



## Lakewood Expands its Outreach with a New Welcome Center

*A net-zero energy ready Welcome Center and landscaping improvements are making this landmark more accessible, inviting and sustainable.*

**Minneapolis (April 2, 2024)** — Lakewood Cemetery, a national innovator and local treasure, announced today that its new Welcome Center is officially open to the public and ready to serve and support the thousands of community members who visit its grounds and choose to be remembered at Lakewood each year. The project encompasses five acres and includes three new garden experiences, accessible walking paths and outdoor seating, and a 25,000-square-foot Welcome Center building. The public is invited to a ribbon-cutting ceremony and open house celebration on Wednesday, May 1.

The new Welcome Center and surrounding landscape serve as:

- A more inviting and accessible point of entry to Lakewood.
- A state-of-the-art space to serve individuals and families who choose to be memorialized and remembered at Lakewood.
- A center for robust community programming centered on remembrance.
- A model of environmental responsibility and one of the first net-zero energy ready buildings in Minneapolis.

“As a nonprofit that’s been serving this community for over 150 years, we need to be responsible stewards for all we’ve been entrusted with while we reimagine and expand on what a cemetery can be,” said Lakewood President Chris Makowske. “This project is a reflection of our vision and emerged from an extensive process of listening to stakeholders about how we can better support families and the community now and into the future.”

**The Welcome Center is a more inviting and accessible point of entry to Lakewood:**

- The project includes a redesigned front entrance with new pedestrian walkways, accessible ADA paths and clearer wayfinding signage.
- The new building is surrounded by expansive outdoor spaces with three distinct garden areas, water features and seating for visitors.
- The building is bright, accessible, warm and welcomes all generations, faiths and cultures.

“We often hear that people are unsure about whether they are allowed to pass through Lakewood’s gates and see what’s inside,” said Julia Gillis, Lakewood’s Director of Outreach. “With this project we are trying to make it clear that ‘yes, you are welcome, and yes, there are all kinds of opportunities here for you.’ We truly want to share the beauty, peace and inspiration that’s here at Lakewood with all who can benefit from it.”

**The Welcome Center is a state-of-the-art space to support families who choose to be remembered at Lakewood:**

- An expanded Family Services area will allow Lakewood advisors to meet with individuals and families in person and provide a comforting presence and listening ear.
- There are dedicated rooms for creating plans and discussing possibilities about how to remember loved ones.
- Spaces are designed as peaceful, private areas that offer greater accessibility, comfort and convenience.

“When it comes to end-of-life and deciding how one wants to be memorialized and remembered, there are so many more choices today,” explained Kelly Leahy, Director of Family Services at Lakewood. “The conversations we are having with families are more intimate and personal—really understanding what is meaningful to them and how they can express that at Lakewood. This new space facilitates these conversations in a more comfortable and accessible setting.”

**The Welcome Center will serve as a center for robust community programming:**

- The Welcome Center’s community room enables Lakewood to host more workshops, book clubs and panel discussions that bring greater awareness and understanding to topics surrounding death and remembrance.
- The vision for the new gallery space is to feature art-inspired and educational exhibits that spark thought and conversation.
- The project includes both indoor and outdoor spaces for educational and community gatherings.

“The pandemic seemed to bring us closer to what’s truly important in life and was a reminder that our time on earth is fleeting and precious,” said Gillis. “There is a growing openness to exploring these topics, and with the new Welcome Center we now have dedicated space to delve into these conversations, ideas and collaborations in a more intentional way.”

Starting this spring, a variety of programming will be offered in or near the new building on a recurring basis, including educational talks, workshops, a book club, meditative yoga and much more. For more information about community events and programming, visit Lakewood’s website at <https://www.lakewoodcemetery.org/events-calendar/>.

