

THE RUDY BRUNER AWARD 2015

LA CASA STUDENT HOUSING

UrbanWorks, Ltd.
Chicago, Illinois



Tony May Photography, 2012

2015 RUDY BRUNER AWARD PROJECT DATA



PROJECT DATA

Please answer questions in space provided. If possible, 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.

Project Name La Casa Student Housing Location 1818 S. Paulina Street City Chicago State IL

Owner The Resurrection Project

Project Use(s) Residential

Project Size 33,000 SF (building) Total Development Cost \$12,000,000

Annual Operating Budget (if appropriate) \$620,698 as of 12/9/2014

Date Initiated 2008 Percent Completed by December 1, 2014 100%

Project Completion Date (if appropriate) _____ Project Website (if appropriate) www.lacasastudenthousing.org

Attach, if you wish, a list of relevant project dates _____

Application submitted by:

Name Patricia Saldaña Natke, AIA Title Partner, Design Principal

Organization UrbanWorks, Ltd.

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Perspective Sheets:

Organization	Name	E-mail
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Public Agencies _____

Architect/Designer	<u>UrbanWorks, Ltd.</u>	<u>Patricia Saldaña Natke</u>	<u>pnatke@urbanworksarchitecture.com</u>
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Developer	<u>The Resurrection Project</u>	<u>Raul Raymundo</u>	<u>rraymundo@resurrectionproject.org</u>
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Professional Consultant	<u>Denco Construction</u>	<u>Rafael Hernandez</u>	<u>rhernandez@descotobuilders.com</u>
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Community Group	<u>La Casa Student Housing</u>	<u>Claudia Martinez</u>	<u>cmartinez@resurrectionproject.org</u>
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Other	<u>La Casa Student Housing</u>	<u>Maria Bucio</u>	<u>mbucio@resurrectionproject.org</u>
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UIC - LARES Program		<u>Luis Duarte</u>	<u>luisd@uic.edu</u>
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Please indicate how you learned of the Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence. (Check all that apply).

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

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Date 12/9/2014

2015
RUDY BRUNER AWARD
PROJECT
AT-A-GLANCE



PROJECT AT-A-GLANCE

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This sheet, the Project Data sheet, and the representative photo will be sent to the Committee in advance as the *Project Overview*.

Project Name **La Casa Student Housing**

Address **1818 S. Paulina** City/State/ZIP **Chicago, IL 60608**

1. Give a brief overview of the project. Approximately 500 words.

La Casa Student Housing is a multi-university student residence and community resource center located in Pilsen, a predominantly Latino neighborhood of Chicago, housing up to 105 student residents on the corner of Paulina and 18th Streets. The six-story, 33,000-square-foot cast-in-place concrete structure includes an inviting façade of glass and masonry with a varied pattern of windows and colorful fiber cement panels expressing the dynamic nature of the neighborhood and its residents. Since its opening in 2012, La Casa has become a Pilsen icon by activating a formerly vacant lot with a community celebration of education.

The program was developed by The Resurrection Project (TRP), a not-for-profit, community-based developer in Pilsen, along with extensive input from Pilsen residents. This program was derived to provide a positive, low-cost residential opportunity for Latino college students who cannot afford to live on-campus at their nearby universities. La Casa did just that by offering the young people of this community a state-of-the-art, safe, and affordable residence with a design inspired by Latino Family traditions. A compact plan was developed that centers on light-filled communal living spaces and kitchens at the heart of each multi-room dorm suite. These suites were inspired by how a typical family occupies a home with individual bedrooms and shared living spaces. This design achieved that same balance between private and communal spaces that naturally foster camaraderie and support among the residents, similar to the dynamics of a family structure.

Additionally, La Casa's program provided the space for high school students and families of the neighborhood to gain the information and skills needed to successfully apply to, pay for, and succeed in college. The building also holds administrative offices, a computer lounge, laundry and private study areas. These auxiliary spaces directly support the student community created within the dorms themselves by providing these other essential needs directly on site for the student residents to utilize. These amenities are also available to the other residents of the neighborhood thus extending this newfound opportunity of community education beyond the walls of La Casa and to Pilsen as a whole.

In short, La Casa is a built representation of how working together can be transformative. It literally took the whole village of community members, designers, and developers to tackle the local problem of inadequate educational resources which were resulting in low high school and college graduation rates. The project identified a vacant street corner and transformed it into a bustling intersection of learning and creativity to the benefit of the neighborhood as a whole.

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.) Approximately 500 words.

La Casa deserves to be recognized for honoring the principles of the Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence because it reduced high Latino drop-out rates by developing a state-of-the-art student housing facility and peer support system. The project established a new model for fostering student success in a culturally-diverse neighborhood. It incorporates Latino culture in all facets of its design, resulting in an example of excellence in architecture that is Pilsen in every way.

On-campus college living is still unattainable for many students from low-income families. The cost of room and board is too expensive and waiting lists to live in dorms are long. Thus, students must strain themselves economically to live in student housing on-campus or continue to make the long and unsafe commute to school from home. La Casa presents these students with a different option--join student housing off-camps and still live close to home.

