Seattle Daily Journal of Commerce

SEATTLE STORM CENTER FOR BASKETBALL PERFORMANCE

"The Storm's owners stood tall behind the plan. Their mission is to empower women and girls through sport, so building upon that foundation to advance the careers of the women working on the new facility aligned perfectly."

Kathy Shaloo Berg
ZGF Architects

Dan Graham
Shive-Hattery

"We looked at each other and thought about just how far we could push this."

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Sellen

"We leaned in to identify women-led consulting firms and principals in engineering and design here in Seattle."

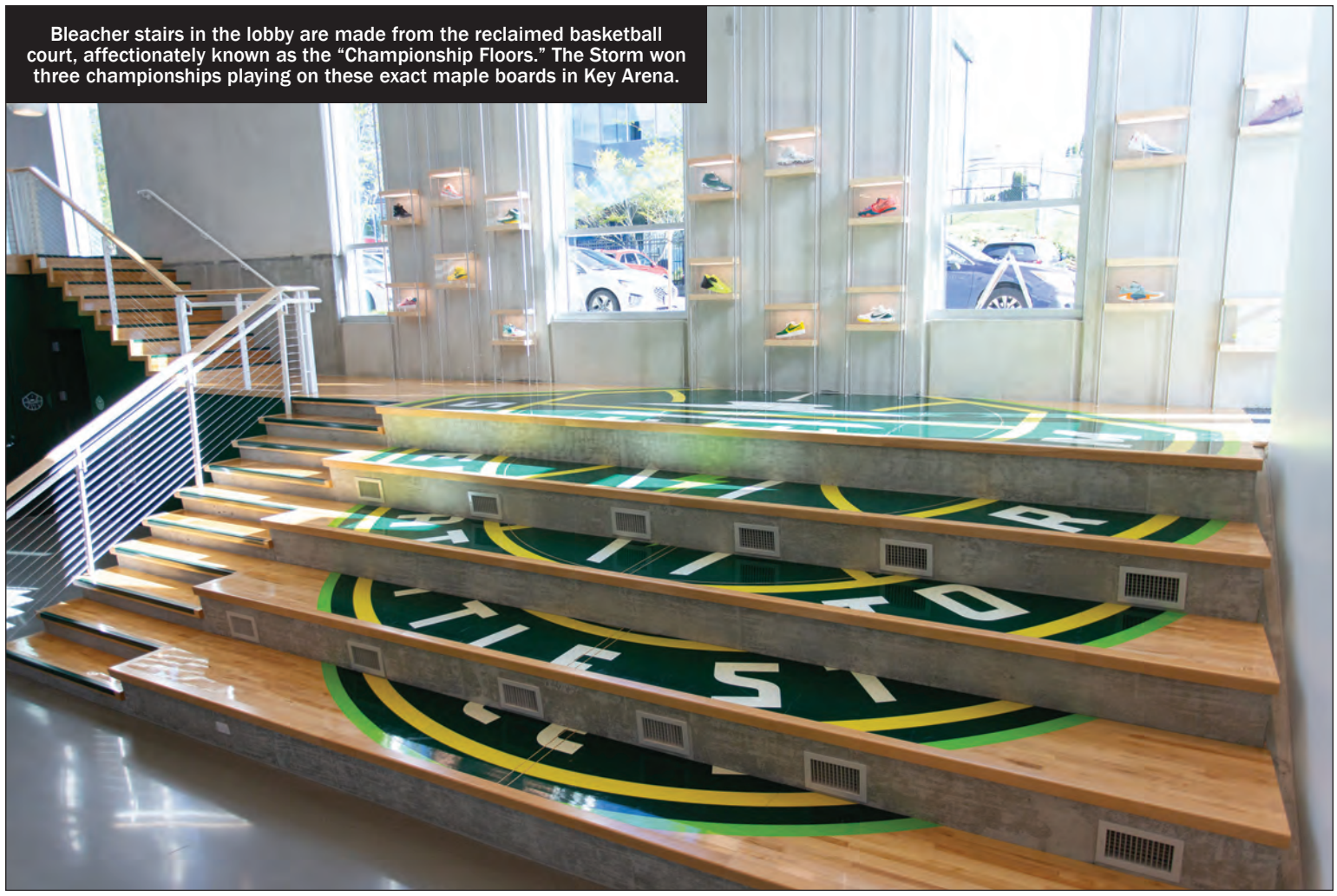
Maria Barrientos
barrientosRyan

May 30, 2024

DESIGNING THE FIRST GROUND-UP WNBA PRACTICE FACILITY

The Seattle Storm Center for Basketball Performance is the first ground-up practice facility built for a professional women's sports franchise, and the women-led design team pushed to make it a signature statement.

BY KATHY SHALOO BERG & DAN GRAHAM
SPECIAL TO THE JOURNAL



Bleacher stairs in the lobby are made from the reclaimed basketball court, affectionately known as the "Championship Floors." The Storm won three championships playing on these exact maple boards in Key Arena.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE SEATTLE STORM

When we got the call to design the Seattle Storm Center for Basketball Performance, it seemed natural to build a team of women to create a practice facility for one of the most successful women's sports franchises. We asked our consultants and construction partners to do the same, and as a result, the team we assembled was 85% women. The Storm's owners stood tall behind the plan. Their mission is to empower women and girls through sport, so building upon that foundation to advance the careers of the women working on the new facility aligned perfectly.

PUTTING TOGETHER THE TEAM

The late Spero Valavanis of Shive-Hattery started the project with the team's owners and the Storm's chief executive officer and president, his daughter Alisha Valavanis. He brought ZGF Architects on board to tap into the firm's experience designing sports facilities, including training centers for the San Antonio Spurs and Phoenix Suns of the National Basketball Association.

