

New Meadows facility designed to inspire

Doerr-Hosier Center makes its debut

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Aspen, Colorado

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Architect Jeff Berkus at the new Aspen Institute Facility

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ASPEN — After five years and \$12.5 million, the vision born from inside some of the largest minds has come to fruition at Aspen Meadows.

Delivering on its creed to transform collaborative thoughts into action, the Aspen Institute unveiled its Doerr-Hosier Center early this month. The conference and meeting center opened for the first time June 8 with a private wedding reception. Since then, the center has served the community in a variety of ways.

Hundreds of Aspenites attended former Mayor Helen Klanderud's 70th birthday bash June 9, and 1,200 people attended the Food & Wine Magazine Classic Best New Chef's Dinner last weekend.

Wednesday night, Challenge Aspen rented a small meeting room for volunteer training. On Thursday, a conference titled "Flight School" attracted 80 pilots to discuss all things aviation. Ester Dyson, daughter of Nobel Prize-winning physicist Freeman Dyson, led the conference.

Whether it's a large private event, a small group or a monumental conference like the upcoming Aspen Ideas Festival, the center was designed to inspire.

The 22,000-square-foot Doerr-Hosier

Center is a monument to the power of visionary ideas, with the design inspired by Bauhaus-trained architect Herbert Bayer and the concept by Fritz Benedict.

The building offers views of the Roaring Fork River 100 feet below, the Hunter Creek Valley and Red Mountain on the south side. To the north, views of Aspen Mountain and the Maroon and Castle Creek valleys encompass the front entrance.

The building's architect, Jeffrey Berkus, involved feng shui expert Alex Stark early in the design process. Stark realized immediately that the building would be at the epicenter of Aspen's energy, with the three valleys flowing directly toward the Roaring Fork. As a result, the building was designed with that in mind.

"The flow of energy is very much like humanity, and it was about getting the energy to flow in the same direction," Berkus said.

That's highlighted by the building's more dramatic feature - a red sandstone wall constructed by British sculptor Andy Goldsworthy. The rocks came from India, China, Jordan and Colorado.

The stone river originates at the building's entrance, meanders through a reflecting pool, flows into the center and



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emerges out the other side to align with the Roaring Fork River.

"The building was designed to bring common ground and [the stone river] is a great metaphor for that," Berkus said. "The idea that we could build someplace that would unite people from all over the world for open-minded discussions and problem-solving was the real source of inspiration."

The center is now the Institute's primary venue for heads of state, leaders in health research, educators, activists and artists, as well as the Aspen community, including the Aspen Music Festival.

The "Goldworthy Wall" is just one of the center's many features that signify the importance of bringing the outside into the building and vice versa.

"The space works well for what it was intended to do, and that was to feel very connected to nature," Berkus said, adding that he has spent the past 2 1/2 years planning, designing and overseeing the construction, which Shaw Construction completed.

Most of the building is pre-cast concrete and follows the Institute's gray-and-white theme.

Berkus said a guest at Klanderud's party told him he expected more color in the building.

"The whole point is that the people bring the building to life, and the building is just the backdrop," Berkus said.

The three-level building's "dynamic modernism" architecture encourages

open dialogues by embracing the natural surroundings - massive sliding pocket doors open to expansive terraces on all three floors - while providing three distinct meeting areas, a full industrial kitchen for on-site catering, large-screen plasma televisions, high-tech audiovisual equipment, wireless Internet and video conferencing, accessible from anywhere in the world.

Named after anchor donors Jerry Hosi-er and John Doerr, the center is the only building in the Roaring Fork Valley to receive the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Green Building Gold Rating for numerous cutting-edge low impacts such as day lighting throughout the center and overall sustainability - including a reflecting pond 14 feet deep and 80 feet wide to heat and cool the building geothermally, which mechanical engineer David Houghton designed.

The center was known as Building 3 in the original master plan for the Aspen Meadows and intended to be meeting space downstairs and VIP housing on the top floor, said Aspen Institute Executive Vice President Amy Margerum. But when Aspen Institute President and CEO Walter Issacson arrived about five years ago, many more public programs began, outstripping the primary meetings spaces - Paepcke Auditorium and the Koch building.

"We hope this is the conference center for the entire community," Margerum said.

The new Doerr-Hosier Center takes the phrase "a room with a view" to new heights.

The meeting rooms within the center

were designed with the user in mind. In every room, there are floor-to-ceiling windows, natural lighting, specialized chairs that make sitting for long periods tolerable, and easy access in and out.

"There are two ways in and two ways out of every room," architect Jeff Berkus said. "Sometimes you need to get out quickly ... when there are high-powered people, you don't want to talk to or a politically charged discussion."

The meeting rooms are all named after donors. Here's the breakdown:

- The McNulty Gathering Room will seat approximately 250 people in a classroom setting or 320 at round tables for special events.
- Located on the lower level is the Kaufman Room with 80 people for theater setting; 70 for private dining, with its own patio overlooking Red Mountain.
- The Catto Terrace Room on the third level accommodates 24 people for the boardroom and 32 for private dining.
- Downstairs, the Resnick Art Gallery has worldwide exhibits, featuring works from around the world - beginning with a Herbert Bayer retrospective, loaned by trustees Lynda and Stewart Resnick.
- Next door, the elliptical Isaacson History Room photographically depicts the institute's evolution since its 1950 inception as a nonprofit organization dedicated to enlightened leadership and dialogue.

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