

CASE STUDY



A Place for Thoughtful Reflection & Renewal

The American Institute of Architects awarded FUNchitecture with the Best Unbuilt Design Project for a new Cemetery Chapel design for Glenwood Cemetery in Flint, Michigan. The cemetery board commissioned FUNchitecture to boldly envision a building to replace the existing structure on the cemetery grounds that was previously home to the undertaker, the cemetery office and board meeting room. After spending a good amount of time in the cemetery researching the grounds, current amenities, existing building style and vernacular, FUNchitecture began designs for a new chapel. The chapel would be located in the exact location as the existing home and offices scheduled to be demolished as it is near the entrance to the cemetery and easily seen from



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C A S E S T U D Y

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Court Street — sighted on a beautiful hill looking over the rolling grounds of the cemetery. The site also works perfectly for a memorial walk and gardens hugging the building to wrap gently down to a lower prayer terrace. This terrace with pavers was designed to feature a curved retaining wall housing urns and ashes in a beautiful way, with cultured stone, gentle LED lighting for evening prayer, and protected from wind by the hill and building above. The curved wall is only interrupted by the oval shaped building and a sweeping two-story stained art glass wall that opens to a secondary smaller private chapel for prayer, reflection and services.

The upstairs chapel features a coat area, narthex and greeting lobby, board and meeting room for families to meet and plan services, two offices for staff, and public restrooms. The chapel seats roughly 50 and has a small stage and podium for clergy-led services. The building was designed to be the antithesis of the cold, foreboding existing buildings at the cemetery.

The current mausoleum is constructed of cold stone and colorless marble, and the grounds have dim lighting and wrought iron fencing, all contributing to forelorn feelings of sadness and grief. The new chapel is an oval shape, intentionally designed to embrace and welcome visitors. The metal roof is swept upwards and is supported over clerestory glass which gives it an ethereal floating feeling as if reaching up to the heavens. The interior is brightly lit by natural daylight and embodies a warm glow from the inside during evening visitation and prayer services. The intention of the chapel is not to replace a church or funeral home, but rather to offer another option and most importantly, on the day of interment or burial, offer an inside chapel when inclement weather in Michigan simply makes a graveside service impossible or impractical. It offers families a warm and loving atmosphere to grieve and share memories together in a joyful space to celebrate life!