What one might consider as cards stacked against these college students--living in overflow student housing, being first-generation college students, living off-campus—are La Casa's greatest strengths. By living in overflow housing, students create their own tight-knit community at La Casa. As many residents are first-generation college-goers, they recognize their shared challenges and support each other. Living off-campus allows students to maintain a close relationship with the community around them, an experience they find crucial to their education and one that they would not have otherwise.

An interesting component to La Casa is that it creates a new type of student culture. A culture where students who find themselves in disadvantaged situations bind together to support each other. These students root for each other. They help their peers succeed by sharing the same challenges and overcoming them together. All the while, pursuing a college education that centers on community action and social justice in their neighborhood.

In turn, this new generation of Latino student culture transforms the greater community of Pilsen into one that better positions its youth for academic success. La Casa residents uphold the principles of the Bruner Award by demanding excellence of their neighborhood. This new culture, cultivated at La Casa, unifies and empowers those students who will one day be leaders in their communities for social change.

2015 RUDY BRUNER AWARD PROJECT DESCRIPTION



PROJECT DESCRIPTION

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1. Describe the underlying values and goals of the project. What, if any, significant trade-offs were required to implement the project? Approximately 500 words.

The goal of La Casa was to decrease high college drop out and low graduation rates of Latinos in Pilsen and its surrounding neighborhoods. The project addressed the fact that, in Pilsen, graduating from college is an exception, not a rule. Out of the combined neighborhoods of Pilsen and Little Village's, another Latino neighborhood of Chicago, 25 year and older population only a mere 14.1% of residents age 25 and over hold a bachelor's degree. Only one in ten Latino students graduate with a college degree, and one-third of freshmen Latino college students do not enter their second year.

Our community partners, TRP and Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council (BYNC), were seeking to re-acknowledge the value of education by restoring the opportunity for youth in Pilsen to successfully make their way through schools to graduation. They began to do so by identifying that one of the primary challenges hindering graduation is Latino parents' concerns with their students, especially females, living away from home on a college campus. In a 2012 survey of La Casa residents, students reported 56% of their mothers and 58% of their fathers have earned less than a high school diploma. Moreover, as many of La Casa residents are first-generation high school graduates and college students, our project centered around building a complete community for them that fostered a comfortable transition from living at home to living in a dormitory.

Other, equally significant, challenges were overcrowded housing conditions, lack of study space in the home, and safety concerns when students stay late on campus to study and return home well after dark. These logistical challenges and safety concerns had also negatively impacted the Latino graduation rate in Pilsen.

La Casa was designed to address these challenges by providing a safe, familial atmosphere in which student residents could live and study. Each of the building's six floors centers around a communal kitchen, directly inspired by the Latino tradition of cooking together. However, La Casa gives students the space they do not have at home to cook their own food and thrive in a college setting. In addition, a Resident Advisor lives on each floor to provide students with academic and emotional support.

Throughout the process, we discovered design challenges that required us to make certain trade-offs. La Casa's current building was originally imagined as two separate buildings to provide more room for housing with a separate resource center next door. However, due to budget constraints we were limited to keeping the resource center within the building. In the end, this took the building in a positive direction by having the resource center closely accessible to residents and the public.

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? Approximately 500 words.

La Casa was one of the first examples of architecture in its community that directly addressed immigrant family challenges. Pilsen has always served as a home to immigrants. It was first inhabited by German and Irish immigrants in the mid 1800s, followed by Czech immigrants in the early 1900s, and finally by Mexican families in the late 1950s. The low-income, immigrant neighborhood has always faced the challenges of neighborhood security and inadequate educational resources. La Casa was conceptualized, constructed, and maintained by community members as a solution to these problems. Latino immigrant families were still finding to be major obstacles.

It enhanced safety in the neighborhood by replacing vacant, boarded-up buildings with new-construction. Thus, La Casa reactivated the street corner by promoting ambitious purpose. La Casa provided a vibrant anchor and sense of place to this corner. This intersection is a major thoroughfare along 18th Street, as it stands directly across from the 18th Street Chicago public transit station. The first floor of the building offers commercial space for retail that caters to both the student population as well as commuters entering and exiting the 18th Street Station. The program and amenities of the building directly offered a solution to inadequate educational resources by providing an education hub within Pilsen as well as a community center serving the whole neighborhood.

The addition of La Casa Student Student Housing and its residents has catalyzed transformation of an underserved community into one that proudly celebrates education. While designing the building was the first step, the student residents of La Casa are the embodiment for social change in the neighborhood by interjecting their knowledge back into the community.

Since its construction in 2012, La Casa has served over 200 students residents, who attended over 30 different schools.

3. Describe the key elements of the development process, including community participation where appropriate. Approximately 400 words.

Over a decade ago, the idea for an independent student housing facility and resource center emerged from a unique collaboration between the developer, TRP, and the community. TRP looked to young adults from the local neighborhoods who faced significant hardships after being first in their families to enroll in college to inform their development process. Through their input, the young community of Pilsen gained greater stakes in the outcome of the project. Our attentive team of community leaders, architects and designers captured the vitality of the neighborhood as well as the hope and desires of the building's prospective residents.