**The building is a model of environmental responsibility and one of the first net-zero energy ready buildings in Minneapolis:**

- Net-zero energy ready means the Welcome Center has been designed to produce as much energy as it uses over the course of a year.
- The Welcome Center uses state-of-the-art energy conservation and generation systems including a geothermal mechanical system, a high-performance building envelope, and a rooftop solar array.
- The Welcome Center was built using sustainably sourced building materials and landscaped with perennial plantings that attract pollinators and require less watering over time.

“This project exemplifies our commitment to stewardship of our energy, water and plant resources, as does our recent accreditation as an arboretum. This sense of responsibility is guiding the future development of other areas of our grounds and offerings as well,” explained Makowske.

**A Collaborative Design Partnership**

To realize its vision, Lakewood engaged three local architecture firms known for their ability to balance tradition with innovation: Miller Dunwiddie, Snow Kreilich Architects and TEN x TEN Landscape Architecture. JE Dunn served as construction manager and NTH as owner’s representative.

“It was an honor for our collective teams to be a part of the future and legacy of architecture and landscape design at Lakewood Cemetery. We are proud to celebrate the opening of a new net-zero energy ready Welcome Center and reimagined gateway to this community treasure,” said Matt Kreilich, Snow Kreilich Architects.

About Miller Dunwiddie

Miller Dunwiddie is a full-service architecture and design firm based in Minneapolis. Founded in 1963, the work of the firm began with a focus on aviation, workplace, and governmental projects.

Since then, the firm's expertise has grown to include preservation, interior design, transportation, and building envelope systems. Understanding history, context, and technology is paramount to the body of their work whether it's the rehabilitation and renovation of an existing structure or creating a new building from the ground up.

#### About Snow Kreilich Architects

Snow Kreilich Architects is a nationally recognized and award-winning architectural studio-based practice in Minneapolis. With each project led by design principals Julie Snow and Matt Kreilich, the studio focuses on producing architecture that performs against multiple measures of design success. This focus has resulted in consistent design recognition for projects that rely on a fresh and intensive design investigation of every project. They have developed shared working methodologies that result in consistently intelligent buildings that are well conceived and carefully detailed.

#### About TEN x TEN Landscape Architecture

TEN x TEN is a landscape architecture and urban design practice grounded by a shared curiosity and passion for experimentation and agency. They collaborate with visionary clients and teams to co-create immersive future-focused landscapes that will adapt to social, economic and environmental transformation. TEN x TEN designs for resilience and flexibility, monitoring what makes places thrive, adapt and be loved long after they are built. Their approach elevates the everyday human experience through a deep respect for the authenticity of people, culture and ecology.

#### About JE Dunn Construction

Established in 1924, JE Dunn Construction is a national commercial contractor with 26 offices, including its Minnesota office, which has been in operation for nearly 80 years. As an employee- and family-owned business, they are known for creatively driving value during design and construction; as a result, over 80% of their business is derived from existing or referral relationships. JE Dunn's local projects demonstrate a breadth and depth of talent unmatched in the region, with a portfolio composed of buildings that cut across type and function. These are projects with unique features, complex code and regulatory issues, and often complicated challenges; each brought to life through collaboration, and what their clients tell them is a great experience.

#### **About Lakewood — A Place to Remember**

Lakewood is a serene haven in the heart of Minneapolis' renowned Chain of Lakes—a place to come together to honor, remember and reflect. Since 1871, Lakewood's 250 acres of urban memorial parkland have served as a community gathering place and a chronicle of our region's traditions, cultures and people. A history keeper and a thought leader, Lakewood honors its roots as a landmark cemetery while reimagining its role in modern life, through thoughtfully designed events, experiences and spaces.

Today, Lakewood is making memorialization more relevant, accessible and inviting for new audiences and generations—with more creativity and choices. As a nonprofit organization governed by a board of trustees, Lakewood is committed to preserving and enhancing its grounds and architectural treasures and uses proceeds generated from activities and events for that purpose.

#### **More Information**

See renderings, FAQs and more information at [lakewoodcemetery.org/welcome-center](http://lakewoodcemetery.org/welcome-center). Images and b-roll available on request.

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