As a project team, we identified with the team aspect of sport — the requirement that everybody needs to be heading in the same direction and working towards a common goal. We think it's analogous to what we do as designers. A great project doesn't come from one great person, it comes from everybody on the team contributing.

At the start of the project, the team benchmarked the history of NBA practice facilities as no WNBA franchise currently had one of their own. Over the last few decades, the size of men's facilities doubled from an average of 35,000 gross square feet to an average of 75,000 gross square feet. Women athletes today are often cobbling together training space or sharing with other teams, resulting in less-than-optimal training routines and loss of training time. It was this inequity that fueled our team.

Inside the practice court, designers crafted a skyline from felt acoustic material and stained the high concrete wall to mirror the surrounding mountain ranges and mute the noise of players shouting and bouncing balls from the courts.

DESIGNING OPTIMIZED SPACES

We were determined to make every inch of our 50,000-square-foot facility — the largest allowable building on the selected site — count by designing a best-in-class facility. We created a first floor focused on the players and their support network of trainers and coaches, with two courts, locker rooms, a players' lounge, a strength and conditioning center, training and treatment spaces, hot and cold plunge pools, and recovery spaces. The second floor is focused on offices for the coaches and the team's administration.

"Women athletes today are often cobbling together training space or sharing with other teams, resulting in less-than-optimal training routines and loss of training time. It was this inequity that fueled our team."

From a design standpoint, we focused on efficiency by streamlining the players' movements between spaces and eliminating corridors. For example, from the trainer's area you can see everything from the aquatics room to the treatment tables, through the strength and conditioning space and out to the courts. The idea is that at any given moment, the trainers, physicians, and other staff monitoring the health of the players can see them, connect with them, and anticipate their needs while assuring player safety.

There were other benefits to eliminating corridors. Making it easier to move throughout the building saves time, giving the player additional minutes to train or recover. In addition, when the players move through the training spaces to reach the courts, it creates opportunities for interactions, feeding the concept of team. Rather than going down a long corridor to exit, players walk through the player lounge where food and spaces to stop and chat create a sense of home and encourage team communication.

We've already heard the players say that this feels much more like a space where they want to hang out, and one where they can see

each other and be seen. That was something the ownership felt was important: creating a space where the players would be willing to stay longer and fostering team building on and off the court.

CREATING A SENSE OF PLACE

The gritty, industrial site in Interbay between two hills was once used as a landfill. The design team wanted to reflect the history of the site and reference its former existence as wetlands. We thought that carrying some of the industrial nature of the neighborhood through the project would reinforce the work ethic of a training facility. We also wanted to craft an environment that was truly "Pacific Northwest" and reflected the city of Seattle.

The sloped site provided the opportunity to create a private player entrance on level one with a separate public entrance located a half level up on the opposite side of the site. The building features a tilt-up concrete sandwich panel wall assembly with a custom concrete finish that is exposed both inside the training spaces and outside as a building finish. Between the panels, glass and metal vertical bands bring light into the building and create shadow and texture on the façade.

Inside, wood elements create contrast with the concrete. Bleacher stairs in the lobby are made from the reclaimed basketball court, affectionately known as the "Championship Floors." The Storm won three championships playing on these exact maple boards in Key Arena.

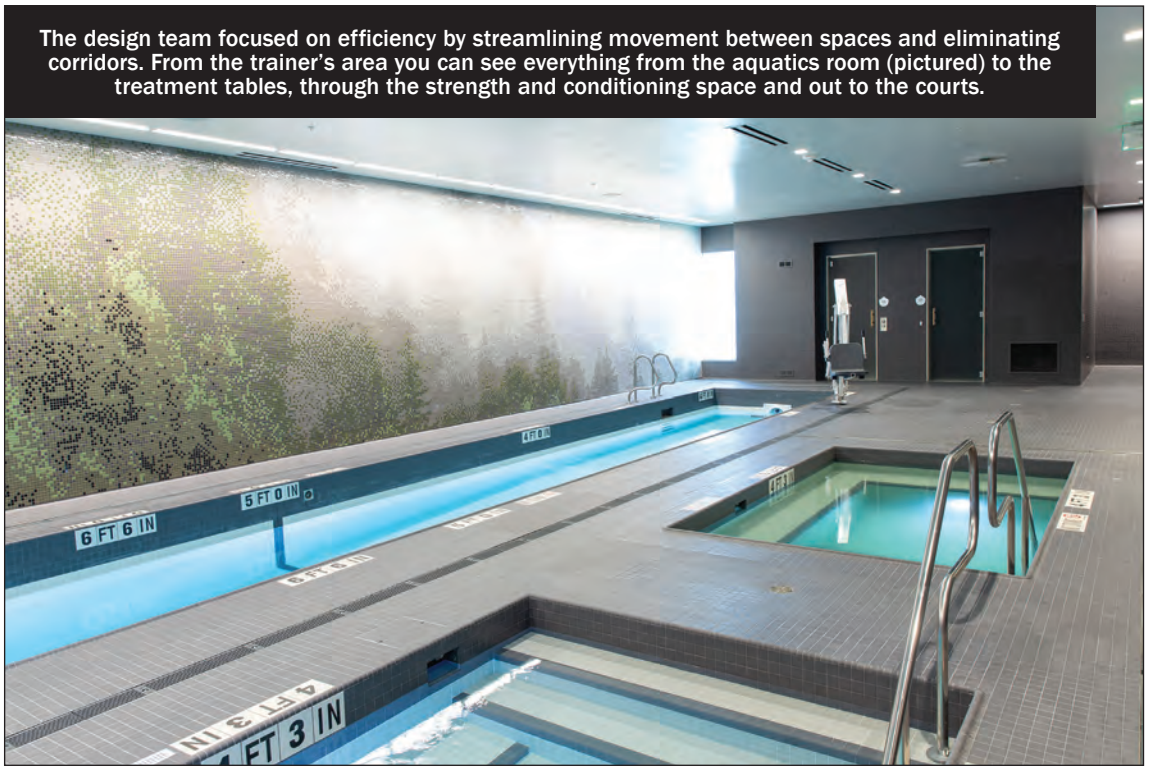
Inside the practice court, a long, high concrete wall — like many spaces in the building — serves more than one purpose. We needed a finish that would mute the noise of players shouting and bouncing balls on the courts, and wanted to anchor the space in Seattle. To solve for this, we crafted a skyline from felt acoustic material and stained the concrete to mirror the surrounding mountain ranges, depicting the Olympic Mountains to the west and Mount Rainier and Mount Baker to the east.