Through community meetings, our brainstorming resulted in bold ideas to better serve our students. For example, the design of suite-style apartment units with a full kitchen came directly out of student feedback. Students expressed the desire for easy access to kitchens in order to cook their own meals. Green design was also important to student residents, resulting in La Casa's sensor-controlled lighting, Transit Oriented location and use of sustainable materials. The fact this is the first new construction project on 18th Street in years and a grassroots concept made this building a powerful anchor for the community.

In addition to holding meetings with neighborhood residents, TRP composed a committee to offer professional insight to the project. This committee consisted of university representatives, deans of student affairs, real estate agents and developers. TRP consulted this committee regularly throughout the development process which helped to give the project realistic goals and feasibility.

4. Describe the financing of the project. Please include all funding sources and square foot costs where applicable. Approximately 400 words.

In order to fund the project TRP worked with State government to reevaluate the impact of economic development in low-income communities. The overall budget cost \$12 million, at \$365 per square foot. In order to realize this project, funding had to be pulled from various different sources. As these fundraising efforts took place during the economic hardships four years ago, the project concept had to be strong to convince donors that it would be economically sustainable and a good investment in the community. Seeking to answer these questions in the fundraising process gave the concept better clarity that shaped the design process moving forward.

5. Is the project unique and/or does it address significant urban issues? Is the model adaptable to other urban settings? Approximately 400 words.

La Casa is the first of its kind and an innovative model in student housing. It surrounds students from various universities with the benefits and resources of on-campus living to support their achievement of finishing college. Students and community leaders informed La Casa's design process by sharing with us the educational challenges faced by the neighborhood. We found this collaborative design model enlightening and effective because it gave us first-hand insight into what needed to be improved in the neighborhood. This same process certainly is adaptable to other urban settings. The key to this model is the community involvement from the planning process through construction. This means the community can take ownership of the building and make it something that will benefit the neighborhood rather than working against well-meaning developers who are not including them in the process. This model establishes a relationship between the community and the design team which only strengthens the end product by giving it true meaning.

La Casa succeeded at solving two urban problems facing Pilsen students. Firstly, it addressed the primary challenge of insufficient resources for college study by providing these resources in a means tailored to their specific needs. The program and design of the building were directly informed and inspired by the heavy community involvement inherent in our newfound design model. Secondly, it transformed an otherwise desolate and problematic corner into a symbol of hope celebrating its students' academic achievements and reminding the community their goals are achievable. This example of creative and inspiring place-making can be adapted by other communities where sensitivity to their cultural histories or other unique challenges are essential to the overall success of their community development.

2015
RUDY BRUNER AWARD
ARCHITECT
OR DESIGNER
PERSPECTIVE



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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. Copies may be given to other design professionals if desired.

Name	Patricia Saldaña Natke, AIA	Title	Partner, Design Principal
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Signature		Date	12/8/2014
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1. Describe the design concept of this project, including urban design considerations, choice of materials, scale, etc. Approximately 400 words.

La Casa student housing utilized design excellence to tackle a social and economic challenge in an underserved neighborhood. In this case, the challenge was low high school and college graduation rates among Latinos in Pilsen. For every 100 Latino elementary students, only 52 graduate from high school. Only 31 of those high school graduates enroll in college and only 10 graduate from college. We signed on to this project understanding the heavy need in the community for a new student housing model. We rethought the standard concept of student housing and created an environment which address the core needs of food and shelter as the baseline for improved learning environments.

We partnered with The Resurrection Project (TRP) to build a student housing facility that empowered Pilsen youth to achieve academic success through providing them with outstanding career-development resources and by light filled creating living space that echoed Latino family traditions. Most importantly, La Casa accepts students whose families live in Chicago, who attend a university within the city. This allows students to experience dorm-style living while staying close to home.

La Casa punctuates the Pilsen skyline as a proud symbol of the community's accomplishments. A composition of glass curtain wall, a mosaic of monochromatic cement fiber board panels, and a varied pattern of individual windows provides La Casa with a lively exterior that reflects the vitality of the community. The exterior brick and masonry tones of the rain screen panels complements the surrounding neighborhood buildings.

The interior floor plan involves two large suites centered on a communal kitchen. The meal and cooking together is central to Latino culture. Thus, La Casa's student kitchen sits at the heart each of each suite. Surrounding the kitchen on each floor are five dormitory rooms which accommodate up to two students, as well as a communal living space. We translated the idea of these communal living spaces into the glazing on the exterior. Additionally, a Resident Assistant on each floor provides students residents with close support and supervision.

Finally, La Casa's location is crucial to its overall design. The building is the hub of student life. It stands at the corner of Paulina and 18th Streets, directly across from the Pink Line 18th Street Chicago transit station. This location is ideal for student residents, providing them with a short door-to-door commute, thus minimizing their time walking outside after dark.

2. Describe the most important social and programmatic functions of the design. Approximately 400 words.

La Casa currently holds three primary functions:

- Student housing for up to 105 student residents and Resident Assistants
- Venue for college programming on career development and post-graduation planning
- Neighborhood educational hub for parents, high school students and the general public with information on how to apply to and succeed in college

We designed the building with an understanding that it had to be permeable but also protected, open to the public but keep students safe. La Casa's inviting, light-filled first floor with alternating glass panels demonstrates the building's transparency with the neighborhood. The first floor is open to the public for workshops, classes and activities. From the 2nd to 6th floors, a varied window pattern within a brick facade provides student residents with more privacy, delineating a space conducive to study. Our unique combination of public and private spaces within the same building makes La Casa's an ideal environment for community education and study at this busy intersection of Paulina and 18th Streets.

