

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY WASHINGTON COLLEGE OF LAW

Washington, DC

Category: Architecture



CONTEXT

American University Washington College of Law has a new home at the Tenley Campus, located at the intersection of Nebraska and Wisconsin Avenues in Washington, DC. The 310,000-sf project occupies an 8-acre site designated as a National Register Historic District. Due to the historic nature of the site and the context of the surrounding neighborhood, it was necessary for the overall building footprint to be broken down in scale and appear as discrete buildings, forming a campus organized around a central quadrangle. The culture of the Washington College of Law required an interconnected community to support their collaboration-based pedagogy of breaking down barriers and creating connections. Programmatic functions within the buildings include classrooms, multi-purpose meeting spaces, clinical programs, teaching courtrooms, law library, faculty and staff offices and a variety of student interaction areas.

CONNECTION

The design solution addresses the seemingly opposing objectives of a campus of separate buildings and the need for creating a strong sense of community with the use of strategic spaces to both physically connect and maximize opportunities for engagement and interaction. The campus consists of three main structures, new and renovated, that are organized around a central outdoor courtyard space and connected underground with a library commons that is day-lit by skylights. The commons is a main gathering space located at the crossroads of the entire complex, linking various law school functions and containing multiple collaborative learning settings. A major design element includes a reimagined atrium that encloses a previous outdoor service yard between the existing buildings, historic Capital Hall and a former chapel. The new space created serves as a central hub of activity that connects the existing buildings to each other and to the new buildings. Interactive classrooms are located directly adjacent to the atrium, allowing for learning to be on display.

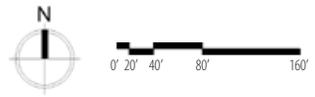
CONSERVATION

The historic chapel, adapted over time and used previously as a dance studio, has been transformed into a teaching courtroom. While key original design features are maintained and restored, the space itself is repurposed entirely as a modern teaching facility and one of the main highlights of the building. From the onset of the creative process, all architecture, engineering and construction disciplines were collaboratively involved. This integrated process resulted in a unified design which made features such as the dedicated outside air system (DOAS) combined with radiant ceiling panels (RCPs) possible. Many sustainable site features are incorporated that manage and treat storm water runoff through rain gardens and pervious paving, minimize urban heat islands and avoided unnecessary irrigation through the implementation of native plantings. Other features include maximizing open space and public transportation, careful placement of sunshading, and utilizing a unique brick product made from encapsulated fly-ash, diverting it from hazardous landfill disposal. The building is LEED-NC Gold certified.



CONTEXT

- 1 Historic Capital Hall, Renovated
- 2 Historic Chapel, Renovated
- 3 New Atrium
- 4 New Yuma Building
- 5 New Warren Building
- 6 Courtyard/ Library Commons below
- 7 Capital Hall Lawn



A CAMPUS OF BUILDINGS

In response to the neighborhood context and the historic nature of the site, the overall building footprint is broken down in scale as a series of discrete buildings. The new Yuma and Warren buildings are connected to the historic chapel and Capital Hall by a central courtyard space and a number of key interior spaces that become the heart of the campus.





CONTEXT

MATERIALITY REFLECTS HISTORIC CONTEXT

Clear distinction is made between the historic and contemporary structures, giving a nod to the site's significant past while incorporating the forward-looking goals that define the College of Law. The exterior material palette compliments the existing limestone façades of Capital Hall; fly-ash brick, limestone, natural zinc panels, and large areas of glass compose these new buildings. The Ceremonial Classroom is expressed as a limestone volume incorporating a panelized rain-screen system; a modern interpretation of the limestone of historic Capital Hall.



CONTEXT

CAREFUL MASSING AND QUIET FACADES AT EDGES

The massing and facades of the new buildings relate to the neighboring scale and context and provides transparency to the activities within.



The facade along Warren is reduced in scale with smaller openings to conform to the character of the neighborhood.



The massing along Yuma Street is broken down into pavilions and subtly articulated to respect the scale and activity of surrounding residential neighborhoods.



