

Category: 11 – Best Building Project – GC (\$10-40 Million)

Contractor: Brinkman Construction

Project Name: Blue Federal Credit Union World Headquarters Campus

From the edge of town, to a cutting-edge campus, this design-build collaboration from Brinkman Construction, Open Studio Architecture, and Blue Federal Credit Union (BFCU) transformed the historic Cole Shopping Center into a state-of-the-art community campus. The original property, dating back to the early 1950s, had been in decline and abandoned for years. It has now been reimagined into a community gathering space boasting the Class A office space for the new BFCU World Headquarters, commercial and retail suites, as well as a public plaza for community events, patio seating, and pedestrian walkways. With a strong community focus in all aspects of the project, the BFCU World Headquarters creates an invaluable addition to the Rocky Mountain Region and was awarded the *Quarterly Beautification Award* by the Greater Cheyenne Chamber of Commerce; recognizing the enhancement of the area as well as a sense of civic pride through exceptional business aesthetics.

Blue started in Cheyenne 68 years ago as a small credit union on F.E. Warren Air Force Base. Today, it is the largest credit union headquartered in Wyoming with \$1.1 billion in assets serving over 85,000 members worldwide. The project marked Blue's commitment to the revitalization of the capital city by creating a catalyst for positive change and a platform to spur future investment in the town.

The BFCU Headquarters campus design features a mountain-industrial-modern theme highlighted by unique exteriors complete with ample expanses of glass, stone, wood, and steel facades covering more than eight acres spanning five buildings. The three-story, 76,000 sq. ft steel building has enough workspace for up to 200 employees while including training areas, fitness and locker rooms, a dining hall, and a rooftop amenity space. This office wing functions as Blue's World Headquarters with the main lobby showcasing a large fireplace with a custom mantel made from the original 1952 Safeway structure that once stood onsite. The banquet hall is available for corporate functions, community gatherings, and special events, and is complimented by the outdoor space that provides an ideal setting for people to enjoy member

BBQs and live music. The new Blue Diamond Center Branch serves as one of BFCU's 14 branches across Colorado and Wyoming. New retail spaces were built within and neighboring this space that are ready for interior finishes as tenants are secured.

Brinkman Construction partnered closely with Blue to understand their short- and long-term goals to bring their vision into fruition. BFCU requested that Brinkman Construction select at least 60% Wyoming-based trade partners to support local companies through the creation of this significant community project. To address this request, the Brinkman team selected from a new pool of subcontractors which required extra training and management. From the company's stringent safety program to the QA/QC guidelines, Brinkman's training efforts were extensive to ensure the overall success of the project. To meet the budget requirements of the project, Brinkman facilitated direct purchasing of over \$4 million in materials. This partnership involved out-of-the-box thinking to ensure a win-win for all.

The office wing is tempered by an Under-Floor Air Distribution (UFAD) system to provide the client with ultimate building control and creature comfort. The UFAD system includes an 18" floor plenum and 2'x2' pedestal grid, which presented challenges with coordination and layout of FCUs, electrical, and hydronic systems during design and construction but were overcome with consistent subcontractor meetings and quality control practices.

Even though strategic planning and careful dialect was implemented to navigate through specific potential challenges that might arise within this high-profile and trafficked area, obstacles still began at the very start of sitework. The team uncovered buried foundations from a previous restaurant, as well as asbestos containing material from the Safeway previously onsite. Brinkman Construction worked closely with the owner's remediation contractor to sequence the remaining demolition and earthwork to avoid schedule impacts before construction began.

The Constructability Reviews also presented challenges due to the use of a newer material (Norstone Planc) that is uncommon in the United States construction industry, as well as the attachment to the exterior façade. By utilizing Brinkman Construction's in-house QA/QC Manager, as well as leaning on our design and consultant partners, we were able to successfully select a buildable wall assembly.

The exterior façade consisted of ACM, stone, metal panel, and natural cedar soffit that presented many material abutment conditions that posed water infiltration possibilities. Heightened attention was placed on flashing and sealing details along with continuous ‘First Work In Place’ and ‘Material Verifications’ that helped ensure the client received top quality and craftsmanship.

The biggest challenge, however, was of course the COVID-19 pandemic impacts. The material impacts required an all-hands-on-deck partnership with the owner, architect, and subcontractors to explore creative solutions to ensure an on-time and on-budget completion. The lead time for the Italian porcelain tile for the raised access flooring panels extended from four to 16 weeks during a critical portion of the project. While the architect worked with vendors to locate U.S.-manufactured tiles compatible with the raised access flooring (RAF), Brinkman successfully re-sequenced those areas within the schedule to keep construction moving and, ultimately, achieved TCO on schedule and under budget.

While navigating those challenges and focusing on safety more than ever before, a Site-Specific Safety Plan (SSSP) was developed during the preconstruction phase to address, in detail, project-specific safety policies and practices. In addition to the SSSP, all employees, visitors and subcontractors of Brinkman Construction were required to follow stringent COVID-19 Safety Protocols starting in March of 2020 and throughout the duration of construction.

Through training all onsite personnel on the SSSP, the jobsite team implemented a safety-first culture focused on three areas of emphasis: Training, Implementation, and Inspection/Enforcement.

Training encompassed that all onsite employees and subcontractors were educated and trained through a mandatory jobsite Safety Orientation Program and weekly Safety Meetings during which site and project-specific hazards are identified and discussed.

Implementation meant that Brinkman Construction required the completion of a Job Hazard Analysis for every task that was performed onsite. This helped employees and Subcontractors recognize potential hazards and ensures the necessary precautions were in place to prevent accidents while working safely.

Inspection/Enforcement included inspection of work activities for safety compliance and required that our Health and Safety Plan and OSHA Standards were followed as well as regular Daily Safety Inspections. During these inspections, deficiencies are noted and followed-up on until corrected.

In addition to the SSSP, the COVID-19 Safety Protocols outlined stringent guidelines including mandatory social distancing, mask-wearing, daily temperature and symptom screenings, and exposure tracking and reporting. The team did an exceptional job managing these new protocols and keeping the onsite employees safe from exposure. During the entire nine-month period that construction was moving forward during the pandemic, the project incurred only two exposures of individuals, and due to adherence to social distancing and mask mandates, these exposures did not cause any lost days onsite.

The project came in under budget due to the strong collaboration between Brinkman, Open Studio Architecture, and Blue Federal Credit Union. The design team was aware of the cost impact for any changes and would work with Brinkman to ensure ideas presented to the owner were within budget but still met the design intent to deliver a world-class campus. The owner made conscientious decisions about meaningful upgrades during the construction process as risk was mitigated and the budget allowed.

The story of this project is centered in partnership, community building, and vision. As Stephanie Teubner, BFCU President and CEO, puts it, “Knowing it’s not every day we get to design and build our world headquarters, having positive partnerships with the project team was of utmost importance to us. The relationships we developed with the Brinkman team was exactly what we hoped for. They focused on getting to know us and understanding what was most important for our company, our employees, and our community. They always went the extra mile to accommodate our requests and bring proactive solutions to the table as challenges arose. The quality of the relationships we developed were equal to the quality of the end-product.”