Outside, our drive to make spaces efficient resulted in a parking lot that doubles as a court, with two 3x3 half courts laid out in the parking lot. The lot is also part of the stormwater drainage system. City code requires the stormwater manhole covers to be labeled "storm." We were able to get approval for each of them – approximately 30 – to be customized and labeled "Seattle Storm" with the outline of the Space Needle from the team's logo.

LISTENING TO AND DESIGNING FOR ATHLETES

Our team consulted with current and former players, including Jewell Loyd, Breanna Stewart, and Storm Leadership, many of whom had played basketball collegiately or professionally, to get the details right. That meant large, service-rich locker rooms, custom locker designs, a fully equipped weight room, and a players' lounge focused on nutrition and community.

The design team focused on efficiency by streamlining movement between spaces and eliminating corridors. From the trainer's area you can see everything from the aquatics room (pictured) to the treatment tables, through the strength and conditioning space and out to the courts.



Prior to Title IX, the federal civil rights law enacted in 1972 that prohibits sex-based discrimination, and requires athletic departments to provide equitable treatment to men and women, there were sports that were not open to women. Even when sports were available for women, facilities were rarely equal to what men were provided. Many of the owners, leaders, and team members for this project experienced inequity over their sports careers, and inequity endures to this day in different forms. As such, the team was passionate about creating a great space for this WNBA team.

We are often asked how we designed the center differently for women. We think that is the wrong question. In any building we design, there is always a diverse community that needs to be considered and reflected.

In this case, we focused on the needs of the athletes, their trainers, coaches, administration, and everyone who supports what they represent. As the first ground-up practice facility designed and built for a professional women's franchise, The Seattle Storm Center for Basketball Performance is not only another step forward in a five-decade quest to elevate not just women's basketball, but also an important step towards equity in sport for everyone.

Kathy Shaloo Berg is a partner in the Portland office of ZGF Architects specializing in a diverse range of project types. Dan Graham is a senior architect in Shive-Hattery's Valparaiso, Indiana office.

INSIDE

ON THE COVER

The Seattle Storm's practice court at their new training center in Interbay. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE SEATTLE STORM

DJC TEAM

SECTION EDITOR: SHAWNA GAMACHE • SECTION DESIGN: JEFFREY MILLER
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STORM CENTER FOR BASKETBALL PERFORMANCE PROJECT TEAM

