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Rhode Island School of Design Opens First Newly Constructed Residence Hall in 34 Years

The first cross-laminated timber-steel hybrid residence hall in New England, North Hall is an innovative model for reducing energy use, limiting environmental impact and providing a customized space designed to help students thrive



Photography by John Horner, courtesy Rhode Island School of Design.

PROVIDENCE, RI (March 3, 2020) – Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) celebrates the opening of North Hall, the college’s first newly constructed residential facility to open in 34 years. The first cross-laminated timber (CLT)-steel hybrid residence hall in New England, the building is an innovative model for reducing energy use and limiting environmental impact while providing a customized space designed to allow students to thrive.

North Hall was designed by award-winning architect and RISD Architecture alumnus **Nader Tehrani** (RISD 86) in collaboration with fellow principals **Katherine Faulkner** and **Arthur Chang** and their Boston-based firm NADAAA. Thanks to thoughtful input from the campus community, NADAAA's design features common spaces for socializing, making, reflecting and creative expression, tailored to meet the varied needs of today's art and design students. The 40,790-square-foot structure houses 148 first-year students on six floors, featuring amenities such as living spaces that facilitate interaction through breakout rooms, workrooms, social lounges, a shared kitchen and studio and gallery spaces, as well as private retreats, a spray booth and bike storage. Shawmut Design and Construction managed the project.

"We are excited to open a new residence hall that so fully supports RISD's unique form of education, meeting the needs of today's students—a generation unlike any before them," notes President **Rosanne Somerson**. "Our broader institutional vision—as set forth in RISD's new strategic plan—commits to contributing to a sustainable planet and to ensuring student health and wellness. This new residence hall demonstrates our collective dedication to both priorities. I thank everyone who committed so much time and effort to planning, designing and realizing this extraordinary building. I am proud of the role that alumni, students and faculty played in the project's development and final outcome. We look forward to seeing how this new space will foster student growth for years to come."

"It is a distinct honor to design a building for an institution I hold so dear, but even more so since I have lived on the same campus myself," said NADAAA principal designer Nader Tehrani (RISD 86). "The students who will occupy these buildings are some of the most talented and intellectually adept artists and designers out there. For them, I hope that North Hall will not only be a place of residence, but also a didactic edifice that can be read, interpreted, interrogated and even overturned. In other words, I hope it becomes not only a place of comfort and respite, but also a place that challenges and provokes."



Photography by John Horner, courtesy Rhode Island School of Design.

The state-of-the-art project—featuring innovative construction methods pairing the steel frame with CLT slabs, along with a high-performance envelope comprised of brick and fiber cement panel rainscreen skin—engaged an Integrated Project Delivery (IPD) method to collaboratively fuse the talents of the many teams involved. Highlights in key areas include:

- **Materials.** The new residence hall makes use of environmentally friendly and healthy materials. Most significantly, an IPD methodology was used to select a CLT-steel structural system, an innovative hybrid of mass timber and steel structural design.
- **Energy.** Designed to use approximately 27% less energy than a typical code-compliant building, the new residence hall will consume 72,794 kWh/year less in electricity and 43,000 therms/year less in natural gas than a more traditional structure of its size, which will save RISD about \$16,400 annually. This will also reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 74.3 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent, which is similar to removing 16 cars from the road or adding 87 acres of forest.

- **Water.** The new residence hall will save more than 3,200 gallons per day compared to other code-compliant buildings housing a similar number of people. This is a reduction of 46% and represents more than 700,000 gallons of water saved per year—more than in an Olympic-sized swimming pool or 5.6 million 16-ounce water bottles.
- **Student wellness.** The new residence hall will give students control over their thermal comfort and lighting, and incorporates a variety of comfortable spaces for work and relaxation. The design also promotes health, comfort and productivity among residents.

“It’s been an extremely exciting process partnering with RISD and NADAAA on this remarkable residence hall,” said **Ron Simoneau**, vice president at Shawmut. “Cut into the fabric of the RISD campus, and with Shawmut’s IPD and Lean construction principles at the center of the construction and design teams’ approach, this project will serve as a long-standing reminder of collaboration, design and opportunity within the RISD community.”

