2025 ACEC NEBRASKA

ENGINEERING EXCELLENCE AWARDS

NATIONAL ENGINEERS WEEK

February 16–22, 2025

Celebrating the state's top engineering projects and the firms behind them.

SPECIAL SECTION
FEBRUARY 16, 2025

Omaha World-Herald
Lincoln Journal Star

GRAND AWARD

Joslyn Art Museum Expansion

GRAND AWARD

CATEGORY B
Building/Technology Systems

Firm: Morrissey Engineering
Project: Joslyn Art Museum Expansion
Client: Joslyn Art Museum

The Joslyn Art Museum expansion is a world-class piece of architecture designed by the internationally renowned architectural firm Snøhetta. MEPT systems blend seamlessly into the architecture, allowing the building and the art to exist in harmony, without distraction from building systems. The expansion significantly increases the museum's gallery space, providing more room for its growing permanent collection and allowing for larger, more ambitious traveling exhibitions.

The renovations and upgrades to the iconic existing buildings bring their MEPT systems to modern standards, providing stable indoor climate and energy efficiency. The project prioritizes public spaces, including community gathering areas, educational spaces, and improved accessibility throughout the museum. It aims to create an inclusive environment where people from all backgrounds can enjoy art and culture, making it a vital cultural hub for Omaha. The expansion integrates sustainable building practices, such as efficient energy use, natural lighting, and eco-friendly materials. This approach reflects the museum's commitment to environmental responsibility while also enhancing visitor experience with light-filled spaces that bring the outdoors inside. The reduced energy use lessens the burden of utility bills on the museum, allowing more money to go to these important programs. The combination of cutting-edge architecture, enhanced exhibition space, and a focus on inclusivity and sustainability makes the Joslyn Art Museum expansion an advancement in what is possible for the arts community

ABOUT THIS SECTION:

Each February, the American Council of Engineering Companies – Nebraska celebrates the innovation and creativity of its member firms in conjunction with National Engineers Week.

This special section spotlights the best of the best in ACEC Nebraska's 2025 awards program.

This special section was produced by the Omaha World-Herald and Lincoln Journal Star in collaboration with the American Council of Engineering Companies-Nebraska.

On the cover: ACEC Nebraska's 2025 Grand Award winner, Joslyn Art Museum Expansion. Photos courtesy of Morrissey Engineering.

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Joslyn Art Museum Expansion

HONOR AWARDS

CATEGORY B
Building/Technology Systems

HONOR AWARD | *CATEGORY WINNER*

Firm: Alvine Engineering
Project: NE State Capitol HVAC and Window Repair
Client: State of Nebraska - Office of the Capitol Commission

Nebraska Office of the Capitol Commission

Alvine Engineering is the mechanical, electrical, and plumbing (MEP) engineer of record for the Nebraska State Capitol (NSC) HVAC Replacement and Window Restoration Project, which is a seven-phase renovation that includes two pre-construction design phases and five phases of construction. Phase 3 of the renovation involved all of the areas within the basement through the third level of the NSC's northwest quadrant, which notably contains the iconic George W. Norris Legislative Chamber and the West Lounge. Since the 1960s, chilled water has been provided from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln's campus. The NSC is provided with steam from the District Energy Corp. which is used at steam radiators and to also generate heating hot water within the Capitol. The two-pipe induction unit HVAC system that supplied the facility meant the office spaces couldn't be heated and cooled at the same time, which proved to be disadvantageous during temperature fluctuations experienced throughout Nebraska's spring and fall seasons. This, in addition to the aging infrastructure, caused the Office of the Capitol Commission to initiate the replacement project. Additionally, the NSC pursued the repair and weather-stripping of the Capitol's windows to aid in energy savings and occupant comfort, and the Capitol Commission also opted to update the life safety systems. Project goals for our team included but were not limited to providing design options and consultation on mechanical and life safety systems, conducting onsite field inspections to understand infrastructure needs, and creating solutions that honored the historical significance of sensitive spaces such as the West Chamber and West Lounge.

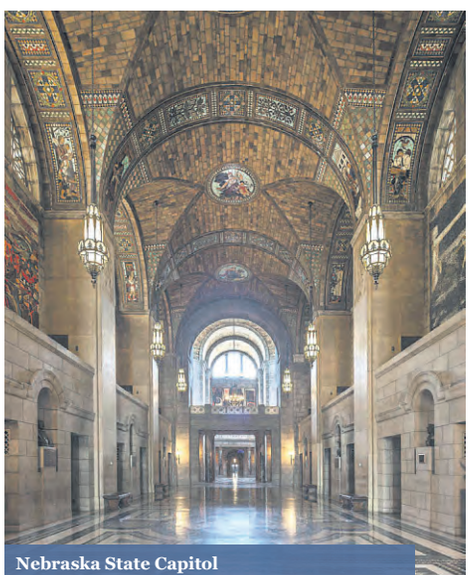
HONOR AWARD

Firm: Alvine Engineering
Project: UNL Scott Engineering Center Renovation
Client: RDG Planning & Design

The Scott Engineering Center, part of the University of Nebraska–Lincoln's (UNL) College of Engineering Department, received a renovation and addition. Our firm's role in the project was to provide entirely new building systems for the renovated and newly added spaces while ensuring that the systems met current building and energy codes. A new front entrance greets students and visitors, and a total of 90,000 gross square feet of space was utilized for laboratories that house the specific needs of the Laser, Bioscience, Material Science, and Computational

UNL Scott Engineering Center

Research departments. Finally, the renovation of the Scott Engineering Center and the construction of a new connecting link structure (referred to as "the Link") brought updates to the Civil, Chemical, and Electrical Engineering departments, offices, learning spaces, and labs. Renovating the space required a phased construction method, which meant design solutions needed to keep as much of the facility usable as possible throughout the renovation process.