Neighboring residential scale

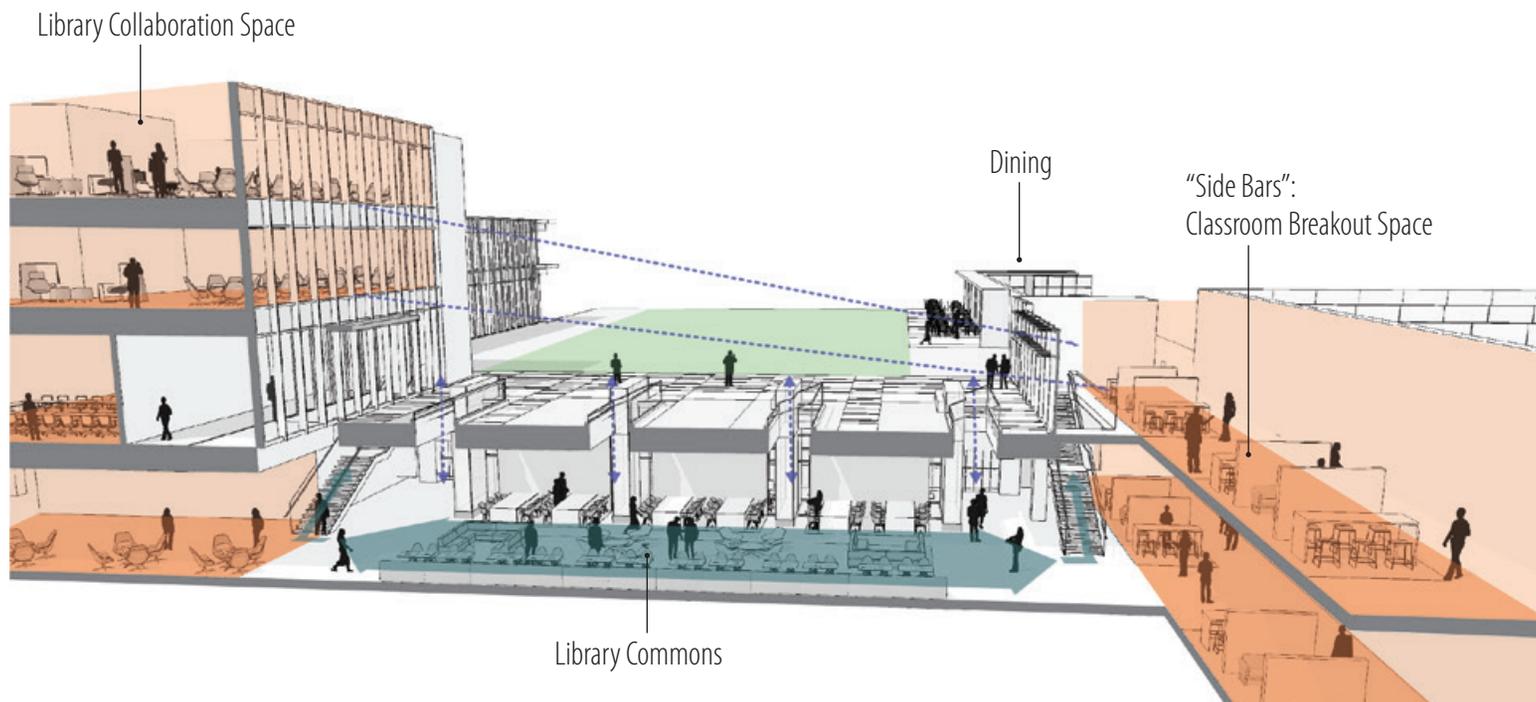


Yuma Street view

CENTRAL COURTYARD

Facades facing the central courtyard are open to maximize physical and visual connection between interior and exterior spaces. Sculptural skylights bring natural light into the library commons space below.





CONNECTION

INFORMAL LEARNING SPACES

Study areas take advantage of exterior views, establishing and strengthening connections through visual connectivity.





BELOW-GRADE LIBRARY COMMONS

The sky-lit library commons creates a connection between the two new buildings and provides group study and work space.

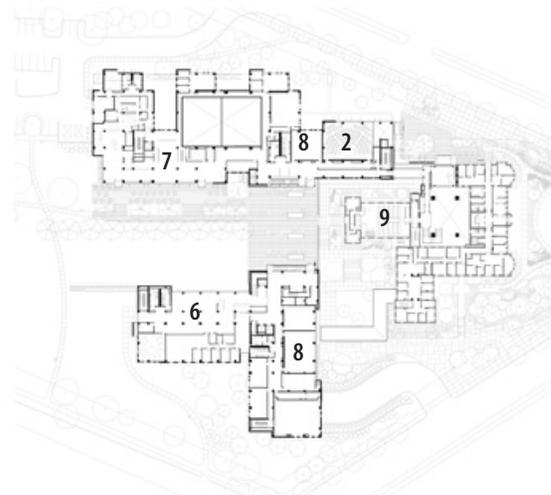
CONNECTION

BUILDING COMMUNITY

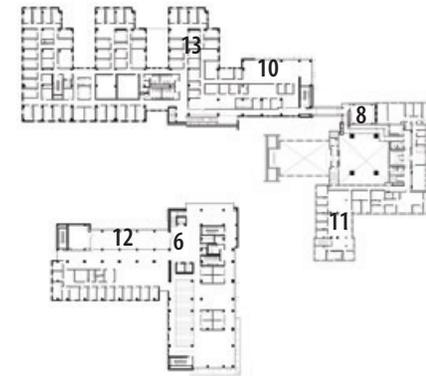
Learning spaces are dispersed to promote faculty/student interaction, encouraging participation and collaboration.