Developer:
Force 10 Facilities

General Contractor:
Sellen Construction

Architect:
ZGF Architects and
Shive-Hattery Architects

Civil Engineer:
Coughlin Porter Lundeen

Landscape Architect:
Walker Macy

Structural Engineer: Holmes

MEP Design:
PAE

Counterbalance Consulting:
Apollo Mechanical

Electrical Subcontractor and Lighting Design:
Prime Electric

Geotechnical:
PanGeo

Kitchen:
Counsilman-Hunsaker;
Bargreen Ellingson

RDH, envelope:
Heffron Transportation

Interiors:
Studio Pacifica

Acoustics:
BRC Acoustics

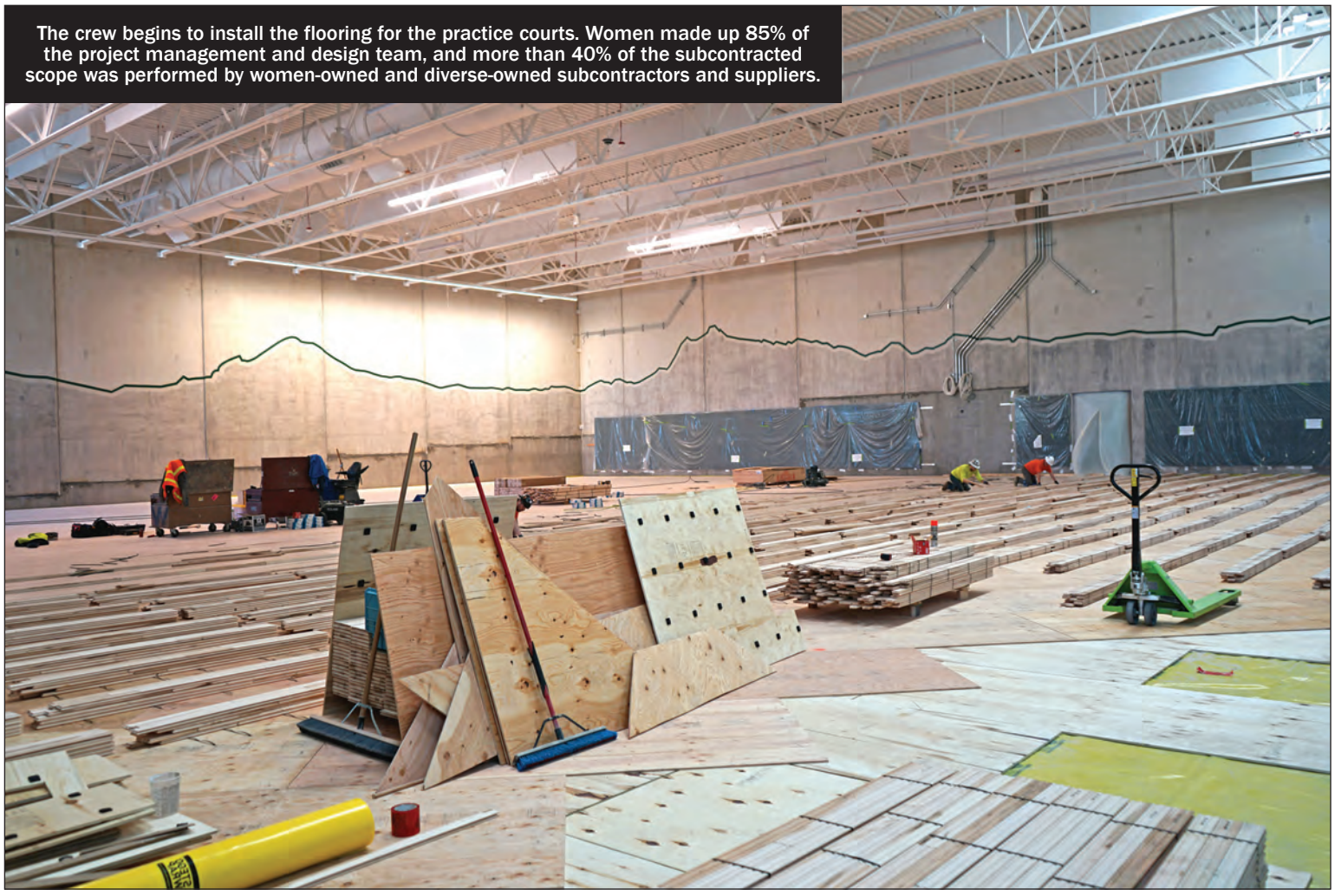
THE SEATTLE STORM'S NEW HOME: A BEACON FOR WOMEN-LED CHANGE

The Storm ownership group centered and elevated women at every step of the project, driven by a vision to create a facility built by, and for, women.

Seattle is home to one of the most incredible new buildings in the country. Not just because of the building alone, but because of the team who brought the owner's vision to life. The Seattle Storm Center for Basketball Performance is the first ground-up facility designed and built for a WNBA team. The Storm ownership group centered and elevated women at every step of the project, driven by a vision to create a facility built by, and for, women.

BY ERIN HOBSON
SELLEN

The work put forth by all levels of our team – from the Storm's ownership to a first-year apprentice – shows what is possible in our industry through an intentional approach to women-led design, management, and project delivery. As the principal-in-charge for Sellen on the project, I feel a profound sense of gratitude and pride to have worked alongside each person on this team, and I am inspired by what this new facility represents in women's professional sports and the A/E/C industry.



The crew begins to install the flooring for the practice courts. Women made up 85% of the project management and design team, and more than 40% of the subcontracted scope was performed by women-owned and diverse-owned subcontractors and suppliers.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SELLEN CONSTRUCTION

BUILDING THE DREAM TEAM

It started with a challenge from the owners of the Storm: to forge a high-performance, women-led team with the experience, skill, and drive to deliver the first-of-its-kind facility. The 50,000-square-foot building includes practice courts, training rooms, a locker room, an aquatic center, and offices for the staff and ownership group with cutting-edge technology to help the Storm's athletes achieve peak performance.

The team behind the four-time WNBA champion's new home would need to share its values and reflect the diversity of our community. Owner's representative barrientosRyan, designers ZGF Architects and Shive-Hattery, and Sellen embraced this vision from day one. As consultants and subcontractors were added to the team, it was made clear to all that this wasn't just another project – it required a firm commitment to the owner's vision.

No specific goals or target percentages for women-led teams, women-owned or diverse-owned subcontractor participation were established at any point. Instead of working to reach a specific metric, the team collectively decided to push the envelope.

"We looked at each other and thought about just how far we could push this," said Sarah Carlson, Sellen's senior project manager. "We decided to shoot for the stars and see what might happen."

Word quickly spread throughout the local subcontractor community. Women-owned firms started reaching out directly to the project team wanting to join the project. As part of the bidding process, all subcontractors and consultants were evalu-

Storm owners Lisa Brummel and Ginny Gilder speak to the project team at the topping out ceremony.

"Many of the women who worked on this project have been elevated in their firms and provided with more opportunities because of their experience delivering this facility for the Storm."

Maria Barrientos, barrientosRyan

ated based on past performance, current capacity, and a holistic review of their commitment to creating a more diverse construction industry.

THE NUMBERS TELL THE STORY

The results speak for themselves: women comprised 85% of the project management and design team, and more than 40% of the subcontracted scope was performed by women-owned and diverse-owned subcontractors and suppliers. Throughout the project, women outnumbered men in the weekly coordination meetings between the owner, owner's representative, architect, and construction team – an exceedingly rare sight in an industry long dominated by men.