Nebraska State Capitol
ACEC Nebraska Honor Award & Category Winner

Lewis Central Performing Arts Center
ACEC Nebraska Merit Award

UNL Scott Engineering Center Renovation
ACEC Nebraska Honor Award

HONOR AWARDS

CATEGORY C
Structural Systems

HONOR AWARD | *CATEGORY WINNER*

Firm: HDR
Project: Kiewit Luminarium
Client: Kiewit Luminarium

The Kiewit Luminarium is a testament to the design ingenuity and cross-discipline collaboration that occurs when great minds get together. The Luminarium is designed to provide hands-on experience in science, technology, engineering and mathematics for children ages six and up, aiming to inspire and empower future generations to consider careers in these disciplines. Seated on the Omaha Riverfront, the museum is built on top of an old industrial site. While the site was preferred for the vistas and views associated with an iconic downtown riverfront community learning and stem space, it was not ideal for the associated challenges related to the adjacent flood wall and below grade obstructions. The structural design responded to what lurked beneath the building and HDR's Engineers were able to adapt and adjust to the challenges associated with remnants of an industrial plant that occupied the land from the 1870's to 1997. HDR played a key role in implementing innovative solutions to make the land usable again. HDR provided building design services for the development, including architectural design, interior and landscape design, together with holistic building engineering services, including structural, mechanical, electrical, public health, site civil, lighting design, information and communication technologies, security and fire protection. Embracing the focus of STEM education, the design showcases fully exposed structural, electrical, plumbing and HVAC elements throughout the majority of the building to help inspire the next generation of engineers.

Kiewit Luminarium

Kiewit Luminarium Interior

CATEGORY F
Water, Waste Water

HONOR AWARD | *CATEGORY WINNER*

Firm: Wade Trim
Project: Saddle Creek High-Rate Treatment Basin (HRTB)
Client: City of Omaha Public Works Department

Saddle Creek High-Rate Treatment Basin

The Saddle Creek High-Rate Treatment Basin (HRTB) is a milestone achievement in the City of Omaha's $2 billion Clean Solutions for Omaha program to reduce the impacts of combined sewer overflows (CSO) on local waterways by 2037. As the first remote high-rate treatment (HRT) facility built in Nebraska, the HRTB captures combined sewage from the CSO 205 outfall and stores and treats it during storm events. The 3 million gallon, underground, concrete basin provides "equivalent to primary" treatment of flows up to 160 million gallons per day (MGD) before discharging to the Little Papillion Creek. During extreme storm events, the HRTB can screen, remove grit, and disinfect flows up to 320 MGD. Wade Trim provided design and construction management for this novel CSO storage and treatment solution to improve water quality.

Since storm events are highly variable, the Saddle Creek HRTB was designed to operate efficiently and effectively over a wide range of conditions without adversely affecting the collection and treatment system. Extensive hydraulic modeling and development of process control strategies enabled use of real time controls and smart sewer technology to optimize flow management. The HRTB's innovative gravity-flow-through design moves flows in and out of the facility without major pumping. Sited on a construction debris landfill, the HRTB's excavation and deep foundation system challenges were overcome to deliver a facility that met Consent Order and budgetary requirements, demonstrates new wet weather storage and treatment technology to Nebraska, and aesthetically compliments the highly developed surrounding area.

HONOR AWARD

Firm: HDR
Project: Papillion Creek Water Resource Recovery Facility Biosolids & Energy Improvements
Client: City of Omaha

Papillion Creek Water Resource Recovery Facility

Completed on schedule and on budget, the Papillion Creek WRRF Biogas Conditioning System adds a conditioning system to transform biogas into Renewable Natural Gas. The biogas is generated from two existing digester complexes (and two new digesters currently under construction) before moving to the new Conditioning Building, where it goes through a series of steps to reduce moisture, hydrogen sulfide and siloxanes and then through a membrane system to remove carbon dioxide and other remaining constituents. Once conditioned to an acceptable level as determined by the utility provider, it will be injected into the natural gas pipeline as RNG. The new process continues the facility's transition to a more sustainable resource that reduces greenhouse gases. It marks the completion of the state's largest wastewater RNG project and provides the City of Omaha a new revenue source - between $5 and $7 million a year - and a quick repayment period, as little as three years. The project team overcame significant challenges, including complex piping, protecting the facility from floods, and coordinating and permitting with federal, state and local agencies. Perhaps most important, the project establishes a cleaner, greener way of life for future generations.

HONOR AWARD

Firm: HDR
Project: Southern Sarpy Wastewater System
Client: Sarpy County and Cities Wastewater Agency

In Nebraska's smallest county, a hydraulic ridgeline prevented development in the southern portion due to challenges of pumping wastewater over the ridge. The $130 million Southern Sarpy Wastewater System allows development expansion

HONOR AWARDS

Southern Sarpy Wastewater System

across the county. With 19 miles of sewer lines, three lift stations and 17 miles of dual force mains, the new system provides new tax revenue for communities, county and state; partners with Omaha for treatment; utilizes Nebraska's largest State Revolving Loan Fund; and takes advantage of unique installation methods to mitigate significant challenges. The first phase of a four-phase, 30-year implementation, the project allows development across about 70,000 acres and will bring $37 billion in new spending, $24 billion in new earnings, nearly $16 billion in new taxes, and more than 4,700 new jobs. The team reduced impacts on constituents, the environment, and the community by working around existing structures, consulting with Tribes and agencies, and limiting disturbances to environmental and cultural resources. The team overcame significant challenges. They installed deep interceptor sewer through challenging soil and high groundwater. To overcome, they chose soil mixing and lift stations with deep secant piles. Perhaps most important, they found common ground between state agencies, the county, five cities, and private and commercial landowners. The new Southern Sarpy Wastewater System offers a blueprint for responsible development across the country.

