

**ULI Chicago 8th Annual Vision Awards
July 10, 2019**



Project Finalist: Park West Cooperative Nursery School

Project Team:

Developer: Park West Cooperative Nursery School
Architecture Firm: Pappageorge Haymes Partners
Structural Engineer: Kibler-AE LLC
Civil Engineer: Eriksson Engineering Associates, Ltd
MEP/FP Engineer: WSP
Landscape: Daniel Weinbach & Partners Ltd

Project Description:

Located in the heart of Chicago's Lincoln Park neighborhood, and directly adjacent to the 'El' - Chicago's Elevated Train Line - the redevelopment consists of the adaptive re-use of a detached 3-story +Basement Victorian single-family home (c.1896) to a preschool designed to accommodate up to sixty children, school administrative offices, and interior play space. Included in the plan is the demolition of the home's former 3-story garage structure and its replacement with the new construction of a modern 3-story + basement addition. The addition provides a new elevator, stair, and entry allowing for an accessible route throughout the building. A 1,500 sq. ft. children's play area ("Movement Room") is located at the lower level with classrooms on the first and second levels, and administrative offices on the third level. Other features include a warming kitchen on the first floor and an outdoor play area. The exterior of the main house maintains the historic character of the original and it's place in the neighborhood. A number of original fireplaces remain as historic artifacts within the classrooms and the lobby area, and original window and door casings remain at the first level. Incorporated into the design of the rear addition are kidcentric windows which provide a child's eye view of the City beyond. One at the second level turns the 'El' into a feature by providing children with an up-close view of passing trains and opportunities for interaction with the train conductors, another at grade allows a child height only view out while waiting for their parents at the end of a day - providing both a protected view for the kids as well as a special experience of their own.

Originally designed as a single-family residence, the building fell out of favor due to it's direct adjacency to the El making a case for a large, single-family home difficult for the market to embrace. However Park West Cooperative saw a great opportunity - both educational as well as financial - to convert this former home into their home. It offered many compelling characteristics, including a neighborhood setting, access to surrounding opportunities such as DePaul and a unique feel of a home for its young occupants. The adjacency to the El was a bonus - kids love trains. Existing features such as the ornate fireplaces, beveled glass entry doors and historic trim were creatively adapted and integrated into the design to engage curiosity and create an intimate, supportive environment.

The primary intent of the parent cooperative model is to introduce pre-school children to the rhythm of interactive group life in a way that stimulates social connection and a love of learning. The play-based curriculum is designed to encourage children to show initiative, create plans, take risks, gain confidence, negotiate to reach a consensus and try out new ideas. Literacy and numeracy, along with the arts, science and social sciences, are thoughtfully integrated into the classroom while children are engaged in play. The program's larger goals are to encourage autonomous, self-reliant thinking and to encourage children to expand their world-view by incorporating the ideas of other people in their decision-making.