

Category: 1 – Contribution to the Community – GC (\$34M) **Actual Cost:** \$31,179,385.00

Contractor: Mortenson

Project Name: Buell Public Media Center

The Buell Public Media Center, Rocky Mountain Public Media's (RMPM) new 93,000-square-foot headquarters at 2101 Arapahoe St. in Downtown Denver, is part of an effort to create a Colorado where everyone is seen and heard, strengthening the civic and cultural fabric of our state while building a new journalism paradigm focused on collaboration and community-centered storytelling.

This project, completed in June 2020, represents the culmination of a years-long effort to build an innovative new hub for public-facing media services in Denver's Arapahoe Square.

RMPM is the parent company of Rocky Mountain PBS, KUVO JAZZ and THE DROP, and is Colorado's largest statewide, member-supported multimedia organization with 90,000 members and stations across the Front Range and Western Slope. RMPM is a crucial element of Colorado's news and culture ecosystem, and the provision of a new, modernized home for the company facilitates the important work performed by the organization in our growing community.

This \$34 million development includes the Metzler Family Learning Center, which focuses on teaching social-emotional skills to children, and the Community Media Center, which hosts production classes for students at the Emily Griffith Technical College. The third floor includes a collaborative space for nonprofit media, The Bonfils-Stanton Performance Studio hosts live music performances, and the Tim Gill & Scott Miller Green Screen Studio produces local content used by the Public Broadcasting Service on a national level.

Additionally, through a new partnership with Denver 8 TV, the building provides media production services to elected branches of Denver city government and city departments and agencies, including fully scheduled video programming services on cable TV and online. Finally, the space includes the Masterpiece Studio, a flexible community event space.

Meeting Construction & Design Challenges

Several factors combined to make the construction of the Buell Public Media Center a unique and challenging project, but through a diligent team effort and careful consideration for the project's context, the building team was able to deliver a result that not only supports diverse programming centered around

performance, technology and media, but also reflects a deep respect for the culture and unique urban context of the Arapahoe Square neighborhood.

Funding this project was the first significant challenge, necessitating a years-long effort on the part of RMPM. A \$30 million capital campaign was launched in 2016, and through the efforts of partners, including the building team, that goal was surpassed and RMPM raised \$34 million to support the project.

Working closely with key trade partners, Mortenson planned this project in such a way to ensure constructability was included in the design from the start. The team included all MEP in the design approach, schedule creation, and constructability review to ensure the built project exceeded the owner's expectation for both quality and schedule.

The highly technical, specialized nature of the facility as a media production center made this a challenging build-out that necessitated specific design additions like acoustic wall coverings, high-efficiency electrical systems and soundproofing. The design team incorporated all of these elements with style, resulting in a highly functional, beautiful space.

Mortenson also self-performed a larger scope of the work, which allowed the team to keep a tighter eye on quality. In fact, Mortenson self-performed all the earthwork/utilities, concrete, masonry, and miscellaneous carpentry on this project.

While the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in challenges to the construction timeline, a swiftly developed and rigorously implemented safety plan customized for social distancing, masking and testing allowed Mortenson to deliver the project to the community on schedule, teeing up RMPM to immediately begin providing its valuable services and resources to this downtown community.

Mortenson maintains a Zero Injury Policy on every jobsite, and the Buell Public Media Center was no exception. This policy means that all employees are committed to conducting their work in a safe manner and to stop work immediately if unsafe conditions are observed and to take swift corrective action so that they can continue work safely.

Further, when Mortenson begins each project, safety managers develop a project-specific safety plan that is tailored to the individual job. In addition to COVID-specific protocol, safety training on this project covered topics including excavation safety, scaffolding, fall protection, crane pick planning, rigging, and construction ergonomics.

Project Safety Stats

Project Fatalities – 0

Total Work Hours (Includes Mortenson and Subcontractors) – 149,547

Mortenson Only RIR – 0

Mortenson Only Lost Time Rate – 0

Mortenson Only Work Hours (includes only Mortenson) – 69,225

Enhancing the Urban Fabric

A building can be well built and have vital programming, but it will never be as valuable to the community if it doesn't also reflect an understanding of its local context or enhance the fabric of the built environment. The Buell Public Media Center is a stellar example of a building that works both for and with the Downtown Denver community.

The Buell Public Media Center replaced a neglected warehouse and parking lot in an infill location in Denver's Arapahoe Square neighborhood, transforming it into a stunning development that exemplifies the goals of public media and directly supports the goals of Blueprint Denver, the city's key planning document.

