibrant social spaces and panoramic views of downtown's Civic Center Plaza, enriching the visitor experience and supporting new programming opportunities. Wood detailing and warmer tones complement the more austere original detailing.

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ICivic108-04

Existing building showing original North elevation

Originally built in 1969 as a civic performance venue, designed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill in the International style developed by Mies van der Rohe, the Hemmens has long been a community landmark.

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ICivic108-05

Arial view of the surroundings

The addition reinforces the Center's cultural role as a hub for the arts—hosting the Elgin Symphony Orchestra, theater groups, dance recitals, community events, and more. The expansion ensures that this civic landmark remains a vibrant, relevant anchor in Elgin's arts and community center well into the future.

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ICivic108-06

View of the new addition and existing building from the northeast corner

The new structure reflects and complements the original building's midcentury modern vocabulary—steel, glass, clean lines, and Miesian detailing—while providing a deliberately contemporary new main entrance. Here the strategic grafting of new elements onto this older building provides powerful revitalization: Rather than erasing the past, it honors it, bringing new life to this aging structure, allowing it to serve modern purposes while preserving its historic and cultural significance.

Preferred slide

Hemmens Cultural Center North Addition

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ICivic108-07

Interior of the new lobby space on the first floor

The expanded lobby creates a more welcoming and identifiable entrance, improving circulation for patrons while enhancing accessibility, flow, and first impressions. Accessible restrooms on upper and lower levels together with ramps and an elevator address long-standing ADA challenges, making the space inclusive for all visitors.



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ICivic108-08

Interior of the new lobby space on the first floor

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ICivic108-09

Interior of the new banquet rooms / flex studio spaces on the second floor

The new reception area / banquet rooms on the second floor with their outdoor balconies provide vibrant social spaces and panoramic views of downtown's Civic Center Plaza, enriching the visitor experience and supporting new programming opportunities. Wood detailing and warmer tones complement the more austere original detailing.

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ICivic108-10

Interior of the new banquet rooms / flex studio spaces on the second floor

The new reception area / banquet rooms on the second floor with their outdoor balconies provide vibrant social spaces and panoramic views of downtown's Civic Center Plaza, enriching the visitor experience and supporting new programming opportunities. Wood detailing and warmer tones complement the more austere original detailing.

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ICivic108-11

Interior of the new staff office on the second floor and public bathrooms on the first floor

Accessible restrooms on upper and lower levels together with ramps and an elevator address long-standing ADA challenges, making the space inclusive for all visitors.



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ICivic108-12

View of existing auditorium space

The Hemmens has long been a community landmark and a hub for the arts—hosting the Elgin Symphony Orchestra, theater groups, dance recitals, community events, and more. The expansion ensures that this civic landmark remains a vibrant, relevant anchor in Elgin's arts and community center well into the future.



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ICivic108-13

View of the new addition and existing building from the northeast corner

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ICivic108-14

View of the new addition from north side

The original Hemmens Sign was reinstalled at the front of the building in the more prominent location to emphasize and compliment the original building's mid century modern vocabulary. It allows the architect to establish the theory that this addition is about the architectural grafting of new onto old and rather than erasing the past, it honors it, bringing new life to this aging structure, allowing it to serve modern purposes while preserving its historic and cultural significance.



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