

ARCHITECT

Snøhetta in Saudi Arabia
Brooks + Scarpa Do Brick
Detoxing the Workplace
Welcome to Waltonville

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Typology: Education

Projects by Arquitectonica,
NADAAA, and Weiss/Manfredi

A Contents

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On the cover: University of Miami School of Architecture Thomas P. Murphy Design Studio Building, in Coral Gables, Fla., by Arquitectonica; photo by Robin Hill.

- 14 Traditional Excellence
- 16 Marvelous Midcentury Modernism
- 18 Voices of a Generation

Tech + Practice

- 20 Best Practices: How to Avoid a Toxic Work Culture
- 22 Detail: The Mark Steel Knuckles
- 24 Next Progressives: Outpost Office
- 28 Products: How to Specify Living Walls in Hospitals
- 30 Opinion: Elevating EDI in America's Heartland



32 Residential: Brooks + Scarpa with Studio Dwell

AIA Architect

- 53 Those Who Can, Teach
- 55 Finding Qualified Staff Is a Top Concern for 2019
- 56 The High Stakes of the High Line Effect
- 60 Is a New Day Dawning for Social Infrastructure?
- 62 Telling the Story

Columns

- 65 The Walton Family Embraces Design Excellence
by Karrie Jacobs
- 75 Snøhetta's Saudi Arabian Wager
by Josh Stephens

