

Tue, July 16, 2013 | By Frank Jossi



The American Academy of Neurology chose a prominent corner in the Minneapolis Mill District on which to build its global headquarters. The five-story building sits right across the street from the Guthrie Theater on Washington and Chicago avenues in a vibrant neighborhood and was constructed with materials that reflect the colors throughout the area.

(Staff photo: Bill Klotz)

Address: 201 Chicago Ave. S, Minneapolis

Project cost: \$20 million

Project size: 63,000 square feet

Owner: American Academy of Neurology

Contractor: Mortenson Construction

Architect: Elness Swenson Graham Architects and 20 Below Studio (interior design)

Engineers: Horwitz/NSI, Gephardt Electric

The new American Academy of Neurology's global headquarters in the Minneapolis Mill District is a celebration of the human body and brain expressed in brick and mortar.

"The metaphor of the building is that of a body," said David Graham, design principal at Minneapolis-based Elness Swenson Graham Architects Inc. "It very much operates like the anatomy of a human being."

Located on a prominent corner across from the Guthrie Theater, the building has a window-filled lobby, or "brain," which features interactive screens focused on neurological information and lighting that looks like neurons. The side of the five-story building that's flush against the Guthrie's parking ramp serves as the "spine" and houses the mechanical infrastructure.

The rest of the structure is the "body," where employees work and conference rooms host meetings, Graham explained. A glass staircase in the lobby connects to conference areas on the upper floors that provide striking views of downtown Minneapolis and the Mississippi River, he noted.

The academy's headquarters takes advantage of its site by having a fifth-floor outdoor terrace overlooking the Guthrie and a ground-level plaza outside the lobby. The plaza features a sensory garden with a waterfall and pervious pavers with the names of different brain diseases.

If a cure is found for a particular disease, the academy will pull the brick and ceremonially smash it, Graham said. The exterior plays off the colors and materials found in the Mill District, including limestone and the lighter brown brick.

The building's biggest asset may be its location. The academy wanted a prominent one near transit routes and recreational trails.

"I think the academy had a strong vision to serve its membership in a highly creative way, and they've done that," Graham said. "The academy felt the Mill District, one of the more vibrant new neighborhoods in Minneapolis, was the place to be."

<http://finance-commerce.com/2013/07/top-projects-american-academy-of-neurology/#ixzz2Zz7joYzF>