Amenities for the students were highly important for the overall success of the project. A fitness room and laundry room are located on the first floor. A staffed entry welcome desk was also crucial to ensure safety and a welcoming atmosphere for the students and visitors. In addition, a recent addition of a kiosk which features all the city and neighborhood public events has been a highly effective way for students to be aware of the city's cultural events.

ARCHITECT OR DESIGNER PERSPECTIVE (CONT'D)

3. Describe the major challenges of designing this project and any design trade-offs or compromises required to complete the project. Approximately 400 words.

As with any public project, we faced significant funding hurdles throughout the design and construction process of La Casa. The project was a dream of The Resurrection Project for over 10 years. They initially began negotiations with a local Archdiocese for the use of a building to be renovated into student housing. After design drawings and initial pricing, it was determined not to be a feasible project with a lease scenario. Although most developers may have abandoned the idea, The Resurrection Project continued their search for an alternative location. They owned a one-story building on the current LaCasa site and a formed Planning Committee generated the idea for the building at the current site. What began as a major challenge became the reason for the great success of the building at its current location. It allowed The Resurrection Project to have equity through the ownership of the building instead of a lease scenario.

Regarding design trade-offs, our original design included terra cotta rain screen panels. Due to the cost and limited distributors of the panels, we redesigned the façade with the Swiss Pearl cement fiber board panels. Again, the cost challenge proved beneficial since we were able to produce a façade with a variety of monochromatic rain screen panels which allow for an iconic subtle visual pattern visible from the Chicago Transit stop platform by thousands of daily commuters.

The project was truly a labor of love from all the community development representatives, construction, and design team. The financing and funding challenges served to create a bond where all parties were able to experience the difficulties of an innovative model without project precedences but also celebrate the successes during an emotional moving ribbon cutting ceremony when the facility opened. A ceremony was held in the adjacent plaza where parents and students spoke heart-felt moving words as to what it meant to for them to be able to have their living space during their college years.

4. Describe the ways in which the design relates to its urban context. Approximately 400 words.

The building is located adjacent to public transportation. The energy of the youth creates an intergenerational experience, where neighborhoods such as Pilsen typically have youth and young professionals relocated to other areas of the city. The building allows young adults to remain as an integral part of a community.

The building reflects a very urban young spirit. The exposed concrete and polished concrete floors allow the students to create their individual statements with their furnishings. The masonry, cement fiber board panels and glazing give this corner a modern progressive expression amidst the rich local history of the neighborhood churches and historic buildings. The entire 18th street in Pilsen is designated a "P" Zone street – a Pedestrian Street. The building strengthens the pedestrian experience with its storefront presence and creation of a safer adjacent plaza.

The building is highly sustainable, inclusive of its site location. It sits prominently at the street corner, punctuating the active 18th street retail/commercial street. As a designated Transit Oriented Development area, the adjacency to the Chicago Elevated Pink Line is ideal for commuters. Parking requirements were reduced and remote parking was accommodated west of the Pink Line. Bike stands, recycling areas, sensor-activated lights, and a highly efficient exterior composite wall system with a rain screen celebrates sustainability and best building performance practices.

2015
RUDY BRUNER AWARD
COMMUNITY
REPRESENTATIVE
PERSPECTIVE



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

Name	Claudia Martinez	Title	Student resident
Organization	La Casa Student Housing	Telephone	(312) 226-5072
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Signature  Date 12/2/2014

1. How did you, or the organization you represent, become involved in this project? What role did you play? Approximately 400 words.

I moved to La Casa about a year ago. Before moving to La Casa I commuted from my suburb, Carpentersville, to the University in Chicago (UIC). My commute was close to two hours, which slowly started affecting me academically and my health also. I found myself overwhelmed and having little to no time to study after a long day at school. I would also not get any sleep because I had to catch an early 5:00 a.m. train to make it to class on time. After a few months of this, I was fortunate to be offered a great internship through The Resurrection Project allowing me to live at La Casa Student Housing.

Living at La Casa has impacted me because I live closer to UIC and now have more time to study. I'm able to effectively manage my academics and extracurricular activities. La Casa has also given me all the tools I need to be a successful student. We have the resource center which is a space where I go to study and do homework. Maria, Director of La Casa, is also a great resource to answer questions and provide direction. She has helped me fix my resume to have it ready to apply to internships. She has also guided me when I felt confused about my career path. The workshops I have attended at La Casa has also been of great help. For example, there was one were professionals came in to talk to us about their career and gave us advice on how we can go about finding ours. This workshop specifically helped me because I was really confused about my career path at this time. Overall, La Casa has impacted me greatly and allowed me to grow.

My role here is both a resident and Student Leader. Basically I speak on behalf of my peers in different projects we are starting at La Casa. Most of us here are on scholarship and one of our requirements is to do 20 hours of community service. I am trying to get students more involved in community and I help pick where we will do our community service. Right now, we are organizing ourselves to do community service at San Jose Obrero. This is a community shelter to help men get back on their feet and find jobs. Student leaders like me start up these initiatives. It's very important for me to connect with the neighborhood, my roommates and to be able to influence others. I love living in the neighborhood of Pilsen. I feel at home with the the community here. It's great to have the Mexican museum down the street. I feel like my culture is here.

