

Gary Comer Youth Center/Gary Comer College Prep

Rudy Bruner Award Submission

13 December 2010

Project Data

PROJECT DATA

Please answer questions in space provided. Answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided on the original form.

NOTE: This sheet and a selected image will be sent to the Committee in advance.

Project Name Gary Comer Youth Center/Gary Comer College Prep Location Chicago
Owner Comer Science & Education Foundation
Project Use(s) Youth Education/Recreation Programs & College Preparatory high school
Project Size 125,000 sf (buildings) / 13.5 acres (site) Total Development Cost \$56,500,000
Annual Operating Budget (if appropriate) GCYC-\$4,000,000; GCCP-\$5,000,000
Date Initiated December 2004 (groundbreaking for GCYC) Percent Completed by December 1, 2010 100%
Project Completion Date (if appropriate) July 2006 (GCYC) & August 2010 (GCCP)
Attach, if you wish, a list of relevant project dates

Application submitted by:

Name Emily Conrath Title Development Manager
Organization Comer Science & Education Foundation
Address 7200 South Ingleside Avenue City/State/Zip Chicago, IL 60619
Telephone (773) 324-2911 Fax (773) 324-2921
E-mail econrath@gcychome.org Weekend Contact Number (for notification): (773) 835-3555

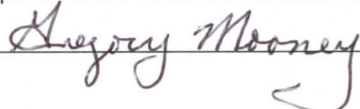
Perspective Sheets:

Organization	Name	Telephone/e-mail
Public Agencies	<u>Andrew Mooney; Acting Commissioner; City of Chicago Department of Community Development; 312.744.4476 / Andrew.Mooney@ex.cityofchicago.org</u>	
Architect/Designer	<u>John Ronan; Principal; John Ronan Architects; 312.951.6600 / ronan@jrarch.com</u>	
Developer	<u>Greg Mooney; Exec Director; Comer Science & Education Foundation; 773.358.4100/gmooney@gcychome.org</u>	
Professional Consultant	<u>Ross Emmerman; GCI Attorney; Neal, Gerber & Eisenberg; 312.269.8051/remmerman@ngelaw.com</u> <u>Lenny Asaro; Attorney at Law; Neal & Leroy, LLC; 312.641.7144 / lasaro@nealandleroy.com</u>	
Community Group	<u>Sam Binion; Program Director; Revere C.A.R.E.; 312.450.1103 / sambinion@yahoo.com</u>	
Other	<u>James Troupis; Principal; Gary Comer College Prep; 773.729.3969 / jtroupis@noblenetwork.org</u>	

Please indicate how you learned of the Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence. (Check all that apply).

- | | | | |
|--|--|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Direct Mailing | <input type="checkbox"/> Magazine Announcement | <input type="checkbox"/> Previous Selection Committee member | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Professional Organization | <input type="checkbox"/> Previous RBA entrant | <input type="checkbox"/> Online Notice | |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> Bruner/Loeb Forum | |

The undersigned grants the Bruner Foundation permission to use, reproduce, or make available for reproduction or use by others, and to post on the Bruner Foundation web sites, the materials submitted. The applicant warrants that the applicant has full power and authority to submit the application and all attached materials and to grant these rights and permissions.

Signature  Date 12/10/2010

Project At-A-Glance

PROJECT AT-A-GLANCE

Please answer questions in space provided. Answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided on the original form.

NOTE: This sheet and a selected image will be sent to the Committee in advance.

Project Name _____

Address _____

City/State/ZIP _____

1. Give a brief overview of the project.

2. Why does the project merit the *Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence*? (You may wish to consider such factors as: effect on the urban environment; innovative or unique approaches to any aspect of project development; new and creative approaches to urban issues; design quality.)

Project Description

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Please answer questions in space provided. Answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided on the original form.

1. Describe the underlying values and goals of the project. What, if any, significant trade-offs were required to implement the project?

2. Briefly describe the project's urban context. How has the project impacted the local community? Who does the project serve? How many people are served by the project?

Perspective Sheets

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Please answer questions in space provided. Answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided on the original form.

This sheet is to be filled out by someone who was involved, or who represents an organization that was involved, in helping the project respond to neighborhood issues.

Name	Sam Binion	Title	Revere C.A.R.E. Program Director
Organization	Revere C.A.R.E.	Telephone	(312) 450-1103
Address	7445 South Chicago Avenue	City/State/ZIP	Chicago, IL 60619
Fax	(773) 891-4834	E-mail	sambinion@yahoo.com

The undersigned grants the Bruner Foundation permission to use, reproduce, or make available for reproduction or use by others, for any purpose whatsoever, the materials submitted. The applicant warrants that the applicant has full power and authority to submit the application and all attached materials and to grant these rights and permissions.

Signature		Date	12/8/2010
-----------	---	------	-----------

1. How did you, or the organization you represent, become involved in this project? What role did you play?

I have lived in the community surrounding the project described in this proposal all my life and have worked with youth there for 25 years. I spent many years coordinating youth activities at Hoard Park and community clean-up projects and developed good relationships with community residents during that time. I was approached by community residents in 2004 requesting that I serve as Community Liaison with the Comer Science & Education Foundation. Gary Comer and I realized we shared the same vision and began working together towards community improvements. I helped to re-activate the five existing Block Clubs, and helped to organize five more. We created a group called Revere Neighbors, comprised of one representative from each block club which met weekly for three years with Gary Comer and other community representatives to gain community input on community needs, and to encourage communication between all the block clubs, community schools and businesses, and CSEF and its partners. Revere Neighbors determined there was a need for a community center for youth. Revere Neighbors became Revere C.A.R.E., an established 501c3 organization, with the mission of ensuring safety and security in the Revere community. We offer youth programs as well as inform community residents of resources in the areas of educational programs, employment opportunities, and affordable housing. I serve as Program Director.

2. From the community's point of view, what were the major issues concerning this project?

Initially some community members were afraid of "institution takeover." They thought Mr. Comer and the City were planning to come and take over the community. They feared that they would move all the existing community people out, and move the University of Chicago Campus. People feared that they would no longer have a stake in the neighborhood. These thoughts and fears quickly changed after a few Saturday morning meetings with Mr. Comer. He reassured community members that his vision and purpose was to try to inspire change to help the community and its current members. He gained the trust of the people, and his actions that followed continued to build that trust. From there the Foundation was able to accomplish great heights in the community.

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE PERSPECTIVE (CONT'D)

3. Has this project made the community a better place to live or work? If so, how?

For the most part, the project has sparked community involvement. The positive changes including the addition of Gary Comer Youth Center and Gary Comer College Prep have made people realize that we have one of the most unique neighborhoods in the City of Chicago. We all know one another in this neighborhood. Most relationships date back 20 or 30 years. This project helped us to come together and have a voice for what we wanted to take place in our neighborhood. It helped us to help one another. It brought out our skills. It allowed us to gain trust in one another. The project, both directly by providing a positive atmosphere for youth and teens, and indirectly by bringing community adults together to create positive change, has resulted in reduced neighborhood crime.

4. Would you change anything about this project or the development process you went through?

I would not change a thing about the strategic planning in which we participated. Block clubs, local businesses, and community organizations came together (and still work together) in support of the Gary Comer Youth Center/Gary Comer College Prep project. It made us feel proud and honored to have been a part of this project.

PUBLIC AGENCY PERSPECTIVE

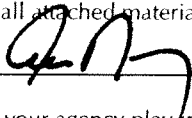
Please answer questions in space provided. Answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided on the original form.

This sheet is to be filled out by a staff representative of a public agency directly involved in the financing, design review, or public approvals that affected this project.

Name **Andrew J. Mooney** Title **Acting Commissioner**
Organization **Department of Community Development** Telephone **(312) 744 - 9476**
Address **121 North LaSalle Street, Suite 1000** City/State/ZIP **Chicago/Illinois/60602**
Fax **(312) 744-6985** E-mail **Andrew.Mooney@ex.cityofchicago.gov**

The undersigned grants the Bruner Foundation permission to use, reproduce, or make available for reproduction or use by others, for any purpose whatsoever, the materials submitted. The applicant warrants that the applicant has full power and authority to submit the application and all attached materials and to grant these rights and permissions.

Signature



Date **December 10, 2010**

1. What role did your agency play in the development of this project? Describe any requirements made of this project by your agency (e.g., zoning, public participation, public benefits, impact statements).

The City of Chicago, Department of Community Development (DCD) was the principle contact for the Comer Science and Education Foundation (CSEF) in the revitalization of the Revere neighborhood which included the construction of the Gary Comer Youth Center and Gary Comer College Prep High School. In this role, DCD

- * Adopted the 73rd /University Redevelopment Tax Increment Finance Plan(TIF). (Initiated and funded by CSEF);
- * Assisted in acquisition of properties for land assembly through the authority of the TIF ;
- * Donated city-owned parcels;
- * Helped secure New Market Tax Credits for the Gary Comer High School; and
- * Provided staff support to the partnership.

The requirements for the project were:

- * The creation of a Plan Development;
- * Community meetings to gauge community support; and
- * the City's green initiatives, which CSEF successfully meet and exceeded-both the Youth Center and the High School are certified by the United State Green Building Council.

One notably major public benefit granted by CSEF was the agreement which allowed the South Shore Drill Team, an international renowned organization, to make the youth center its home. This organization with over 300 members has also benefitted this community in terms of providing additional resources for the youth.

2. How was this project intended to benefit your city? What trade-offs and compromises were required to implement the project? How did your agency participate in making them?

There were many obstacles in the area including deteriorating housing stock, high unemployment rates, and drug activity with few income alternatives. The Gary Comer Youth Center and Gary Comer College Prep were designed to provide

- *Structured and safe extracurricular activities;
- *Educational opportunities; and
- *Local jobs.

This was done by providing a quality recreational facility and a state of the arts high school for the neighborhood youth.

The trade-off which DCD made was the donation of the city parcels needed to completed the initiatives. In DCD perspective, the donation was minimal to the overall total project cost which was funded by the CSEF.

3. Describe the project's impact on your city. Please be as specific as possible.

This project has changed the course of the Revere neighborhood which has been subject to deterioration, low educational attainment, and crime. Now with multiple stakeholders working together to restore, rebuild, and revitalize, the course of this neighborhood has changed, with education being its anchoring development. The construction of the Gary Comer Youth Center and Gary Comer College Prep is the solidifying factor of this change. The overall impact of this development is seen through:

- * Job creation (75 full time adult permanent, 50 part time youth);
- * 67 affordable new constructed single family homes;
- * Construction job training programs;
- * A 74,000 square foot new youth center providing access to programs once not accessible in this community; and
- * A 44,000 square foot charter high school which is managed by the Noble Street Network Charter Schools.

Noble Street Network of Charter Schools' mission is provide low income students with a world class education by instilling scholarship, discipline and honor necessary to succeed in college and beyond. There has been a paradigm shift in the community through the philanthropy of CSEF. The number of active concerned citizens has grown into a unified working group of neighbors whose valuable input spurred the planning of the youth center and high school.

4. Did this project result in new models of public/private partnerships? Are there aspects of this project that would be instructive to agencies like yours in other cities?

The redevelopment of the 73rd /University Redevelopment area would not have developed to the magnitude it is today but for the partnership of the Comer Science and Education Foundation, City of Chicago and community stakeholders.

The public private partnership was successful due to a number of reasons from the location of the neighborhood, its size, its real and invisible boundaries and more importantly its focus-the youth. In this type of partnership flexibility is key. There needs to be:

- * An awareness of the reality each partner deals with both administratively and economically.
- * A realization of the time process and the flexibility of both parties to meet an agreed upon timetable;
- * Flexibility to change as consensus building may move in another direction; and
- * And flexibility with policies to create new avenues in getting the agreed upon results.

5. What do you consider to be the most and least successful aspects of this project?

There are many significant aspects of the redevelopment of the Revere neighborhood. CSEF initiated the redevelopment of this area starting with the renovation of the public elementary school. The Foundation has gone on to complete a number of initiatives from facade improvements, new housing, a youth center, a high school, and an urban farm.

In the partnership created between the Comer Science and Education Foundation and the City of Chicago, the growth of the ownership of the community and the diversity of engagement throughout the community process are a few key successful points. A central theme running throughout the project was coalition building. A new leadership group was formed as a result of the participation from existing community groups, block clubs, and individuals. This new group was essential in the effectiveness of keeping the lines of communication open.

The community residents came together and provided valuable input on their vision of what they wanted in the neighborhood and its identity, which led to a five day panel conducted by the Urban Land Institute.

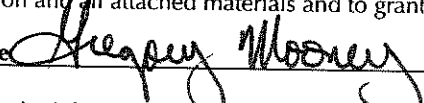
DEVELOPER PERSPECTIVE

Please answer questions in space provided. Answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided on the original form.

This sheet is to be filled out by the person who took primary responsibility for project financing or is a representative of the group which did.

Name Gregory Mooney Title Executive Director
Organization Comer Science and Education Foundation Telephone (773) 358-4100
Address 7200 South Ingleside Avenue City/State/ZIP Chicago, IL 60619
Fax (773) 358-4089 E-mail gmooney@gcychome.org

The undersigned grants the Bruner Foundation permission to use, reproduce, or make available for reproduction or use by others, for any purpose whatsoever, the materials submitted. The applicant warrants that the applicant has full power and authority to submit the application and all attached materials and to grant these rights and permissions.

Signature 

Date 12/10/2010

1. What role did you or your company play in the development of this project? Describe the scope of involvement.

Since 2002, I have served as Executive Director for The Comer Science and Education Foundation (CSEF). CSEF is the developer and owner of the Gary Comer Youth Center and Gary Comer College Prep. CSEF was incorporated in 1998, initiated by Mr. Gary Comer, the founder of Lands' End. Mr. Comer was a strong supporter of the Revere Community in which he was born and raised. CSEF's partnership with the Revere Community initially focused on the basic needs of school children and their families, but over the past twelve years, the Revere Community Revitalization Initiative has become a comprehensive approach to address the intricate intersection of child, family, school, and community. The process to create and actualize such an initiative, has involved school administrators, parents, local businesses, local city council, the local police department, and community residents. Block Clubs were revitalized to serve as the primary vehicle of neighborhood leadership and communication. As part of the community improvement project, the Gary Comer Youth Center was built and opened in 2006 and serves community residents by providing a safe alternative for youth during out-of-school-time with a wide range of dynamic programming in academics, technology, arts, and health and fitness. The Gary Comer College Prep High School was built and opened in fall 2010 and presently serves 506 students in grades nine through eleven. GCYC and GCCP work in close collaboration toward the mission of 100% of our students graduating high school prepared for colleges and careers.

2. What trade-offs or compromises were required during the development of the project?

Throughout the planning process, the needs of the community were continuously solicited through numerous community meetings. What was originally conceived as a community center, evolved into a youth center to prioritize youth development. Although GCYC serves community adults with programming, events, and social support; its main focus is youth. Other community members wanted a swimming pool in the building, but due to construction and maintenance costs as well as space requirements, that consideration was "traded" for a full court gym which doubles as a 600-seat performance theater.

During the planning of Gary Comer College Prep, the design team wanted to create an assembly space within the high school. The scope and budget as well as the required space to create this did not allow for an assembly space in the building. Instead, the result was a positive compromise. Two classrooms were combined to create one college seminar classroom. Equipped with a SMART board, the multi-purpose classroom seats up to 110 students in tiered seats and allows students the opportunity to learn in a space mimicking that of college. The high school administration and students are able to use the auditorium that is in GCYC and part of the high school campus.

3. How was the project financed? What, if any, innovative means of financing were used?

4. What do you consider to be the most and least successful aspects of the project?

PROFESSIONAL CONSULTANT PERSPECTIVE

Please answer questions in space provided. Answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided on the original form.

This sheet is to be filled out by a professional who worked as a consultant on the project providing services other than physical design or planning (e.g., legal services).

Name	Title
Organization	Telephone ()
Address	City/State/ZIP
Fax ()	E-mail

The undersigned grants the Bruner Foundation permission to use, reproduce, or make available for reproduction or use by others, for any purpose whatsoever, the materials submitted. The applicant warrants that the applicant has full power and authority to submit the application and all attached materials and to grant these rights and permissions.

Signature	Date
------------------	------

1. What role did you or your organization play in the development of this project?

2. Describe the project's impact on its community. Please be as specific as possible.

PROFESSIONAL CONSULTANT PERSPECTIVE (CONT'D)

3. How might this project be instructive to others in your profession?

4. What do you consider to be the most and least successful aspects of this project?

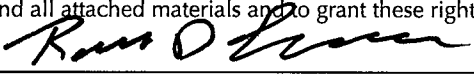
PROFESSIONAL CONSULTANT PERSPECTIVE

Please answer questions in space provided. Answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided on the original form.

This sheet is to be filled out by a professional who worked as a consultant on the project providing services other than physical design or planning (e.g., legal services).

Name	Ross D. Emmerman	Title	Partner
Organization	Neal, Gerber & Eisenberg, LLP	Telephone (312)	269-8051
Address	Two N. LaSalle Street, Suite 1700	City/State/ZIP	Chicago, IL 60602
Fax (312)	429-3574	E-mail	Remmerman@ngelaw.com

The undersigned grants the Bruner Foundation permission to use, reproduce, or make available for reproduction or use by others, for any purpose whatsoever, the materials submitted. The applicant warrants that the applicant has full power and authority to submit the application and all attached materials and to grant these rights and permissions.

Signature  Date 12/8/10

1. What role did you or your organization play in the development of this project?

Neal, Gerber & Eisenberg, LLP acted as legal counsel to Comer Science & Education Foundation in connection with the financing of Gary Comer College Preparatory school. The financing of the school involved a special provision of the United States Internal Revenue Code known as the "New Market Tax Credit". This type of federal tax credit is only available for qualified community developments (such as a school) in low-income communities (such as Grand Crossing). Without this tax credit, it is unlikely that the project would have been financeable (and, thus, viable). As counsel, we also worked with The City of Chicago and others with respect to various matters, including the City's contribution of several parcels of land to the project, as well as the architect and general contractor.

2. Describe the project's impact on its community. Please be as specific as possible.

In my view, Gary Comer Youth Center and Gary Comer College Preparatory school have significantly enhanced the lives of the members of Chicago, in general, and the Grand Crossing community, in particular. These projects are testaments that the most fortunate Chicagoans are, with the assistance of the City, able to give back to and improve the City and the daily lives of its residents, provide education and other important services for underprivileged citizens and create an environment focused on self-development and upward mobility. These projects have garnered a substantial amount of publicity which serves to remind others of the benefits of "giving back" to make the City a better place.