HONOR AWARD

Firm: HDR
Project: Wastewater Treatment Plant Improvements and Expansion
Client: City of Fremont

After nearly 10 years, the Fremont Wastewater Treatment Plant has been completely upgraded and expanded to meet the needs of the growing community. Completed in four distinct projects, the City of Fremont has a state-of-the-art facility that is meeting ever stringent regulatory requirements; expanded capacity that has fueled economic growth; and provides environmental benefits in improved water quality, upgrading biogas to natural gas, and expanded operations for beneficial composting of biosolids. This upgraded and expanded treatment plant will meet the needs of Fremont for years to come and allow for continued economic development in this

Wastewater Treatment Plant Improvements and Expansion

important eastern Nebraska city.

Projects like this cannot be completed without successful partnerships. The City of Fremont's excellent administrative, management, operations, and maintenance staff have made this project a reality. Their tireless dedication and willingness to work with both the consulting team and contractors have made this project an overall success for the benefit of Fremont.

CATEGORY G
Water Resources

HONOR AWARD | *CATEGORY WINNER*

Firm: JEO Consulting Group
Project: Crossing Park
Client: City of Gretna

Gretna Crossing Park

JEO was hired by the City of Gretna to create a master plan, develop design documents, and provide construction phase services for a new 157-acre park situated on the southern edge of town. The City's goal was to create a multi-dimensional park to meet the needs of Gretna's expanding population. The park offers a harmonious blend of community recreation facilities and open green spaces, ensuring that citizens of all ages and abilities can enjoy its features.

Gretna Crossing Park introduces a variety of features to the city's park system. The focal point of the park is the community recreation facility and aquatic center featuring an indoor natatorium and outdoor water park with one of Nebraska's first drop-gate slides. In addition, there are new natural grass ballfields, batting cages, playgrounds, and nature areas with walking trails, and educational exhibits throughout.

Other features of the park include a three-acre pond complemented by walking trails with ADA accessible fishing piers and boardwalk bridges. Picnic shelters, restrooms, frisbee golf course, and an off-the-leash dog park are thoughtfully positioned to overlook and encircle the pond. Adjacent to the pond sits an amphitheater intended to host various community events, as well as a flat grassy area suitable for informal play and practices.

Gretna Crossing Park presents a remarkable opportunity for the city to enhance its community and cultural impact, attracting visitors from far and wide. This valuable addition to the community undoubtedly contributes to Gretna's reputation as an exceptional place to live and play.

CATEGORY H
Transportation

HONOR AWARD | *CATEGORY WINNER*

Firm: Olsson
Project: CONNECTSarpy – West Sarpy Program
Clients: Sarpy County, NE

CONNECTSarpy – West Sarpy Program

The CONNECTSarpy program is a $65 million project that included seven structures and nine square miles of construction, from 168th to 204th streets, and from Harrison Street to Nebraska Highway 370 in Sarpy County, Nebraska. The project coordinated roadways and utilities with public and private agencies, with the goal of connecting more people to West Sarpy and the surrounding metropolitan.

The project is the first public roadway project in Nebraska to implement the Construction Manager/General Contractor (CM/GC) project delivery method, allowing Olsson's engineers to coordinate with the contractor through final design to better inform overall project sequencing and constructability and keep the project on its aggressive construction schedule.

With seven adjacent development projects occurring during this project, Olsson maintained access for multiple parties while navigating phasing and traffic routing. Olsson also managed utility conflicts that necessitated coordination with eight utility companies.

Olsson's bridge engineers coordinated with the roadway and hydraulic engineers to evaluate alignments, profiles, and span arrangements of the various bridge structures to provide connections over the South Papillion Creek and BNSF Railway line. Olsson's water resources team provided H&H analysis for every hydraulic crossing on the project, including structure sizing for bridges and box culverts and design of scour protection methods around structural elements.

The result of this complex program includes nine miles of new concrete roads, five roundabouts, a traffic signal, seven new structures, including three overpasses.

HONOR AWARDS

HONOR AWARD

Firm: HDR
Project: US 275 Scribner to West Point
Client: Nebraska Department of Transportation

US 275 Scribner to West Point

U.S. Highway 275 is a major north-south transportation corridor that connects northeast Nebraska to Interstate 80 and the Omaha metropolitan area, and provides access to key services including employment opportunities, social services, healthcare and education. The Nebraska Department of Transportation has steadily advanced construction of U.S. 275; however, 44

miles of the expressway remained unfinished prior to this project. In an expansion planned and discussed for more than three decades, an 18.6-mile segment of U.S. 275 between Scribner and West Point has been transformed from a 2-lane highway to a 4-lane divided expressway. This long-desired expansion was driven by Legislative mandate, lack of efficient connectivity between urban centers and high average daily traffic use. The U.S. 275 Scribner-to-West Point project entails constructing a new, parallel 2-lane roadway to create a 4-lane expressway; repairing and reconstructing portions of existing U.S. 275; constructing a 3-mile, 4-lane bypass around Scribner; and strengthening the levee that encircles the west side of Scribner. In a unique engineering feat rarely seen in Nebraska, the project team built the highway atop a new Pebble Creek left bank levee — the longest application of this approach in Nebraska. The project team overcame changes in permitting requirements, changes in contracting methodology, and the challenges posed by the project's proximity to the Elkhorn River and Pebble Creek to provide a roadway more resilient to flooding on an accelerated schedule. The expansion of U.S. 275 provides greater mobility and connectivity for the region and improves the safety and reliability of the roadway.