2. From the community's point of view, what were the major issues concerning this project? Approximately 400 words.

Most of the students living here were pretty open to the idea. We all come from a lot of different backgrounds and wanted to meet new people. But some students' parents were hesitant. It was a totally new concept, letting their kids go. So it was hard at first for all parents. They do come and visit though and I think they're getting used to the idea. They know it's for their kids' own good.

For me, the idea of living with ten other people made me a little nervous. I had never lived with that many people before! It turned out great at the end of the day. It's a great opportunity to learn from everyone and to learn how to get along with people. We all come from different schools and backgrounds and I like learning about their experiences.

I would definitely recommend my friends to live here. For one, it's more affordable than living in the on-campus dorms. Two, you get help from all the different resources here. We have the resource center right here, career workshops, you have staff that help you with resumes you have mentors to talk to if you are confused about your career. A great part about La Casa is that you are close to all the different schools in the area. It's very convenient. You also have a lot of networking opportunities with your peers from other schools, and and you do see that students all help each other. For instance, someone might be taking a finance class at DePaul and someone at UIC took a similar course. We can all help each other with our studies.

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE PERSPECTIVE (CONT'D)

3. Has this project made the community a better place to live or work? If so, how? Approximately 400 words.

It's really good for students to have the neighborhood experience. The community service we do helps us connect with Pilsen and give back to community. That's really important to me. You don't get that at just any other campus. It's great to get in touch with the community and understand it's different needs. Living in an urban Chicago area has also had an impact on what I study. I'm in the Marketing program at UIC. My internship at La Casa has made me more aware of marketing in the real world and has really opened my eyes to what I am studying.

The fact that La Casa is here makes this community more thriving. It's had a great impact on the community. All of the students here are united but the same goal, to become professionals. This is an inspiration to the community. La Casa is very close to a local elementary school. We hope to do some tutoring work with them in the future. It is great for them to have us nearby. I think, maybe one day they will be living where I am.

4. Would you change anything about this project or the development process you went through? Approximately 400 words.

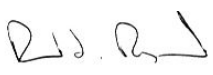
I would not change anything. I think its perfect the way it is. La Casa will change over time because the students makes it what it is. The building is wonderful, but it is the students and programs happening here that make La Casa a success.

2015
RUDY BRUNER AWARD
DEVELOPER
PERSPECTIVE



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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	Raul Raymundo	Title	CEO
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Fax ()		E-mail	rreymundo@resurrectionproject.org
Signature		Date	12/2/2014

1. What role did you or your company play in the development of this project? Describe the scope of involvement. Approximately 400 words.

We, The Resurrection Project (TRP), are the innovator, developer and long-term owner and operator of La Casa, a university-style residence hall located in the Pilsen neighborhood. We developed this project idea from the beginning with community member involvement in addition to our organizational interest. From this community involvement, we were able to identify a key problem that many young adults from Pilsen, Little Village, and Back of the Yards faced difficulties graduating due to them being the first in their communities to go to college. Once we had identified this problem we began seeking more information on how to begin easing the burdens related to college enrollment that were resulting in these low graduation rates.

Over the years, TRP refined this idea to help students by directly incorporating the feedback of high school and college students, as well as representatives from local high schools and universities in the neighborhood. We developed and conducted workshops under our "Pathways to College" program, providing students from Benito Juarez, Farragut, Cristo Rey, and other local high schools with information on topics like applying to college and securing financial aid while discussing and brainstorming with them about the La Casa project. We engaged local principals and high school counselors to find out that the most pressing challenges their middle and high school students faced when going off to college were a lack of resources and how La Casa could aid in easing these burdens by providing resources. In order to identify these key resources needed, we met with representatives (including student affairs, housing, and university presidents) from over a dozen local higher-education institutions to determine what services are already offered so as not to replicate already established resources. Additionally, we conducted surveys and a full market study of local high school and university students to learn more about what types of specific living environments and supportive services they identified as most necessary to successful college graduation.

Our work with all of these individuals – hundreds of students, teachers, counselors, principals, and university representatives over the years – established a network of relationships that directly shaped and defined the vision for La Casa as well as the amenities and services that it would provide to the students and neighborhood specific to the identified needs of the Pilsen community.

2. What trade-offs or compromises were required during the development of the project? Approximately 400 words.

La Casa Student Housing and Resource Center is the first of its kind locally and nationally; this designation brings both the thrill of innovation and an inherent set of obstacles. Over the past ten years, we overcame a variety of challenges to bring the project to fruition. Securing financing for a unique project like La Casa during a time of economic crisis and extremely conservative lending proved nearly impossible. The Resurrection Project approached more than a dozen lenders, investigated new market tax credits, and raised capital during a recession. In the end, a unique blend of state and private grants with a private loan made the project feasible. A tight budget meant the project team had to be savvy on how they spent every dollar. Layouts were carefully planned to maximize overall square-footage while still allowing adequate space for students to live. Cost effective materials were chosen to control the budget while still providing a comfortable and modern backdrop true to the desired ambiance of La Casa. Despite all of the budget conscious design choices, the team had to be selective of what programs and amenities would be offered to maintain manageable costs. The team was diligent about choosing the programs which were needed the most and sacrificed some other programs they felt were already found in other locations nearby.

