



LUTZ CENTER FOR AFTER SCHOOL MATTERS

TRANSFORMATION OF FORMER COMMERCIAL OFFICE BUILDING FOR EDUCATIONAL/NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION

CLIENT After School Matters | **LOCATION** Chicago, Illinois (Belmont Cragin) | **SIZE** 34,000 sf

RECOGNITION American Society for Interior Designers – Illinois Chapter (ASID-IL) Design Excellence Award for Education (2017);

Richard H. Driehaus Foundation Award for Architectural Excellence in Community Design - Third Place (2018);

Honorable Mention, School Planning & Management Education Design Showcase

PROJECT SCOPE

Eckenhoff Saunders transformed an existing four-story insurance headquarters into the new Michael and Karyn Lutz Center for After School Matters, serving the teens of the Belmont Cragin neighborhood. Programs include dance, music, culinary arts, technology, visual art, and a “tinkering space” for product design. The Center represents the organization’s first owned space and will serve as a model for teen programming across the city. As part of a predesign workshop, students, staff, and alumni shared their vision for effective learning spaces. The resounding desires were for flexible spaces linking the activities of one program space to another and weaving a culture for After School Matters.

The new facility responds to student input for spaces that reflect their personality and encourage collaboration. On each floor, garage doors connect perimeter studios to a central flex space, inviting educators to open their doors to create a single free-flowing learning space. Students of all programs share ideas over casual pin-ups or gallery displays of their work.

Bookended by a commons/lobby and a teaching kitchen, the ground-level circulation “boulevard” affords glimpses into vocal, dance, and tech studios, creating a dynamic, interconnected community of performance. Finishes are simple, including oriented strand board and cement board, encouraging teens to nail, to paint over, to apply tile, or otherwise customize them to express their creative energy. Vibrant, saturated colors reflect the organization’s brand identity, brighten the studios and simplify wayfinding. The Lutz Center provides the opportunity to help Chicago’s teens discover and stretch their potential. As the donation of the building met long-standing organizational vision, the organization is itself transformed from a tenant into an owner and operator.