

## Design-Build - September 2005

---

### Gourmet R&D

Second phase of Swift facility in Greeley showcases design-build efficiencies  
(08/01/2005)

The two-story, \$6.6 million Summit Customer and Innovation Center is the R&D arm of the Swift Company's international operations, completed in just 212 days by the Neenan Co. of Fort Collins.

Efficiency and a customer-focused approach were Gus Swift's business ideals 150 years ago when he founded Swift & Company. Today, the fast-growing company is the nation's third largest processor of fresh beef and pork products and has evolved into a broader-based food company.



*The Summit features 17,000 sq ft of space for product development where Swift employees can research and develop new meat products.*

Honoring Gus's efficiency and customer-service doctrines, company officials vowed in 2000 to enhance day-to-day administrative operations by bringing hundreds of key employees together under a single "headquarters" roof in Greeley. They also wanted to build an innovative research-and-development facility to help Swift customers test new foods, learn better food-display techniques and experience all aspects of new-product development.

Swift officials selected Colorado developer McWhinney Enterprises and The Neenan Co. from Fort Collins to design and build both facilities. Phase I centered on Swift's 132,000-sq-ft world headquarter building, the more recent Phase II on the 32,000-sq-ft R&D facility.

Intimate R&D Neenan used its design-build process called "Archistruction®" to team with Swift and McWhinney officials in planning, designing and building the corporate headquarters within budget. For its headquarters, Swift officials told Neenan they wanted a warm, intimate and inviting Colorado look.

Receiving regular, face-to-face feedback from Swift officials and the design-build team, Bob Hosanna, Neenan project designer; and Chris Wesche, Neenan architect; suggested a

multipurpose, "prairie-style" headquarters that features low rooflines, open spaces, natural colors, indirect and natural lighting and lots of windows to capture the Colorado views.

"This is essentially a 'see-through' building," said Wesche. "It has so many windows that someone at one side of the building can see across an entire floor to the other side."

The facility, completed in 2001, also houses a training room with the latest IT technology, a sophisticated café to entertain visiting customers and dignitaries and an employee cafeteria.

Swift's Phase II project, a two-story, \$6.6 million Summit Customer and Innovation Center completed in late 2004, is the R&D arm of Swift's international operations. Built in just 212 days, it sits next to Swift's world headquarters in Greeley.

"We worked with Neenan's architects to ensure harmony exists between the two buildings," said Pat Huebner, Swift's vice president of research and development.

Using Neenan's Archistruction process, the team traveled to four R&D facilities across the country, noting the advantages and disadvantages of the various facility designs and equipment.

**Gourmet Touches** The result is an efficient, one-of-a-kind facility that meshes customer interaction with top-notch research.

"The Summit definitely avoids the clinical, cold and unwelcoming feel of other R&D facilities," Neenan's Hosanna said.

A sweeping, green-carpeted staircase connects the lobby to second-floor offices. Behind the lobby's concierge desk is a glass-enclosed customer-interface area. Natural light illuminates the area from two large lobby windows, with additional lighting available from small adjustable spotlights.

Equipped with a demonstration kitchen full of the latest equipment, the customer-interface area features a large, raised granite countertop with seating for 12.

"We wanted the feel of a gourmet kitchen in a home," Huebner said. "And Neenan came through. Our presenter can talk to people while preparing food. We also have ceiling-mounted cameras that provide streaming video to wall monitors. And we can provide videos of each session they can show co-workers later."

The Summit also features 17,000 sq ft of space for product development where Swift employees can research and develop new meat products.

"At our first meeting, I said our R&D employees need easy access to a centralized cooler or freezer," Huebner said. "I drew my initial idea on a paper towel. Bob [Hosanna] from Neenan took it, made a more detailed building design and after a few meetings, we came up with the final layout.

"Talking, coming together and sharing ideas, that's what makes Neenan's Archistruction process so successful and efficient," Huebner added. "It's a customer-focused concept we now use at The Summit."

Neenan houses its 160 designers, architects, construction managers and other design-build employees under one roof in Fort Collins.