PROFESSIONAL CONSULTANT PERSPECTIVE (CONT'D)

3. How might this project be instructive to others in your profession?

As New Market Tax Credit transactions are relatively new to the City of Chicago, this project serves as a precedent to other attorneys that these financing transactions, although complicated, have been completed in, and supported by, our City. Hopefully, as more precedential transactions are completed using the New Market Tax Credit, other practitioners in both public and private legal practice will become more familiar with them thereby facilitating future New Market Tax Credit transactions.

4. What do you consider to be the most and least successful aspects of this project?

The most successful part of the project is that the school building was constructed on time and on budget, is operating as a charter school and is providing a high end education to deserving students from the local community. I think the graduates of Gary Comer College Prep will have opportunities that otherwise would not be unavailable to them. As these graduates achieve goals in life, I believe that they will remember their high school experience (and the skills and values they developed at GCCP), and eventually give back to the Grand Crossing community and help it to thrive. I don't believe that there is a least successful aspect to this project. However, because New Market Tax Credit financing transactions are relatively new to Chicago, they tend to be time consuming and expensive. That is too bad because the residents of low income communities could benefit from faster project implementation at lower cost.

ARCHITECT OR DESIGNER PERSPECTIVE

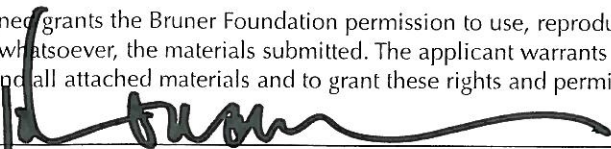
Please answer questions in space provided. Answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided on the original form.

This sheet is to be filled out by a design professional who worked as a consultant on the project, providing design, planning, or other services.

Name	John Ronan	Title	Founding Principal
Organization	John Ronan Architects	Telephone	(312) 951-6600 x21
Address	320 W. Ohio Street 4e	City/State/ZIP	Chicago IL 60654
Fax	(312) 951-6544	E-mail	ronan@jrarch.com

The undersigned grants the Bruner Foundation permission to use, reproduce, or make available for reproduction or use by others, for any purpose whatsoever, the materials submitted. The applicant warrants that the applicant has full power and authority to submit the application and all attached materials and to grant these rights and permissions.

Signature



Date 07 December 2010

1. Describe the design concept of this project, including urban design considerations, choice of materials, scale, etc.

The buildings are designed to form a secure but inviting campus, expressing youth and optimism. The buildings are meant to complement each other, but retain their own identity. The youth center is conceived as a series of programmatic bars wrapping the building's main space, an adaptable gymnasium that converts to a 600-seat performance theater. Wrapping around this main space are programmatically adaptable bars that support a variety of educational and recreational programs--art room, computer lab, dance room, recording studio, band room, music room, costume shop, classrooms, offices and exhibition spaces, which are shared with the high school building. Classrooms, offices and exhibition spaces on the third floor overlook a large planted roof garden above the gymnasium/theater and cafeteria. The roof garden serves as outdoor classroom to support youth horticultural programs and environmental awareness. With a 24" depth of soil, children can plant and harvest vegetables, flowers, herbs, grasses, and can be used as a nursery for neighborhood garden clubs. Skylights dot this garden landscape to bring natural daylight into the gym and cafeteria below. Extensive use of glazing inside both buildings allows visual access between the different program spaces to foster a sense of community between the various building users, as well as bring in abundant natural light and create a sense of security and oversight. The high school borrows some of the secondary materials of the youth center to bind the two projects into a single whole; its spring green color is meant to reflect the youthful optimism of its faculty, staff and students. The youth center is clad in brightly-colored fiber cement panels which speak to the center's youthful orientation and re-birth of the community. The youth center's LED signage tower announces upcoming events, and serves as a visual marker for the community.

2. Describe the most important social and programmatic functions of the design.

The spaces of both buildings and the site are designed to optimally-support educational programs, the complex's main function. The youth center's roof garden is designed not merely as a green roof, but as an outdoor horticultural classroom where students can grow and harvest vegetables and food plants, which are used in culinary arts courses in the youth center's teaching kitchen on the ground floor. The roof garden also serves as a community garden and nursery for the neighborhood's many block clubs, who replant the flowers along parkways in the neighborhood. Thus the garden is something of a social hub for the whole community. The main gym/performance space in the youth center is an important space, both programmatically and socially. This space functions as the center of energy for the complex which permeates the entire building. This space supports both practice and performance of the South Shore Drill Team, as well as high school assemblies, community meetings and events. Another important space is the parking lot/practice parade ground which stretches between the two structures, which supports Drill Team and high school activities, as well as outdoor community events. An educational garden immediately adjacent to this space helps children understand natural systems, hydrology, plant species; its outdoor classroom shaded by trees is used by both the high school and the youth center.

Extensive use of glass in both buildings brings abundant daylighting into the structures and serves to create a sense of community between the different building users. The quality of the architecture and site design sends a message to the students & youth center users that they are important and respected.



3. Describe the major challenges of designing this project and any design trade-offs or compromises required to complete the project.

The overall site and buildings within support a wide array of programs which required a very flexible design so that it did not limit the types of programs that the buildings and site could support, either now or in the future. Every space in the youth center was considered in terms of its ability to support multiple functions, and its ability to be adapted over time to changing needs. As an example the exhibition space on the third floor overlooking the roof garden can be adapted as a lecture room for 220 people, two seminar rooms via a deployable separation wall, and also to support a variety of exhibition types. Partitions separating the different spaces are free of wiring and plumbing so that they can be easily reconfigured in the future as programs change, extending the life of the building. Examples of spaces that were accommodated during construction include a video editing suite, which was added towards the end of construction. A medical clinic was recently added to the first floor of the youth center.

One of the design trade-offs of using the youth center to supplement the educational spaces of the high school was that students would have to walk outside to get to and from some of their classes. Since one of the goals of the high school was to prepare students for college, this was seen as an opportunity to create a more campus-like feel; students are given umbrellas as they walk to and from the buildings during inclement weather.

Another design challenge was that of security for the building which is located in a neighborhood with more than its share of gang violence. Building users initially requested no glazing in the building due to the high incidence of drive-by shootings in the neighborhood, which presented a challenge of how to design a secure building that did not feel like a bunker. This requirement led to a design that features numerous skylights and areas of protected glazing to deliver a structure that feels light and airy on the interior, yet is secure. Bullet-resistant glazing was employed in the youth center in areas that presented large expanses of glass to the street; Perforated metal covers street windows in the high school to present a secure exterior, while allowing maximum light and visibility to the street from the inside.

The cement board cladding panels of the youth center are arranged in a seemingly random distribution pattern to animate the facade, and to allow panels to be replaced over time in response to damage or vandalism without drawing attention to their replacement.

4. Describe the ways in which the design relates to its urban context.

The high school/youth center complex is intended to serve as a landmark project that rises above its blighted surroundings to create an environment where children feel safe and respected. The siting of the buildings seeks to hold the traditional street line and the buildings' materials, scale and colors seek to reflect the youth and optimism of the project, and speak to the rebirth of a community. The youth center's LED tower serves as a visual marker for the community and advertises upcoming events in the facility to the neighborhood and people traveling into Chicago on the Chicago Skyway, a nearby elevated highway.

A perforated screen fence stretching between the buildings provides a safe area for high school and Drill Team activities, but allows neighbors and passers-by to view into the site. This fence continues north of the high school and bears signage reading "Grand Crossing," to give the neglected neighborhood and take its place among the city's more well-known neighborhoods.

South Chicago Avenue, the main street onto which the high school and youth center front, is a six-lane high speed motorway that serves as a conduit to downtown Chicago. Raised planters along this stretch seek both to beautify the neighborhood and provide safe passage to the many children that travel each day to the high school and the youth center.

OTHER PERSPECTIVE

Please answer questions in space provided. Answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided on the original form.

Name	James Troupis	Title	Principal
Organization	Gary Comer College Prep	Telephone (773)	729-3969
Address	7131 South Chicago Avenue	City/State/ZIP	Chicago, IL 60619
Fax (773)	729-3960	E-mail	jtroupis@noblenetwork.org

The undersigned grants the Bruner Foundation permission to use, reproduce, or make available for reproduction or use by others, for any purpose whatsoever, the materials submitted. The applicant warrants that the applicant has full power and authority to submit the application and all attached materials and to grant these rights and permissions.

Signature  Date 12/10/2010

1. What role did you play in the development of this project?

I was involved heavily in the design of the school building as it pertained to the programmatic needs of the school. Aside from the square footage footprint, the design of the school changed dramatically with each iteration as we thought through the actual "needs" and "wants" of the school. Some of these programmatic developments and decisions included but were not limited to:

- Classroom size, layout, a/v, furniture, materials.
- Office size, layout, a/v, furniture, materials.
- Big picture decision on number and layouts of offices and classrooms.
- Hallway, locker and other common space needs.

Ultimately, I was involved in most decisions that could have a day-to-day impact on the operations of the school.

2. Describe the impact that this project has had on the your community. Please be as specific as possible.

The school has had a tremendously positive impact on our school's students, parents, and faculty members (what I define as our community). If I were to categorize the impact I would do so in the following categories:

- Academic Enhancement: The school was designed with one focus – student learning. Having a space that is dedicated so clearly to teaching and learning has given teachers and students well-designed and sufficient space to learn. Each classroom focuses solely on the core elements necessary to teach students and has allowed teachers to maximize their space.
- School Culture: From the glass walls to the well-lit and open areas, the ability to see all students and teachers at all times has created a communal culture. Additionally, the efforts to embed a college-going-culture physically into the building have built the entire school culture toward our vision of college graduation for all.
- School Pride: A far cry from any school to which our students have ever gone, the physical beauty of the school has increased pride beyond just academics, but also to our physical space.
- Engagement of Other Individuals: By creating a beautiful facility to house what we believe is unprecedented work with students.
- Larger Impact of the Facility on Education: The unique aesthetic of the facility – particularly in a community with very few new construction and no high performing schools – has heightened awareness of the need for and power of a strong education. It is becoming a beacon of possibility. Additionally, educators from across the country have come to see the glass walls particularly because it has and will continue to push the thinking of performance and accountability in schools.

3. What trade-offs and compromises were required during the development of the project? Did you participate in making them?

I do not have an intimate knowledge of most of the material and financial sacrifices that were made in the project but do know of the programmatic trade-offs made in the design. These included:

- As much space as possible was given to classrooms. This meant reducing office size, conference room size, common space size, and storage space. This was an intentional decision about our priorities.
- No large common spaces were created in the new school. Original designs had a common space for students to gather for assemblies or eating. This was compromised to increase the number and size of classrooms and ultimately create synergy between the spaces already in the youth center, and thus available for the schools' use.
- The footprint was fairly limiting. Having a fixed footprint to build the school within meant that all changes had to be within fixed square feet. If there had been space to extend in any direction many decisions would have changed – instead we had to think creatively about the shape we were given.

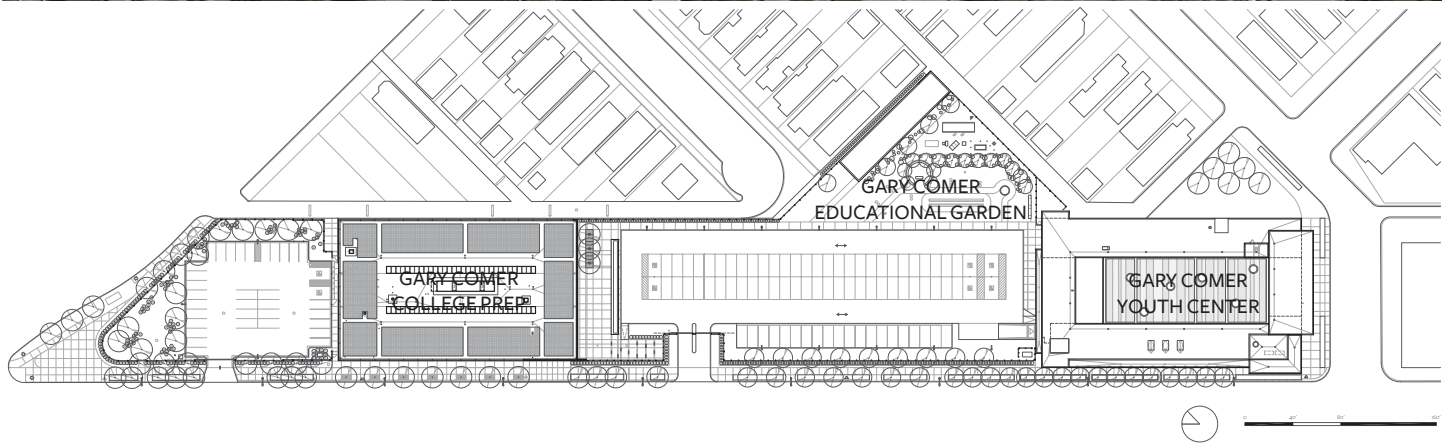
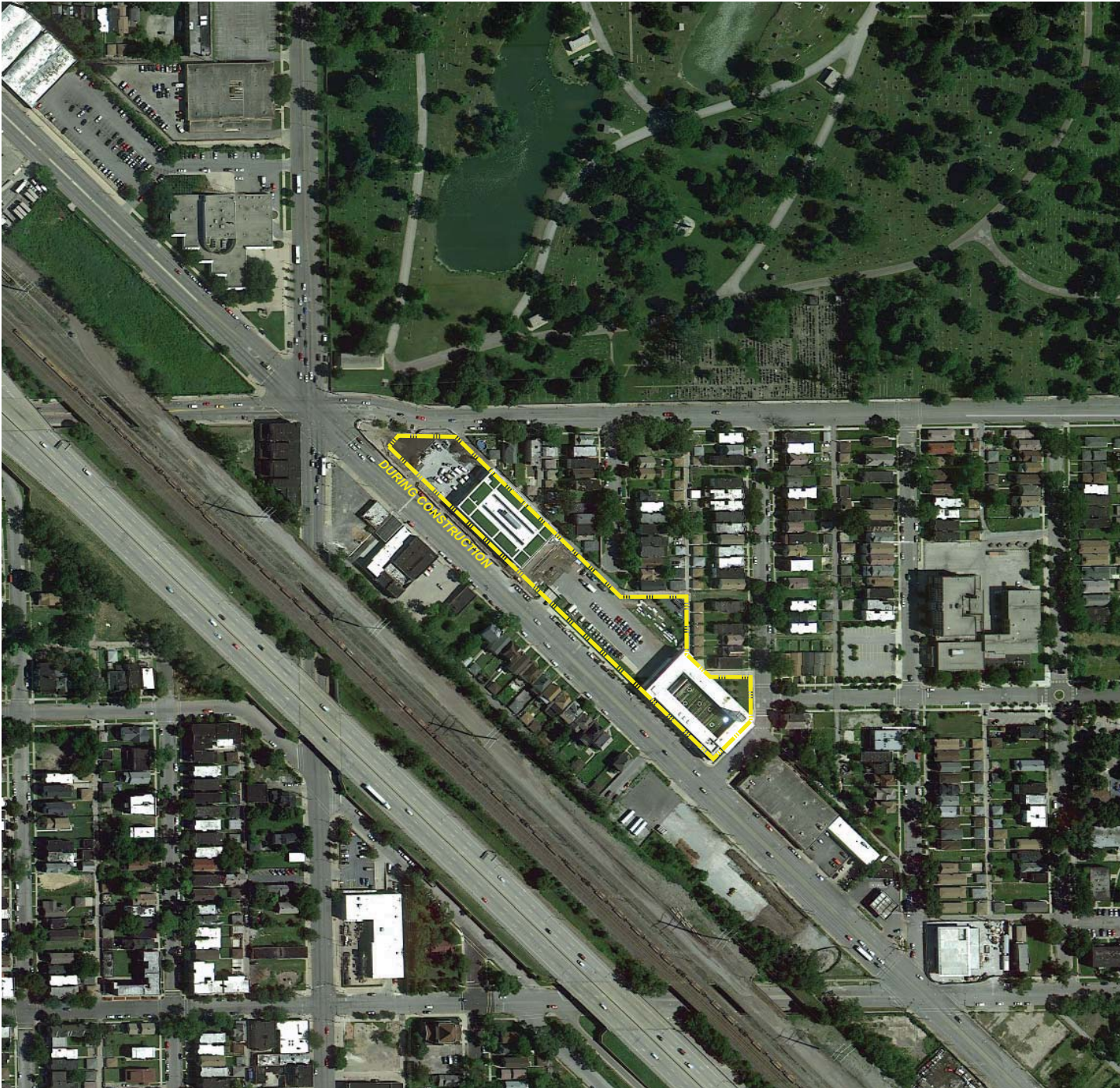
4. What do you consider to be the the most and least successful aspects of this project?

I believe the most successful aspects of the project are how the vision and priorities of the school were built so intentionally into the physical design. Some of the elements include:

- Alumni Hall (college culture)
- Two Buildings - GCYC and GCCP (college culture)
- College Matriculation Area (college culture)
- Classroom #s and Size (teaching/learning as priority #1)
- Standardized Materials and A/V For Teacher Classrooms (teaching/learning as priority #1)
- Glass Walls Into Each Classroom (accountability and performance and communal culture)

I believe that the least successful element of the project was having the programmatic insight we had for classrooms with office/printer areas/hallways and other non-classroom areas. We could have anticipated usage and incorporated standard elements into the physical design of these areas. We have adjusted by adding furniture that captures usage needs.