There is a market place of at least 10,000 students. We wanted to do a project up to 200 students. Because of funding we decided to only do a building for 100 students. Additional trade-offs included:

- Location (Downtown vs Neighborhood) Pilsen was selected because it's near public transportation, universities and high schools.
- Adaptive Re-use vs New Construction: We could've chosen an existing building, but went with new construction. New construction presents a clean slate to incorporate emerging ideas in design and technology.

A challenge stemming from La Casa's innovative model was that there was no structure or outline of programming available for reference to for best practices to achieve such a goal. While many individual components of La Casa have been done before, this is the first combination of affordable residence with supportive services and community education targeting Latino students and families. Building curriculum, developing new partnerships, and recruiting La Casa's residents are all hurdles that we have had to face to make La Casa a success. The team spent a lot of time researching and brainstorming ideas to bring all the pieces together in a successful way. Much like the budgetary challenges, items that were not fitting within the framework we were able to establish had to be sacrificed due to time and knowledge limitations.

3. How was the project financed? What, if any, innovative means of financing were used? Approximately 400 words.

The financing process for La Casa is unique and one of its kind. We used no public funding sources that exist for this (i.e. new market tax credits or low income housing tax credits, etc.). This involved working with State government to discuss economic development in low income communities and looking at the potential college graduates to add economic capacity to communities.

In order to realize our \$12 million project, with a \$365 per square foot cost, we utilized an innovative financing structure which included a variety of sources. We received an \$8.4 million grant from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, a private loan of \$2.2 million, capital grants totaling \$56,000 from private donors including the Polk Bros. Foundation, JPMorgan Chase Foundation, Field Foundation of Illinois, Midwest Generation, Jim & Kay Mabie, Cody & Deborah Engle, and Vive La Hispanidad Magazine, and an addition of \$732 thousand from TRP equity.

This compilation of funding was assembled by deploying a creative strategy to go after a variety of public and private sector monies in differing ways. Fundraising efforts, tax credit research, and grant applications were all implemented to meet the demands of the budget. This was challenging given the state of the economy during the heart of the financing efforts. Private donors had to be convinced of the need and potential success of the project before they were willing to risk invest. The project team was able to present in such a way that did just that. Grants and other public monies were being highly sought after and were difficult to secure due to the number of projects in dire need of funding. Here too, the project team had to successfully demonstrate La Casa's need and probability of success in order for the public to invest in the project as well. With our thorough research, thoughtful presentation, and creative blending of sources we were able to pull together the proper funds for La Casa to move forward.

4. What do you consider to be the most and least successful aspects of the project? Approximately 400 words.

Our project's most successful aspects are its college counseling and programming, design and location. These elements, when grouped together, have created a community icon of education for the neighborhood of Pilsen to utilize and admire.

La Casa offers its residents a number of supportive programs including: mentorship and internship opportunities, workshop and lectures series geared towards personal and professional development, and community service opportunities. Students have the support and guidance of the housing's staff who facilitate workshops, provide academic and financial resources, and connect students to opportunities for service and leadership. In addition to serving its residents, La Casa provides services to area high school and college students and their parents through the resource center. We engage community students and parents through workshops, mentorship opportunities, and on-site youth development services. La Casa's resource center houses "Campus Connections", a variety of services for area high school students and their families, including workshops that prepare and teach students about college access, college financing, and college life. Monthly, La Casa's Resource Center hosts a representative from a Chicago-area college or university for "drop in" hours who provides students and their families with information about applying and matriculating to, and succeeding at, their particular institution.

In regards to its innovative design and construction, the project incorporates various green elements including low-e glass, motion sensor triggered lights at stairs and lobby areas, energy saving appliances, and location within 600 ft of a CTA station. The compact plan layout maximizes space and centers on the communal kitchen, a full kitchen, and light filled communal living space per dorm floor. The first floor features a fitness center and laundry room for resident use. The sustainable façade materials include brick, and cement Swiss Pearl composite rain screen panels. The rain screen cladding application is the most reliable system from the viewpoint of building physics, and eliminates nearly all condensation and optimizes the efficiency of the insulation.

Further, the project's proximity to the "L" public transportation and its placement on the bustling corner of 1800 S. Paulina allows the building to anchor the public plaza at 18th St and Paulina. Its view from the "L" platform with the city skyline creates the visual backdrop for this new building, a new frontier in affordable student living, education and social change.

The least successful aspect of La Casa is that it's a new concept in student housing. It's the only project of its kind in the country and there is no blueprint to follow. However, this gives TRP an opportunity to create the blueprint for replication in other communities.

Other less successful aspects of La Casa include:

- A lack of upfront investment given the uncertainty of La Casa's eventual success.
- The cultural barriers of some Latino households where there is hesitance to let children, even college-aged children, live on their own.
- Public perceptions that La Casa will gentrify the neighborhood. This has served as an opportunity to educate the public on the positive impact La Casa is having on students.

