

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OCTOBER 21, 2026

SEATTLE AQUARIUM'S OCEAN PAVILION ANNOUNCED WINNER OF ASCE 2026 OCEA AWARD

SEATTLE, Wash. – Magnusson Klemencic Associates (MKA) was recognized at the American Society of Civil Engineer's (ASCE's) Outstanding Projects and Leaders (OPAL) Gala on October 15, as the Seattle Aquarium's Ocean Pavilion (SAOP) was honored with the renowned Outstanding Civil Engineering Achievement (OCEA) Award—the highest project award in the nation, bestowed annually. OCEA recognizes projects that demonstrate superior civil (and structural) engineering skills while significantly contributing to civil engineering progress and society.

Completed in 2024 as the latest addition to the Seattle Aquarium, the Ocean Pavilion features a geometrically complex, cantilevered concrete habitat that serves as the building's primary gravity- and lateral-force-resisting systems. Using built-to-curve formwork from a fabricator who designs ship hulls, MKA's structural design team shaped the concrete to meet the architectural needs and create a robust structure where the central habitat alone acts as the main structural system, eliminating columns and creating more dramatic architectural expression.



As it is a keystone element of Seattle's complex waterfront redevelopment, MKA's efforts for SAOP prioritized creating a seamless and transformative connection to other local waterfront destinations. An accessible rooftop public space functions as an extension between Pike Place Market and Overlook Walk, creating a nexus that elevates SAOP into a multifaceted public space from which visitors can explore multiple iconic and historically significant destinations.

"While the aquarium is great to experience from the inside, it has been truly city-changing on the outside," said Structural Project Manager Hannah Walters, PE, SE, in her speech at the OPAL Gala. Speaking of the crowds that gathered on SAOP's public rooftop to watch screenings of the FIFA World Cup this summer, Walters noted "Receiving a number of photos of a jam-packed public rooftop, we saw just how much our engineering can truly bring joy and excitement to a city."

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Speaking to the collaboration vital to SAOP's success, Civil Project Manager Rita Greene, PE, LEED AP BD+C, shared, "Contributing to an iconic anchor of the revitalized Seattle Waterfront is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Looking out [MKA's] office window and seeing the Ocean Pavilion is a reminder of all the collective hard work and brainpower everyone involved put into the project." SAOP showcases MKA's innovative big-picture approach, with a civil engineering practice that values collaborative and intuitive elements that work with, not against, the project site.

Before receiving the top OCEA Award of the evening, SAOP was one of twelve projects nationwide to win a 2026 OCEA Honor Award. MKA also took home the Charles Pankow Award for Innovation for SpeedCore, and John Hooper was honored with the OPAL Lifetime Achievement Award for Design. With a 106-year legacy of award-winning designs, MKA's passion is creating structural systems for buildings of all shapes, sizes, and complexities and civil site and infrastructure designs for architectural projects.

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ABOUT MKA

Magnusson Klemencic Associates (MKA) is an award-winning structural and civil engineering firm founded in 1920 with offices in Seattle, Washington, and Chicago, Illinois. Serving clients worldwide, MKA has worked on projects in 48 states and 62 countries. MKA's passion is creating structural systems for buildings of all shapes, sizes, and complexities, and civil site and infrastructure designs for architectural projects.

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