A Call to Return to Tradition: Come in and make yourself at home

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Situated on an elevated piece of ground, this assembly or ensemble recalls a time past and gives reference to comforting and familiar traditions.

The practical use of ruff-hewn lumber and other raw materials in buildings was a part of colonial and westward expansion. In a historical context, a desire for growth has precipitated this local materials use ethic. A pioneering spirit and the frontier itself provided a material palette for construction use, which began to establish an identity where houses and buildings provided temporary or permanent shelter.

In a possible call to return to tradition, the new DeWaay Capital Management headquarters building is a manifestation of this identity in that the owner enjoys the outdoors and the look and feel of exposed timber and natural stone.

The client is from Northwest Iowa and South Dakota. He enjoys the great outdoors of Big Sky Country and the Great Plains prairie. He was drawn to the lodge aesthetic of the Black Hills, Montana, and Wyoming,” says Jeffrey Morgan, principal of Jeffrey Morgan Architecture Studio. “He saw this aesthetic as a way to connect personally with his clients, many of whom share his love of nature and the outdoors.”

The architects worked closely with owner Don DeWaay, who sought the counsel of many business and personal contacts and involved them in charrettes—public idea-generating sessions—conducted during the design process.

“The company’s CEO sought the advice of many of his close associates and consultants. This included business, real estate, and marketing advisors,” says Matt Coen, AIA, project manager and architect. “This group of stakeholders was identified early in the process to provide feedback on the design and development of the project.”

The building construct is indigenous to the legacy of the Midwest and feels natural and at home. It offers a place where employees, visitors, and guests are comfortable in the expanse where DeWaay Capital Management does business.

The result is a milieu where clients arrive and feel welcome. The timber-framed porte cochere is a focal point upon approach to the new location. The large-scale lobby space was borne from the notion of the “grand lodge,” where visitors arrive and are encouraged to make themselves at home. Also included is a conference facility with state-of-the-art audio/visual equipment. The building can accommodate 96 employees and approximately 150 conference attendees. Additionally, a number of fireplaces and water amenities are incorporated on the premises, and shower facilities are available to support employee wellness.

“The photographs depict the building’s unique characteristics at multiple scales. For example, a strong axial approach, coupled with a grand entry space, help organize the building and give it a presence at the top of the hill, while the interior of the building is carefully detailed with a rich material palette,” said Cameron Campbell, from Integrated Studio. “The combination of the two results in a memorable approach sequence and tactile interior experience.”

The natural surroundings of DeWaay’s headquarters give reference to the prairie and the materials palette that make the physical building an expression of the owner’s values and interests. With the materials preference is the inherent reality that, over time, the building will acquire a patina that will complement its character. In a traditional sense, the structure offers DeWaay a place to connect and collaborate.

—M. Monica Gillen lives and works in Ames, Iowa.
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