2015
RUDY BRUNER AWARD
PROFESSIONAL
CONSULTANT
PERSPECTIVE



Please answer questions in space provided. If possible, 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 design, planning, legal, or other services. Copies may be given to other professionals if desired.

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Signature  Date 12/6/2014

1. What role did you or your organization play in the development of this project? Approximately 400 words.

DENCO was the General Contractor. I was the Project Executive and client contact of the General Contractor under my previous employment with DENCO. DENCO was awarded the project in a competitive bid process with three other bids. The company had already completed two very successful recent projects with the Architects, Urbanworks, in the previous 5 years but it was our first project with the not for profit, The Resurrection Project.

DENCO provided pre-construction as well as general construction services. We managed all the sub-contractors, schedule, budget and delivery of the Certificate of Occupancy. In addition, we did a post occupancy evaluation at 6 months after completion.

DENCO is an MBE minority Hispanic firm in Chicago. DENCO's construction work spans a wide reach, which includes private and not for profit clients.

For LaCasa, we were assigned to work with Ms. Guacolda Reyes, VP of Real Estate Development and her Project Manager, Benito Hernandez, a young architecture graduate. I also have an architecture degree but transitioned into the construction side of the field. I have a great appreciation of the design aspects of a project and the need to retain those key design features while maintaining a tight budget.

My interest in pursuing this project included its location, its impact on the Hispanic community, and its prominence at a heavily populated walking route to Chicago's pink line elevated train line. The project is located in Pilsen and DENCO had recently completed a wellness center in the neighborhood. We had become aware of the people, process, and strong community focus of not for profits in the area. The Resurrection Project is a highly respected strongly focused local not for profit community development organization in Pilsen.

2. Describe the project's impact on its community. Please be as specific as possible. Approximately 400 words.

As with all projects the impact is beyond the physical building, but in this instance the impact was threefold. First, it was the first major new construction project in the heart of the Pilsen neighborhood. Although cranes and construction sites are plentiful in the adjacent downtown loop area, the Pilsen neighborhood had not been able to strongly withstand the economic downturn. Aside from fully public funded school construction located much further southeast in Pilsen, there was no previous major renovation nor new construction in over 10 years on this main 18th street commercial spine. This project brings awareness and interest to other developers, designers and general contractors who might overlook projects in this area. It also gives financial lenders a precedence of success which can assist others wanting to improve and upgrade their storefronts and facilities. Its adjacency to the Pink Line elevated train line also stresses the importance of Chicago's TODs (Transit Oriented Developments). Proximity to public transportation for the LaCasa students was also key to its success.

Secondly, it has uplifted pride in Chicago's Hispanic community. I was a past board member of HACIA (Hispanic American Construction Industry Association) and the project was awarded Project of the Year in 2010. It's success was further highlighted by the fact that it was an all Hispanic team – TRP as community developers, DENCO as general contractor, and Urbanworks as architects.

Thirdly, the architects and community developers goal for the project was to create an inviting hip cool college age space for the students. Although cast in place concrete is typically reserved for projects over 7 stories, we were able to use local concrete subcontractors to achieve the design intent of the architect and client – a clean exposed concrete aesthetic. The exterior has a rain screen material made from fiber cement boards. Although originally the design had a terra cotta rain screen which was not affordable after the project bank funding was tightened, the fiber cement board was a successful alternate material. We are proud that the project employs progressive construction methods and materials.

3. How might this project be instructive to others in your profession? Approximately 400 words.

As a general contractor, the project is instructive to my field in various ways.

- The construction was completed 2 weeks ahead of schedule. Often projects with public funds are delayed, but a close working relationship with TRP and their key staff allowed the project to be completed on time and under budget.
- Since this was the first of its kind in the Midwest, where students from any University are welcome, we recommended, a mock up of a typical dorm room in the adjacent resource center. It served as an effective marketing tool. Each of us on the team were passionate about achieving project success.
- Alternating clear and opaque exterior glazing allowed for cost reductions due to no need for window treatments at the corner communal living spaces.

Changing the perception of perceived difficulties:

- The poured in place concrete construction exemplified how a low scale building can still have a well executed exposed concrete finish while maintaining the budget.
- The exterior fiber cement board pattern designed by the architects was originally perceived as complicated by the carpenters. When we worked hand in hand with the architects on the template and color coding, the exterior panels were quickly installed without any time delays.
- Often projects with various public funding sources are perceived to be more time intensive. We held weekly team meetings at a site trailer where the client's project manager and the architect attended. The meetings were always open for the VP of Real Estate to attend spontaneously. This created an open transparent process.
- We created an "open book" process for this project. All paperwork from our subcontractors was accessible to the client, TRP. This created a collaborative team effort.

4. What do you consider to be the most and least successful aspects of this project? Approximately 400 words.

As to the least successful portion of the project, a partial green roof was eliminated from the project due to necessary cost cutting and concern for student liability issues. This unfortunately has led to a lack of landscaping and green space. The adjacent plaza is all concrete paving, therefore when monies are available, a garden area would enhance the street. In addition, the project originally included the six story building plus a four story larger suite student housing. This second building was removed from the project, but in hindsight the current one story resource building in its place has served well for the students and the community.

