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From the Milwaukee Business Journal:

<https://www.bizjournals.com/milwaukee/news/2019/05/02/discovery-world-pavilion-500-n-harbor-drive.html>

Real Estate Awards

## Discovery World Pavilion | 500 N. Harbor Drive, Milwaukee

### Best Renovation - Cultural Assets

May 2, 2019, 3:00pm CDT

On a recent sunny April afternoon, student spring break and National Robotics Week converged on Discovery World. The educational science and technology center on Milwaukee's lakefront bustled with activity as parents and kids navigated the exhibit halls and demonstrations by local FIRST robotic teams.

Just a year ago, such a scenario would have been chaotic and crowded with robotic team creations lined up along either side of the Discovery World's promenade — the public passing area that connects the main entrance and exhibit halls. But the addition of a 10,000-square-foot pavilion, which opened last July, has helped alleviate the congestion that Discovery World was encountering after a decade of growth.



KENNY YOO

Discovery World's new pavilion

"We were having to turn away community organizations," said [John Emmerich](#), Discovery World's interim president and CEO.

To serve the growing number of visitors and offer additional educational programming, Discovery World embarked on an expansion and renovation project in October 2017. The first phase involved the construction of the multipurpose pavilion to replace a seasonal tent raised on the north lawn during the spring and summer. The new pavilion provides year-round space for special events, educational programming, traveling exhibits and an orientation and lunch area for school groups.

"The old lunchroom was 1,300 square feet. Student groups were packed in," explained Discovery World public relations manager [Paul Fladten](#).

The construction project, designed by Eppstein Uhen Architects of Milwaukee, was completed in phases to ensure minimal impact and disruption to visitors and staff.

Despite the magnitude of the project, general contractor [Gilbane Building Co.](#) fast-tracked the construction to complete the pavilion in time for the annual Discovery World Gala on July 29, 2018. With 680 people in attendance, it was the largest gala the center hosted since the lakefront location opened in 2006.

“Gilbane helped mitigate challenges throughout the project,” Emmerich said. “If there were scheduling issues, contractors were reassigned to other tasks to keep things moving forward.”

A second phase, completed in October 2018, focused on renovating and expanding Discovery World’s existing exhibit areas. Repurposing a 150-seat theater helped double the amount of exhibit and program space. Other renovations include a new admissions desk, a “grand entrance” to the technology exhibit gallery and relocating administrative offices on a mezzanine level to create 5,000 square feet of new public space.

An uptick in attendance and new memberships following the expansion is generating more revenue, which helps support Discovery World’s mission to expand access to families and community groups that otherwise cannot afford admission.

The pavilion is quickly becoming a premier venue for private gatherings and special events. Emmerich said Discovery World is already booking out events three and four years in advance.

“It’s a good problem to have,” he admitted.

### **Project Credits**

**Owner/developer:** Discovery World

**General contractor:** Gilbane Building Co.

**Architect:** Eppstein Uhen Architects

**Engineer:** IBC Engineering Services Inc.

**Completion:** July 2018

**Project cost:** \$9.1 million