Visual Representation of the Project



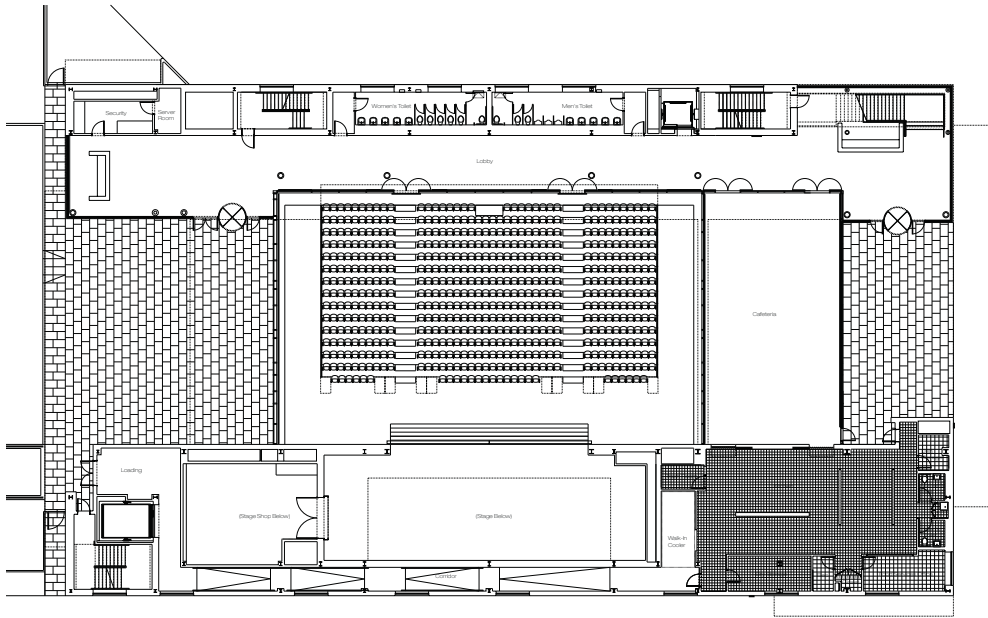




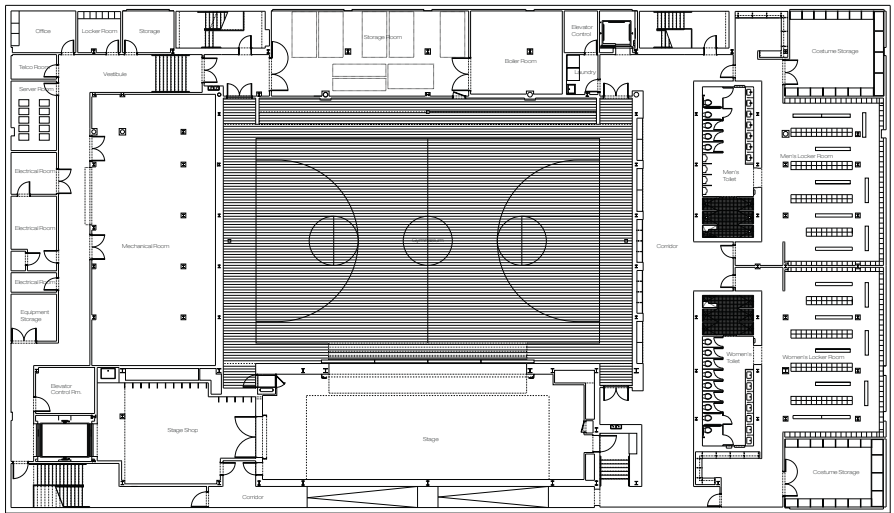


Gary Comer Youth Center

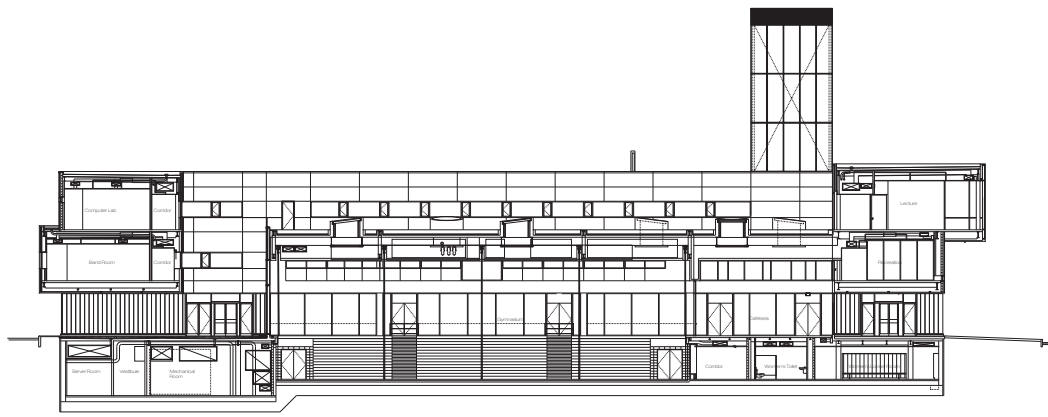




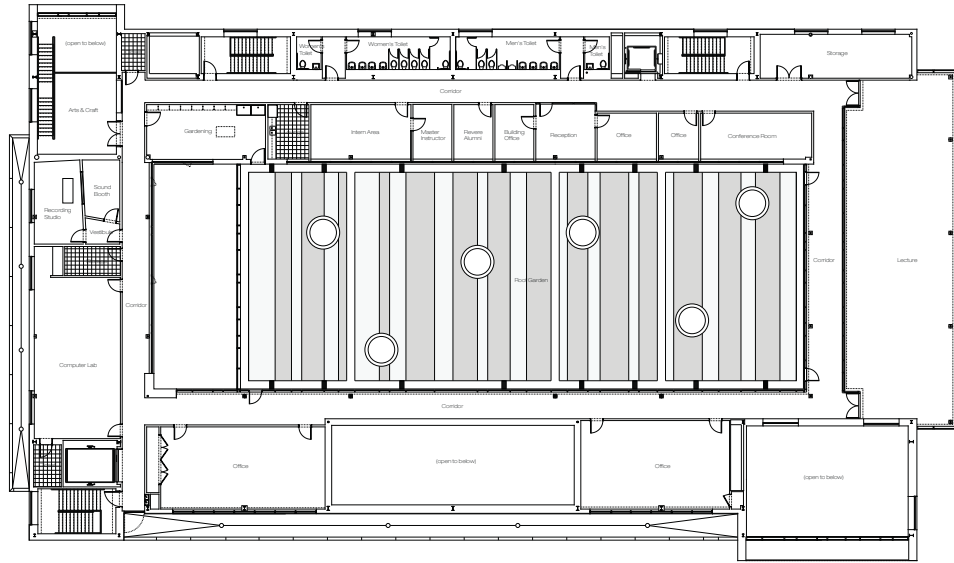
Ground Floor Plan



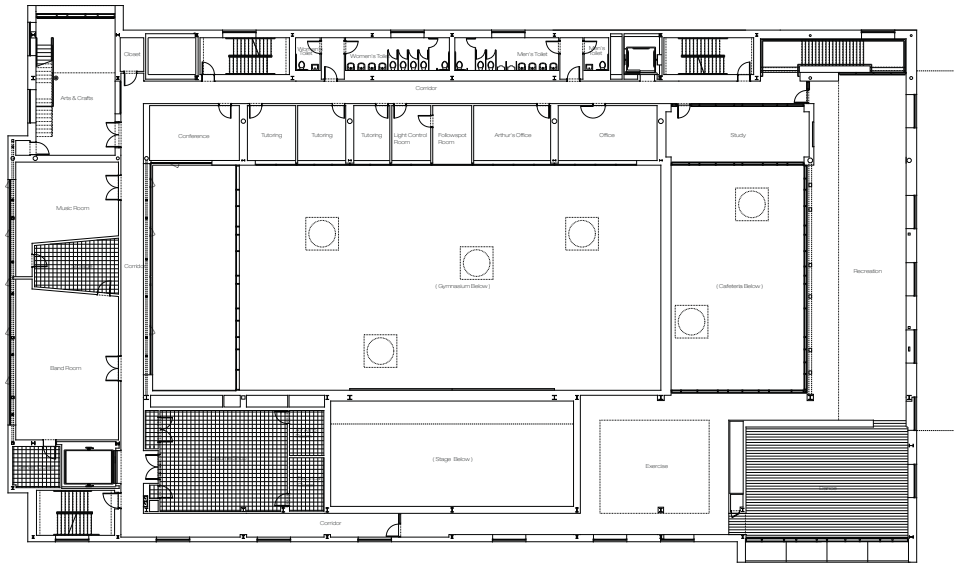
Lower Level Plan



Section looking East



Third Floor Plan



Second Floor Plan







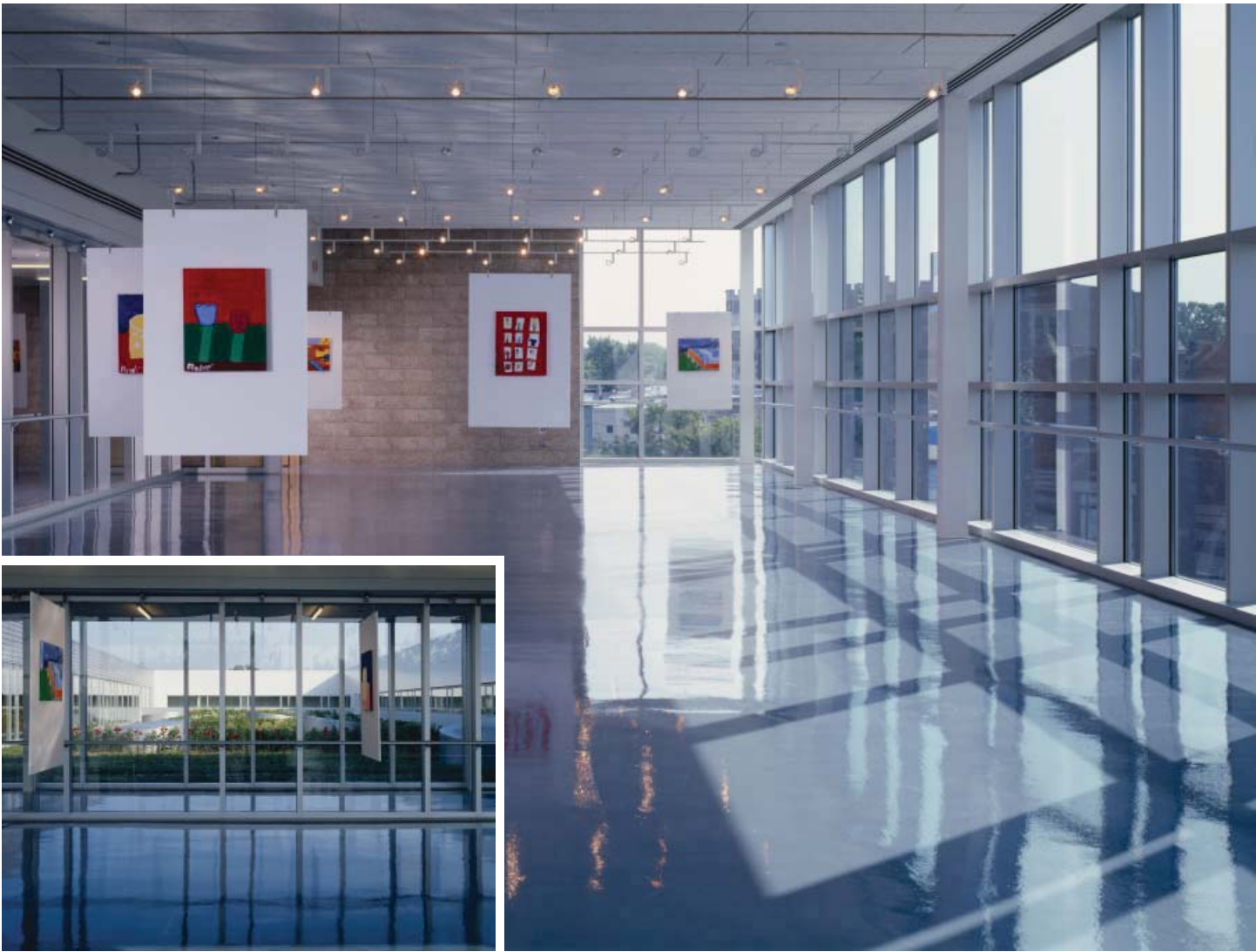


SOUTH



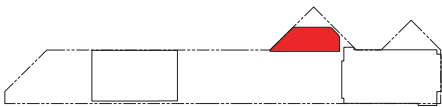








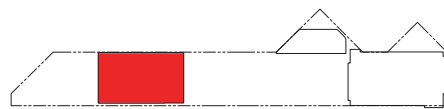
Gary Comer Educational Garden

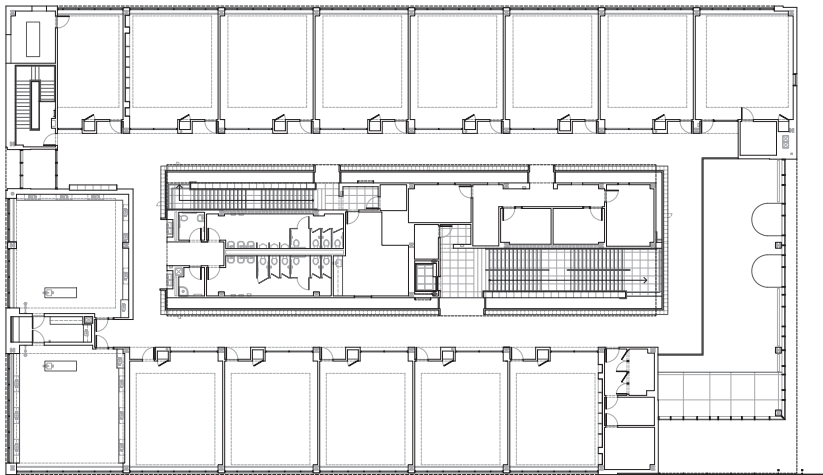




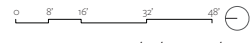
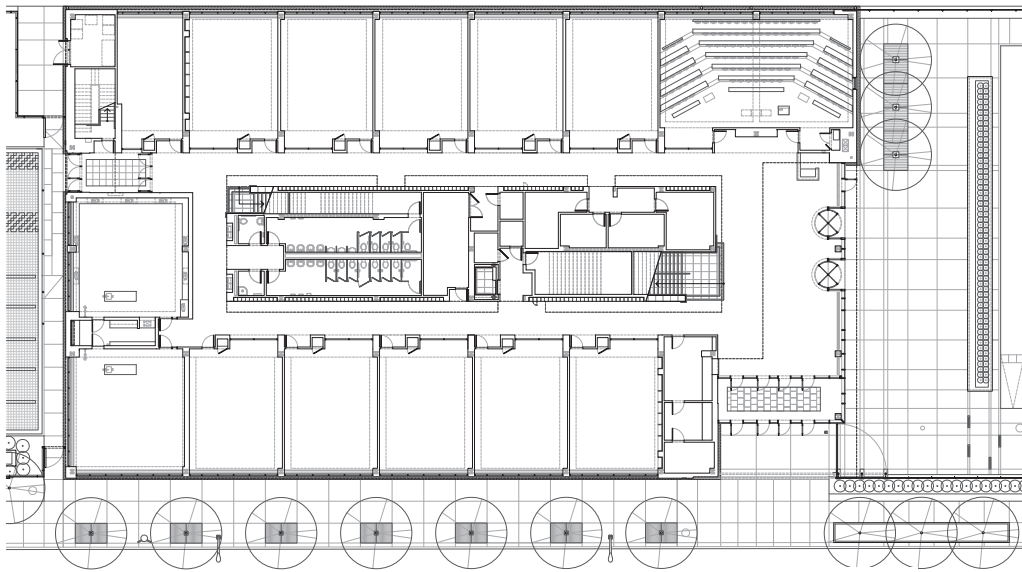


Gary Comer College Prep

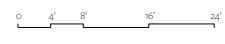
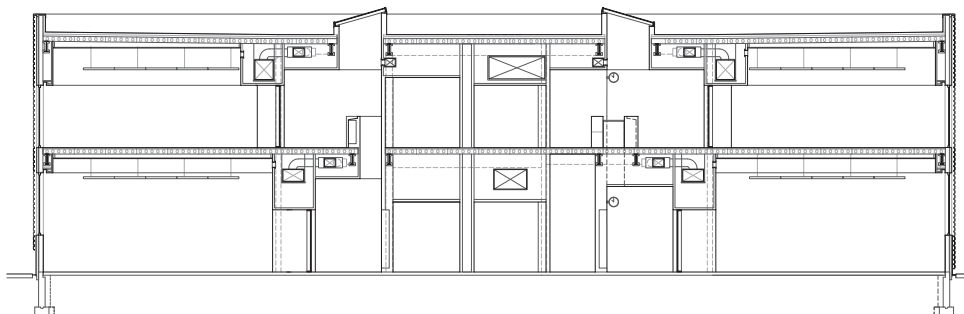