In devising the design for North Hall, NADAAA studied the history and function of RISD’s “Quad block” of buildings—an area that includes multiple housing structures, a dining facility and a fitness center. Part of a larger multiyear Quad enhancement project, completion of North Hall allows for continued sequential renovations. Developed in the 1950s, RISD’s core campus was designed by local architects Cull, Robinson and Green with nationally known architect **Pietro Belluschi** as a consultant within an urban composition of three buildings: Nickerson Hall, Homer Hall and the refectory (now known as The Met dining hall) coming together around a series of terraces with expansive views of downtown Providence. These remained intact for several decades, until the forces of expansion introduced East Hall and South Hall on the southern side of the original dormitories, compromising the public nature of their collective spaces. The Quad enhancement project sets out to reclaim those public spaces while making the buildings accessible to all students. Renovations to Nickerson are currently underway, with targeted completion in May 2020. Homer renovations will follow, beginning in summer 2020 through summer 2021.

An important goal of the overall project was to model a process of RISD working with faculty and alumni designers to demonstrate RISD’s commitment to contemporary design in both the architecture and the furniture of the new residence hall. In addition to Tehrani’s overall design of the structure, Schiller Family Endowed Chair in Furniture Design **John Dunnigan** (RISD 80) and Furniture Design Professor and Department Head **Lothar Windels** (RISD 96) designed the Rhye dorm furniture collection, making its debut in North Hall. In addition to its affordability, simple functionality and durable

construction methods using sustainable materials are the key hallmarks of this collection, which includes beds, desks, chairs, drawer chests and tables. Only two materials were used: solid European beech (PEFC certified, the European equivalent to FSC certification) and bamboo plywood, a fast growing, carbon neutral natural resource. In addition, lighting by Rich Brilliant Willing, founded by Furniture Design alumni **Theo Richardson** (RISD 06), **Charles Brill** (RISD 06) and **Alexander Williams** (RISD 06), is featured in the 5th-floor common room. The trio generously donated the *Palindrome 8* chandelier, a sculptural centerpiece with a modular composition of tubular steel arms; RBW's *Queue* lighting, a linear LED pendant system, is also installed throughout the common room.

Special thanks to all project consultants and trade partners: Landworks Studio, Vanasse Hangen Brustlin Inc., Odeh Engineers, Environmental Systems Inc., Reilly Electrical Contractors (RELCO), Arden Engineering Constructors, Jensen Hughes, Kalin Associates Inc., Colliers International, DiGregorio, SyNet Inc., Encore, GZA, John Strafach & Sons, Ocean Steel, HB Welding, Worcester Air, Chandler Architectural, Sweeney Drywall, Grande Masonry, Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates, Andelman & Lelek Engineering and Acentech.

About Rhode Island School of Design

RISD's mission, through its college and museum, is to educate students and the public in the creation and appreciation of works of art and design, to discover and transmit knowledge and to make lasting contributions to a global society through critical thinking, scholarship and innovation. The college's strategic plan *NEXT: RISD 2020-2027* sets an ambitious vision for educating students for the future and bringing creative practices to bear on the creation of just societies, a sustainable planet and new ways of making and knowing. RISD's immersive model of art and design education, which emphasizes critical making through studio-based learning and robust study in the liberal arts, prepares students to intervene in the critical challenges of our time. Working with exceptional faculty and in extraordinary specialized facilities, 2,500 students from 69 countries engage in 42 full-time bachelor's and master's degree programs. RISD's 30,000 alumni worldwide testify to the impact of this model of education, exemplifying the vital role artists and designers play in today's society. Founded in 1877, RISD (pronounced "RIZ-dee") and the RISD Museum help make Providence, RI among the most culturally active and creative cities in the region. Find more information at risd.edu.

Learn more about the project: [fact sheet](#).

[A selection of high-resolution images are available here.](#)

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