Editorial

- 112 The "Architect" of the Capitol
by Ned Cramer



82 Weiss/Manfredi Architecture/Landscape/Urbanism



90 NADAAA



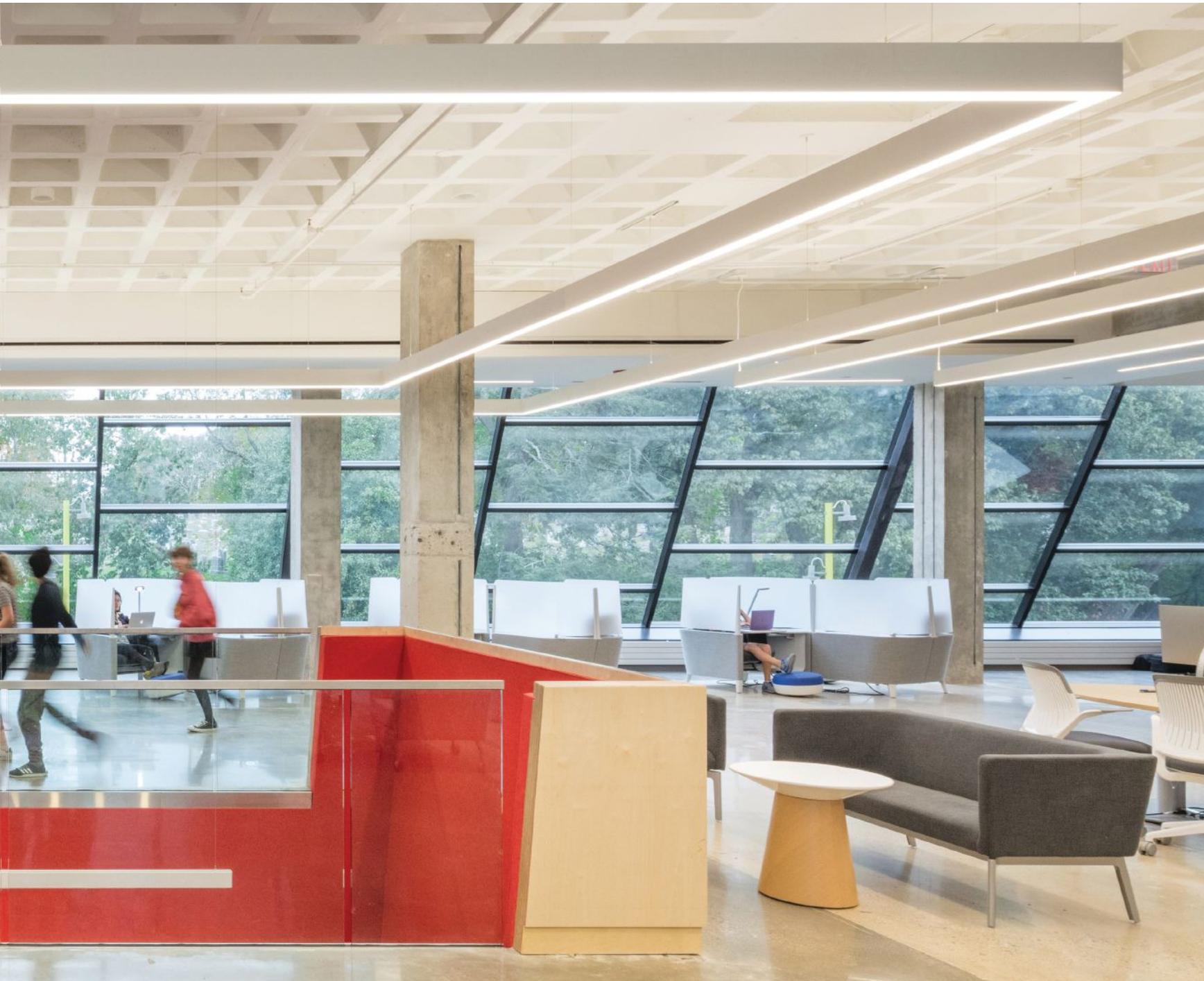
100 Arquitectonica

**Beaver Country Day School Research + Design Center
Chestnut Hill, Mass.
NADAAA**



A nontraditional library addition brings research, fabrication, and study space to middle and high schoolers outside Boston.

INTERVIEW BY KATIE GERFEN
PHOTOS BY JOHN HORNER



Tell me about the Beaver Country Day School campus. What was your design responding to?

Katherine Faulkner, AIA, principal-in-charge: The campus has been added to maybe four times since the 1920s. The structure that we were focusing on was a 1960s concrete-frame library, which really sticks out as a modern Brutalist building in a field of iterative Georgian additions. The school had done a master plan, called “the ring of knowledge,” that was all about bringing their campus up to accessible standards, and that was very much the genesis of this project: How do we line up and connect all of the buildings so that one person can get to every corner of the campus without going outside? The school has also really made a name for itself among middle and high schools that have embraced technology. This addition was going to be a library, but one rebranded into a research and design center. It’s got a strong fabrication component, and its notion of how a library is used is really quite different from any library addition we’ve ever done.

Nader Tehrani, design principal: There is a connection between the physical distribution of spaces in the addition and pedagogical model the school is working with. They eliminated what you would traditionally call the front door to the library and the insularity of a reading room, and the new ring that connects the auditorium wing, the arts wing, the fabrication wing, and the science wing flows around a courtyard. Essentially the library as we would know it has been exploded around this ring in its entirety and encompassed that continuity of space. The library is seen as a lively space where people come to learn how to do their work, to collaborate, and to make things.

Tell me about the character of the spaces you designed.

Tehrani: We added one floor at the very top of the existing library structure, and the rest of the project is about carving out existing conditions and elongating them because of the way it wraps around the courtyard. Spatial typologies that would otherwise be cut up into rooms were attenuated into these long stringy conditions of stairs and ramps. Along that journey you get study carrels and bleachers, and things like that.

Faulkner: The great thing about this client and their method of teaching is the idea that you can take these spaces along the path and program them so that there are small and medium rooms for meeting, and larger classroom spaces—all occurring along what is essentially a ramp that allows an accessible route.

The school’s idea of precedent for the space was looking at how people are working these days. What

are the kinds of spaces where people go when you are not in the classroom, or on the ballfield, or in the lunchroom? Where is the space that you go to do your project work or to meet with your teacher?

At the center of it all is the courtyard. How did you approach the design for that space?

Tehrani: The courtyard was a collaboration with landscape architect Gary Hilderbrand, and there was an intended dialogue between a bosque of birch trees that he had conceived of in the courtyard and the façades. We went through many different iterations of timber cladding elements—they became thinner, and thinner, and then they became louvers. You’re seeing one iteration out of several that we drew in order to accentuate the kind of dynamism of the circulation as you walk around this building in different directions, but also the way the birch trees wave in the wind.

Faulkner: It’s a funny space, that courtyard, because they always had it. It wasn’t fully enclosed, but it was this really charming space that existed between the buildings with no obvious way to get to it. As we began to develop the architecture around it and this circulation, which would constantly have you confronting it—either coming down the gallery stairs as you look north or looking south from the fabrication space, it became clear how central it would be.

What was your materials strategy for the interior?

Faulkner: The interior is very bare because, certainly for the first-floor fabrication level, the idea is that it’s a workshop. We used Baltic birch plywood upstairs, and we spent a lot of time with [acoustical engineer] Acentech aurally modeling the space, figuring out what could be hard and reverberative, what needed to be soft and absorptive. Our palate always tends toward the natural because you can do a lot with that.

