

BUILDING ON A MISSION

IN 2005, THE INSTITUTE WILL BREAK GROUND to complete the Aspen Meadows site with the Doerr-Hosier Center. It will house large public meetings, intimate summits, and every kind of gathering in between. But this structure will provide much more than just walls, conference tables, and a roof; this is a building on a mission. In every aspect of its concept and design, Doerr-Hosier is being planned to carry out the Institute's most essential goals: to maximize human potential by stimulating mind, body, and spirit; to spark collaboration and the dynamic exchange of ideas; and above all, to facilitate progressive human interaction.



A sketch of the new Doerr-Hosier Center, the last structure to be built on the Aspen Meadows site.

The original buildings on the Aspen Meadows site are landmark examples of the Bauhaus design school.



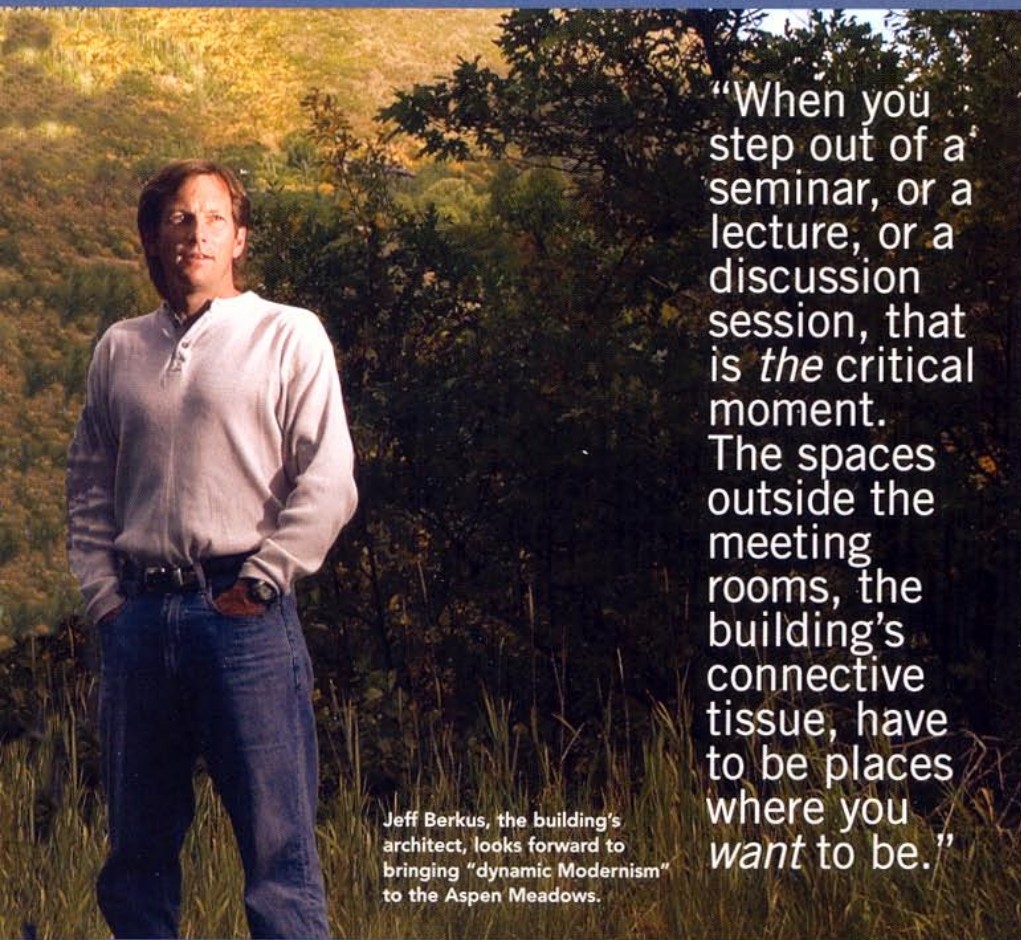
“This building will complete the Institute and serve the town of Aspen,” says Institute President and CEO Walter Isaacson. “And it will allow us to fulfill our strategic mission of having meetings and interactive conferences in addition to the smaller seminars and roundtables that work in our current facilities.” To Jeff Berkus, the building’s architect, this goal makes the project uniquely exciting. “Conditions in the world have become so divisive, and communication is so vital: Bringing people together is absolutely the most important function a public building can have.”

How does this translate into a structure? First and foremost, says Berkus, the new building will be intimately connected to its exceptional

TRADITION OF TEAMWORK

When Institute founder Walter Paepcke set out to build on the Institute’s 40 acres in Aspen’s West End—the Aspen Meadows site—he brought in Bauhaus school artist and designer Herbert Bayer and Frank Lloyd Wright-trained architect Fritz Benedict to join forces on the site’s design and development. The three, together, created what is still regarded as a landmark of Modernism.

The Doerr-Hosier Center, too, will be a landmark, and it, too, will be the product of intense collaboration. Perhaps the most important collaborative group for this project was the one at its genesis: its donors. New donors Alex Kaufman and Jim Barksdale have pledged \$1 million each, building on the primary gifts of new Institute trustee and tech venture capitalist John Doerr and attorney Gerald Hosier, who each gave \$3 million; and two new Institute trustees, technology investor Jerry Murdock (who helped spearhead the fundraising) and Goldman Sachs senior partner John McNulty, who contributed \$1 million each. And technology pioneer Bill Joy, also a new Institute trustee, has donated \$250,000 (half of a \$500,000 gift to the Institute). The generosity and vision of this group will have a profound, positive impact on the Institute, Aspen, and perhaps even the world.