CATEGORY I
Special Projects

HONOR AWARD | *CATEGORY WINNER*

Firm: Lamp Rynearson
Project: Heartwood Preserve
Clients: Applied Underwriters Inc. and S.I.D 583 of Douglas County

Heartwood Preserve

Building Omaha's future through innovative engineering, Lamp Rynearson led the civil engineering design for Applied Underwriters' ambitious 500-acre mixed-use development. Our team brought decades of expertise in large-scale land development to manage complex tasks including land survey, engineering for sanitary and storm sewers, grading, utility planning, and paving. The project required precise on-site work and significant offsite improvements to accommodate the development's scale and impact.

One of the primary challenges was expanding infrastructure to support increased traffic. Lamp Rynearson oversaw the reconstruction of a bridge to add an eastbound exit off West Dodge Road at 150th Street and widened 144th Street to improve traffic flow, along with other engineering partners. Additionally, we engineered the main parkway through the development, Applied Parkway, which spans from the new West Dodge exit to Pine Street, helping to alleviate congestion on surrounding streets while providing secondary access to Millard North High School.

The project's design included three roundabouts, one of which was a unique five-legged design, a critical component for enhancing traffic efficiency while ensuring safety. These improvements not only created a striking and functional entrance to Applied Underwriters' campus but also provided a safer, more accessible route for multi-modal traffic, including pedestrians and cyclists.

Close coordination with Applied Underwriters, the City of Omaha, and the Nebraska Department of Transportation was crucial to completing phases 1 and 2 of the public improvements, making this development a model for urban growth and infrastructure planning in the region.

MERIT AWARDS

CATEGORY B
Building/Technology Systems

MERIT AWARD | *CATEGORY WINNER*

Firm: Farris Engineering, Inc.
Project: Iowa National Guard Building
Clients: Iowa Air National Guard

Iowa National Guard Building

The renovation of Iowa Air National Guard Building 254 in Sioux City, IA, represents a significant upgrade to the facility's functionality and sustainability. The project aimed to transform the existing Squadron Operations building into a modern, energy-efficient space suitable for the Global ASNT system and a dual Alert Facility. One of the most notable aspects of the renovation is the innovative use of the building's tall roof structure to create varied ceiling heights along the circulation routes. This design not only enhances the spatial experience but also contributes to improved HVAC performance by optimizing airflow and thermal comfort. A key feature of the renovation is the installation of clerestory windows, which strategically introduce natural daylight deep into the building's interior. This design choice significantly reduces the need for artificial lighting during daylight hours, leading to substantial electrical energy savings. Additionally, the clerestory windows provide occupants with unobstructed views of the flight apron, facilitating effective aircraft monitoring while enhancing the overall connection to the surrounding environment. The renovation also incorporates distinctive thematic elements, such as circular spaces and new exterior facades inspired by the base logo, "Home of the Bats." These design elements not only reinforce the facility's identity but also integrate seamlessly with the building's mechanical and electrical systems. The updated facades contribute to the building's thermal performance by improving the envelope's insulation properties, thus reducing HVAC loads and further advancing the energy efficiency goals of the renovation.

MERIT AWARD

Firm: IP Design Group
Project: Lewis Central High School Performing Arts Center
Client: BVH Architecture, Lewis Central Community School District

The Lewis Central Community School District Auditorium project is a state-of-the-art, multipurpose performance venue utilized by Lewis Central High School and the surrounding community in Council Bluffs, Iowa, to host speaking engagements, music performances, theatrical programs, and more in order to provide adequate opportunities for students and faculty to fulfill educational initiatives and enhance students' access to performance art opportunities and curricula. IP Design Group's role on the project was to provide audiovisual, telecommunications, and acoustical design

Lewis Central High School Performing Arts Center

and consultation for the performance stage, orchestra pit, 1,100-seat auditorium, balcony, and mezzanine as well as the black box theater, changing rooms, audition and practice spaces, and catwalk areas. Important aspects of design and client objectives included assuring that audiovisual and acoustical equipment would not be distracting to the space's overall aesthetic. Working closely with user groups to determine practical and lasting technology equipment solutions was also imperative to the success of the project as the space needed to be a high-performance multi-use space that would be beneficial to the various departments that intended to utilize the auditorium. In response to these client needs, IP Design Group provided cost-effective and cutting-edge solutions that allowed the project to be completed on time and within budget despite various changes in interior design and layout that occurred throughout different stages in the project timeline.

CATEGORY D
Surveying & Mapping Technology

MERIT AWARD | *CATEGORY WINNER*

Firm: HDR
Project: Omaha Streetcar Utility Mapping & GIS Hub
Clients: Omaha Streetcar Authority

To support the 3.2-mile Omaha Streetcar project – which requires extensive excavation along its route – HDR's utility coordination team embarked on a comprehensive GIS-based mapping effort to help expedite conflict reviews and provide a platform for relocation design and other corridor management efforts.

This documentation effort sets a new benchmark for coordination and mapping. The team developed an ArcGIS-powered platform that provides a comprehensive view of the area's complex utility network comprised of 19 different providers within the project area.

Team members cut more than 800 pot-

Omaha Streetcar Utility Mapping & GIS Hub

holes across the project footprint to enhance the level of detail and verify the accuracy of data collected during the outreach process. The information includes both photographic and quantitative metadata for each location checked. The team also developed an innovative 360-degree street-view imagery system to support time-specific inquiries and enhance the detail available for reference during planning discussions.

As construction of the streetcar system begins, the hub will help minimize disruptions to businesses and residents by enabling more efficient coordination and data-driven decision-making during key phases of the work. The platform also enhances the project's sustainability by providing better data to support potential reuse of bricks excavated from existing roadways.