Lower Level



First Level



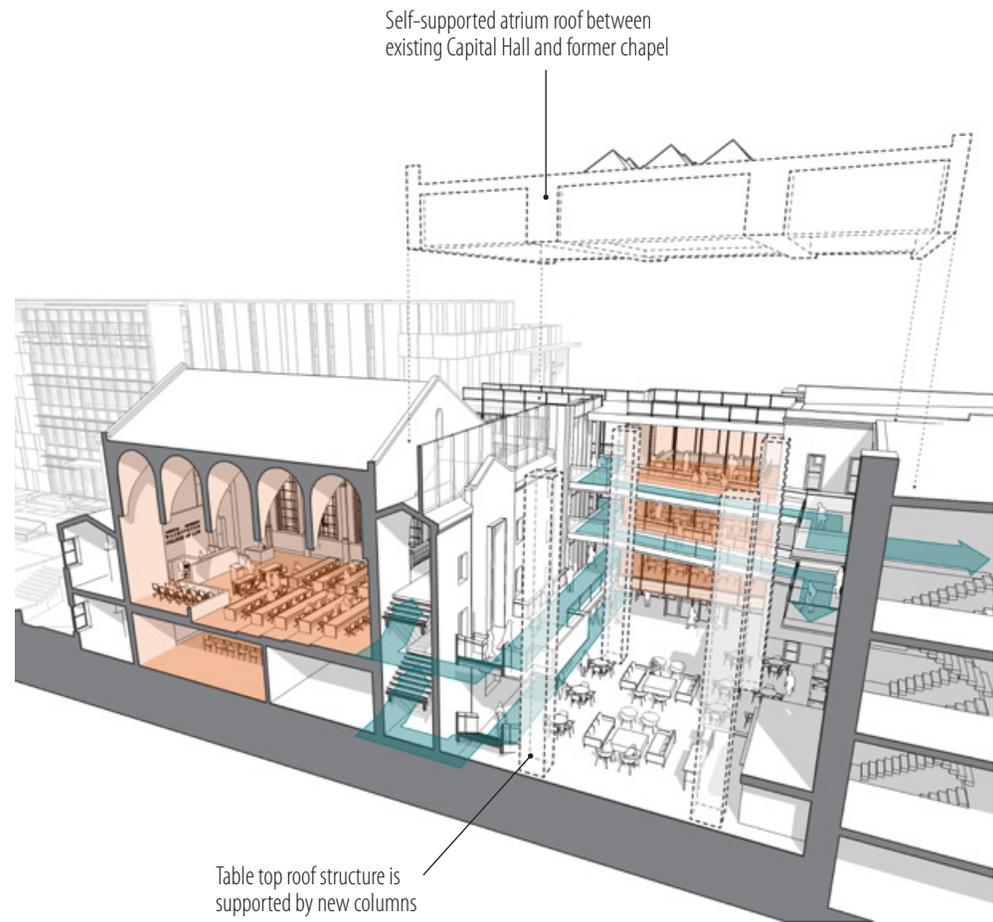
Second/Third Level

- 1 Ceremonial Classroom
- 2 Socratic Classroom
- 3 Library Commons
- 4 Flex-Multipurpose Room
- 5 Atrium
- 6 Library
- 7 Dining
- 8 Flex-Classroom
- 9 Moot Courtroom
- 10 Law Clinic
- 11 Administrative Offices
- 12 Reading Room
- 13 Faculty Offices



SPACES FOR INTERACTION

The dining area provides a vibrant space to study and additional opportunities for student and faculty engagement.



CONNECTION

RE-IMAGINED ATRIUM

New atrium space connecting historic Capital Hall and former chapel to the new Yuma building replaces the existing outdoor service yard. Due to the historic nature of the two existing buildings, the structural approach to the new atrium space included a self-supported frame that did not bear any load on the existing buildings.

