

Art & Science

T H E C O M M U N I T Y T E C T O N I C S Q U A R T E R L Y

Community Tectonics Was Founded To Fulfill Community's Design Needs

Community Tectonics' name was conceived many years ago to reflect the specific focus of its founder, the late Hubert Bebb. Community projects have formed the heart of the architecture, planning and design firm's work for almost 50 years.

"When Mr. Bebb opened his first office in 1950, his philosophy was to fulfill the architec-



tural needs of his community, including anything from a garage to an auditorium," says Butch Robertson, an architect with the firm for more than 20 years.

Clingman's Dome

One of the earliest significant projects designed by the firm in 1955 was the observation tower atop Clingman's Dome, the highest mountain in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park (6,643 feet). Bebb designed the 54-foot tower, which offers views of over 100 miles and into seven states.

Robertson notes that this project was particularly challenging. A concrete plant was put in operation on top of the mountain. Bebb not only designed the tower with its unique spiral ramp, he also designed the forms with which it was built. It was a labor of love, and when he passed away in 1985, his ashes were scattered in the winds from the top of the tower.

The Nature of Community Projects

Since that time, Community Tectonics has designed hundreds of community projects, including municipal complexes, fire halls, courthouses, recreational facilities, public safety buildings and libraries. In addition, the firm has planned and designed many educational facilities throughout the State of Tennessee.

The Sunsphere is another famous community structure designed by the firm. Built in 1982 for the World's Fair in Knoxville, the Sunsphere is one of the most unique, spherical structures in the world.

Robertson explains that community projects, schools and churches have three things in common related to their design process. First, he says that they are all planned for long-term use by the general public. "You rarely see one of these buildings sold," he says, "so the planners focus on issues like long-term maintenance costs and material selection."

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architecture • planning • interior design

Tectonics: The Art and Science of Creating Structures



Making A Difference

“Well-programmed facilities make a major, long-term difference in education,” says Dr. Levonn Hubbard, the new assistant to the president at Community Tectonics. “School boards must take the building process seriously and program facilities with the idea that we can make a difference when we design environments conducive to learning. Otherwise, they’re missing the opportunity forever to enhance education and the children’s future. Good buildings make a statement about a community. They

reflect the commitment that school board members and government officials have toward the children and their community.”

Hubbard says that making a difference in the lives of children is why he chose to join Community Tectonics instead of retiring after more than 30 years in education. He began as a teacher in Cumberland County. He has served as a teacher, principal and superintendent, most recently as superintendent for Sumner County Schools.

He received his bachelor’s degree in education and science and his master’s degree in educational administration and supervision from Tennessee Technological University. He received his doctorate degree from Peabody College at Vanderbilt University.

When he started his career in education, children were rarely comfortable in their learning environments, and their education suffered as a result. Today, leaders in education are focusing on the environment in order to provide the best opportunities for their students. Comfort issues are joined by attention to technology, individual classroom control, economy of operation and maintaining a safe, secure facility.

“My job is to work with school districts to help them plan, design, renovate and restore older buildings and to construct new buildings,” Hubbard explains.

“When I joined Community Tectonics, I joined a comprehensive service firm that provides planning, programming and design for educational facilities,” Hubbard says. “Our goal is to maximize the teacher’s ability to teach and the student’s ability to learn. We facilitate the process of community input, and we have the knowledge to support funding and expanding opportunities for young people. Community Tectonics’ designs make a difference in education for students.”

Everett Recreation Center

The Everett High School Gymnasium, originally constructed in 1953, was closed from 1979 until 1994, when the Blount County Recreation and Parks Commission took ownership. The facility was refurbished to serve a variety of recreational needs, and the main entrance and public restrooms were enlarged. The upper level serves as an exercise and game area. The intermediate level provides meeting rooms and classroom spaces, and a central control booth provides visual access throughout the center. The lower level will be developed in a second phase with large-scale meeting facilities, exercise rooms, arts and crafts areas, and additional storage.

Project specifics:

Building area: 31,920 square feet

Total cost: Phase 1: \$1.1 million

Phase 2: \$850,000 (est)

Includes: refurbished gymnasium, an enhanced exterior that eliminated energy-inefficient glass areas, and addition of a new roof.



Sevierville Police Facility

As Sevierville has grown in population, the city’s law enforcement services have also expanded. This new facility replaces a facility that had become inadequate for the department’s needs. Constructed adjacent to the existing Community Center (also designed by Community Tectonics) and the relocated City of Sevierville offices, the Police Facility features compatible materials and building elements to provide a harmonious architectural environment for the total site.

Project specifics:

Building area: 9,810 square feet

Total cost: \$1.2 million

Areas include: administrative, centrally-located dispatch, secure sallyport, evidence storage, detective work stations, squad room, lockers and toilets, and a physical training area.



which are both Functional and Visually Pleasing.

Interior Design Complements Comprehensive Approach

Interior design at Community Tectonics has grown to a staff of five professionals, as clients have discovered the benefits of an integrated approach to architecture and interior design. Allison Pelham, the director of interior design at Community Tectonics, explains that her department's primary responsibility is to support the architectural work being done by the comprehensive architecture, planning and interior design firm.

