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HMFH Architects completes studios for Cambridge Community Television

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HMFH Architects has completed new studios for Cambridge Community Television (CCTV) at 438 Massachusetts Ave.

HMFH worked closely with CCTV during a year-long search for a studio location, and was commissioned to design the colorful new home for the nationally-recognized community media center. CCTV operates Cambridge cable channels 9, 10 and 22, and involves all residents, businesses and organizations in the city as media producers and viewers.

An adaptive reuse of a hardware store in Central Sq., the 8,000 s/f two-floor space includes three studios for television and audio production, as well as three editing suites. The building's location directly over the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority's Red Line train and beneath four floors of housing presented unusual acoustical challenges. To achieve complete isolation from these noise and vibration sources, each studio is designed as an individual box on a system of structural springs that separate it from the vibrations of the underground trains. Double walls, a floating floor slab and double-paned windows throughout also contribute to the acoustical design. In the studios and control room, the angled walls were carefully designed for optimal sound reflection and absorption.

"Locating our new studios in a central and visible site was of primary importance," said CCTV executive director Susan Fleischmann. "In addition, we also house a variety of media facilities to meet the diverse needs of the Cambridge community. HMFH succeeded in integrating all of these functional requirements seamlessly, creating a professional-grade acoustic environment, all within an inviting and visually stimulating space."

The central urban location offers easy public accessibility and high visibility, which the design promotes with a live "Today Show" style studio at the street front with large windows that invite passersby to view the live production.

"By transforming this former urban storefront into a community television studio, CCTV adds its very visible presence to the regeneration of Cambridge's Central Square as a community arts scene," said George Metzger, AIA, HMFH senior principal. "Integrating the varied programmatic elements into a truly challenging acoustic environment enabled the project team to create an educational and media facility that will benefit all of Cambridge."

The CCTV space also houses a new classroom, green room, control room, two computer labs, office space, and new gathering spaces that further CCTV's community-based mission: a teen center, as well as an inviting members' reception area. Finish materials were selected for high durability and "greenness," including recycled flooring, low-VOC paint, and efficient lighting with automated occupancy dimmers. Timber salvaged from the original structure was also repurposed into benches for use in the space.

Led by HMFH, the project team included Highland Development (construction); R. G. Vanderweil Engineers, LLP (mechanical engineer); Foley Buhl Roberts & Associates (structural engineer); Reuter Associates, LLC, and Sonic-Space (acoustical consultants).

About HMFH Architects

In the four decades since its founding in 1969, HMFH Architects, Inc. has built opportunities for learning on a local, regional and national level. With its distinguished range of award-winning work from renovated urban buildings to new rural campuses, HMFH is recognized as a leader in the design of innovative learning environments. HMFH's work, noted for its user-centered design and energetic use of color, has been exhibited nationally.

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