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## **Linn-Mar Intermediate Schools win AIA People's Choice Award**

### **Public invited to buildings for June 2 open house**

MARION - [Linn-Mar Community School District](#)'s new intermediate schools, Hazel Point and Boulder Peak, have been recognized by the American Institute of Architects Iowa Chapter with a 2021 People's Choice Award. Each year to celebrate Architecture Month, AIA Iowa recognizes the role the public plays in architecture by giving the public a chance to reward the designs they love with a People's Choice Award.

Submitted as one project, Hazel Point and Boulder Peak were one of three projects honored during this year's AIA Iowa spring conference.

As part of an overall restructuring plan to address capacity issues, Linn-Mar Community School District opened the identical intermediate buildings, each with a capacity for 800 fifth and sixth graders, in 2020.

The opening of the buildings, which reduced the number of students in the district's middle schools and all of the elementary school buildings, was well timed in the middle of a pandemic when space was much needed. The timing, though, means most district residents have not seen the buildings, which were funded by a bond referendum passed in with 66% approval in 2018.

There will be a chance to see the buildings in person at an open house from 5 to 7 p.m. on June 2. A ribbon cutting will take place at 5:30 p.m. at Boulder Peak, 3920 35<sup>th</sup> Avenue, and 6 p.m. at Hazel Point, 453 Echo Hill Road.

The building design incorporates a neighborhood concept that breaks down the size of the building more appropriate for 5/6 grade students. Eight independent neighborhoods are stacked two per floor in two wings, organized around a core with music, art, a gymnasium, cafeteria, project rooms, and special education spaces with a sensory room.

"Hazel Point and Boulder Peak are not only beautiful school buildings, but their design is also perfect for the fifth and sixth grade students that attend our intermediate schools," said Linn-Mar Superintendent Shannon Bisgard. "The neighborhood concept encourages teacher and student collaboration while providing a safe and comfortable environment for students to learn to their full potential. We are very excited that all Linn-Mar students will be able to benefit from these wonderful schools in the future."

Each neighborhood – each identified by a unique color palette - includes classrooms, lockers, restrooms, and collaboration areas that support flexible learning, while still allowing teachers to oversee student activities both in and out of the classrooms. Classrooms are arranged along the exterior walls with large windows creating healthy, day-lit spaces as well as general spatial awareness and a connection to the outdoors.

"We wanted the building to be able to withstand the rapid growth of the Linn-Mar Community," said Roger Worm, OPN principal and the lead designer of the project. "By building two identical intermediate buildings, the school district was able to save money



on the design and it was able to accommodate its current students with room for future growth.”

#### **ABOUT OPN ARCHITECTS**

OPN Architects is a regional, knowledge-based design firm with more than 110 designers working on projects across the Midwest. OPN has studios in Cedar Rapids, Des Moines, and Iowa City, Iowa, and Madison, Wisconsin. The firm’s award-winning work spans a wide variety of client types including corporate, civic, higher education, health care, and libraries. For more information about OPN, visit [www.opnarchitects.com](http://www.opnarchitects.com).

#### **ABOUT LINN-MAR COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT**

The Linn-Mar Community School District includes portions of the cities of Marion, Cedar Rapids, and Robins. The 12th largest district in student population in Iowa, Linn-Mar has a small-school feel by maintaining neighborhood schools with smaller class sizes, and updated technology to help our students discover, grow, and prepare for the world of tomorrow.

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