"We leaned in to identify women-led consulting firms and principals in engineering and design here in Seattle," said Maria Barrientos, a partner at owner's representative barrientosRyan and a key leader on the project. "There were firms we had worked with for years that we were unable to engage with because they didn't have women leaders, principals, and staff to assign to the project. Three years later, those firms have all made a push to hire and promote women in their firms. In addition, many of the women who worked on this project have been elevated in their firms and provided with more opportunities because of their experience delivering this facility for the Storm."

Today, women represent less than 10% of the national construction workforce. It's only fitting that Sellen's self-perform concrete placement crew – responsible for creating the very foundation of the building – featured several women in prominent roles, including a female nozzle operator. The finished facility, which officially opened for players and front office staff in April, is a testament to the world-class craftsmanship put forth by every man and woman who set foot on the job site.

A CATALYST FOR CHANGE ON AND OFF THE COURT

The Center for Basketball Performance established a new precedent for women-led project delivery in the Puget Sound A/E/C industry. But what lessons does it offer for the broader industry and how can we successfully build upon its momentum?

An interesting parallel exists in another sphere where women have historically been underrepresented: the national sports stage. In the finale of last month's NCAA women's basketball tournament, more than 24 million people tuned in to watch Caitlin Clark's Iowa Hawkeyes face the South Carolina Gamecocks. It marked the first time in the history of the tournament that the women's final garnered more viewers than the men's, and it was the most-watched basketball game at any level – college or professional – since 2019. The game captured the attention of the entire country and put the elite athleticism and skill in women's basketball on full display, inspiring a generation of new fans.

The Storm's Center for Basketball Performance opened

WOMEN-LED CHANGE — PAGE 9

Sellen's self-perform concrete crew included two women in prominent roles (including the female journeyman nozzle operator on the left and an apprentice on the right).

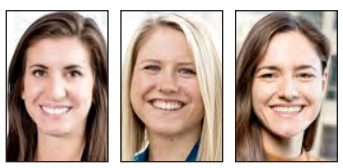
Seattle Storm co-owner Lisa Brummel, Maria Barrientos, a partner at owner's representative barrientosRyan and a key leader on the project, and Seattle Storm co-owner Ginny Gilder at the building's groundbreaking on March 27, 2023.

The Seattle Storm will host summertime 3x3 tournaments on these exterior courts. Drainage for the one-acre site is tucked below the colorful court area.

RENDERING COURTESY OF ZGF ARCHITECTS

ENGINEERING PLANNING AND PROJECT TEAM COLLABORATION FOR A NEW SEASON, NEW HOME

A tight Interbay lot with a high groundwater table and a challenging construction schedule required solid teamwork to meet the project's ambitious goals, including neighborhood revitalization.



BY JACKIE SEMPEL, BAILEY COOK AND KATLYN CHRISTENSON
COUGHLIN PORTER LUNDEEN

As the civil engineers for the Seattle Storm Center for Basketball Performance, we understood the challenge from the start: combining all the desired uses into a tight Interbay lot with a high groundwater table, while achieving a design that would meet the ambitious construction schedule to support the opening date.

COURTS THAT PROVIDE BENEFITS ABOVE AND BELOW

Our first hurdle was meeting site drainage requirements for an outdoor space that would do double duty: serving as player and staff parking that can convert into two 3x3 tournament basketball courts.

Typical vault detention was not feasible, but a corrugated-metal pipe system kept excavation above the groundwater table and significantly reduced cost while still providing detention for the entire site of 1.17 acres - the equivalent of around ten basketball courts.

This then required utility covers for maintenance access. However, covers would introduce a slippery surface, a hazard to be avoided for player safety. We worked with ZGF Architects and Walker Macy to meet the grading requirements for the courts and successfully locate all access hatches outside the court area.

Our final touch: the team produced a special design for these access covers. Because stormwater code only requires the word "storm" on the covers, Coughlin Porter Lundeen was able to help convince the city to allow the design team to use the customized covers with the Seattle Storm name and logo. We were honored to provide input on the design and couldn't be prouder that the Center's access covers were specially designed for the team players and fans,

"The Seattle Storm organization is committed to benefiting the communities that support them. Their non-profit Force4Change responded to a community suggestion that they fund public art to enhance the area around the Center and so Storm Country was born."

and all say “Seattle Storm!”

PROJECTS SUCCEED OR FAIL IN IMPLEMENTATION

As engineers, we know the success of the best laid plans is determined by thorough planning and implementation. Construction on the Seattle Storm Center began in early 2023 with a groundbreaking ceremony in March, aiming to open for training camp’s start April 28, 2024.

During the final review stages, an issue was identified that would affect the pipe routing to the bioretention planter. This would have lowered the ceiling height in the pool and recovery area, creating a cramped space for the players. To avoid these impacts, we worked with the plumbing, architecture and landscape teams to relocate the planter to a location that improved the pipe routing in the building and maintained the full ceiling height while expediting SDCI’s approval for this post-permit revision.