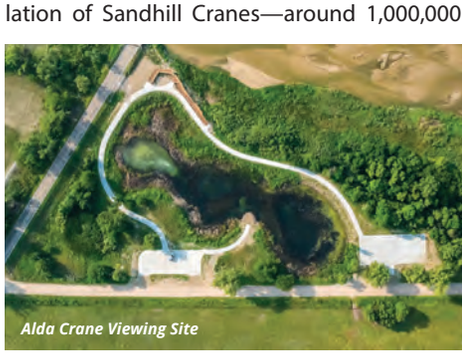
The extensive data collection – paired with adept use of software to document and share the information efficiently – sets a new standard for utility mapping at this scale.

CATEGORY G
Water Resources

MERIT AWARD

Firm: JEO Consulting Group
Project: Alda Crane Viewing Site Improvements
Client: Central Platte Natural Resources District

Each spring, over 80% of the world's population of Sandhill Cranes—around 1,000,000



Alda Crane Viewing Site

MERIT AWARDS

birds—converge on the Platte River in central Nebraska. This migration draws bird watchers, scientists, and tourists from around the globe. The Alda Crane Viewing site, located near Alda, Nebraska, is a key destination for this migration. However, after 30 years of being exposed to the elements, the site faced several challenges: the wooden deck was deteriorating, the asphalt trail was in poor condition, and there was inadequate parking. Recognizing the need for substantial improvements, the Central Platte Natural Resources District (CPNRD) contracted JEO Consulting Group to develop a renovation.

The renovation project replaced the deteriorating wooden deck and outdated asphalt trail with a new elevated viewing deck and a 1,160-foot ADA-compliant concrete path. Alternatives were explored for the three existing parking lots, resulting in two being upgraded to concrete surfaces with designated handicap spots, while the third was decommissioned and repurposed for maintenance activities. Additional enhancements included shoreline stabilization, habitat improvements, and a new angler access pad in the pond.

With convenient access off Interstate 80, the site now ensures greater accessibility and safety for all visitors. The project was completed within the allocated budget, supported by over $322,000 in grants from the Recreational Trails Program and the Nebraska Environmental Trust Fund. These upgrades have significantly enhanced the site's user experience, ensuring it can be used as a sought-after destination for years to come.

CATEGORY H
Transportation

MERIT AWARD

Firm: Ehrhart Griffin & Associates
Project: The Mercantile Public Street and Utility Improvements
Client: Hines Interests Limited Partnership

The public improvements for the Mercantile were a complex, detailed and exciting project. From start to finish it included all aspects of engineering from surveying, demolition and removal of existing buildings and infrastructure, over-excavation and surcharging of the soils, relocation of significant utility mains, ADA accessibility analysis, detailed grading design, incorporation of aesthetic landscaping and intriguing light systems, drainage and stormwater calculations, fire truck accessibility and pedestrian friendly design.

The project has created a unique space that

The Mercantile Public Street and Utility Improvements

will bring together people from across the city and the region to enjoy the amenities, the events, the restaurants and the retail shops for years to come.

MERIT AWARD

Firm: Felsburg Holt Ullevig
Project: 156th Street
Client: City of Omaha

156th Street, Omaha

This project improved a heavily-traveled roadway in the community and provided a significant increase in public safety, particularly around Kiewit Middle School. The main objective was to find a way to alleviate severe traffic congestion during school hours. The solution to expand 156th Street to four lanes and to realign the school's north driveway to create a new intersection solved the problem. The addition of a traffic signal and the redesign of the roadway resulted in a smoother traffic flow, drastically reducing the bottlenecks that previously caused frustration for parents and commuters during peak hours. What sets this project apart is its innovative approach to addressing the common yet complex issue of traffic congestion in school zones. The careful coordination with the school and the thoughtful design of the new traffic patterns showcase how existing techniques can be applied in new and effective ways to solve persistent problems. A key feature of the project was its focus on pedestrian safety, particularly around high-traffic areas like Kiewit Middle School. By enhancing sidewalk connections, the project prioritized the well-being of students and community members, ensuring safer and more accessible routes, which is a testament to its commitment to social responsibility. The project successfully navigated significant challenges, such as working around existing infrastructure and carefully phasing construction to minimize disruptions to school operations. This careful planning ensured that the most disruptive work was completed during the summer break, underscoring the project's commitment to minimizing community impact while achieving its goals.

MERIT AWARD

Firm: Felsburg Holt Ullevig
Project: Blair South Bypass
Client: City of Blair

In smaller communities, the downtown district often serves as the lifeblood of the area, but for the City of Blair, that vitality was at risk. The Blair South Bypass Project is a forward-thinking solution designed to tackle pressing traffic issues while enhancing the overall quality of life for the community. This

Blair South Bypass

project isn't just about constructing a new road—it's about building a safer, more accessible, and vibrant environment for everyone. The new road provides a critical alternative route for traffic, particularly the heavy truck flow that has long caused congestion in downtown Blair. By offering drivers a more direct way to travel between two major highways, the project significantly reduces traffic in the heart of the city. This change will make downtown Blair safer, quieter, less polluted, and more enjoyable for both residents and visitors. But the project goes beyond just easing traffic. It also introduces new mobility features that benefit pedestrians and cyclists. With the addition of new sidewalks, crosswalks, and a multi-use 10-foot trail, the project ensures

MERIT AWARDS

that everyone—whether walking, biking, or driving—can navigate the city safely and comfortably. Throughout the process, the project was carefully planned with the environment in mind and included strong community involvement. The team collaborated closely with local and federal agencies to minimize environmental impact and ensure that residents' voices were heard and respected. The result is a safer, more connected, and thriving Blair.

