



Children's Harbor
Family Center/
Children's Research
& Innovation
Birmingham, AL

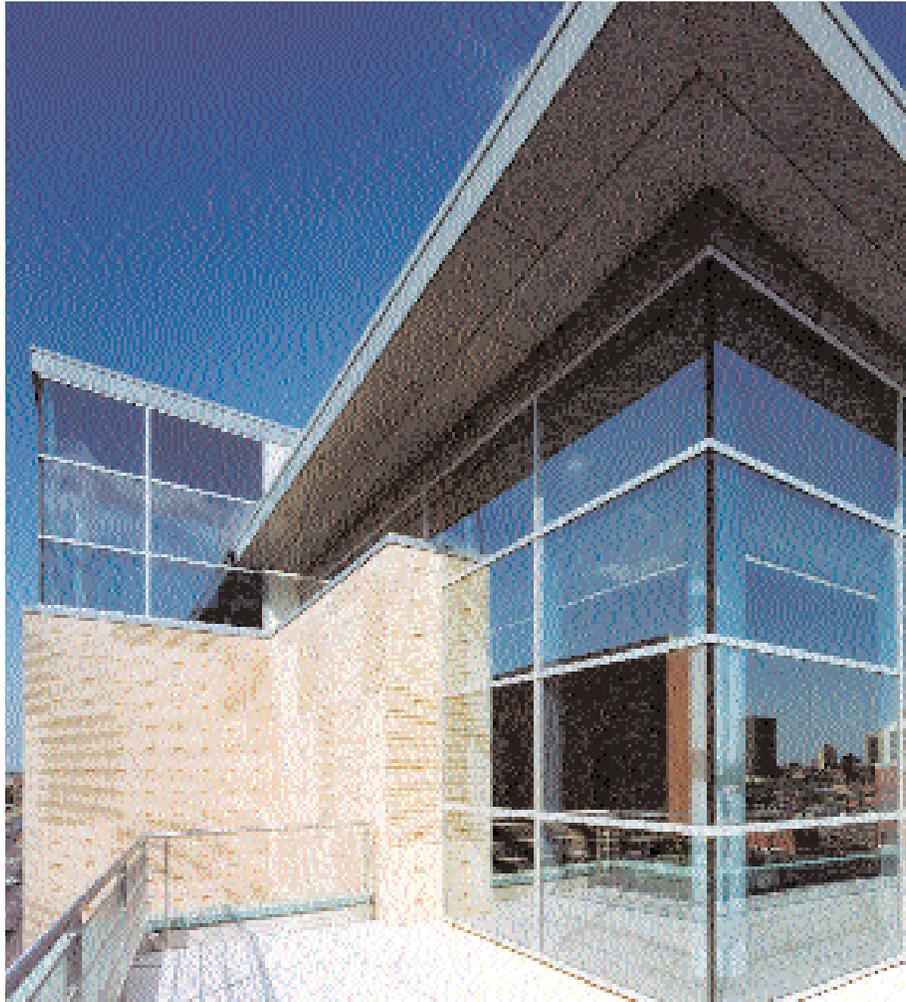
Architect:
Giattina Fisher
Aycock Architects, Inc.
Birmingham, AL

General Contractor:
Brice Building Company
Birmingham, AL

Masonry Contractor:
Masonry Arts
Bessemer, AL

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Playful Design Makes Family Center A Safe Haven

When Children's Health Systems in Birmingham, AL, exceeded its capacity to serve the needs of children and their families, administrators called upon the expertise of Giattina Fisher Aycock Architects to carry out the expansion. The hospital needed a sophisticated building that would combine its mix of medical research laboratories, a family counseling center, and a series of high-tech lecture halls. The design team worked diligently to understand the diverse needs of the many different users. The result is Children's Harbor: an exciting new facility that responds functionally to the unique programs it houses while making a

“Using brick textures pulled from adjacent buildings, we wove a new masonry fabric that works at multiple urban scales to unify existing campus architecture and to create a place kids love.”

Christopher A. Gattina, AIA
Giattina Fisher Aycock Architects, Inc.





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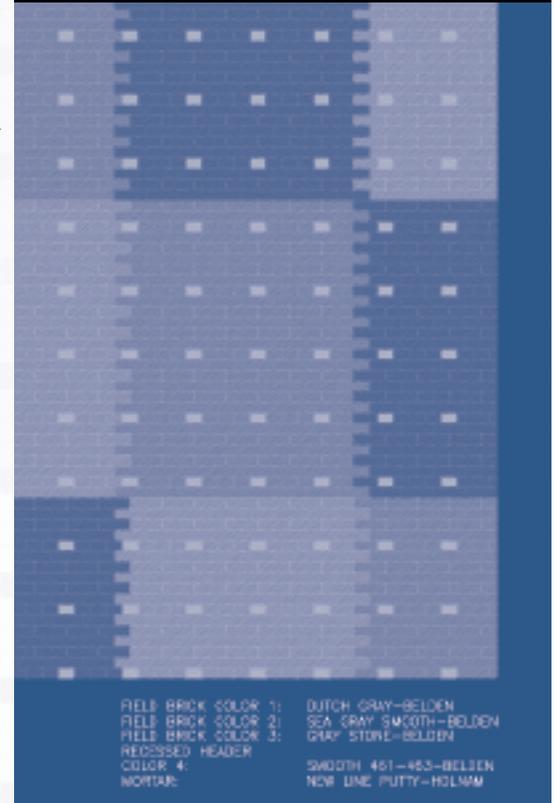
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THE DETAIL FILE

Take a closer look at how the Architect detailed this section. Of course, this depiction is not to be construed as an exact detailing recommendation by Brick SouthEast.



building that substantively engages all of the children it serves.

The Harbor Building is located one block from the existing Children’s Hospital and is surrounded by a mix of institutional buildings with strikingly different styles. The original Children’s Hospital, built in the 1970s of tan pre-cast, stands on one side, and an office building featuring a brick diaper pattern stands on the other side. “Though the adjacent buildings vary in form, we designed a unique brick pattern that created a common thread,” says Christopher Giattina, design principal with Giattina Fisher Aycock Architects. “We had a responsibility to tie together the existing buildings visually while establishing a new design vocabulary for future campus developments.”

Early in the design process, a typical research laboratory module was developed around a structural grid which provided an efficient laboratory layout. This lab configuration ultimately influenced the building’s massing, the layout of its circulation and public spaces, the

masonry modules, and the arrangement of fenestration.

The design team carefully chose several different colors of brick to tie the Harbor Building to surrounding structures while also carrying out the design’s playful, nautical theme. Three shades of tan modular brick are used with a putty-colored mortar to create a subtle pattern of interlocking color blocks, reminiscent of a patchwork quilt. To visually tie the blocks together and add a secondary texture, a terra cotta header is recessed at regular intervals throughout the field. To round out the nautical theme of the building, a curved element of copper siding, which resembles a ship’s prow, adds a punch of color to the softer brick background. “In this way, a familiar material known for its solidity and permanence is transformed into a visually soft, multidimensional fabric, which speaks to the new building’s modern palette of copper and glass, as well as to the existing brick hospital across the street,” Giattina says.

Creating an animated building on a tight urban

site was challenging, according to Giattina. But careful planning enabled the design team to carry out the color-block brick pattern through many undulations without losing its coursing. The Children’s Harbor Family Center stands out not only as a safe haven for children and their families, but also as a welcome addition to the architectural character of downtown Birmingham.



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