Tehrani: Schools are like public spaces. They’re designed to get beaten up and battered, and our general philosophy toward concrete, fabrics, and plywood is that they’re going to get a lot of wear and tear. The plywood is well-crafted, but it’s a raw detail, and it doesn’t matter if it gets beaten up a little bit because it adds to its patina.

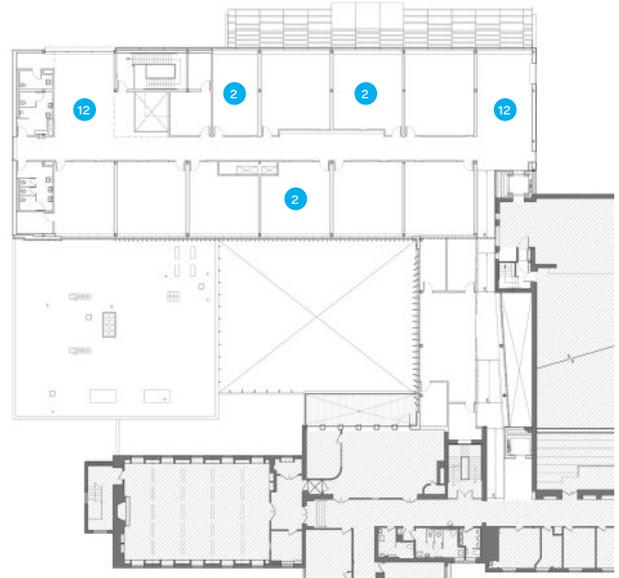
Overall, this project also became an exercise about articulating and framing a didactic space of teaching and learning with certain details that trigger in the students’ minds that something in architecture is happening here. It’s not business as usual.

This interview was edited for length and clarity.

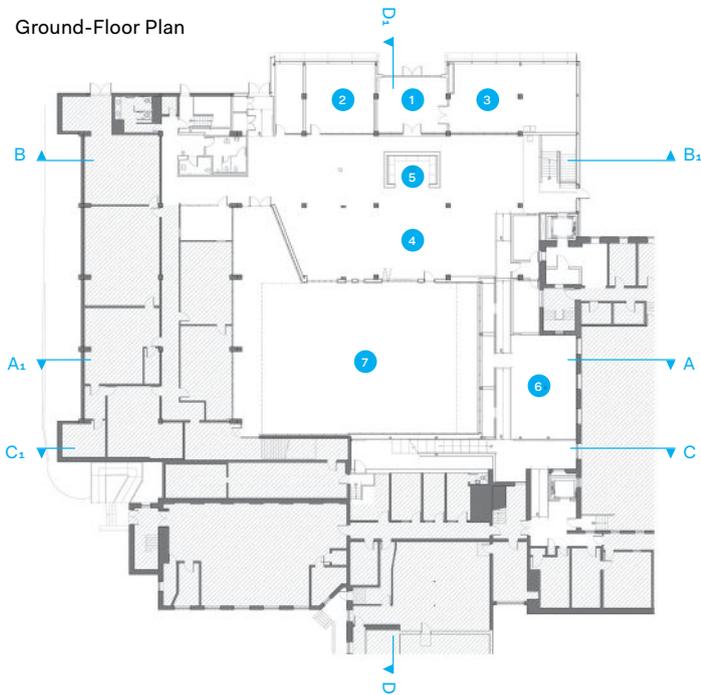
Second-Floor Plan



Third-Floor Plan



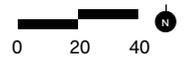
Ground-Floor Plan



Previous Spread: In the north-facing research workspace on the second floor, the architects exposed the existing waffle slab ceiling.



- 1. Entrance
- 2. Classroom
- 3. Workshop
- 4. Studio
- 5. Huddle space
- 6. Library stacks
- 7. Courtyard
- 8. Research workspace
- 9. Librarian's office
- 10. Study carrels
- 11. Gallery
- 12. Lounge





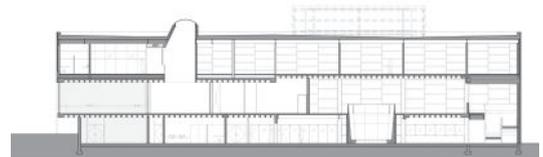
A flexible first-floor amphitheater blends the functions of a library, study room, corridor, and gathering space. Baltic birch plywood furniture provides book storage, study carrels, and lounge seating.