Second Floor Plan

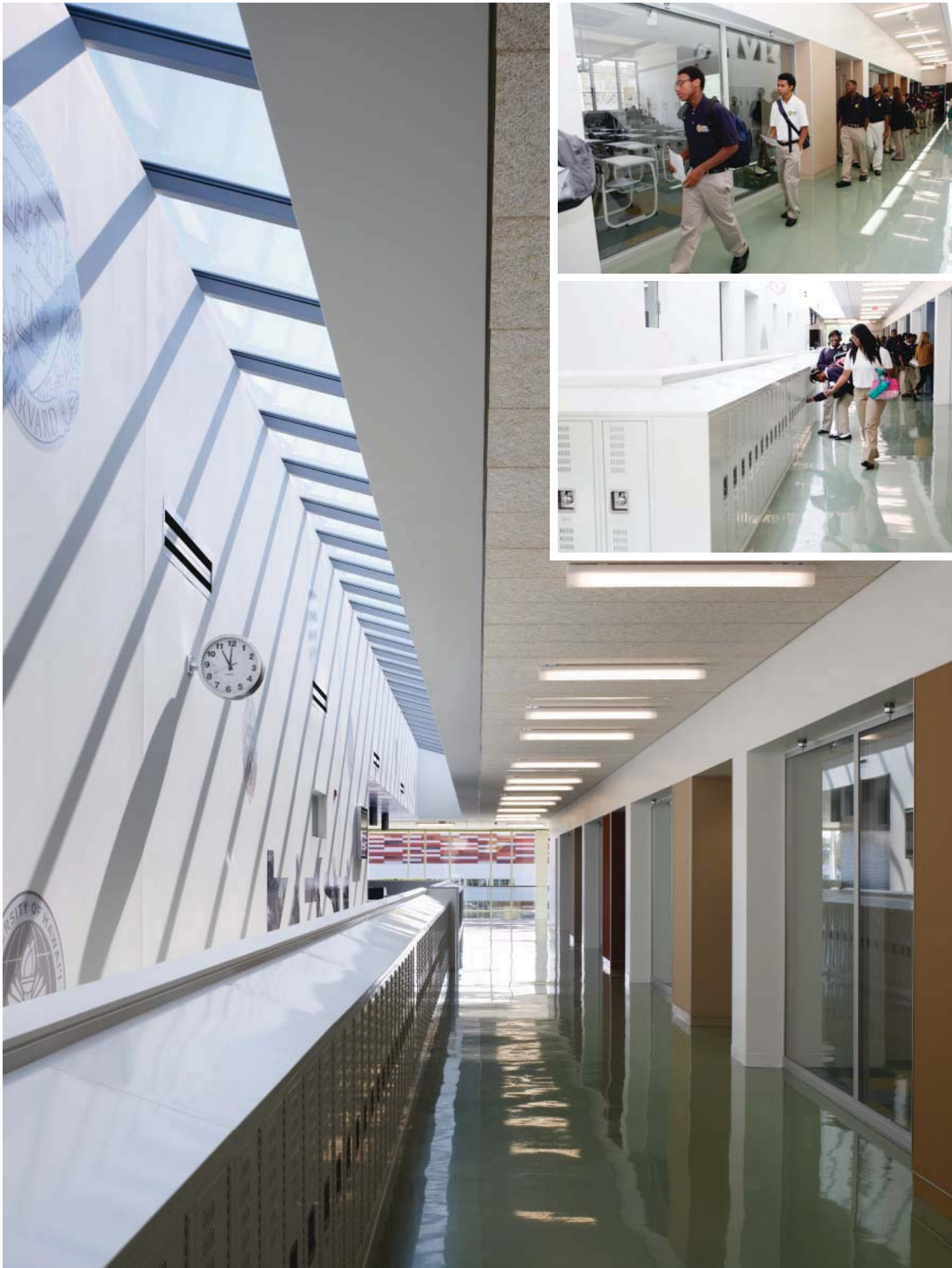


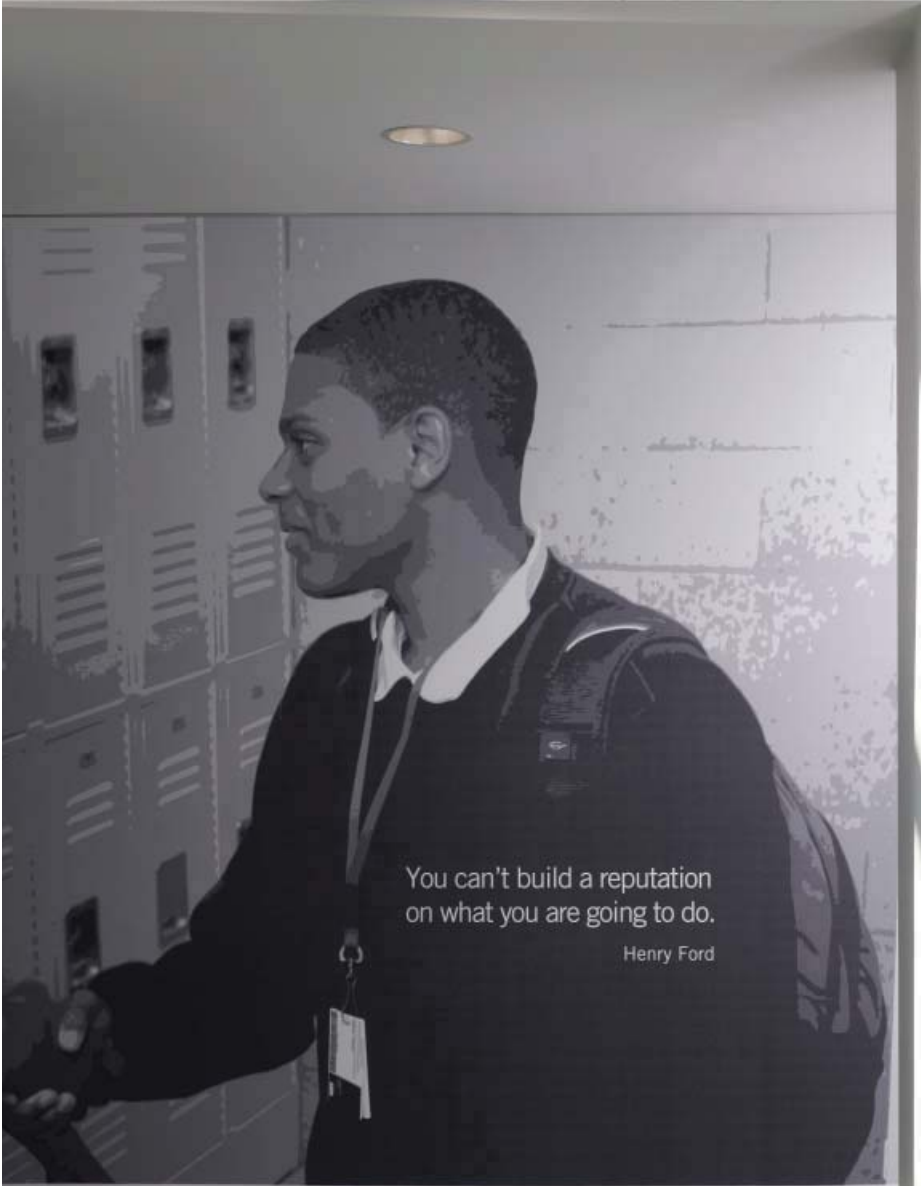
Ground Floor Plan



Section looking North



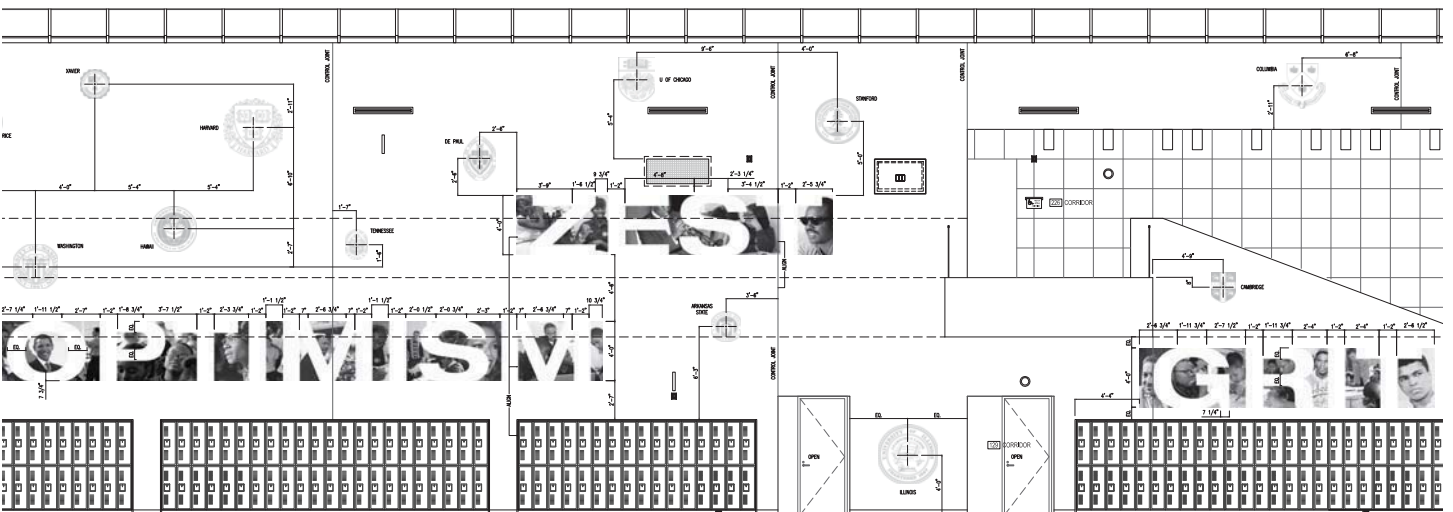


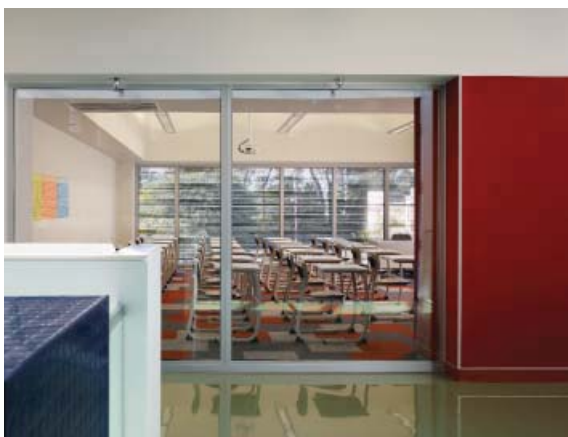


You can't build a reputation
on what you are going to do.

Henry Ford









Optional Supplementary Pages

GARY COMER YOUTH CENTER

HOME OF THE SOUTH SHORE DRILL TEAM



The Gary Comer Youth Center offers positive extracurricular alternatives in a welcoming and safe environment.

Our mission is to provide support for all of our students to graduate from high school, prepared to pursue college and careers.

The Story of Gary Comer Youth Center

Gary Comer grew up on the South Side of Chicago in the 1930s. In 1998, he visited his grammar school, Paul Revere Elementary, and found that the school, as well as its surrounding neighborhood, faced many challenges. Comer had a desire to help and began by donating funds for facility and teaching improvements. He continued to invest in Revere to improve the school and its academic performance, the results of which have been dramatic. Comer's commitment grew, creating additional partnerships to help address challenges in this traditionally underserved area of the city.

The South Shore Drill Team

In 1980, Arthur Robertson started The South Shore Drill Team with a handful of kids and a vision: to teach unique flag, rifle and dance routines. In the process, the Drill Team members would learn self-discipline, self-esteem, and pride in their accomplishments — and ultimately apply these same values to their everyday lives.

Gary Comer College Prep, Noble Street Charter School

Gary Comer College Prep (GCCP) opened to its first class of freshmen in August 2008. The school's vision is to develop well rounded and successful college graduates based on the Noble Network pillars of scholarship, discipline and honor. GCCP staff members, families and community partners are committed to ensuring high school and college success for all their students. The state-of-the-art high school building, completed in August 2010, operates in conjunction with the adjacent Youth Center. GCCP students participate in Youth Center programming after school and during the summer.





“The Youth Center is dedicated to providing a greater opportunity for young people in this neighborhood to practice, to learn, to study, and to sharpen their skills and intellect. This Youth Center is for the children. May they use it well.”

—Gary Comer

GCYC PROGRAMS

The Gary Comer Youth Center has created an environment where young people have the opportunity to participate in one of four primary program tracks.

Education, Technology and Careers

Programs in this area include tutoring, college bound, Upward Bound programming, book clubs, writing team, graphic and web design and gardening. Career development courses and internships are also offered.

Cultural and Performing Arts

Programs include pottery, culinary arts, sewing, African drumming and dance, modern and urban dance, sound production, piano and choir.

Physical Fitness, Social Recreation, Health and Nutrition

The Youth Center provides a wide variety of programs in this area including football, basketball, board and recreational games and nutrition classes.

Civic Engagement, Social and Leadership Development

Programs in this area include gender-specific programs, the Leadership Circle, anti-violence programming, community building and environmental programs.

Through one-on-one mentorship, classroom instruction, technology and real-world experience, Youth Center members learn a wide variety of important life skills and experiences. Most of all, they have fun!



Our Partners Include:

- Access Community Health Network
- Afterschool Matters
- The Chicago Community Trust
- Chicago Police Department (3rd District)
- City of Chicago Department of Family & Support Services
- Free Spirit Media
- Greater Chicago Food Depository
- Illinois Children's Healthcare Foundation
- Illinois Department of Agriculture
- Illinois Department of Human Services
- Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity
- Illinois State Board of Education
- TG Public Benefit
- UBS Investment
- University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine
- University of Chicago School of Social Service Administration
- U.S. Department of Education
- U.S. Department of Health & Human Services



How can you help?

Volunteer, Teach, Donate

Contact us or visit us online to learn more...

GCYC | 7200 South Ingleside Avenue | Chicago IL 60619 | 773.358.4100
www.gcychome.org



VISION

It is the vision of Gary Comer College Prep to develop well-rounded and successful college graduates.

OUR STUDENTS

Gary Comer College Prep is the first Noble Street Charter School campus on Chicago's South Side. Core to the school's mission is serving students from the South Side who otherwise may not have access to a Noble education. Over 95 percent of GCCP's students come from the South Side of Chicago and over 57 percent come from the neighborhood. The student body is roughly 95 percent African-American and 5 percent Latino. Ninety percent of students receive free or reduced lunch. The majority of students come from single-parent or non-nuclear families.

Students come to GCCP from some of the nation's lowest-performing elementary schools. As a nonselective school, GCCP gets a representative subset of students from across the South Side. The majority of students enter GCCP testing multiple years below grade level.

THE NOBLE WAY

Gary Comer College Prep was designed on the same core principles that have made the other Noble campuses successful. The core principles are known as the Noble Way: scholarship, discipline and honor.

SCHOLARSHIP

Gary Comer College Prep has the singular mission of getting each student to and through college by preparing all students academically for the appropriately rigorous college. Some of the key strategies that help ensure this include:

- Students have a longer school year.
- Students go to school from 8:30 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. and are in class for more than 2,000 minutes per week.
- Students double up on math and reading courses in their first two years making their way toward rigorous Advanced Placement courses in their final two years.
- All teachers pre-design all goals, assessments, tracking systems, and unit plans based on the ACT's College Readiness Standards.
- All teachers give out their cell phone numbers and are available into the evening to help students.
- The leadership team prioritizes the recruitment of top teachers from across the nation – selecting less than 6% of teachers who apply.

continued >



GARY COMER COLLEGE PREP

A CAMPUS OF NOBLE STREET CHARTER SCHOOL

GARY COMER COLLEGE PREP'S DESIGN

DISCIPLINE

Gary Comer College Prep students are held to unwaveringly high discipline expectations. We believe discipline is important to maximize time on task but also to help students develop self-discipline that will ensure success in college and in life. Some of the key strategies that help ensure this include:

- All teachers, administrators and support staff enforce the same discipline code with an emphasis on absolute consistency.
- Students wear a strictly defined uniform.
- Meeting discipline requirements (ex: no more than 12 detentions) is a promotion criteria.

HONOR

Gary Comer College Prep students are expected to leave high school as well-rounded citizens with a diverse range of experiences. Some key strategies that help ensure this include:

- Students must complete five hours of community service per semester—at least 40 hours to graduate.
- Students must complete more than 100 hours of enrichment outside of school in activities such as sports, clubs and additional class work.
- The school offers all major high school sports and more than a dozen clubs including math team, yearbook, and student council.
- Students take more than 100 minutes of physical education each week and must pass health and fitness tests to be promoted to the next grade level.
- Students must spend at least 40 hours by the time they graduate exploring colleges through the Comer to College program.

On a corner of Chicago's battered South Side, next door to where a methadone clinic once stood, green peppers, cucumbers, potatoes, and carrots now grow in the rooftop garden of the Gary Comer Youth Center.

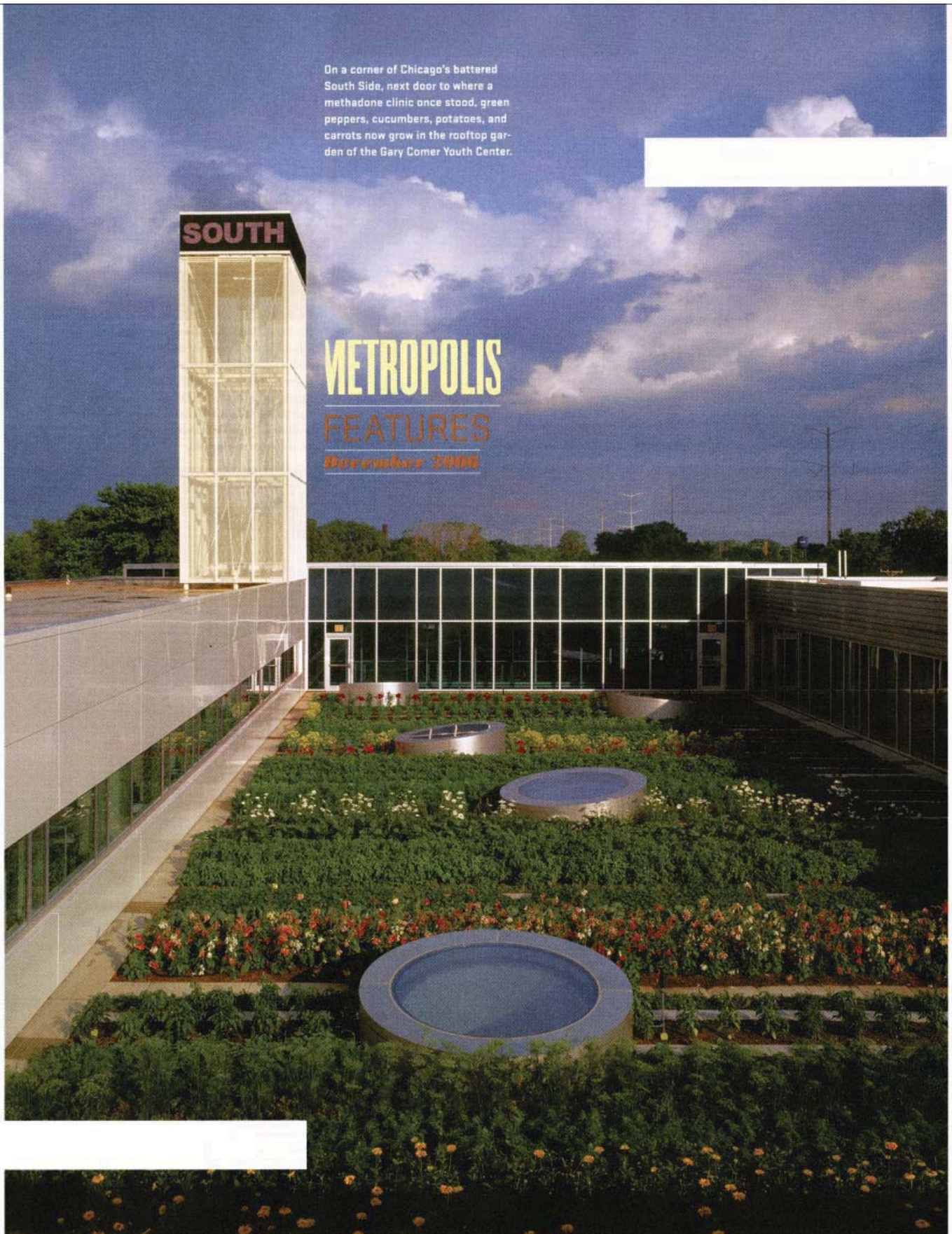
SOUTH

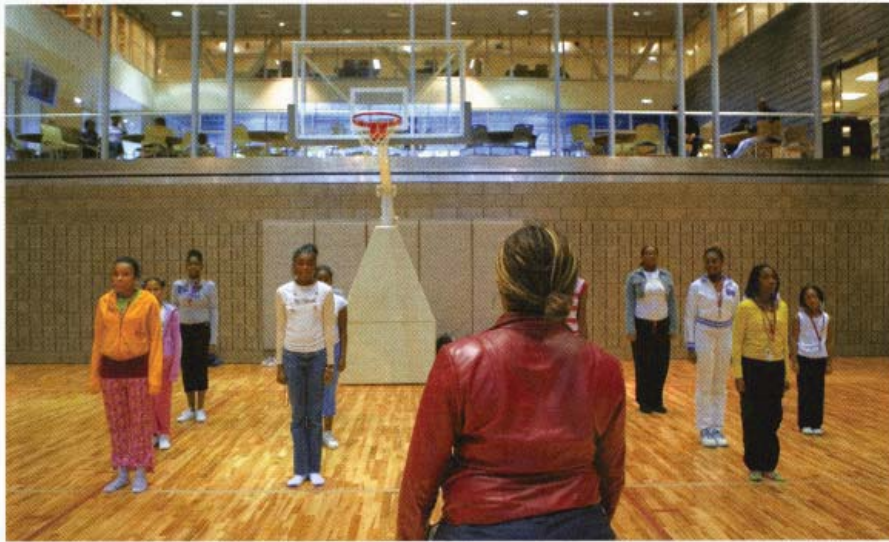
METROPOLIS

FEATURES

December 2006

Steve Hall/courtesy Hedrich Blessing





Portraits by
Chris Lake
for Metropolis

The Gary Comer Youth Center's interior is largely given over to a double-height gymnasium, where the South Shore Drill Team practices. Before the center opened, the 300-odd members had to split up into separate locations, including a church and a local elementary school.