This location sits at the confluence of five urban districts – Lower Downtown, the Central Business District, Five Points, RiNo and Upper Ballpark, bringing together people and businesses of varying cultures, socio-economic statuses, political leanings, and priorities. Because the Buell Public Media Center sought to serve as a community asset that equally served all, it was critical to consider differing stakeholder perspectives when designing and building the project.

By engaging with leaders from the neighborhoods and maintaining a culture of openness and transparency, the project team was able to come to a solution that aligned perfectly with RMPM's mission for the new space, focusing on the idea of creating a community living room for this historically underserved neighborhood. By making it a place that welcomes all, the project team made sure that the Buell Public Media Center is a gathering place for each of the five neighborhoods, rather than a dividing line.

The inclusion of educational spaces in the building, and the partnerships with educational institutions contributes to a long-held goal of downtown Denver advocates to build a scholastic pipeline in the central business district, and further emphasizes the organization's commitment to the community.

A cultural touchstone for downtown, the Buell Public Media Center further improves diversity in the area by drawing audiences from across the metro area to classes and events. This type of development,

encouraging gathering and the exchange of ideas in the core of the city in place of underused vacant real estate, is key to the creation of healthy, diverse, responsibly dense thriving cities.

Supporting a Diversity of Programming

The Buell Public Media Center is an inspired gathering place for the downtown community, featuring a mix of urban uses. By consolidating PBS and KUVO locations under one centralized roof, the new Buell Public Media Center creates a multidisciplinary hub for public media in the neighborhood and the region. The combination of the building's collaborative design and the diversity of community-facing programming help it feel more like a community center than an office building, fostering an inviting atmosphere that genuinely welcomes all.

By modernizing the workspace of the 90 journalists who work there, the center allows these reporters access to the resources they need to continue their crucial work informing and educating the people of Denver and Colorado.

Partnerships formed with institutions like the Emily Griffith Technical College demonstrate considerable investment in the future of Denver through education. The inclusion of the Metzler Family Learning Center and the Community Media Center teach students at both preschool and college levels, giving them the resources, they need to succeed. Through this investment in the education of Denver's youth, the Buell Public Media Center will make its mark not just on downtown, but on the whole city and state.

Providing these students with educational opportunities also helps build Denver's workforce, growing our ranks of trained professionals, which in turn attracts new companies to the area. And a well-trained workforce is arguably the best thing a city can have to bolster economic development efforts.

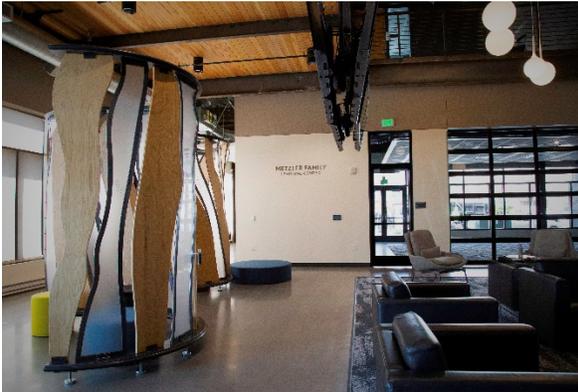
Ultimately, this type of development, encouraging gathering and the exchange of ideas in the core of the city in place of underused vacant real estate, is key to the creation of healthy, diverse, responsibly dense thriving cities.



Caption: Completed Buell Media Center – corner of Arapahoe & 21st Street
Credit: Mark Montour-Larson, RMPM



Caption: Main lobby – Donor Wall spans two stories
Credit: Mark Montour-Larson, RMPM



Caption: Metzler Family Learning Center
Credit: Mark Montour-Larson, RMPM



Caption: Reception area
Credit: Mark Montour-Larson, RMPM



Caption: Masterpiece Studio
Credit: Mark Montour-Larson, RMPM



Caption: Groundbreaking ceremony
Credit: Lindsey Kotik, KGM Creative Studios



Caption: *Buell Media concrete pour*

Credit: Jack Tift, Mortenson



Caption: *Buell Media exterior construction*

Credit: Christina Zavislan, Mortenson



Caption: *Buell Media construction site walk*

Credit: Christina Zavislan, Mortenson



Caption: *Buell Media interior framing structure*

Credit: Christina Zavislan, Mortenson