



October 21, 2020

Ms. Ying Liu, AICP
Project Manager | TED Business Group
City of Naperville
400 S. Eagle Street
Naperville, IL 60540

Dear Ms. Liu:

In response to the following review question:

Architectural design of the new buildings is different than what is currently on the Naper Settlement campus. Provide a letter explaining how/why the design was selected and how it correlates with the existing buildings on the Naper Settlement campus.

It is important to begin with the clarification that the buildings on site are not all alike. They are actually quite different and represent varying architectural styles and time periods. For example, The Martin Mitchell Mansion, known as Pine Craig, is a classic example of Victorian architecture; while the Paw Paw and Daniels Buildings are Greek Revival. These differences are part of the charm and signal the evolution of architecture, construction, technology and our community. From our simple Log House, and Clapboard School House to Century Memorial Chapel's Gothic Revival style, we have tremendous diversity of architectural styles on site already. Adding the two new structures to the site and trying to conform to any set style would be nearly impossible.

In the first few years of the project, museum experts and architects spent a great deal of time discussing and researching styles that would fit the site and the purpose of the buildings themselves. We chose to use unobtrusive, low, clean-line, modern-style buildings as an inspiration for Innovation Gateway. A modern-style provides a new era of architecture on the museum campus grounds and expresses the evolution of architecture. The open, multi-purpose walk-up/walk-in space makes anyone of any generation, racial/cultural background or physical ability, feel like they belong and can enter the gateway to the campus through a secure entrance without barriers. The long uniform walls allow us to construct massive interactive digital walls inside for learning and even the ability to self-curate stories. No other building on-site is conducive for this purpose. For the Agriculture Center and Pavilion, we dove deep into our own roots for inspiration. The team went through hundreds of photographs of barns and farm houses that once lived here in Naperville and surrounding areas; we even developed a focus group of retired Naperville farmers to get a sense from them about how they would like to be remembered, and how they want others to think about modern-day agriculture. The typical barn gable roof form is expressed in modern steel frame to provide a hint of urban design was what everyone agreed upon. For both the Innovation Gateway and the Ag Center, we intend to utilize re-claimed stone that Naper Settlement is holding off-site. The Pavilion is also representative of a farm implement building and compliments the existing adjacent farmhouse, school and red-barn maintenance buildings.

Perhaps the most important reason is that for the first time in Naper Settlement history, the new structures will truly fit the purpose for which they were built. All other buildings, including the PreEmption House (a recreation of the actual PreEmption building on Main and Jackson) have been retrofitted and adapted to fit current needs, and in some instances present real challenges.

Museums, by their very nature, are educational institutions. Well-established research has resulted in the almost universal agreement that learning is an active process that requires engagement. This recognition has shifted the perspective towards the focus on visitors. We sought to design a visitor experience in both buildings conducive to open-ended, creative engagement. Among the criteria used to ensure interactivity and connection are: attracting visitor's attention, delivering the message effectively, providing information for exhibits, facilitating social interaction, engaging in minds-on activity, ensuring multiple levels of content, providing for effective story-telling, and having a level-playing field when it comes to access and a sense of belonging.

Finally, it is important to note that trying to fabricate history is not as authentic as creating a building design that represents this moment in time. We are a museum that interprets history to the modern day and a new building should not try to pretend to be from the past. A building that represents the architecture and design of today has more historical integrity for us than something that is made to look old. A different looking building will draw more attention on site and create a sense of wonder and curiosity for visitors.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Leanne Meyer-Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Leanne Meyer-Smith, AIA, LEED AP BD+C
Vice President Architecture | Licensed Architect