MIRACLE
ON
72ND
STREET



Facade photo: Steve Hall/Courtesy Hedrich Blessing

Architectural
photos by
Steve Hall



Gary Comer and John Ronan create a stunning citadel of hope on Chicago's troubled South Side.

by **John Hockenberry**



If you meander southward from the glittering architectural trophy case that is the Chicago lakefront, you pass by (and under) the vast steel rectangles of McCormick Place and the Ionic columns of the Field Museum. Farther south you come upon the domed nineteenth-century Beaux Arts palace housing the Museum of Science and Industry. Turn west and the landscape quickly becomes a low-rise wasteland of crime and shabby retail. Stores promise easy credit for ghastly furniture. Carryout food is prepared behind thick panels of bulletproof glass. Every street has a liquor store. Vacant lots punctuate an alarming streetscape of poorly constructed box residences and the occasional brownstone holdout. A multifamily building on 72nd Street South stands blackened and vacant from a recent fire. The bitter smell of burnt plastic still lingers in the air, and the building's exterior vinyl siding has been warped into the sagging signature of old Venetian blinds.

As you pass the fortress of Paul Revere Elementary School, where a man was recently arrested for child abduction and public indecency, the view abruptly changes: 72nd Street appears to dead-end into a wall mosaic of colored panels. Surrounded by grim warehouses and a couple of solo boarded-up buildings with moats of weeds and garbage stands a three-story apparition of whimsical-looking bricks that might have been conjured by some child daydreaming of Lego blocks. An 80-foot tower with a moving LED display spells out messages in colored lights. As you get close you can see slitlike recessed windows, but it's difficult to tell what is going on inside until you enter the double doors, check in with tough but friendly Sam at the security desk, and take a few steps into a multitiered atrium of absolute magic.

Nothing can quite prepare you for a visit to the Gary Comer Youth Center, named for the man who

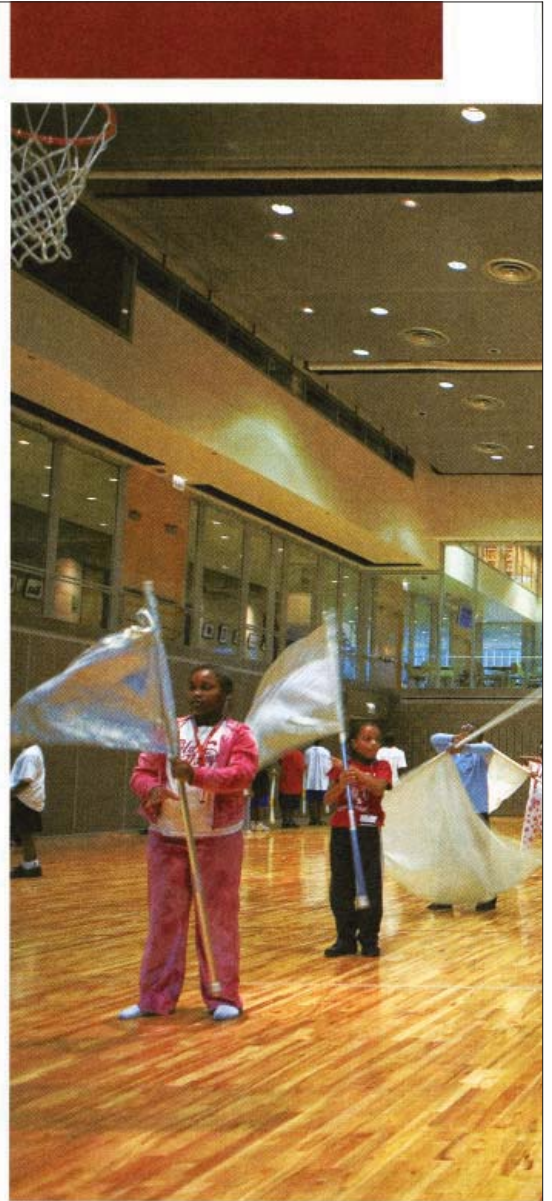
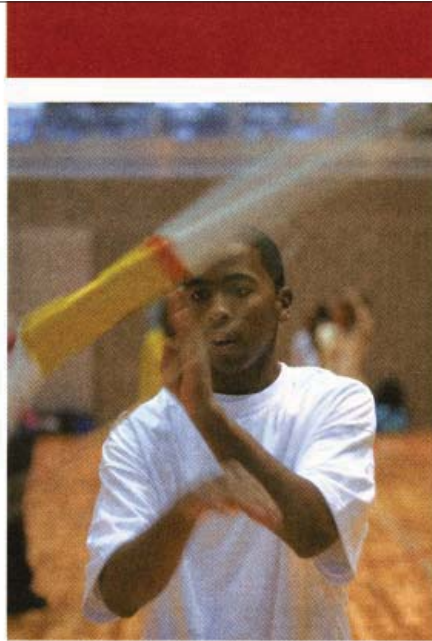


Opposite page, left: the east facade, seen from a back alley. Above: aside from supplying visual texture, the red and blue fiber-reinforced-cement panels—which have five shades each—safeguard against graffiti. If one panel is defaced, it's easy to swap it out for another.





Above: kids play basketball during a weekday open-gym session. Right, this page and opposite: the drill team's 8- to 18-year-olds practice rifle and flag maneuvers in the multi-functional space.



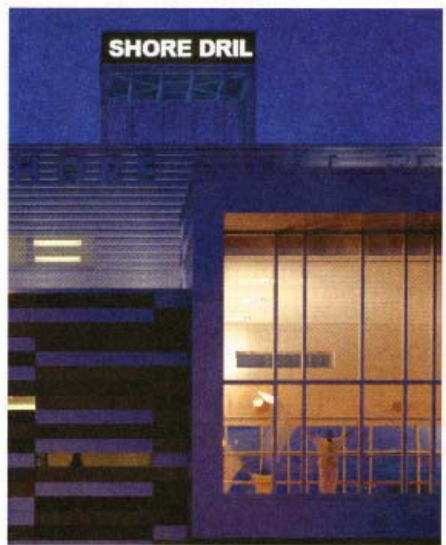
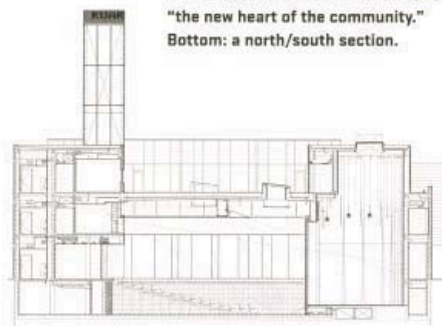
The idea that Comer originally brought to Ronan was much more modest: make a practice facility for the South Shore Drill Team.

paid for its construction, the billionaire founder of catalog retailer Lands' End. The center opened this summer on the site of an abandoned warehouse at the corner of 72nd Street South, Ingleside, and South Chicago Avenue. Designed by local architect John Ronan, the building is an arresting, alluring mystery by day. (Taxis frequently stop to ask pedestrians, "What the hell is this thing?") By night it's a warmly lit gathering place for a neighborhood that for decades has known only fear after dark. The facility is so beyond any familiar notion of a "youth center," YMCA, or Boys' Club, that it takes some getting used to. It is discreetly secure, as bulletproof as any neighborhood mini-mart, but this is no bunker. As modern as a contemporary art museum, it still manages to retain a casual human scale.

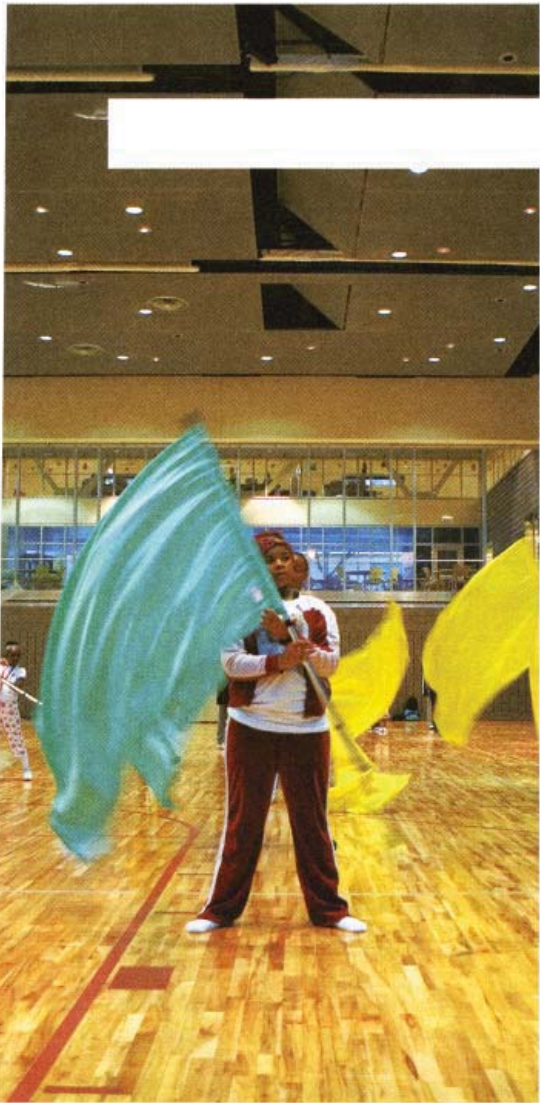
Its structure is formidable, built for constant use, not occasional visits. A steel frame holds massive trusses that allow high ceilings all around and support large skylights and a freestanding roof garden with more than 18 inches of soil and a full irrigation system. The structure is concealed behind walls and exterior surfaces decorated with festive and sophisticated graphics—but make no mistake, this building is designed to do battle with the forces of neglect and vandalism much in evidence on these streets. So far it seems to be winning; there is not a spot of graffiti anywhere. Perhaps the most amazing quality of the building is how radical it is on every level. It is the only new construction of any kind for years in this part of Chicago.



The building's dance room (above and right) is highly visible from the street below. Topped with an LED display, the steel-mesh tower symbolizes what architect John Ronan calls "the new heart of the community." Bottom: a north/south section.



This page, exterior photos, and opposite page, bottom photo, Steve Hall/courtesy Heifich Blessing, sections, courtesy John Ronan Architect



The gym (right) is outfitted with a motorized system that deploys in 40 seconds to transform the space into a 640-seat theater with blackout curtains. Bottom: an east/west section.

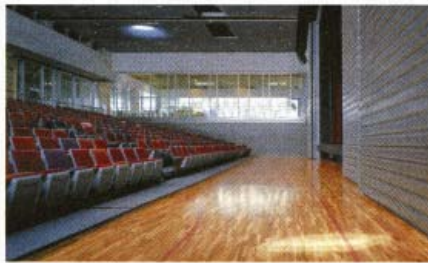


A view of the gym (above) from the second story. With few exterior windows, the center uses glass extensively on the inside to maximize light. Below left: a member of the drill team, which performs publicly more than a hundred times a year.

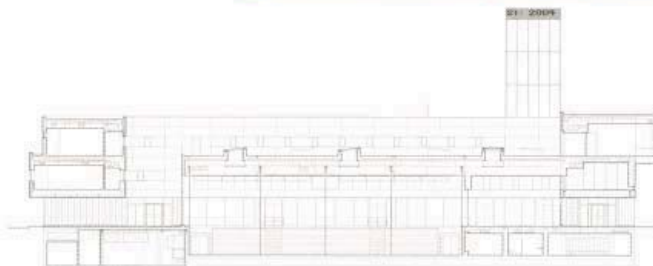


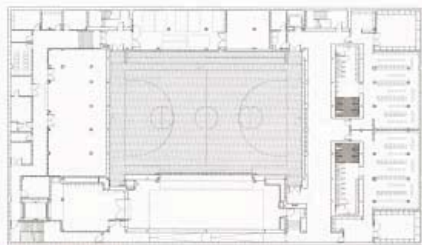
No timid trial-balloon seed development, the \$30 million facility boldly announces its intention to be here a century from now. This neighborhood, called Grand Crossing, was in January the largest in Chicago without a public library. Today it boasts an architectural landmark as distinct in its own way as Sears Tower.

Comer attended Paul Revere Elementary School 70 years ago, when the neighborhood was a polyglot immigrant community whose labor fueled Chicago's industrial expansion and was hit hard by the Great Depression. After the success of Lands' End, he became one of Chicago's biggest local philanthropists, focusing his resources on the streets and parks where he once played without any thought of bullets or gangs. Comer's three giant gifts, totaling more than \$84 million, to the nearby University of Chicago Medical Center established a children's hospital, a specialty-care facility, and a mobile pediatric unit for the neighborhood, but he yearned to get closer to the streets of his childhood. He walked them alone back in the late 1990s to get a feel for the needs of Grand Crossing, which then had a 55 percent dropout rate and one of the highest levels of violent crime in the city. With the quiet expertise of a retailer observing his customers, Comer studied the area until a plan began to form. One afternoon in 2003 this newly street-smart entrepreneur of change took his then modest plan to an architect.

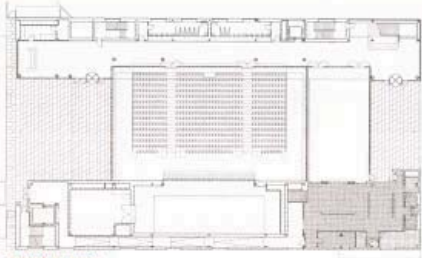


The multilevel see-through interior seems to create an infectious factory of work and play where anything could happen.

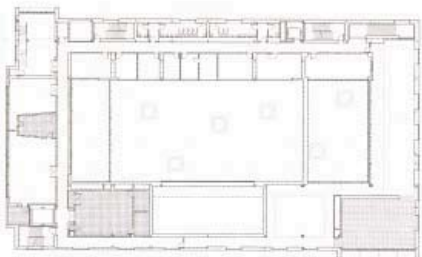




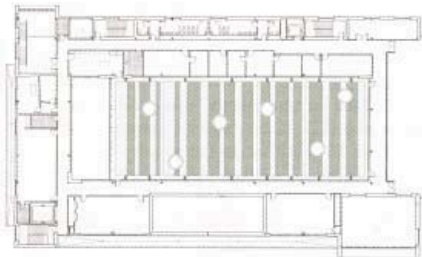
GROUND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR



THIRD FLOOR/ROOF

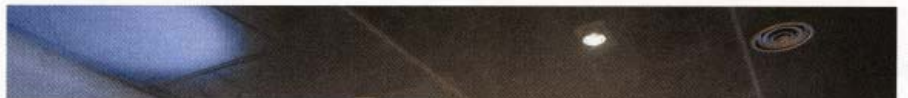
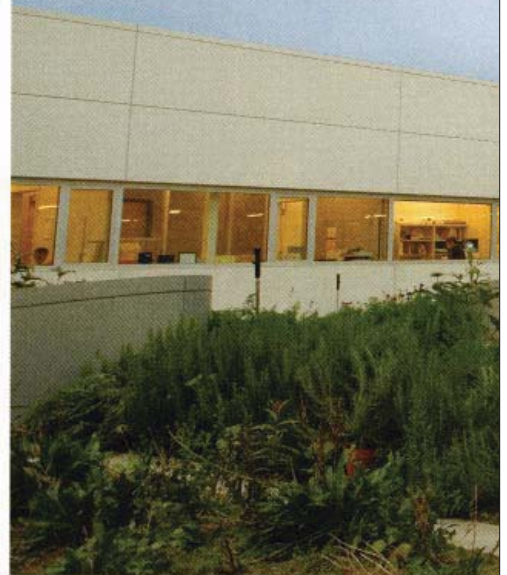


The cafeteria (right) overlooks the gym and offers views into the library and tutoring room.



Ronan can clearly recall the day when an unassuming elderly man stopped by his firm's hip offices in Chicago's River North. "He was just a nice guy with an idea for a building," he says. "I was on the phone when he came in and made him wait for about five minutes, and I never do that. I had no idea who he was. He was wearing a sweater and khakis from Lands' End, but I didn't put anything together." Eventually Ronan did, but he's still reeling with amazement over what the project became. Although he has a solid portfolio of buildings under way around the world, the architect comes close to matching Comer's unassuming style. He even quickly disavows a widely reported story

A student in the dance studio (left), which has three walls of mirrors and one of glass. Students help maintain the center's 8,400-square-foot, 18-24-inch-deep green roof. Three mornings a week, seniors also tend to the garden. "It reinforces the goals of the center and responds to the mandate" of Mayor Richard J. Daley's green-roofs initiative, Ronan says.



Cafeteria and exhibition-room photos: Steve Hall/courtesy/Stanrich-Blessing



Chicago architect Brad Lynch calls the center the most transformative building to be constructed in the city in a decade: "It's that powerful."



The multipurpose exhibition room (left) looks out onto the roof garden and often holds student art. Students play foosball in the game room (above), which features a wall of messages from such quotables as Muhammad Ali, Henry Chester, and Henry David Thoreau. Top right: 11-year-old Marc Franklin, who comes to the center for help with his homework.



that Comer was attracted to him because, unlike other big-name architects, Ronan answers his own phones. "That's just a rumor," he says with a twisted modesty. "I answer my own phones, but that's not why Gary picked me."

Modest or not, the collaboration between Comer and Ronan has produced what Chicago architect Brad Lynch calls the most transformative building to be constructed in the city in at least a decade. "The center does everything superior architecture is supposed to do," Lynch says. "And it's not because of some dazzling Koolhaas- or Gehry-style design elements. It has already changed lives. You go down to that urban war zone and spend time in that building, and it goes bang. It's that powerful."