Section A-A₁

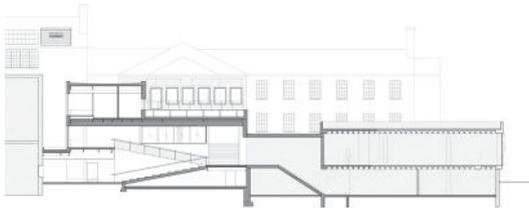


NADAAA added a third floor to the existing library structure to accommodate 10 classrooms and additional breakout space. A light well connects the new level to the research floor below.

Section B-B₁

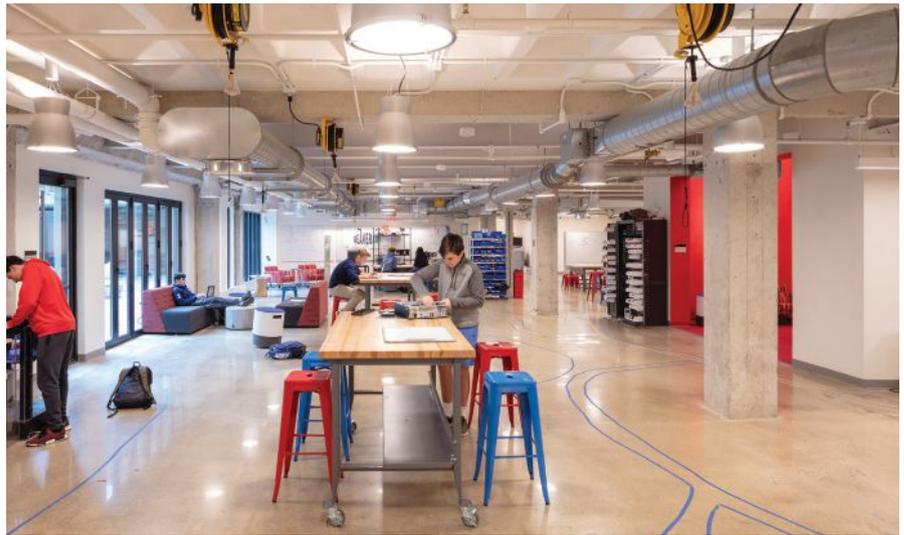
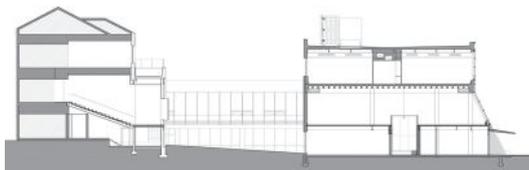


Section C-C₁



A series of ramps wrap the courtyard to connect the new construction to existing and renovated spaces in the surrounding buildings. With the addition of the ramps, students and faculty can navigate the entire complex without needing to go outdoors.

Section D-D₁



The first-floor research and development space contains a fabrication shop and robotics lab. A red double-height huddle space (at right) punches through to the research level above (seen on the opening spread).

Project Credits

Project: Beaver Research + Design Center, Chestnut Hill, Mass.

Client: Beaver Country Day School

Architect/Interior Designer: NADAAA, Boston · Katherine Faulkner, AIA (principal-in-charge); Nader Tehrani (design principal); Arthur Chang, AIA (project manager); Gretchen Neeley (project coordinator); Jin Kyu Lee, Thomas Tait, Tim Wong, AIA (project team)

M/E/P Engineer: AGA Consulting Engineers

Structural Engineer: Souza, True and Partners

Civil Engineer: Nitsch Engineering

Geotechnical Engineer: McPhail Associates

General Contractor: Erland Construction

Landscape Architect: Reed Hilderbrand Associates

Lighting Designer: LAM Partners

Envelope Consultant: Studio NYL

MAAB Updates Contractor: C&L General Contractors

Acoustical/A/V/I.T. Engineer: Acentech

Owner's Representative: Ron Axelrod

Accessibility/Code Consultant: Hastings Consulting

Signage: Whitney Veigas

Size: 39,700 square feet

Cost: Withheld



On the new north façade, a sloping glass curtainwall—its chevron profile determined by the addition of a third floor—admits diffuse light to the interior and preserves the view of an adjacent cemetery.



An existing central courtyard (now enclosed by the new addition) is lined in a rainscreen clad in wood-grained FunderMax phenolic panels. The panels were oriented to minimize solar gain, and to signal the pattern of movement along the programmed interior ramps.