MERIT AWARD

Firm: Schemmer
Project: Fremont Southeast Beltway
Client: Nebraska Department of Transportation

The Fremont Southeast Beltway project, studied between 2005 and 2008, serves as a strategic bypass for regional truck traffic, diverting it from Broad Street in Fremont. This initiative enhances the continuity of US 77 and connectivity with US 275 and US 30.

The project involves constructing a new four-lane roadway beginning north of the Platte River Bridge on US 77 and ending at a new interchange with US 275 near Old Highway 8 in southeast Fremont. Key features include grade separations at critical junctures, such as the BNSF and Union Pacific railroads, and US 275. Dual-lane roundabouts were introduced at Broad Street and Downing Street, while single-lane teardrop roundabouts were installed at the ramp terminals of US 275. Additionally, bridges were constructed at significant points, including the BNSF Railway, Union Pacific Railroad, and the US 77/US 275 interchange.

Aligned with Fremont's long-term plans, this beltway aims to bolster connectivity for the rapidly expanding industrial sector in south Fremont and supports the newly established Inland Port Authority, highlighting its regional economic importance.

The project was funded through a public/private partnership, with public funds from the Build Nebraska Act and private investments from the Fremont Economic Development Council. This collaboration expedited construction by several years, potentially saving $20 million in costs.

In conclusion, the Fremont Southeast Beltway is a vital infrastructure development that promises significant economic benefits, improved regional connectivity, and enhanced traffic flow and safety for the greater Fremont area.

Fremont Southeast Beltway

Lincoln on the Move Growth Project

CATEGORY I
Special Projects

MERIT AWARD

Firm: Olsson
Project: Lincoln on the Move Growth Projects Construction Management
Client: City of Lincoln

Lincoln on the Move is an ambitious, voter-approved street improvement program aimed at transforming the transportation infrastructure of Lincoln, Nebraska. This initiative is designed to enhance the city's mobility, safety, and sustainability, ensuring a better quality of life for residents. With nearly 75% of funding dedicated to repairing and upgrading existing streets, the remaining 25% is committed to extending infrastructure at the city fringes where growth is occurring. Lincoln on the Move growth areas are represented by 12 distinct projects, including 15 modern roundabouts, grading, roadway paving and turn lanes, pavement markings, traffic signals, streetlights, water mains, storm sewer, concrete box culverts, and other utilities and infrastructure. Approximately 87,000 SY of concrete paving, 21,000 tons of asphalt paving, and over 2,800 LF of new water main were constructed as part of the 12 projects. Olsson provided construction management, construction inspection, field testing of construction materials, geotechnical and laboratory testing services, project coordination and scheduling, stakeholder coordination, public involvement, and project closeout. The program required substantial design and utility coordination within a condensed timeframe, followed by quick completion dates for multiple projects. The city and design teams remained engaged during bidding and construction, ensuring project progression through utility coordination, re-bidding, and plan revisions to accommodate adjacent site improvements and budget constraints. Thanks to this unique funding source and Olsson's proactive, streamlined construction management services, Lincoln on the Move delivered more projects to the community sooner than would otherwise be possible.

CATEGORY J
Small Projects

MERIT AWARD | *CATEGORY WINNER*

Firm: Olsson
Project: Fletcher Landmark Trail Projects Construction Management
Client: City of Lincoln Parks and Recreation

The Fletcher Landmark Trail project is a 1.2 mile,10- foot-wide by 5-inch-thick concrete trail that improves pedestrian and bicycle access in north Lincoln and connects the community to nearby parks, businesses, and schools. The City of Lincoln takes pride in its vast network of trails, and this project expands that network to achieve more comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian amenities. The City's Parks and Recreation Department, Nebraska Department of Transportation, and Olsson worked closely to keep the project on schedule and within budget. The team successfully delivered a project that minimized impacts to adjacent properties and natural resources, including the protection of 14 different wetlands. The design also avoided filling into an existing pond and maintained existing drainage paths to remain within the Nationwide Permit threshold. Facilitating a potential future roadway widening was another consideration during design.

In cooperation with the City of Lincoln, Olsson led engagement activities to effectively provide the public and area residents with details on construction detour and project information. The trail links residences and businesses bound by North 14th Street, Interstate 80, and North 27th Street to the City of Lincoln's greater trail network. Because this area was previously a restricted community, neighborhood residents and businesses around this trail will enjoy increased access and connectivity.

Fletcher Landmark Trail Project

Jacob Weiss Named 2025 Young Professional of the Year by ACEC Nebraska

Jacob Weiss, P.E., PTOE, a senior traffic engineer/transportation planner at HDR, has been selected as the 2025 Young Professional of the Year by the American Council of Engineering Companies of Nebraska. The award recognizes accomplishments of Nebraska engineers under age 35 who have contributed to the engineering profession in the state and made a positive community impact.

During his more than 10 years at HDR, Weiss has improved user mobility and safety on complex projects throughout the region through his transportation solutions and strategies. He has focused on transportation planning, travel demand modeling, traffic simulation, and bicycle and pedestrian system planning and design. He was recently appointed deputy practice group leader for HDR's Multimodal Corridor Planning Practice Group, helping coordinate resources and personnel to advance HDR's multimodal practice and align the firm's expertise with clients.

"Jake brings a truly unique combination of the human and technical aspects to consulting," said HDR NE/IA Transportation Business Group Manager Craig Hunter. "He is driven to deliver quality projects that are considerate of users and the surrounding environment."