The idea that Comer originally brought to Ronan was much more humble than the multiuse complex standing at 72nd and Ingleside. The original plan was to make a practice facility for the 26-year-old South Shore Drill Team, a precision parade team famous for its steely discipline and spectacular synchronized rifle throws and spins. The team was founded by local educator Arthur Robertson to keep his brother from dropping out of school. Robertson's kids are taught to pursue goals and stick together, and are required to maintain a C average. The award-winning drill team has performed all over the world—the Indy 500 Parade, gubernatorial inaugurations—but it had never had a home. Robertson had been scrounging for space for his expanding group for years.

"We sat down with them and said, 'Hey, what do you want in this building? Because you can have anything you want,'" Ronan recalls. "They asked for really basic things like 'a building with heat—that would be good.'" Comer kept asking Ronan to go beyond the basics, and the **continued on page 132**



MIRACLE ON 72ND STREET

continued from page 95 idea of a full-fledged youth center began to take shape. "One week it was a health clinic and then it was a preschool, and then that went out the window. It had this make-believe quality to it." Three months into the project Ronan made up a laundry list, trying to pin Comer down, including some easy things like arts and crafts, a game room, and a library for homework. He also put in some things that were more out there, such as a recording studio, a computer lab, a fully wired lecture hall capable of broadcasting onto the Internet, a workout space, and a dance studio. Ronan gave the list to Comer and expected him to look it over and give him some feedback. Instead Comer decided on the spot to do it all.

"We could pick any site we wanted because Gary had basically bought up the whole neighborhood. Money was not an issue, ever," Ronan says.

"Usually somebody comes to you with a site and a program, and a budget way too small to do the program," Ronan says. "Here we had no program. We could make it up ourselves. We could pick any site we wanted because Gary had basically bought up the whole neighborhood. Money was not an issue, ever. I mean it was like a school project or something. It was a dream."

Comer's dream was going to have some severe design limitations. An early mock-up with lots of exterior glass was unveiled before a community group and flopped. "Basically they told us they wanted no glass at all," Ronan says. "Glass is impossible down here," they said." So he devised thick concrete walls with colored panels, to keep the building from looking like a bunker. Ronan quietly added recessed windows of bulletproof glass and lots of skylights and interior glass to capture and diffuse all available daylight. Halfway into the design process Comer abruptly demanded a third floor to the building. Each addition increased Comer's and Ronan's passion for the project.

But there was something else driving this endeavor that Ronan discovered long after his first encounter with Comer. Midway through the project, the philanthropist was stricken with a recurrence of bone-marrow cancer. Ronan says he could feel the importance of the project to Comer as the months passed and construction began. Although Comer never would explicitly say it, this project

MIRACLE ON 72ND STREET

represented his legacy. "He gave a lot more money to the hospitals," Ronan says. "But there it was just hand over a check and the doctors did the rest. Here Gary had a hand in all of it. His heart was really into this center."

Comer created an endowment for the building to be maintained long after his death, and there is a long list of Chicago institutions eager to carry out programming and activities there. Pamela Bozeman-Evans, senior program director, left a job with the rising political star Senator Barack Obama to join the center. She says this is her first community-service job where fund-raising is not the primary responsibility. "This building is already a major player in the revitalization of the neighborhood. Just look around."

When the building was dedicated in May, Comer was in a wheelchair, too weak to walk. "Isn't this going to be the greatest thing for the kids?" he whispered to one of the local reporters who covered the event. Ronan says Comer had his hands in the critical details right up to the end. "I remember we showed him the color tiles for the outside not knowing what he would think, if he would even like them at all," Ronan recalls wistfully. "He of course told us to make them brighter, bolder."

On an October afternoon, kids begin wandering in from nearby schools to do homework at the clean tables in the cafeteria, where others are getting a hot meal at the line up front. Above, windows all around reveal rooms for one-on-one tutoring, art classes, a library, a dance studio, workout equipment, a recording studio, and a computer lab. Through a wall of glass, visitors peer down into the building's centerpiece, a beautiful gymnasium (which converts with the push of a button into a 640-seat theater), and watch three groups of boys and girls playing basketball. On the roof the working garden is still producing some late crops destined for a culinary-arts class. Everywhere is color, warmth, smiles, and laughter. The multilevel see-through interior seems to create an infectious factory of work and play where anything could happen. As I look around only boredom seems an implausible activity here.

"This place is clean and fun, and you can do activities here, not just sit around and watch TV," 11-year-old Marc Franklin says, munching on some chicken while explaining that his favorite activities involve the game room and homework help. A crowd gathers. Everyone is eager to explain to a stranger what this building means to them. "It's clean and nice and important-looking—that's why nobody puts graffiti here," 12-year-old Tyrenza Stevenson explains, until Marc suddenly interrupts her: "It's like you don't worry about getting shot over here. That's the main thing." He's stocky and a little sensitive about his weight, which he blames partly on spending too

continued on page 135

MIRACLE ON 72ND STREET

continued from page 133 much time in his house, off the dangerous streets. "I plan to slim down," Marc says. "They have treadmills and all kinds of weights and things for exercising."

The subject shifts to what people want to be when they grow up. They all chatter at once, but there's no boastful thuggery, no references to video games and hip-hop celebrities, or other typical preteen acting out. The talk around these tables ranges far and wide, as though the building has quietly given them permission, as though it's suddenly OK to dream. The kids are excited but not

The talk around these tables ranges far and wide, as though the building has quietly given them permission to dream.

overawed by this place. They speak of it as something they deserve to have, not some outlandish, intimidating piece of good fortune. A member of the drill team says, "This building is here because we were so determined, and that's what got us noticed." It's an attitude that suggests that the center will be around for a long time. Every kid knows about the man who made it possible. "We love Mr. Comer," they say, even though none of them has the faintest idea what Lands' End might be. "Mr. Gary Comer used to live around here and wanted to do something to make the neighborhood better," Tyrenza says. "He sure enough did that." Marc says confidently. "If I was really rich I would put a youth center in every neighborhood."

Comer died in early October at the age of 78. Ronan says one of his last appearances was in September by video link to a live performance of the radio show *A Prairie Home Companion* in the center's theater. "You should have seen it," Ronan says. "Kid volunteers were parking cars. The drill team was fantastic." It was a thrilling experience to see a building that he designed so alive and bringing people from all over the city to a neighborhood they never knew existed. He speaks reverently of the client who walked into his office out of the blue and changed his life. "I consider myself lucky to have found Gary Comer, but he lucked out to get me," the architect says quietly with a fierce emotional pride. "He trusted me, and he was right." Outside as night falls, the interior lights of the youth center spill warmth out onto what were very recently mean streets. On the tower above the center the lights spell out a somber message: "Thank you Gary Comer." This newest detail on Chicago's skyline can be seen for miles.

www.metropolismag.com

"You have to create a secure environment. It's a precondition for learning."

— John Ronan, architect who designed a stainless-steel exterior for Gary Comer College Prep



Glass walls separate hallways from classrooms at Gary Comer College Prep at 7131 S. South Chicago Ave. ALEX GARCIA/TRIBUNE PHOTOS

Beacon of optimism

Bright new design for Comer Prep meant to aid education

The bright new high school rises next to the scene of a senseless inner-city killing — a 17-year-old girl, chatting with a friend on her cell phone, shot dead in 2008 after two men argued on a CTA bus.

The \$20 million school is a legacy of the late Gary Comer, the innovative founder of the Lands' End clothing empire, who grew up in the Grand Crossing neighborhood and never forgot it.

Like a neighboring youth center that also bears Comer's name, the school is a beacon of optimism for an area that needs it.

Here at 7131 S. South Chicago Ave., just blocks from streets where crimes like burglary and robbery are almost as commonplace as a Starbucks in Lincoln Park, a protective outer shell of glistening stainless steel gives way to an interior that is washed in natural light — from windows, skylights and glass walls that line hallways instead of concrete block.



Blair Kamin
Cityscapes



Comer Prep, which formally opened Sept. 14 in Grand Crossing, has lime-green exterior walls and a glassy two-story lobby.

The crests of elite universities (Princeton, Stanford, Northwestern) adorn the wallpaper in the soaring, light-filled lobby.

Without speaking a word, the architecture sends a message to the school's 510 students: You are safe here — and you will be challenged.

The school, called Gary Comer College Prep, was designed by Chicago architect John Ronan, whose wide-ranging portfolio includes the under-construction Poetry Foundation building in River North and, alongside the school, the Gary Comer

Youth Center at 7200 S. Ingleside Ave. The exuberant youth center, home to the South Shore Drill Team and winner of a 2009 national design award from the American Institute of Architects, is sheathed in materials that include bulletproof glass.

"You have to create a secure environment. It's a precondition for learning," Ronan explained the other day as he walked the sidewalks outside the school.

Built for the Comer Science & Education Foundation and formally opened Sept. 14, the school raises a broader question that ultimately may be impossible to answer: Can better buildings help produce better students?

It is far easier to quantify the academic challenges that the school's teachers confront. Only 5 percent of the adults in Grand Crossing have earned a bachelor's degree and less than half the students in the neighborhood graduate from high school, according to the school's managers, the Noble Network of Charter Schools. And the physical setting around the school — a hard-edged commercial strip, storefront churches, vacant lots — is no less daunting.

Please turn to **Page 10**

Stainless steel safety, but bright natural light

Continued from Page 1

In this tattered context, Ronan's brightly colored buildings inject a jolt of optimism as well as a sense of order.

Like the 4-year-old youth center, which is topped by an 80-foot LED tower and wrapped in bold red and blue panels, the school grabs the eyes of passing drivers with its zesty lime-green walls. Attractive modern fencing, a welcome departure from Mayor Richard Daley's ubiquitous fake wrought-iron, keeps out gang members and other troublemakers. Facing a nearby six-corner intersection, letters atop the fencing spell out "Grand Crossing."

"That was Gary's idea," Ronan said. "He wanted to give (the neighborhood) an identity that Lincoln Park has, or Kenwood has."

As they would on a college campus, students walk between the buildings. Fortuitously, the school shares the youth center's gym, cafeteria, music rooms, art rooms and computer labs. Without the arrangement, the school would have been twice as big and cost twice as much. True, there are inconveniences associated with using two buildings rather than one, but the school literally has them covered.

When it rains, green-and-white Comer Prep umbrellas keep the perambulating students dry. When it turns cold, jackets donated by Lands' End will help keep them warm.

"As I've said to the students, we are going to get them ready for college in every way that we can," says the school's 29-year-old principal, James Troupis, a 2003 Northwestern graduate. "I still remember those days walking up Sheridan Road, in negative temperatures, sleet coming down, wind coming off the lake, having to go between classes at NU."

While Ronan's stainless-steel exterior conveys a feeling of protection, it is anything but fortresslike, more a streamlined screen than a brutal wall. With typical attention to how people use urban spaces, the architect provides a swinging metal gate



Quotes and university crests adorn lobby walls at Comer Prep, named for the Lands' End founder, who died in 2006. ALEX GARCIA/TRIBUNE PHOTO



just to the side of his monumentally scaled lobby entrance. Through the gate, away from the dangerous streets, is a protected outdoor plaza that students have come to call "the Quad."

It is all ruggedly handsome, which is just right for this industrial-strength section of Chicago. Yet the straightforward exterior is simply a warm-up for the light-filled spaces that await inside.

A glassy two-story lobby that looks back toward the youth center is monumental without being stuffy. Alongside it is a tiered lecture hall that prepares

students for amphitheater-style learning once they graduate.

On corridor walls, custom-designed letters from Ronan's shop spell out the school's core values: "Grit," "Zest," "Optimism" and "Gratitude." Appropriately, because the vast majority of the students are black, the letters are framed by black-and-white photographs of African-American achievers and by pictures of students and teachers.

What ultimately elevates the interior, though, is Ronan's manipulation of space and light.

By ringing the perimeter with classrooms and pushing services and offices (even the principal's) to the building's center, he guarantees that natural light will pour into the classrooms. The perforated steel on the outside may look impenetrable, but the light goes right through it and the windows behind it.

Better yet, Ronan places skylights directly over the building's corridors and cuts openings between the first and second floors, ensuring that daylight will reach the lower floor. In the most innovative move, he puts glass walls between the hallways and the classrooms, an arrangement that ordinarily would raise concerns about distracted students, safety and fingerprints. But Comer is not an ordinary place.

The charter school operated out of a glassy exhibition room in the youth center for two years, and the teachers and students came to like the openness.

"Here, I feel so lucky," said physics teacher Chris Carlson, whose lab is especially brightly lit because it occupies one of the building's corners. The corridor glass stays clean, by the way, because "we tell the students not to touch it," according to principal Troupis.

Such features, it should be noted, are not simply aesthetic. The interior's transparency is designed to create a "stay on your toes" culture of performance and accountability. And it may promote a sense of community without the acoustical problems associated with the open classrooms that were all the rage in the 1970s.

It is too early in the life of Comer Prep to know what sort of impact the design will have on students and whether it will help raise test scores and other measures of achievement. The school's 96 percent attendance rate is an encouraging sign, but by no means conclusive. Only next year will the fledgling school have students in all four years of high school. It is currently teaching in grades 9 through 11.

Nonetheless, good design and even good mechanical systems

can help reframe both the environment and what students expect of themselves.

"The trend (from various studies) suggests, over and over, that quality of air and the abundance of natural light makes a difference in how a child learns," said John Weekes, a Portland, Ore., architect who chairs the American Institute of Architects' national committee on education design. It's common sense: Better conditions mean less sickness — and that means more attendance and more learning.

Ronan's design offers a potent reminder of architecture's ability to transform lives — not single-handedly, but in partnership with committed teachers and parents. You know it when you knock on the door of Pilar Landon's 11th-grade math class at Comer, and a young woman comes to the door, gives you a firm handshake and invites you in to see students intently following every number their teacher writes on her 8-foot-high marker board.

bkamin@tribune.com

chicagotribune.com/kamin

Architecture critic Blair Kamin blogs about the buildings and urban spaces that shape our lives.

ARCHITECTURE

New youth center in Grand Crossing a beacon of optimism

Lands' End founder Gary Comer taps architect John Ronan to craft an innovative new space

By Blair Kamin
Tribune architecture critic

Only every inner-city neighborhood had an angel like Lands' End founder Gary Comer. In his old Grand Crossing neighborhood on the South Side, the 76-year-old casual clothing magnate has funded a new \$30 million youth center that, despite a sometimes-garish exterior winningly stitches together social conscience and striking aesthetics.

The center's architect is John Ronan, one of the young talents who has infused Chicago's design scene with fresh energy. Two years ago, Ronan beat such international stars as Thom Mayne of Santa Monica, Calif., last year's Pritzker Architecture Prize winner, in a competition for a public high school in Perth Amboy, N.J. His out-of-the-box design, now on hold for lack of funds, calls for a school with five towers, each housing communal facilities such as a gym and set off with vibrant graphics.

His youth center, located near the Chicago Skyway at 7200 S. Ingleside Ave. and topped by an 80-foot-tall tower with an LED sign, is cut from the same cloth as the planned New Jersey high school—a beacon of hope for an area that needs it. At the May 25 dedication for the building, Comer joked that the 42-year-old Ronan got the job because he was the only one of three potential architects who answered his own phone.

Glass was verboten

The center offered Ronan challenges that are unheard of in the expensive private homes he's designed since he opened his practice in 1997. "The building users didn't want any glass in the building. I was really struck dumb," Ronan says. But "that's the reality they live with. The question was how do I keep this building from being a bunker?"

Lots of bulletproof glass along the outside walls, for starters. And plenty of skylights that bring in light from above.

Those are two elements in the building that demonstrate why Ronan deserves a spot on the design map—and how his approach to architecture differs from those of other Chicago up-and-comers, such as Doug Garofalo, who uses the computer to create fluid, biomorphic shapes called blobs.

"I'm interested in more of a spatial complexity than a formal complexity," Ronan replies when asked why he clings to seemingly old-fashioned right angles and rectangles.

Formally known as the Gary Comer Youth Center and providing a permanent home for the previously itinerant South Shore Drill Team (as well as programs for children at the nearby Paul Revere School), the building illustrates the fundamental soundness of Ronan's approach.

The center's context is urban decay—a variety of modest homes (some well-kept, others ramshackle), vacant lots, storefront churches and heavily trafficked roads. Ronan wisely sees no need to imitate these surroundings, as post-modern architects might have done 20 years ago. That's the past. His building aggressively asserts the future.

Convertibility a core value

At its heart is a gymnasium that can be converted into a 600-seat theater with movable tiers of seats, motorized theater curtains and motorized stage doors that reveal an 80-foot-wide, 30-foot-deep stage. The handsomely proportioned, light-filled room serves as the drill team's main practice and performance area.

Wrapping around it, like a series of long, evenly spaced bars, are a variety of facilities, including a cafeteria, a recreation room, a dance room, an arts and crafts room and an exhibition/lecture hall. Outside, a parking lot also serves as the drill team's practice parade ground, one of numerous flexible spaces both inside and outside.

In a typical youth center, interior walls would segregate this rich assortment of uses from each other and the activities would not be expressed on the building's exterior. The excitement within the building would dissipate.

In a far more creative unity of form and function, Ronan uses large expanses of glass to open views from one room into the other. He puts areas such as the dance room and the exhibition room on vivid display, using cantilevers to thrust their glass walls beyond the building's perimeter. Seeking to express the youthful energy of the inhabitants and the optimism of the community, he clads the steel-framed building in brightly colored cement panels (which come in seemingly random patterns of red and blue). If one of the panels is damaged, workers can take out the rivets that hold them in place and easily install a replacement.

It is, on the whole, an effective exterior, with a strong civic presence despite its lack of outlandish, look-at-me shapes.

The cantilevered rooms and their vast expanses of bulletproof glass endow the building with sculptural force. The steel-framed tower leaves their dominant horizontality, suggesting a modern version of an old-fashioned church steeple with its ghostly steel mesh cladding and an LED sign that advertises events at the center. The building effectively echoes the monumentality of the nearby Revere School, with its castelike top, rather than imitating it.

There are subtle pleasures, too, such as the way Ronan bridges the second floor over sheltered outdoor foyers to create a graceful path inside. Most important, the action on the inside is communicated to the outside. The building does far more to express its activities than its structure.



Tribune photos by Chris Walker

Designed by Chicago architect John Ronan, the Gary Comer Youth Center is topped by a steel-framed tower, complete with an LED sign that advertises events at the center to the community. Ronan used a variety of innovative materials, including a translucent green glass from Germany that accents the building's entries.



Ronan used large walls of glass to make the Comer Youth Center's cafeteria (foreground) and its convertible gymnasium/theater appear to be a single space. The multipurpose space is the main practice and performance space of the South Shore Drill Team.



Atop the Comer Youth Center is a courtyardlike roof garden that is directly outside the building's third-floor office. It offers children in the neighborhood a serene place to experience nature. Ronan accented the roof garden with sleek skylights that draw natural light into the building's gymnasium-theater.