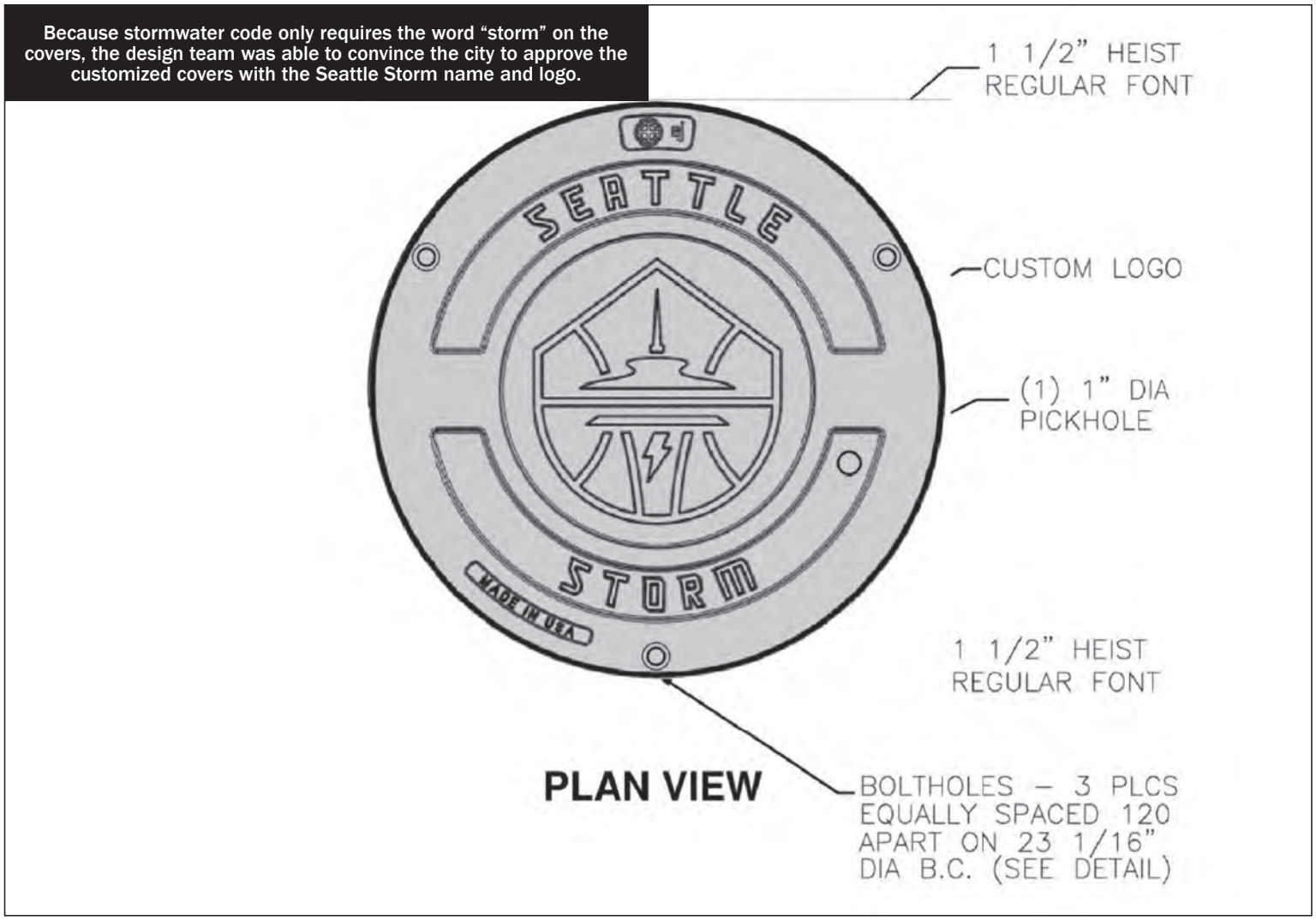
Nimble, collaborative teams are invaluable when surprises occur in the field. Toward the end of construction, an unexpected street condition threatened to delay building occupancy. The street improvement permit required an asphalt grind and overlay on West Bertona Street, however, the contractor found the asphalt section was not paved to standard thickness and was too shallow to accommodate the planned process. Normally, this would require an entire street be repaved at full depth – both expensive and time-consuming. We worked quickly with the contractor and SDOT to produce a solution that kept costs down, lowered the environmental impact, and met the opening target date.

EXTENDING THE BENEFITS BEYOND THE PROPERTY LINE

The Seattle Storm organization is committed to benefiting the communities that support them. Their non-profit Force4Change responded to a community suggestion that they fund public art to enhance the area around the Center and so Storm Country was born.

Public art requires careful planning and often multiple permits. We studied locations for sculptures, painted crosswalks and intersections, street murals, pole banners, and utility box wraps. A neighborhood walk with Storm leadership and the mayor’s office allowed us to explain the options, and the best locations were selected and approved.

Because stormwater code only requires the word “storm” on the covers, the design team was able to convince the city to approve the customized covers with the Seattle Storm name and logo.



MANHOLE DETAIL BY EJ GROUP, INC.

We are currently leading the approval process for street use and right-of-way permits from SDOT and public art advisory review. We have completed this for the first sculpture placement, helping the alliance of Force4Change and Urban Artworks in their mission to amplify the work of Black women artists in their community art, and we are excited to see more artwork unveiled.

It has been an honor to work with this highly collaborative team to establish the Seattle Storm’s new home, and we look forward to watching the team continue building space for girls and women to succeed in even more unprecedented ways!

Coughlin Porter Lundeen’s women-led team included Jackie Sempel, civil associate principal; Bailey Cook, civil project manager; and Katlyn Christenson, civil project engineer.

Stormwater covers were located outside of the courts for player safety and feature customized covers with the Seattle Storm name and logo.

PHOTO COURTESY OF COUGHLIN PORTER LUNDEEN

SETTING A NEW STANDARD FOR ENERGY-EFFICIENT AND LOW-CARBON DESIGN FOR PROFESSIONAL SPORTS FACILITIES

The 50,000-square-foot, all-electric project is pursuing LEED Gold certification, which qualified the project for the city of Seattle's Priority Green expedited permitting program and allowed the team to explore innovative strategies for reducing carbon.