Weiss volunteers his time outside of work to both community and industry organizations. He serves on the Omaha mayor's Active Living Advisory Committee, providing community input and recommendations to the mayor and other city leaders on projects, plans and policies that would benefit the local active living community. He's also a member of various industry groups, including the Missouri Valley District and Nebraska Section of the Institute of Transportation Engineers. He served as the coordinator of NITE's DriveSmart safety program for seven years, educating high school students on safe driving practices.

Jeff Sockel Honored with ACEC-NE's Prestigious Charles Durham Achievement Award

The Durham Award is presented annually by ACEC-NE to individuals who have demonstrated exceptional service to the engineering profession, exemplifying the highest standards of integrity, technical excellence, and leadership.

The American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC)-Nebraska is proud to announce Jeff Sockel, Sr Vice President and Omaha Division Manager at Benesch, as this year's honoree of the Charles Durham Achievement Award. This distinguished award recognizes Jeff's outstanding contributions to the engineering profession and his commitment to excellence in infrastructure development.

Jeff Sockel, PE, VMA, a Kansas State University graduate and licensed professional civil engineer in multiple states, has demonstrated exemplary leadership and expertise in civil engineering throughout his career. While he has spent a significant portion of his career focused on construction engineering and materials, Jeff has also provided technical services across a spectrum of areas including transportation design, intelligent transportation systems planning and deployment, traffic incident management, ADA compliance, asset management, and value engineering. For the last 32 years, Jeff has led and been part of project teams responsible for planning, designing, constructing and/or maintaining infrastructure improvements primarily for public agencies in Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, Colorado, and North Dakota. He has also authored local and national standards. In addition to his technical roles, he has managed Benesch's Omaha Division for more than 15 years and currently serves on Benesch's Board of Directors. His commitment to client service, engaging and developing students and young professionals, strong operations and project management, and identifying opportunities has helped Benesch to grow locally from 17 to more than 80 employees. Under his guidance, Benesch has added three new service lines locally and repeatedly delivered innovative and sustainable solutions that have benefited communities and significantly improved transportation networks and other infrastructure across the region.

Beyond his professional contributions to Benesch, Jeff has been deeply involved with ACEC-NE, serving as numerous Board positions including President and National Director, as well being involved in other professional organizations. Locally, he has chaired the Better Streets Better City Bond Initiative Committee and the Improve Omaha! Bond Initiative Committee. His first industry contribution came as a member of the ACI Nebraska Board of Directors. Today, he remains active in ACEC Nebraska and currently serves as the Secretary for the ACEC/Nebraska PAC Board of Trustees. Jeff's involvement continues at the national level also, serving as 1 of 5 consultant members on ACEC's National Education Advisory Group, helping to shape future ACEC national conference and educational programs. Jeff was recognized as a Midlands Business Journal's 2010 '40 Under 40' for his business and community contributions.

ACEC NE Honors Senator Fischer as Engineering Champion for Nebraska

Senator Deb Fischer named Nebraska Champion for Engineering Award winner

Senator Deb Fischer was awarded the 2025 Nebraska Champion for Engineering Award by the American Council of Engineering Companies Nebraska (ACEC NE) for her leadership and support to the state's engineering industry.

"I am honored to receive the Nebraska Engineering Champion Award. ACEC NE plays a crucial role in building a safer, more efficient Nebraska. By equipping our engineering companies with essential tools and educational opportunities, they are committed to enhancing the quality of life across our state. Thank you for your recognition," said Senator Fischer.

A lifelong Nebraskan, Deb Fischer is the senior senator from Nebraska. Senator Fischer was first elected to the U.S. Senate in November 2012, becoming the first Nebraska woman elected to a full term and the first Nebraska state senator elected directly after service in the state legislature.

Before her election to the U.S. Senate, Fischer served in the Nebraska Unicameral, representing the 43rd Legislative District from 2005 to 2013. During her time in the state legislature, she chaired the Transportation and Telecommunications Committee. She was also a member of the Revenue Committee, the Natural Resources Committee, and the Executive Board. Fischer championed the BUILD Nebraska Act, which has had a significant contribution to Nebraska's transportation infrastructure.

"Senator Deb Fischer understands why our water, energy, and transportation infrastructure are essential to our society. She saw it firsthand at a young age through her father Jerry Strobel, in his position as Director of the Nebraska Department of Roads. As a Nebraska State Senator and Chair of the Transportation Committee in the Legislature she took the lead in making sure Nebraska prioritized infrastructure. As a US Senator she is a member of the Commerce, Science, Transportation Committee and continues to be a strong voice for good public policy and infrastructure investment. Senator Fischer has always been a steadfast supporter of good public policy for our industry in its mission to design, build, maintain, and improve the infrastructure we all rely on every day," says Matt Tondl, Senior Vice President at HDR. Tondl serves as the political action committee chair for ACEC NE.

ACEC NE Executive Director Jeanne McClure acknowledges, "Senator Fischer's leadership ensures that vital infrastructure projects are prioritized and funded, creating opportunities for innovation and workforce development. By championing legislative measures that support engineering excellence, Senator Fisher fosters economic growth and positions our state as a leader in the field of engineering."

ACEC Nebraska established the Nebraska Champion for Engineering Award to recognize outstanding individuals and teams who have collaborated with the association to support the state's engineering profession. The organization represents consulting engineering firms in Nebraska, and its mission is to improve the quality of life in the state by strengthening the business environment for the consulting engineering profession.

Denny Wilson Recognized for Service to State's Engineering Industry

ACEC NE names Wilson Nebraska Engineering Pillar Award Winner

Dennis (Denny) Wilson, Director for Sarpy County Public Works, has been awarded the 2025 Nebraska Engineering Pillar Award by the American Council of Engineering Companies Nebraska (ACEC NE) for his leadership and service to the profession.