The exhibition/lecture hall of the Comer Youth Center is one of several flexible spaces in the building that can be adapted to different uses. It also is among the rooms in the building that offer views of the surrounding neighborhood, including a nearby church.

That showcases the center far more effectively than any sign.

Exterior panels a problem

The innovative exterior panels, however, turn out to be a mixed blessing. True, the panels animate what otherwise would have been an enormous windowless mass. The blue panels even have a cool sophistication that joins with the spoked-steel form of the tower to suggest a sleek steamship. But the red ones are simply garish, resembling an oversize version of the pinkish and reddish asphalt shingles once attached to aging wood frame houses around Chicago. One wonders how they'll look in 10 years. For now, the cladding is more exuberant than elegant.

Inside, despite the need for the protective exterior, the center manages to be light and open.

The interior spaces work not simply as individual rooms but as interlocking zones that simultaneously create a sense of openness, enhance the center's sense of community and offer a form of security because people can be watched. A good example is the view from the cafeteria to the gymnasium. Shared maple flooring makes the two rooms seem like one. The glass between

them is less a wall than a screen. The fact that the gym is sunken below ground level only adds to the spatial drama.

"The idea was to feed off the energy of the drill team and let that permeate the building," Ronan says.

The gym is an apt demonstration of what he calls "programmatic sustainability." Translation: By combining two normally separated uses, a gym and a theater, into one, you save both money and energy. Of course, multipurpose buildings, such as the combined football and baseball stadiums of the 1960s, have failed before. In that regard, the acid test is going to be how the gym works as a theater—whether its acoustics are effective, whether sound from inside the room doesn't disturb quiet spaces elsewhere in the building, whether its seats are comfortable and the machinery that moves them doesn't break down.

Flexible interior design

But there are no such caveats for the rest of the interior, which is both tailored to its occupants (the dance room, for example, is twice the normal height to let the drill team practice rifle and

flag throwing) and flexible enough to accommodate future unanticipated uses.

Among the finest spaces are an exhibition/lecture hall (another flexible space) and the arts and crafts room, both of which allow children to rise above the everyday and look back down on their neighborhood—its churches, its schools, its housing. The best space, however, is the roof garden, which is flanked by offices for the center and a corridor leading to the exhibition/lecture hall.

Like a conventional green roof, this one works against the urban heat-island effect by replacing heat-generating asphalt with heat-reducing plants. But it offers the advantage of being habitable, a place where kids growing up amid gangs and drugs can instead plant flowers and vegetables and watch them grow.

You can feel a sense of possibility here that you can't on real ground. Good architecture can do that. It doesn't just create new possibilities for how we use the world. It opens up new ways of seeing the world. That's what happens when an angel such as Gary Comer remembers from whence he came.

bkamin@tribune.com

John Ronan's bright and bold **GARY COMER YOUTH CENTER** supports an ambitious agenda on Chicago's South Side

By Joann Gonchar, AIA

PROJECTS

Though little more than 10 miles to the south, Grand Crossing is worlds away from Downtown Chicago. Instead of the sleek office towers and luxury apartment buildings sprouting like weeds in and around the Loop, this South Side neighborhood is a jumble of empty lots, industrial buildings, and humble wood-frame and brick single-family homes. In the midst of these dreary surroundings is an almost improbable symbol of optimism—the colorfully clad, \$30 million Gary Comer Youth Center, with its scrolling LED sign atop an 80-foot-tall tower that punctuates the otherwise low-rise landscape.

The building, financed by Lands End founder Gary Comer, was completed in July 2006, just months before he died of cancer at age 78. The mail-order retailer had grown up in Grand Crossing and had attended Paul Revere Elementary school, just one block from the site of the future youth center. His reengagement with his old neighborhood reportedly began in the late 1990s, with the donation of computers to Revere. Soon, Comer's involvement with the community deepened, and in early 2004, on the basis of a recommendation from a professor at the Illinois Institute of

Technology, he sought out Chicago architect John Ronan.

Comer's desire was to build a home for the 300-member South Shore Drill Team—a 28-year-old parade performance group, whose mission is to combat teen drug use and violence by instilling kids with self-discipline and confidence. But Comer's ambitions for the building grew, with the program expanding almost weekly, according to Ronan. The philanthropist's vision for the center eventually evolved into a three-story, 75,000-square-foot facility that would support recreational and educational

Project: *The Gary Comer Youth Center, Chicago*

Owner: *The Comer Science & Education Foundation*

Architect: *John Ronan Architects—John Ronan, AIA, lead designer; Evan Menk, Brian Maladay, project architects; Yasushi Koakutsu, Oscar Kang,*

Brad Kelley, Micah Land, Nageshwar Rao, project team

Engineers: *Arup (structural); CCJM (m/e/p); Terra Engineering (civil)*

Consultants: *Charter Sills (lighting); Kirkegaard Associates (acoustics); Peter Lindsay Schaudt (landscape)*

General contractor: *W.E. O'Neil*



The colorful exterior of the Gary Comer Youth Center enlivens an otherwise dreary landscape. Its collection of boxlike volumes, including the glazed exhibition hall that projects to shelter the entrance below, gives just a hint of the spatial complexity found within.





The client had at first wanted a brick building. However, the architect thought the material would be the wrong scale, especially for a building with few windows. Instead, he enveloped the structure in a bold pattern of rain-screen panels.

programs for all Grand Crossing youth.

The program's expansion might have complicated site selection, but Comer had already acquired much of the available land in the neighborhood. The project "had an unreal quality," comments Ronan. "We could pick the site and make up the program."

If the project had the make-believe character of an architecture school studio assignment, Ronan nevertheless grappled with daunting real-world constraints. For example, community members worried that expanses of street-facing glass would leave occupants vulnerable to drive-by shootings. To respond to this concern without creating a fortress, the architect enveloped almost all of the braced-steel frame structure in colorful fiber-cement rain-screen panels. Their seemingly random arrangement camouflages slotlike bullet-resistant windows. More generous areas of this glazing give expression to programmatically significant elements, like a dance studio and an exhibition hall.

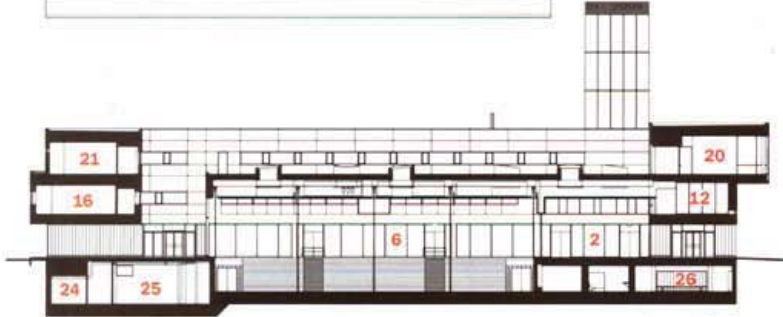
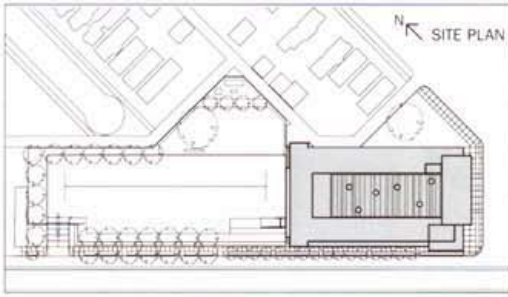
These spaces, as well as others that support programs such as computer instruction, tutoring, and music classes, are housed within bar-like modules that wrap around the building's physical and emotional center—a double-story, daylight-filled gymnasium that serves as a daily practice space for the drill team. To convert the gym into a theater for an audience of 640 people, a telescoping seating system is deployed, and motorized doors open to reveal a well-equipped stage.

An endowment established by Comer covers the building's operations and maintenance, while educational and community organizations, such as the job-training group After School Matters and the video instruction program Free Spirit Media, oversee the center's offerings. Forging such partnerships was a process that continued throughout design and construc-

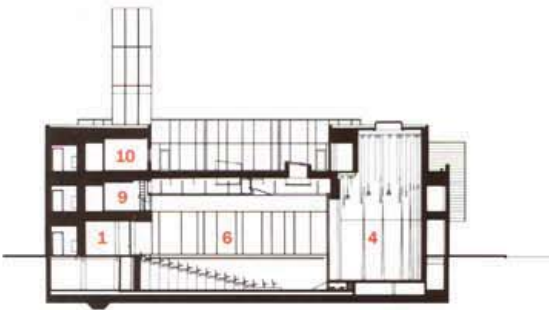
Expanses of glass are reserved for programmatically important areas, such as the exhibition hall projecting from the entry

facades (this page). At the opposite end of the building, the parking lot (opposite) doubles as an outdoor practice area for the drill team.



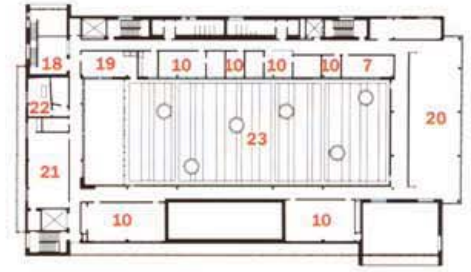


SECTION A-A



SECTION B-B

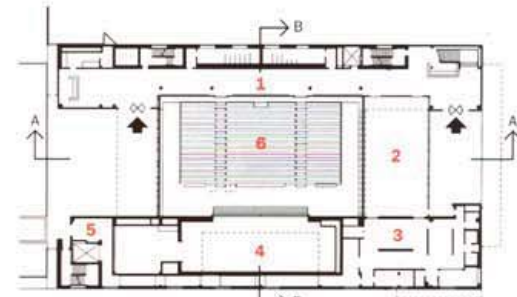
1. Lobby
2. Cafeteria
3. Kitchen
4. Stage
5. Loading
6. Gymnasium/theater
7. Conference
8. Tutoring
9. Theater lighting controls
10. Office
11. Study
12. Recreation
13. Dance



THIRD FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR

14. Exercise
15. Costume shop
16. Band
17. Music
18. Arts and crafts
19. Gardening
20. Lecture/exhibition
21. Computer lab
22. Recording studio
23. Roof garden
24. Server room
25. Mechanical
26. Locker room





The dance studio (above) has ceilings tall enough to allow the drill team to practice twirling and throwing props such as flags.

Many of the third-floor spaces, including a circulation corridor (below left), provide visual access to the roof garden, where

children cultivate vegetables and herbs. From the cafeteria (below), visitors can survey activity in the gym and beyond.



tion, says Greg Mooney, executive director of both the youth center and the Comer Science & Education Foundation. But, by the time the building opened, all the spaces were occupied. "It all fell into place," adds the architect.

With overlapping volumes, well-considered adjacencies, and strategic use of interior glazing, Ronan has achieved a spatial complexity that the center's exterior massing belies. From the cafeteria, for example, a visitor can survey the activity in the gymnasium, look through the entry court, and see beyond to the parking lot that doubles as an outdoor practice area for the drill team. This visual access encourages a sense of community among the various users and facilitates staff oversight.

Ronan chose finishes that create a calm but playful backdrop for the center's sometimes frenetic activity. Inside, the bold cladding scheme gives way to more subdued hues: epoxy-coated concrete floors in muted oranges, blues, and greens pull out the aggregate colors in ground-face-block walls. "We were aiming for a fun environment where kids would want to be," says Ronan. "One where they feel respected and important."

Much of Comer's philanthropy was directed toward the study of climate change, and the building reflects his concern about the environment.

The spaces are designed to be adaptable and flexible. The third-floor exhibition area comes with deployable display panels that double as room dividers, while black-out shades and projection screens convert it into a small lecture hall.

The most obvious manifestation of this preoccupation is the green roof above the gym and cafeteria. It counteracts the urban-heat-island effect and reduces storm-water runoff, but unlike most planted roofs built for those purposes, the center's intensive system has soil deep enough to allow children to cultivate vegetables and herbs. For some, it is their first experience with gardening. "To these kids, outside is a dangerous place to be," points out Ronan.

Other features contribute to the green agenda as well, including the rain-screen facade, which has inherent thermal benefits. Strategies

such as skylights and the generous interior glazing help the building seem remarkably daylight-filled despite the community's stricture against windows, while occupancy sensors control electric lights. In addition, a sophisticated management system permits the stepping down of heating and cooling when individual spaces are not in use.

Perhaps more important than any of these features is the building's programmatic adaptability. Just as the gymnasium converts to a theater, the third-floor exhibition space allows for multiple uses. Here, a deployable panel system for displaying artwork can also subdivide the room into classrooms. Black-out shades permit its conversion to a lecture room.

Other spaces are designed so that they can be easily modified over time as the needs of the community change, or to allow multiple uses over the course of the day. For example, during normal school hours, when the building is relatively empty, adult exercise classes and a nurse-training program occupy some of the rooms. Starting next fall, the building will be even more intensely inhabited during school hours when the center launches a charter high school in partnership with another Chicago-based nonprofit.

The launch of the charter school is one example of how programs offered at the center are already growing and transforming in ways unanticipated during the design process. And that is perfectly in keeping with Comer's philosophy, says Mooney. "Gary believed that if you created something visionary, it would sustain itself." ■

Sources

Exterior cladding: *Eternit; Alucobond; Centria*

Roofing: *American Hydrotech (roof garden); Carlisle (other locations)*

Windows and skylights: *Wausau*

Glazing: *Viracon*

Auditorium seating: *Irwin*

Interior downlights: *Lightolier*

Elevators: *Mitsubishi*

ONLINE: To rate this project, go to architecturalrecord.com/projects/.



March 2, 2008

Where the sky's the limit

At inner-city youth center, there's so much more than vegetables growing and developing up on the roof

By Barbara Mahany | TRIBUNE REPORTER

Hard by the Chicago Skyway, tucked into a triangle bound by train tracks, a cemetery and an outlet store that peddles office desks and chairs, there is, up two flights of stairs, a respite where children more used to running for cover, and stepping over broken bits of glass, can actually sink their fingers into soil, and lie down and take in great swaths of sky.

Or simply feel the wind. Or take in the chirping of a bird. Or the fluttering of a butterfly.

In fact, first thing Marji Hess, the teacher, does when she starts a brand-new garden class at the Gary Comer Youth Center on Chicago's South Side, is have her students leave behind the planting tables and the seeds. Pick a row, any row, she tells them. Then, lie down and see what you can see.

Clouds and more clouds, might be the answer. Or maybe only endless blue.

Either way, it's a sight unseen by many pairs of eyes of the children who soon will learn how a seed sprouts, or that you can really pull a carrot from the ground. And, most astonishingly, that a pickle comes from a cucumber that you pluck from a vine. (They're still shaking their heads over that bit of botanic news, confounded that the floppy discs don't merely come from jars, or somehow wind up tucked beneath the bun on fast-food burgers.)

When children live in a neighborhood where gang shootings punctuate the daily news, it is nothing short of revolutionary -- and sacred, really -- to have a place where they can lay down their fears, and simply turn their faces toward the sky.

"The symbolism is not lost on them," says Hess, stepping over a snow-dusted earthen mound one recent chilly afternoon. "That's why you're here," I tell them. "The sky's the limit for you."

"They get that; I don't have any question about that. I had a 6th-grade girl who wasn't keen on gardening, but she liked to go out very carefully and lay her head on the oregano. This was like her relaxation therapy. This is our nature center. To hear all the birds when the pole beans are growing. There aren't a lot of hiding places for birds around here. Our pole-bean tents became that. We made a meadow here of echinacea. The first year we had no bees. But now there are birds and bees, and worms and caterpillars."

And that's just the start of it.

'Makes my mind explode'

"The garden makes me feel poetic," says Cherish Solomon, who is 12, and wears purple high-top sneakers. "The soil is like, you know, you like playing in soil. The soil is soft. The flowers, when they bloom, it's beautiful. It makes me feel relaxed.

"Coming up to the rooftop ... it makes my mind explode. I feel like I'm laying out on a cloud. I never felt like that before."

When Hess took on the garden back in May 2006, when the youth center first opened at 7200 S. Ingleside Ave., in the

(cont'd)

Grand Crossing neighborhood, she had an inkling that this 8,600-square-foot plot, designed by landscape architect Peter Lindsay Schaudt, would harvest much more than herbs and root vegetables, morning glories and coneflowers, okra and tomatoes.

"Maybe we'll get to gardening, and maybe we won't," says Hess, who trained in horticultural therapy at the New York Botanical Garden, interned at the [Chicago Botanic Garden](#) in [Glencoe](#), and has seeded therapeutic gardens throughout the city. "Maybe there's been a shooting that day, and the buzz in the building is all about that. What we do here is meet them where they're at; the garden serves the children."

It serves the seniors too. During mornings and afternoons before school gets out, Hess works, too, with older gardeners. Gardeners who know how to cook, and who might have spent their childhoods with hands always in the dirt -- back on farms, back before they settled into an urban grid that allowed no luxury of growing things.

But for the children, mostly 5th- through 8th-graders at the nearby [Paul Revere](#) Elementary School, where Gary Comer, the late founder of Lands' End, the clothing chain, once graduated, this is brand-new, head-spinning stuff.

A chance to 'let down'

"These are children who've maybe never been outside the borders of their community," says Ayoka Samuels, senior program director at the center that serves some 600 children, ages 8 to 18. "Being able to go on the other side of the train tracks is not something they're going to get to do. It's like a war zone, if you will.

"The young people here know they can come here to take a breath. Miss Marji always welcomes them to breathe. Their only experience of nature, outside this garden, might be the play lot, which might have grass. Would they ever lie down and watch the clouds? Not unless Miss Marji says so. Not unless she asks them, 'What shapes do you see?' 'Do you feel the wind?'

"Without this connection to the garden," says Samuels, "it's a lot easier to litter, to pollute the air, to walk on someone's flowers. It is a wonderful thing to see children smiling and running through the garden, even though they shouldn't run. But because here they can. The garden gives them an opportunity to let down and relax. No 12-year-old should have to always worry about, now, how am I going to get to school? How am I going to safely make it home?"

Where the sky's the limit

So that each flock of students gets a chance to know the whole seed-to-table cycle, Hess has instituted what she calls "season extension gardening." Even in the deep of winter, when the snow is inches thick and the mercury is hovering in the low, low digit range, two rows of the rooftop garden are covered in what look like little white camping tents.

Beneath the tents, in soil that routinely basks in a combination of solar heat from above and the heated gym just below the rooftop's rafters and thus stays well above freezing, rosemary and thyme and oregano -- "the pizza herb," the children call it -- and even tender leaves of spinach unfurl and wait for plucking.

"I want each child to unzip that tent and have that 'aha' moment," says Hess, standing back to watch a row of growers yank at zippers, and try to guess just what the leaf is poking through the soil.