BY CHRIS CHATTO & ANGI RIVERA
SPECIAL TO THE JOURNAL

Low-carbon concrete requirements played a significant role in the building design, including the tilt-up concrete "sandwich" panels comprising the exterior. This photo was taken in the middle of the "tilt up" process, when the crew was placing the facility's concrete wall panels.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SELLEN CONSTRUCTION

When the Seattle Storm's owners commissioned the state-of-the-art, $64 million Center for Basketball Performance in Seattle's Interbay neighborhood, they sought a design that met the needs of their elite athletes while reaching for a new standard for environmentally friendly sports facilities. After all, the Storm were the first WNBA franchise to sign The Climate Pledge, promising to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2040, and play their home games at Climate Pledge Arena, the first net-zero carbon arena in the world.

MEETING SUSTAINABILITY GOALS

Looking to be as green as possible, the Storm turned to our project teams, relying on our expertise in sustainable building to achieve targets for energy-efficiency and low-carbon metrics. The facility, designed by ZGF and Shive-Hattery, includes two courts, locker rooms, a players' lounge, a strength and conditioning center, hot and cold plunge pools, and a recovery suite on the first floor.

The second floor houses offices for the coaches and the team's administration. The building gives the organization a facility of their own after years of practicing at a local university, which was available to the team only between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. The 50,000-square-foot, all-electric project is pursuing LEED Gold certification, which qualified the project for the city of Seattle's Priority Green expedited permitting program and allowed the team to explore innovative solutions.

USING GREENER CONCRETE

Low-carbon concrete requirements played a significant role in the design of the new building, including the tilt-up concrete "sandwich" panels comprising the exterior. Tilt-up concrete panels were chosen by the owner for their efficiency and how they meshed with the site's industrial context. The panels provide both an internal and an external finish, eliminating the need for additional finish materials.

At the same time, the design team recognized the potential impact of concrete reduction, and ZGF worked with structural engineer Holmes to specify ambitious but achievable sustainability benchmarks for the concrete mixes used on the project. Concrete is the most widely used material in the world. Consequently, it is also responsible for about 8 percent of global warming emissions because cement — the binder between aggregate materials like rocks and sand — requires heating limestone, clay, chalk and other ingredients to scorching temperatures of 1450 degrees Celsius, creating an enormous amount of greenhouse gases.

Sellen Construction worked with Stoneway Concrete, the project's concrete producer, to find innovative strategies to reduce that impact. The first strategy was to replace cement with slag, a waste product of steel production, customizing the slag mix for the concrete. For the tilt-up walls of the building, for instance, the cement reduction was as high as 80 percent.

"The embodied carbon of the project's concrete is at least 40 percent lower compared to standard practices in the region."

Using slag has another benefit: it creates a lighter, more pleasing look. That meant portions of the building could be exposed concrete without finishes, further reducing the carbon required to build the project. Lastly, we extended the cure time of the mixes to reduce the amount of cement and slag. Concrete typically has a 28-day cure time to reach the necessary strength. On this project, a 56-day cure time was used in some of the tilt-up walls and portions of the foundation that did not need to be at full strength in the first month. Those longer cure times led to a substantial reduction of cement in the mix.

As a result, the embodied carbon of the project's concrete is at least 40 percent lower compared to standard

A 60-kilowatt solar roof array produces more than 12 percent of the all-electric facility's energy needs.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE SEATTLE STORM

Athletic facilities require large amounts of fresh air, and the Center for Basketball Performance reduces energy consumption with a ventilation system that uses the outgoing warm air to help heat the incoming fresh air.

RENDERING COURTESY OF ZGF ARCHITECTS

practices in the region. In fact, it's the highest reduction that ZGF has tracked, earning the project a 2024 Concrete Innovations Award from the National Ready Mixed Concrete Association.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

The team took a holistic approach to reduce the carbon footprint of the building's daily operation, looking at multiple systems to achieve efficiencies.

Heat pumps, efficient lighting, optimized building envelope and recovering heat through the ventilation system were implemented. Athletic facilities require large amounts of fresh air, and the Center for Basketball Performance reduces energy consumption with a ventilation system that uses the outgoing warm air to help heat the incoming fresh air. Keeping that heat or that cooling inside the building is essential for efficiency. The roof features R50 insulation, which is far higher than the R20 required by building codes. Exposed concrete in the walls acts as a thermal buffer, moderating temperature changes.

Because windows tend to be the weak link in the thermal envelope, the facility has a low window-to-wall ratio of approximately 6 percent compared to a more typical 30 or 40 percent. This decision was made in part because the practice courts require consistent lighting, but the overall impact is reduced energy costs for the Storm.

The team then looked to the sun as a clean energy source. A 60-kilowatt solar roof array produces more than 12 percent of the all-electric facility's energy needs. The combined impact of the solar array and other operational efficiencies enabled the Center for Basketball Performance to reduce energy costs by 46 percent compared to similar facilities.

DESIGNING FOR ATHLETES

Reducing the environmental impact of the building was a driving force of the design. Merging that core principle with the needs of the athletes was paramount. Employing a holistic approach to sustainability — including healthy building materials and reducing carbon emissions — to meet the project's sustainability goals was vital. Most importantly, though, the building supports the reason we're building it in the first place: to elevate and support elite athletic human performance.

Chris Flint Chatto is a high-performance building specialist at ZGF Architects and Angi Rivera is Sellen's director of sustainability.

WOMEN-LED CHANGE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

just 11 days after that game, representing a new standard for investing in professional women athletes. We hope that our project and the team behind it can serve as a similar catalyst within our respective fields.

While much work remains to build a more diverse construction workforce, we are seeing positive trends begin to emerge. At Sellen, 14% of our craft apprentices in 2023 were women, more than three times the local industry average. For those apprentices and women early in their careers who worked on this project, the women-led Center for Basketball Performance doesn't represent an outlier – it shows what is possible when high-performing, women-led teams work together to accomplish something truly groundbreaking and advance our industry.