"I am shocked, excited, and elated, but most of all, I feel honored. It is an honor to be recognized by my peers and the ACEC NE Board of Directors," says Wilson, who has served as Director for Sarpy County Public Works for the last 15 years. Wilson is in his fourth elected term as the Sarpy County Engineer.

In his position as the Director of Public Works, Wilson has charge and general supervision of improvements by the county board. He and his staff prepare road and bridge designs, stormwater control, project estimates, and conduct winter work.

Wilson has spent his entire career in engineering. He received a bachelor's degree in engineering, design, and construction at UNL and UNO. Wilson also holds an Executive Master of Business from UNL and a PhD in Consumer Behavior from Iowa State University.

"Engineering is an interesting field that comprises science and math, which may sound simple, but the requirements are anything but that. A Professional Engineer's (PE) responsibility is to protect the public with help and support by organizations such as ACEC NE and the Nebraska Society of Professional Engineers (NSPE)," he explains. "It necessitates licensing through education, experience, and expertise to practice safely and ethically."

Wilson often thinks about the future of the industry. "When I have the opportunity, I ask young people if they are still in school and have plans for college. I provide them with information and explain how engineers can save lives. That usually starts a conversation," says Wilson.

He adds that one thing hasn't changed.

"There still exists a lack of engineers. The gaping hole was present in 1974, and it is still present today. Large and small firms are searching for college graduates and seasoned engineers. It is gratifying to see more women involved in the practice and more diversity in hiring for our professions."

After a 42-year career, Wilson says he has two loves.

"My first love is work with consultants and agencies. My second love is politics. Before I worked for Hal Daub, the former mayor of Omaha, he surprised me by attending, speaking, and handing me the Executive MBA Student Award of the Year (1999). He later asked me to work for him to oversee the massive growth of downtown Omaha," says Wilson.

Douglas County Engineer Todd Pfitzer first met Wilson in 1990 when he was the design engineer at the City of Omaha. Wilson and Pfitzer served together on a Metropolitan Area Planning Association (MAPA).

"Denny always stays on the ethical side of engineering and within the lines that a PE should. I have so many great memories of working with Denny throughout my career. He has been and will continue to be a pillar to the industry," says Pfitzer.

Pfitzer acknowledges their 35 years of friendship.

"Denny has a quick wit and great (sometimes very dry) sense of humor and loves telling long jokes with the perfect pauses in place, then delivering his dry punch line with that little grin on his face. His good-natured ribbing often results in laughter as we tease each other front a room full of people – always with much love and appreciation for one another. I can't wait to help honor him," says Pfitzer.

ACEC NE Executive Director Jeanne McClure credits Wilson's leadership and partnership with ACEC NE and within the industry.

"Strong leadership in our community is exemplified by those who build and sustain the infrastructure that supports us all. The engineering professionals who serve as pillars in our community not only create the physical foundations of our daily lives, but also inspire the next generation of innovators and problem solvers. We are deeply grateful for Denny's dedication, expertise, and vision. I am grateful for his partnership with ACEC NE," says McClure.

Denny lives in Papillion, NE, and has three daughters and seven grandchildren.

ACEC Nebraska established the Nebraska Engineering Pillar Award to recognize outstanding engineers who have supported the organization and its mission, as well as contributed to the engineering community in the state. The organization represents consulting engineering firms in Nebraska, and its mission is to improve the quality of life in the state by strengthening the business environment for the consulting engineering profession.

ACEC Nebraska

American Council of Engineering Companies

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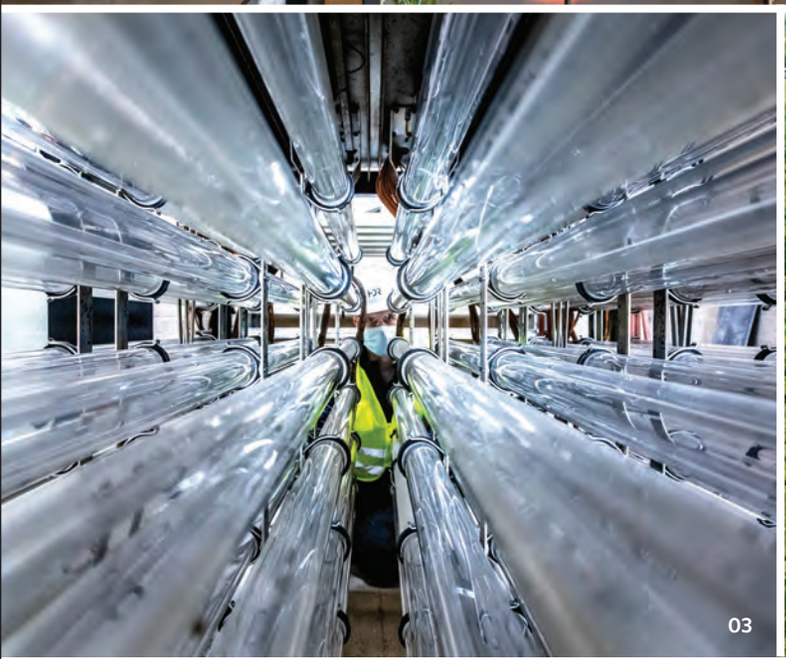
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Ideas transform communities

We're proud to celebrate Engineers Week with our employees and our community partners — people who make great things possible.

01. Kiewit Luminarium, Omaha, NE | 02. Papillion Creek Water Resource Recovery Facility Biosolids and Energy Improvements-Biogas Conditioning System, Bellevue, NEE | 03. Wastewater Treatment Plant Improvements and Expansion, Fremont, NE | 04. Southern Sarpy Wastewater System, Sarpy County, NE

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