Related links



• [Gary Comer Youth Center Photos](#)

(cont'd)

Life beyond Flamin' Hots

Hess hopes, too, to teach the children just how healthy snacks can be. "Our main competition," she says, "is the gas station down the street. Flamin' Hots," a spicy cheese puff, is the after-school snack of choice. Hess, though, hopes to sprout a taste for something else. Say, a sunflower seed plucked right from the seed-stitched middle of the sunflower growing in their garden.

The grand finale of each class, at the end of each semester, is to pick and toss and eat a homegrown, rooftop salad. The unlikely farmers drown the tender leaves in a dressing made from fresh-plucked, fresh-cut herbs.

Sometimes, says Hess, all is not tender at the garden. The children's roots in a rough-tough neighborhood are exposed. Say, for instance, the afternoon the children were painting terra-cotta pots, but first they needed to tap out the dried bits of dirt from inside. As one child tapped a pile of dried-out potting soil onto the table, another asked, "Is that pot?" To which the other child, a 3rd-grader, answered, matter of factly, "No, you keep pot in a Ziploc bag."

Says Hess: "The matter-of-factness is incongruent with their age."

And it is why, in a neighborhood where drugs and gangs are commonplace, Hess keeps coming back to teach the simple lessons offered by a garden classroom where endless sky serves as the only roof -- and infinite inspiration.

- - -

About 30 feet: Height of garden above street level at the Gary Comer Youth Center, 7200 S. Ingleside Ave.

250: Number of kids who have participated in the program to date (count 10-year-old Kyla Cook, shown at top, among them)

3,500: Number of spring and summer bulbs in the rooftop garden

26: Varieties of perennials in the garden

About 75: Kinds of annual flowers, vegetables and herbs in the garden

bmahany@tribune.com

IN THE WEB EDITION: See more pictures of the Gary Comer Youth Center garden at chicagotribune.com/garycomer.

February 1, 2009

In the loop Giving back One man's gifts to the community that spawned him

SIDEWALKS

By Rick Kogan

Photo By Charles Osgood



You might come upon the Gary Comer Youth Center if you have taken a wrong turn on the way to someplace else or gone astray while exploring the haunts of our new president's former stomping grounds in Hyde Park/Kenwood to the east.

You will not know what to make of it, this strikingly colorful building at 7200 S. Ingleside Ave. It seems of another neighborhood if not another planet, surrounded as it is by a Grand Crossing area that has been down at the heels for a very long time.

But there it is, the dream made real of Comer, who grew up dirt-poor in Grand Crossing, went on to found Lands End, made a lot of money and started giving it back in all manner of ways: buying computers, an air-conditioning system and uniforms for his old grammar school, Revere; funding CITY 2000, a yearlong Chicago photo project that yielded 500,000 photos and a book; donating more than \$80 million to the creation and expansion of the Comer Children's Hospital at the University of Chicago; and building homes for people in the Grand Crossing community.

The Youth Center, a block away from Revere, was built to be permanent home for the South Shore Drill Team, some of whose 300 members are performing in Osgood's photo.

And now it is home to Gary Comer College Prep, a campus of the Noble Street Charter School, and every weekday is filled with the bright, eager faces of the 150-some members of its first freshman class. One of them, 14-year-old Jason Williams, said, "It is strict here but I think that will teach me to prepare for college, to be prepared for my future."

He never got to meet Comer and was not there a few years ago when Comer visited the building. It was still under construction, but Comer, though very sick and traveling the hallways in a wheelchair, still seemed able to see its future.

"Isn't this going to be the greatest thing for the kids?" he said.

He never got to hear an answer, which on every level is a resounding "Yes." He died on Oct. 4, 2006.

"Gary always talked about a high school here," says Greg Mooney, the executive director of the center.

Mooney works closely with Guy Comer, Gary's son and a former commercial airline pilot. Guy's mother, Francie Comer, and his photographer/author sister, Stephanie, are also involved in philanthropic endeavors. But it is Guy who is hands-on here on the South Side, trying to make good on his father's vision.

"People are still poor here. They need help," he says.

He shares his father's self-effacing demeanor and his fiery affection for Chicago. He knows that his father has left a lasting legacy. But when you listen to him talk about new ideas and new dreams for this center and this city, you know that in time that legacy will be his too.

rkogan@tribune.com

Drill Team Helps Provide Structure and a Refuge



José Moré/Chicago News Cooperative

The South Shore Drill Team and Performing Arts Ensemble participates in competitions across the United States.

By **DON TERRY**

Published: April 9, 2010

As the city was reeling from dozens of shootings last week, a group of teenage boys gathered on a basketball court in a tough South Side neighborhood called the Pocket. Their leader, a stocky 32-year-old wearing baggy sweat pants and a baseball cap, told them to settle down and listen up. They didn't have much time.

Related

- Times Topic: [Chicago News Cooperative](#)



José Moré/Chicago News Cooperative

Members practiced an interpretive drill about youth violence

Then he barked out a chilling command: "Go get the rifles."

This was Saturday afternoon, April 3, the end of an especially bloody few days in Chicago. Yellow police tape fluttered in the wind from Englewood on the South Side to Austin on the West Side. In just 26 hours, some 41 people had been shot, at least 3 fatally. As one of the boys said, "Everybody in the city is on the warpath."

When the rifles arrived, the leader, Michael Borum, shouted at the boys to take their positions. "It's time to get serious," he said.

And with that began another four-hour practice session of a unique youth violence-prevention group, the South Shore Drill Team and Performing Arts Ensemble.

Since 1980, the drill team has been providing boys and girls, ages 8 to 21, with a highly disciplined, choreographed and increasingly stylized alternative to the street. Team members use wooden mock rifles, hip-hop music and modern dance moves in their performances, which have taken them from Morocco to [Walt Disney World](#) to the annual back-to-school [Bud Billiken Parade](#) down Chicago's [Martin Luther King](#) Drive. In 2009, the team performed at 130 events in nine states.

On June 5, the team will mark its 30th anniversary with a night of performances at the Chicago Theatre.

(cont'd on back)

Although many on the drill team come from struggling families and from schools where sometimes up to half the pupils drop out before the 12th grade, 99 percent of the members graduate from high school and many go on to college, said Arthur Robertson, the former Chicago public school teacher who founded the team with only four boys, two of whom were his nephews. Now, its membership remains steady at about 350.

“Some of our kids are first-generation high school graduates,” Mr. Robertson said.

Two Saturdays ago, at the gym at the [Gary Comer Youth Center](#) on South Ingleside Avenue, the team was preparing for the 33rd annual drill team and color guard world championships this weekend —the [Winter Guard International](#) — in Dayton, Ohio. More than 300 teams from across the United States and four other countries were entered, said Bart Woodley, the Winter Guard’s marketing manager. The South Shore team won the championship in 1992.

“They are one of the fan favorites year in and year out,” Mr. Woodley said. “People rush to the gym to see them. People appreciate that they are really making a difference in their community by offering these kids an outlet to perform and keeping them off the streets. The South Shore kids also do some amazing things with those rifles.”

Indeed, this is not your father’s drill team competition.

“It’s a combination of Olympic sports and the pageantry of the Broadway stage,” Mr. Woodley said. “In the early ’80s, people started looking more to movement and modern dance and incorporating that into their routines. Once they started doing that, it became much more theatrical with more outrageous costumes. It just kind of snowballed.”

The South Shore team is divided into several age groups and units. On April 3, the Cadets, boys 15 to 17, practiced with their coaches, Mr. Borum and Fred Irvin, both members of the 1992 world championship team.

The Cadets worked on a skit called “Why Me?” — a 4-minute-26-second interpretative drill and dance combination about youth violence. Outlined in blue tape on the team’s basketball-court-sized performance tarp were two fallen bodies and the words, “Please Don’t Shoot.”

The 16-member unit includes Reginald Jackson, 17, and David Myers III, 15, who said his parents allowed him out of the house only to attend team practices and events.

“They said they want to keep me as safe as possible,” David said. “I understand, but it makes me feel trapped. You can’t go outside and be a regular kid. Here you can be.”

The team co-captain is Rodney Nelson, 17, who said that before he joined the drill team he was headed down a path of fast-money dreams and jailhouse nightmares. When he was 13, he sometimes held drugs for older, rougher boys because, “I was trying to fit in,” Rodney said. “I was under the influence of the wrong people. I was being disobedient, disrespectful to my mother, to everybody.”

Four years ago, Rodney’s desperate mother yanked him off the corner and dragged him to Mr. Robertson. Now, instead of hanging out on the corner holding a bag of drugs, he spends his days learning how to twirl a mock rifle high into the air, do a back flip and catch the rifle without missing a step as he parades down the street, the cheering crowds making him feel “like a rock star.”

“The drill team saved my life,” Rodney said.

A version of this article appeared in print on April 11, 2010, on page A25B of the National edition.

August 11, 2010

Comer Youth Center project is a garden in the desert

By Pete Reinwald, Special to the Tribune

Drivers on South Chicago Avenue near 73rd Street notice something turning green, and it's not just the traffic light. It's something beautiful and edible.

"In the midst of a big street, you turn around, and then there's a farm," said Joshua Jackson, 16.

It's a new community garden, where Jackson and dozens of fellow teenagers at the Gary Comer Youth Center are helping to turn 15,000 square feet of blight — about a third of an acre — in the Greater Grand Crossing community into fruit trees, nut trees, landscape plants, collard greens, mustard greens, pole beans and more. And it's all organic.

The garden is an extension of the center's rooftop-garden program, across the street at the corner of South Chicago and Ingleside avenues. There, teens have been growing plants, fruits and vegetables as part of an educational program that emphasizes healthy cooking and eating and the benefits and business of organic gardening.

The community garden builds on that by emphasizing, among other things, urban land use, year-round gardening and community outreach. Planting began last month, when the youth center received about 600 plants.

"It's about education," said Marji Hess, garden manager at the youth center, whose mission is to help kids get through high school and help prepare them for college and careers. "It's about looking at a community and looking at young people, who up to now, had not had an opportunity to grow food locally, learning to do that, and sharing that knowledge with the community."

Greater Grand Crossing could use that knowledge. A 2006 report by Mari Gallagher Research & Consulting Group identified the community as a "food desert," lacking supermarkets and access to fresh food. As a result, residents have an increased risk of chronic health problems.

"That gas station is the only source of food in the area," said Hess, standing in the community garden and motioning to the corner of 73rd Street and South Chicago Avenue. "A food desert means that it is more convenient to get food at that gas station than to get healthy food."

The new community garden rests on part of a 1.7-acre lot owned by the Comer Science and Education Foundation, the nonprofit Delta Institute, and the City of Chicago, Hess said. Emily Emmerman, special projects coordinator at the Gary Comer Youth Center, said the center plans to eventually purchase the entire tract.

Years ago, the land was the site of a gas station and a distribution center for chemicals and petroleum, Emmerman said. That meant the land needed to be cleaned to Environmental Protection Agency standards.

"We took the most conservative approach known to us, which was to bring it up to residential standards," Emmerman said.

A Delta Institute affiliate, the Delta Redevelopment Institute, had attempted to recruit a "green grocer" to build a store on the site, said Chris Slattery, senior associate director at the Delta Institute. "When that failed, we helped the Gary Comer Youth Center apply for planning grants for a community food project."

The organization, whose mission is to help promote the sustainable reuse of brownfields, has been working with the Comer Science and Education Foundation for about five years to manage the redevelopment of the site and others in the neighborhood, Slattery said.

(cont'd on back)

(Cont'd)

A couple of years ago, there was a seasonal farmers market on the site that was "relatively successful" in terms of community interest, said Ald. Leslie Hairston, 5th. When efforts turned to attracting a green grocer, she said, "nobody wanted to invest in building" because of the state of the economy.

"That's my opinion," she said. "That doesn't change the need. People need to eat. People need to have access to food. People need to have access to nutritious food."

Hairston said she thinks the community garden could have a greater community effect than the farmers market because of the educational component, including cooking demonstrations.

"You also have to raise awareness and educate people," she said. "Look at things like diabetes, high blood pressure and obesity. Part of that is because people don't have access to fresh food."

The Gary Comer Youth Center's garden program has continued to blossom. Youths from nearby Paul Revere Elementary School take classes in gardening at the rooftop garden, on the center's main building. They lie among 8,600 square feet of plants, seeking refuge and peace from an unsafe neighborhood, encouraged by Hess to look into the sky, breathe and connect.

This year, the center initiated a program called Green Career Exploration, funded by city's Community Development Block Grant Apprenticeship program. "Green teens" ages 13 to 18 work nine hours a week during the school year and during the summer receive a stipend — up to \$15 a day — for working 20 hours a week.

Green teens specialize in areas such as cuisine, environmental science, community outreach and garden building. The group's build-and-design cohort recently completed a backyard garden, featuring edible landscaping, at a Gary Comer Youth Center annex near the main building. The program's banner emphasis is "seed to table," encompassing all education and skills required from planting to eating.

"Our youth are taking to it and loving it," Hess said. Attendance is 90 percent, and nobody has dropped out, she said.

The green teens use their organic produce for culinary classes and sell it to local restaurants, such as Frontera Grill and Table Fifty-Two.

On Fridays, the green teens sell the fruit and vegetables to the community and get a whiff of entrepreneurial experience.

"The youth are being exposed to a business model," Hess said.

This fall, green teens will build a greenhouse in the community garden so that they can grow plants during winter.

Jackson, a student at Gary Comer College Prep, appreciates "seeing how a farm starts."

"It's kind of like critical thinking, because you're putting a farm in the city," said Jackson, who wants to open an organic restaurant one day.

Fellow student Brianna Dukes, 17, said the program has taught her valuable life skills, including avoiding the gas station for meals.

"A lot of people, that's where they go," she said. "You can't buy fresh strawberries. I don't see tomatoes. I don't see hot peppers. No healthy stuff there."

September 29, 2010



P.E. coach Orlandus Thomas, right, teaches student Lexus Thompson, 14, how to exercise in one of his intense-but-fun gym classes at Gary Comer College Preparatory High School in Chicago.

Pumped-up at Comer Prep

By Pete Reinwald, Tribune Reporter

The gym floor rattles. Twenty-six freshmen simultaneously perform exercises such as "**Spider-Man** push-ups," "triceps extensions" and high leg lifts to the music of pop star **Katy Perry**. Then, without missing a beat, they do another exercise. And then another.

This is physical education, the Orlandus Thomas way. Students at Gary Comer College Prep get in shape, learn the principles of a healthy lifestyle and have a blast doing it.

It's all part of Thomas' plan to help them prevent **childhood obesity** and the lifetime of problems that can come with it.

It's teaching kids how to be more active, how to leave the video games and this type of stuff alone," said Thomas, in his third year as a coach and physical education teacher at Gary Comer. "Everybody is going all the time. Nobody's standing around. They're working out. They're enjoying it."

Thomas, 34, established the P.E. course four years ago at Chicago's Noble Street College Prep, which, like Comer Prep, belongs to the Noble Network of Charter Schools. Inspired by his own P.E. teacher, his love for fitness and a mother and a twin brother who battled obesity, Thomas created a curriculum based on a class he took at Chicago State University that emphasized the muscles and the heart.

His aerobic-fitness unit emphasizes "the ability to practice health-enhancing behaviors and reduce health risks." His muscular-fitness unit emphasizes that "physical fitness — including muscular fitness — leads to both healthy habits and lifestyle."

The curriculum includes diet. Thomas said his class features a cooking session and discussion of **healthy foods** and the best ways to prepare them. He also shows kids how to read food labels.

"As freshmen, they are totally shocked," Thomas said of students' reaction to his class. He says he asks students: "What was your P.E. experience like at your prior school? The responses I get every year: sitting around, texting, running a few laps, playing basketball, talking. I wipe away all that."

Thomas said his class gives students self-esteem, a better sense of well-being and a better knowledge of their bodies. He said many have maintained the principles of his course after high school.

"We know we are closer to achieving our vision of graduating every student from college when we see students following a physical fitness regimen on their own and not just when required by us," principal James Troupis said in an e-mail. "It represents a lifestyle and mindset shift that crosses out of just the realm of physical fitness and shows an entire change in character."

Students in Thomas' class never stop moving. During a class for brand-new freshmen last week, students lined up around the perimeter of the gym at 16 exercise stations, each designed to work specific muscles.

(cont'd)

Class started with a warm-up that includes light exercises and stretching. Thomas turned up the music a notch, and hearts pounded with the beat. As one student did push-ups, another lifted dumbbell weights while another lay on the floor and played catch with a 10-pound medicine ball. After 45 seconds, students ran to a new station, never stopping, sometimes grunting and often laughing. They did this for about 45 minutes.

Laughing?

"Because it's fun," freshman Morgan West said, then added with a smile: "Then again it's, 'Why am I doing this?'"

"It's fun working your body, and it helps," classmate Caleb Williams said. "You can do things faster, better."

Thomas got an even better workout, darting back and forth across the gym to check on students' progress and to make sure they were doing the exercises correctly.

"C'mon! C'mon! C'mon!" he'd cheer. "You can get it! Move those feet! Move those feet!"

"Now rotate! Let's go, let's go, let's go!"

Fifteen minutes into the class, the front of Thomas' T-shirt was soaked with sweat. And he still had three more classes.

"This is my heart," he said.

preinwald@tribune.com

(cont'd on back)

Award Use

AWARD USE

Please answer questions in space provided. Answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided.

Please separate this page from the rest of the application. Award Use should be submitted in a sealed envelope along with the application materials. It will not be used in judging entries or be seen by members of the Selection Committee.

Please describe how *Award* monies will be used to benefit the project. (The *Award* check will be made out to the Applicant unless otherwise specified.)

If awarded a Rudy Bruner Award, the Award monies will be used entirely for youth development as follows:

GCYC Academic Programming - \$10,000

GCYC Technology Programming - \$10,000

GCYC Art Programming - \$10,000

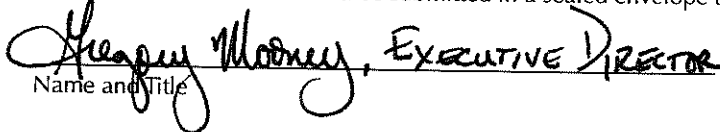
GCYC Health and Fitness Programming - \$10,000

GCYC Rooftop Garden and Urban Farm Programming - \$5,000

Student Internships and Scholarships including three to five student scholarships to the Illinois Institute of Technology's

Summer Architecture Program - \$5,000

** This statement should be signed by the applicant. Photocopies or facsimile copies of the statement with original signature is acceptable. Award Use statement should be submitted in a sealed envelope along with the application materials.

 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Name and Title

12/10/2010

Date