Erin Hobson is an executive vice president at Sellen Construction, serving as a principal-in-charge on projects throughout the Pacific Northwest, including the Storm Center for Basketball Performance.

The landscape was designed in concert with the building to provide interest and color throughout the year. Its flowing grass plantings, statuesque trees, and collection of new public art creates a sense of movement, and the Seattle Storm's colors of yellows and green echo throughout the site.

RENDERINGS COURTESY OF ZGF ARCHITECTS

A LANDSCAPE TO EMBODY THE STORM'S IDENTITY AND MISSION

The overarching themes for the landscape design drew inspiration from the coastal landscape and tidal flats that once filled the Interbay area, along with the dynamic energy and power of the Seattle Storm.

BY LARA ROSE & CHELSEA MCCANN
WALKER MACY

In collaboration with ZGF, Walker Macy was engaged to develop a compelling landscape for the Seattle Storm Center for Basketball Performance. Principals Lara Rose and Chelsea McCann led the project. The landscape architecture team was challenged to create a place that would delicately balance both the public and private needs of the project, support the Storm's identity, and serve as a landmark within the neighborhood.

The resulting landscape provides balance: it is compact, yet vibrant and sustainable; it welcomes the community, but also provides privacy and enclosure; and it is representative of the Storm's brand and identity as a backdrop for public events and activities.

KNITTING THE CENTER INTO INTERBAY

Seattle Storm's new home in Interbay led to a design approach that is context-sensitive and that contributes to the neighborhood's livability. As a rapidly developing area, Interbay's light industrial legacy is evident in its warren of low-key streets, and its assemblage of low to mid-rise buildings and parking lots. It is missing the verdant tree canopy that characterizes the nearby Magnolia and Queen Anne neighborhoods.

While there are other Seattle athletic facilities that attract visitors from around the community, this project had the opportunity to position the Center as a new anchor in the neighborhood, raising the bar for sustainable development that will meaningfully benefit the neighborhood's quality and pedestrian experience. In response to the site's tight footprint, the design team aimed to blur the lines between streetscape and site, creating an expanded landscape experience around the full block. Textured concrete and weathering steel walls ground the building in its

Climate adaptive and native plants were chosen for resilience to the site's sun-drenched exposure, and multiple stormwater gardens treat roof runoff and are adapted to their specific locations on site – in sunny spots, these gardens are replete with rushes and iris, while ferns and other perennials hug the stormwater treatment area along the building's shady northern edge.

industrial setting, while large areas of planting and new trees provide tangible neighborhood improvements.

CHOREOGRAPHING PUBLIC AND PRIVATE AREAS

The landscape - with its gracious entry plaza, flowing grass plantings, and new public art – provides a public face for the Center. The main entry sits at 16th Ave. W and Bertona Street, where a monumental stair wraps the corner, inviting visitors to the center and creating a dynamic and engaging point of arrival.

Since the building's primary purpose serves the development of a professional team, privacy was a major driver for other portions of the site. The building and site were designed to contribute to the neighborhood while screening the activities within. Textured concrete and metal panels provide rhythm and interest on the building façade.

The landscape was designed in concert with the building to provide interest and color throughout the year. Its flowing grass plantings, statuesque trees, and collection of new public art creates a sense of movement, and the Storm's colors of yellows and green echo throughout the site. A rooftop gathering area with a green roof provides a place for athletes and staff to find respite and privacy. The result is a rich enclosure that screens training activities from public view while projecting the positive energy of the Seattle Storm outwards.

INSPIRATION

The overarching themes for the landscape design drew inspiration from both the tidal flats that once filled Interbay area, as well as the dynamic energy and power of the Seattle Storm. The site harnesses elements of light, wind, and energy, and focuses them into a rhythmic design that showcases color and movement. Ornamental grasses, reminiscent of those which once populated the coastal landscape of the site's pre-development origins, are animated by winds from nearby Puget Sound. Undulating topography ripples along the building's southwest face, conveying a sense of dynamic motion and energy. Paving band patterns and embedded lighting lead visitors to the front door with a rhythm that pulls you into the building's welcoming threshold.

HEALTH, WELLNESS AND SUSTAINABILITY

The sustainable design includes climate adaptive, native, and non-allergenic plants that improve the urban environment while supporting human health and wellness. Climate adaptive and native plants were chosen throughout for resilience to the site's sun-drenched exposure. Multiple stormwater gardens treat roof runoff on site and are adapted to their specific locations on site – in sunny spots, these gardens are replete with rushes and iris, while ferns and other perennials hug the stormwater treatment area along the building's shady northern edge.

The design team intentionally selected large street trees that will provide shade and reduce the urban heat island in this exposed neighborhood. The requirement for a sustainable and healthful environment was emphasized by the Storm's leadership and reflects the team's values and identity as a responsible part of the community.

Walker Macy's contribution to the design of the Center for Basketball Performance demonstrates the power of the landscape as both a dynamic, evolving part of the building's function, and as a memorable emblem of the Seattle Storm's mission and presence for Seattle. The landscape will grow and evolve alongside the Storm as they inhabit the new Center and make it their own.

"The sustainable design includes climate adaptive, native, and non-allergenic plants that improve the urban environment while supporting human health and wellness."

Lara Rose is a principal and landscape architect who leads Walker Macy's Seattle office and the design of distinctive, public-facing projects. As a landscape architect and Walker Macy's Managing Principal, Chelsea McCann brings strong leadership to complex projects integrating sustainable design and the arts.