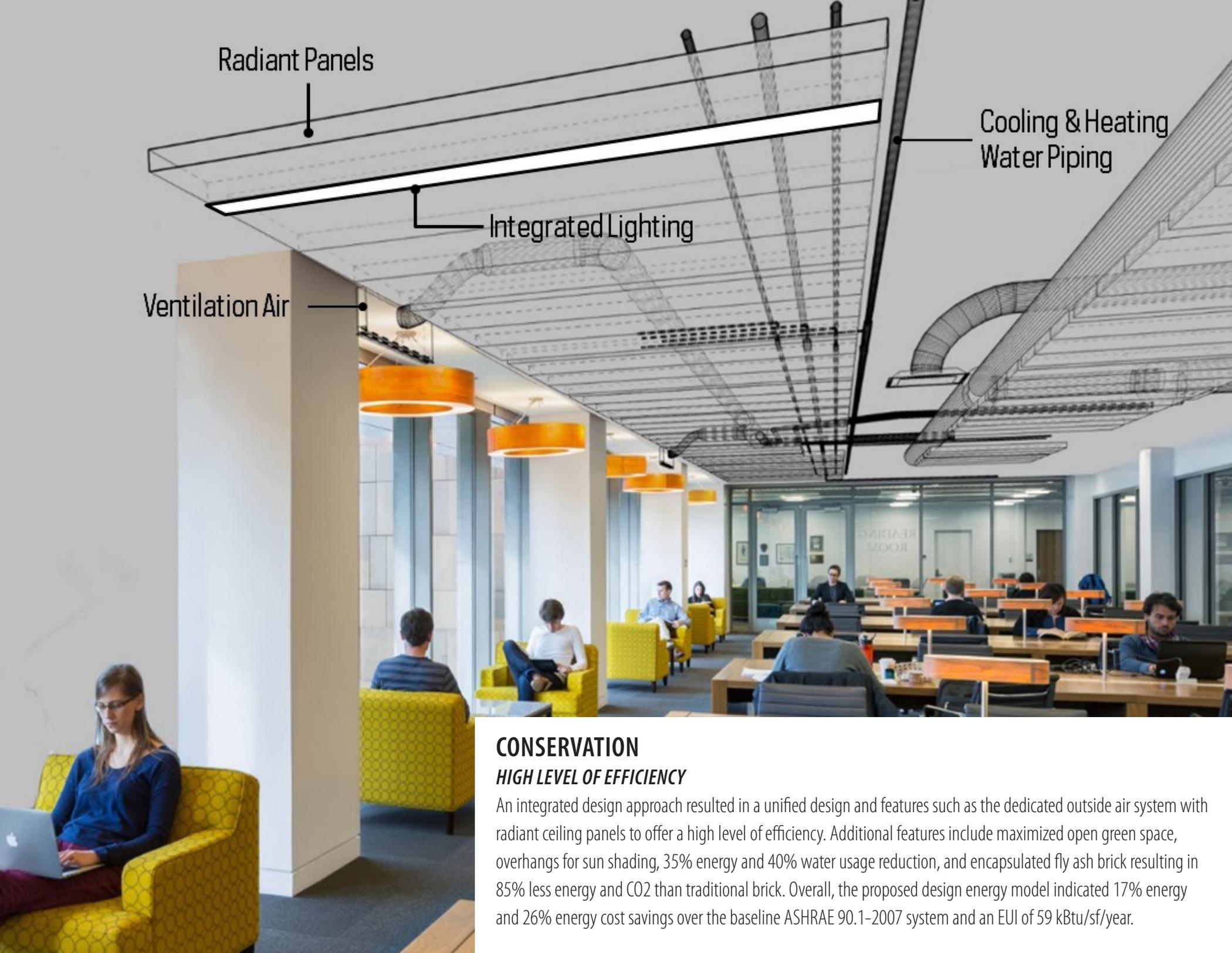
CONSERVATION

RENOVATED CHAPEL

The historic chapel, adapted over time and used previously as a dance studio, is revitalized as a moot courtroom.



Dance Studio



Radiant Panels

Cooling & Heating
Water Piping

Integrated Lighting

Ventilation Air

CONSERVATION

HIGH LEVEL OF EFFICIENCY

An integrated design approach resulted in a unified design and features such as the dedicated outside air system with radiant ceiling panels to offer a high level of efficiency. Additional features include maximized open green space, overhangs for sun shading, 35% energy and 40% water usage reduction, and encapsulated fly ash brick resulting in 85% less energy and CO₂ than traditional brick. Overall, the proposed design energy model indicated 17% energy and 26% energy cost savings over the baseline ASHRAE 90.1-2007 system and an EUI of 59 kBtu/sf/year.



ATRILIN

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YUMA