"We work with the project architects and design teams for each project, from the beginning stage to the end," Pelham says. "We provide furniture layouts with the initial floor plans depicting how each space will be used, furniture-wise. We identify finishes for the walls and floors and provide floor patterns and wall graphics for some clients. We also develop color boards and drawings for client review and approval."

Community Tectonics' special expertise lies in facilitating planning and community input on building projects. Pelham says that's reflected in the interior design department as well. Many of their clients are school districts, and Pelham stresses the importance of researching the use of space and identifying special needs, particularly those that affect furniture, lighting, data/electrical needs and millwork.

She is working with the Cleveland City school district on the Blythe-Bower Elementary School, which entails combining two schools into one expanded building. She met with board members and teachers to determine the spaces needed, the functions in those spaces, the relationships between spaces, and the furnishings and finishes required.

"Once we gathered the information, we developed a space summary that was then presented to user groups," she recalls. "This data helped us reach the final decision as to the size of the school and the budget available. Once again, integration of the disciplines was helpful, because the information was used by the architects, the engineers and the interior designers."

Pelham says she believes the use of interior design services at Blythe-Bower helped to meet the challenge of bringing two schools together. "We wanted to build a sense of community into this school. One way we did that was to create a 'town hall' concept involving spaces that could be used jointly by the school and community. We wanted to create a fun, exciting place where children would enjoy learning - a place where they would want to be."

She notes that her department also provides furniture and equipment for clients. This process includes evaluation, inventory, specification, bid documents, purchasing and installation. She says she's also worked with religious, health care, commercial and governmental clients. Recent interior design projects include Roane County Medical Center, the Pigeon Forge Municipal Complex, King Business Forms, Grace Baptist Church and First Baptist Church, Cleveland.



Interior designers Allison Pelham and Angela Paxton review a client color board.

Representative Community Projects

Community Centers & Recreational Facilities

Community Centers for the Cities of Gatlinburg, Newport, Sevierville, and Rogersville
Blount County, Everett Recreation Center
McGhee Tyson Air Base, Professional Military Education Complex, Multi-Purpose Building
First Baptist Church, Concord, Family Life Center
First United Methodist Church, Maryville, Multi-Purpose Facility
Manley Baptist Church, Family Life Center

Municipal and State Park Facilities

Gatlinburg City Park Facilities
Gatlinburg, Mynatt Park, Boy Scout Pavilion
Gatlinburg, Tennis Association Building
Norris Dam State Park Swimming Pool
Indian Mountain Pool & Bathhouse
Rogersville Pool & Bathhouse
Frozen Head State Park, Visitors Center

Governmental Facilities

Knox County, Distribution Center
Cocke County, Industrial Park
City of Knoxville, State Street Parking Garage
City of Alcoa, Public Safety Building
City of Newport, Operations Center
Sevier County, Emergency Operations Center
Sevierville, Police Facility
City of Gatlinburg, Chamber of Commerce
Municipal Complexes in Gatlinburg and Pigeon Forge
Martin Marietta/DOE, Walker Branch Watershed Laboratories
Courthouse Renovations in Sevier, Cocke and Hamblen Counties
Fire Halls in Parrottsville and White Pine
Libraries in Blount, Hamblin, and Sevier Counties
Health Department Renovations in Cocke, Knox and Sevier Counties
Ambulance Services in Cocke and Sevier Counties
United States Postal Services Facilities throughout Tennessee
Lenior City Armory



Public Safety Building, City of Alcoa

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In addition, he says that these buildings are usually planned by a group of people, such as a building committee, school board, county commission or city council. Communication is the key to working with groups like these. Finally, he says that they are all "very, very, aware of budget considerations. There has to be a sense of good stewardship of public money, which is a finite resource," he adds.

Recent Community Projects

Robertson worked with the Maryville-Alcoa-Blount County Recreation and Parks Commission to renovate the old Everett High School gymnasium into a community recreational center. John Wilbanks, executive director of the Parks Commission, says that the project benefited when Robertson went before the Blount County Commission in support of it.

"The people at Community Tectonics don't duck questions," Wilbanks reports. "They're straightforward with their answers and honest with their estimates. They make people feel comfortable."

Several years ago, the firm also designed the Gatlinburg Municipal Complex, which houses city offices, city council chambers, the police department and the fire department. A comprehensive representation of the firm's other community projects is listed on page three.

Robertson notes that each type of community project has its own set of design issues to be addressed. Recreational centers, for example, must simultaneously serve a wide range of recreation opportunities, hopefully with minimal staff requirements. Law enforcement facilities must be friendly to the general public, yet extremely secure for the officers and criminals. Fire halls offer unique vehicular challenges, and libraries are driven by new media and technology.

"Community Tectonics has evolved into this community project niche," Robertson concludes. "As the nature of facilities has become more complex, we've emerged as the experts. To this day, Community Tectonics exists to fulfill our community's architectural needs."

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