

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



Project Finalist: University of Chicago Keller Center

Project Team:

Developer: University of Chicago, Harris School of Public Policy
Architecture Firm: Farr Associates, Architect of Record
Structural Engineer: Stearn Joglekar
General Contractor: Mortenson

Project Description:

The story of the Keller Center begins with a 55-year-old enduring work of exemplary architecture. The façade was weathered, and the systems were at the end of their useful lives but still stood with sturdy foundations and structural bones. The University of Chicago determined the transformation of an historic building would embody the ethos of the Harris School of Public Policy: the creation of positive social change.

The original building was designed by architect Edward Durrell Stone as the Kellogg Center for Continuing Education in 1960. Eero Saarinen, the University Architect, was responsible for the Campus Master Plan that included this new mid-century addition to the University of Chicago's South Campus along the iconic Midway Plaisance. The New Formalist design derived from the International Style, is characterized by classicism, strict symmetry, and decorative elements. In its original 1962 construction, the Kellogg Center for Continuing Education functioned as a conference center and hotel and housed visiting lecturers, guest professors, and various seminars.

New accessible passages erode the uninviting and monumental original plinth leading to glass insertions respectfully nested in the limestone pilasters. The new entries signal a transparent view into the practice of public policy education and development. Just inside the front doors, the existing concrete floors were re-polished with a continuation of the hexagonal concrete pattern used in the exterior terrace, an homage to the transition from old to new. The renovation features a four-story atrium daylit by skylights, serving as the center of academia, social interaction, and policy development. The new volume respects the existing structure, including decorative concrete columns restored to their original finish. Treasures from the historic building were repurposed throughout the new design including grand bronze saucer pendants, unique hexagonal-patterned limestone panels, bronze mailboxes, and custom wood trim pieces.

The thoughtful transformation of the building preserves and celebrates Stone's signature design: decorative hexagonal engravings that wrap the slender encircling columns; a white concrete perforated canopy; and a limestone facade to create an encompassing experience. All of the exterior elements -- limestone facade, concrete column, canopy, and terrace -- were patched and restored to their original color, patterns, and finish. The limestone mullions were restored and

finished with insulation caps or storm windows to ensure the appearance of limestone still translated to interior spaces while improving envelope performance and thermal comfort.

Sustainability was the centerpiece of the Keller Center project goals. Preserving and repurposing the existing 60+ year old structure was the major driver toward the project's LEED Platinum and Living Building Challenge Petal certifications. The building's embodied carbon was cut in half due to both the required reinforcement of structural alterations utilizing steel over concrete, as well as the preservation of the facade and its concrete. All new components were vetted for their chemical makeup to assure the most natural materials would be harmonized with the existing building to create the healthiest environment possible.

The Keller Center is a deserving recipient of the ULI Vision Award for its revitalizing transformation of a historic building into a vibrant center for learning and engagement. The harmonization of history, technology, and sustainability yields a committed resistance to climate change and environmental degradation. Students, faculty, and community members will gather to discuss and advance public policy while still being reminded of the value of historic foundations. An exemplar of the future of adaptive reuse, the Keller Center will serve as a prominent anchor on a local and global scale in cultivating a pathway for a more sustainable future.