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Jeff Berkus, the building’s architect, looks forward to bringing “dynamic Modernism” to the Aspen Meadows.

natural setting, between the Bauhaus-style Calaway Health Center and the Wexner lodging building (part of the Aspen Meadows Resort and Conference Center, operated by Dolce International). Jeff spent much of his career in California and has recently completed an innovative residential project in the Aspen area. All of his work shares a central theme: “the idea of a direct connection to nature,” he says. “We’re interested in drawing energy from the natural elements of the site, and integrating them directly into the building.”

The building is being carefully planned to take full advantage of its surroundings. Berkus cites abundant glass, water, stone floors, ample natural light, and features that combine natural elements, such as moving water and a distinctive fireplace on the central terrace. The building will frame views of the Roaring Fork River and Hunter Creek Valley while maintaining a low profile that fits in with the mass and scale of the surrounding buildings. Upon entering the building, for example, people will be instantly greeted with a spectacular, expansive view, and the hallways outside the smaller meeting rooms will be enclosed in glass. In the summer, when Institute activity is at its peak, the building will have the capability to expand into the outdoors with tent-like extensions. Symbolic elements like a sandstone wall built from local material and stone from around the world will reinforce this connection to nature and emphasize the global mission of the building.

This natural connection will carry through the design, says Berkus—not only in the entry and meeting spaces, but also in the informal congregating spaces and hallways. This serves his larger purpose: to capture the momentum of an intense dialogue—from a seminar, conference, or other gathering—and retain it by encouraging people to linger and interact throughout the structure. Berkus attended the 2004 Fortune/Aspen Institute Brainstorm conference—a gathering of some 250 CEOs, political leaders, and scholars—and paid careful attention to the human dynamics at work. “When you step out of a seminar, or a lecture, or a discussion session, that is the critical moment,” he says. “The spaces outside the meeting rooms, the building’s connective tissue, have to be places where you want to be.”

Another essential component of the building will be its emphasis on human health and medicine. One of its major uses will be to offer space for the work of a new Institute program focused on this area, now in development. With the main conference area able to accommodate approximately 250 people, Doerr-Hosier will make large public conferences on health topics like bioethics and cancer research possible for the Institute in the near future. The hall will also be used for summits of world leaders and ministers on various topics, and as the home for conferences and hub for the annual Aspen Ideas festival.



The site plan for the new Doerr-Hosier Center on the Aspen Meadows campus.

To accomplish these ambitious goals, Berkus is working with a diverse team of people to make this vision a reality. Since the project's very inception, the donors have provided essential guidance, resources, and brainstorming, and contributed substantively to the development of an evolving design.

Others on the team include Aspen architect Joede Schoeberlein, who worked on the Harris Hall Auditorium project, New York feng shui consultant Alex Stark, who has earned international recognition for his work in sacred and healing spaces, and internationally acclaimed environmental artist Andy Goldsworthy, who, for the first time ever, will work with the building's architect to weave his environmental sculptures throughout the building. Also consulting on the building is the Rocky Mountain Institute (RMI), the innovative and nationally renowned environmental firm base in Old Snowmass. RMI's input will help

Wright-trained architect Fritz Benedict, are widely recognized as landmarks of the Bauhaus style, emphasizing simplicity, cost effectiveness, and the almost austere, "honest" materials of the time, such as exposed cinder blocks. While Bayer designed outdoor spaces (like the Marble Garden and the earthmounds in Anderson Park) to take advantage of the environment, the indoor meeting spaces were simple and enclosed, with little relationship to the natural surroundings.

"The Bauhaus buildings are very much of their time," says Berkus. "They reflected the spirit of the period, and the Institute's desire at the time to be as cost effective as possible, while adhering to ideals of simple geometries and materials for a new, experimental organization." Berkus' structure will build on this legacy of Modernism, he says, but, he

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make Doerr-Hosier as environmentally responsible as possible.

To Walter Isaacson, the constant exchange of ideas among all of these groups is an essential component of the project. "The donors and others have been working together in a very Aspen-like way," he says. "It's been a collaborative process, with a lot of excitement and ideas flying back and forth, as Jeff develops a building design that we will be proud of generations from now."

These exciting elements are not without significant challenges. For one, the building will need to fulfill a wide variety of functions at once, and meet the Institute's longtime standards of simplicity and cost effectiveness—both priorities that the whole team recognizes. Perhaps most daunting—and at the same time, the most inspiring, says Berkus—is the fact that this building is the Institute's last: "the final piece of the puzzle."

His challenge, he says, is connecting architecturally with both the past and future of the Aspen Meadows—seamlessly integrating Doerr-Hosier with the historic Bauhaus style that defines the rest of the site. These original buildings, the work of Bauhaus designer Herbert Bayer and Frank Lloyd

explains, he's building for a very different, more established Aspen Institute. "Now that the Institute is so established and well-rooted to this site, our goal is to create a building that is timeless, a bridge to the future. I like to think of it as 'dynamic Modernism'—a style that not only makes a contemporary statement, but will serve the Institute as it grows for decades to come."

Another challenge for Berkus and the rest of the team is the ambitious schedule they have set: if all goes well, building will begin in 2005, and the hall is slated for completion in the summer of 2006. "We're on a fast-track design and building schedule," he says, due to the team's eagerness to utilize the myriad benefits and possibilities the new structure will offer. Off to a running start, Jeff Berkus can visualize his and the whole group's hopes vividly: the public and world leaders alike finding in the meeting spaces, corridors, and courtyards of the Doerr-Hosier Center inspiration for productive dialogue, reflection, contemplation of the difference they can make in the world—and maybe even common ground. "This building is all about creating a theater for human interaction," he says, "because after all, that's what the Aspen Institute is all about." ♦