The most successful aspect is the outcome of the project as a reflection of the dedication and inspiration of a community organization that focuses on youth and community through development. The building is an icon for the Pilsen community, recognized by professional organizations through various awards. It is adjacent to an open community plaza where public events and gatherings take place, therefore the building is prominent and reflects hope for the next generation.

2015
RUDY BRUNER AWARD
OTHER
PERSPECTIVE



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Name	Maria Bucio	Title	Director, La Casa Student Housing
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Signature  Date 12/2/2014

1. What role did you play in the development of this project? Approximately 400 words.

Now in our third year of existence, La Casa (an initiative of The Resurrection Project) is uniquely positioned to contribute to the urban experience of college youth who aspire to live in a living-learning community that provides meaningful experiences and exposure to audiences and issues that are of concern in the industries related to their programs of study. Nonetheless, La Casa continues to experience and address issues of (1) sustaining occupancy by students who are of low-income households and are the first in their families to enroll in college; and (2) program development to better meet the needs of each student's college journey.

From a programmatic angle, possibly more than anything else, La Casa students aspire to experience meaningful work that will help them acquire marketable skills before they graduate. Their primary objective is to learn about careers in general as well as to acquire the specific skills necessary to function effectively in the industries related to their programs of study. But many internship programs today create or perpetuate serious inequalities, especially for students from families of modest means. When unpaid internships require students to forego wages and finance a living without a paycheck, internship opportunities are out of reach for many low-income students.

To this end, we are currently focused on developing a paid internship program that will connect La Casa students with on-the-job training experiences. A variety of organizations and employers are being engaged as internship providers that we hope will provide modest living stipends and sponsor student to live at La Casa while pursuing an undergraduate degree.

All in all, we are being intentional in supporting a community-immersion model and its related impact on developing the identity and approach of new leaders and professionals. That is, by providing La Casa students with college and career guidance that includes engagement in course work, internship opportunities, informational seminars, and projects for college credit, it is our intent that students explore themes of community responsibility, active citizenship and informed leadership through service and community engagement in Pilsen and in surrounding communities. In the process, we intend to position students from a variety of backgrounds to gain perspective and appreciation for the interconnection of the growing ethnic, economic, and political diversity of our community and the State.

2. Describe the impact that this project has had on the your community. Please be as specific as possible. Approximately 400 words.

La Casa provides young students with a safe, affordable place to live and study, close to their family and community, which in turn helps these students succeed and graduate from college. The goal of the project is to help decrease our communities' high Latino college drop out rates – only one in ten Latino students graduates with a college degree, and one-third of freshmen Latino college students don't enter a second year -- by providing affordable living accommodations alongside housing and academic support services. La Casa opened its doors for the fall semester of 2012 for its first residents and will be fully occupied by 2013 academic year. I have personally seen youth who were struggling academically begin to thrive through our academic support programs. At La Casa, we believe that college changes everything and are committed to helping students get their first bachelor level degree.

Earning a bachelor level degree or transferring from a community college to a four-year university is a momentous accomplishment. Being the first member of a family to do so? It makes the accomplishment even more significant.

Students who live at La Casa certainly are a good representation of youth who seek a place to live where student support services are available. Students that approach La Casa staff with the intent to drop-out from their college studies are faced with a set of professionals who challenge the idea and instead provide advocacy, resources, leadership development, and a variety of student support services. Our collective counseling approach is he

The dormitories are not only an investment in the long-term academic success of the community's young people, but an investment in the social and economic infrastructure of the community. Given that college students earn 74% more than high school graduates, La Casa is having an impact on the community at large by stimulating economic growth for the local economy and in turn, building a stronger, more sustainable community. Increasing local access to postsecondary education also has a ripple effect on the community, resulting in increased access to better education, health care, and safety. In June of 2014 we held our first La Casa graduation ceremony to celebrate students graduating from college and to share the experience with their friends and family.

3. What trade-offs and compromises were required during the development of the project? Did you participate in making them? Approximately 400 words.

Some of the compromises that we had to make in developing this project turned out to be opportunities. For example, the original design did not include a computer lab, a campus connection, and office space. I worked with the team to develop space that is functional and brings added value for our students and to our community.

Today, students have access to the computer lab, we have an office space on site, and college representatives have a dedicated space that permits families and students easy access to professionals. The result is we are available to assist students much more quickly as opposed to having an offsite office. These trade-offs have actually allowed us to do more to ensure we provide the support they need to make sure they graduate or successfully transfer from community college to university.

4. What do you consider to be the the most and least successful aspects of this project? Approximately 400 words.

The most successful aspects of the project is that La Casa provides more than just housing. It has become a one-stop shop where youth get resources and supports that enable them to thrive academically, get access to internship opportunities, get support in getting scholarships, and have quality affordable housing.

2015
RUDY BRUNER AWARD
OTHER
PERSPECTIVE



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Name	Luis Duarte	Title	Associate Director
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Signature  Date 12/8/2014

1. What role did you play in the development of this project? Approximately 400 words.

The LARES program was part of the early community discussions on the creation of an alternative housing space in the Latino community for students. The ideas generated in those conversations, implemented by the design team at UrbanWorks, eventually took the shape of La Casa and its student resource center.

A central component of LARES was the creation of community-university connections in order to enhance the educational pipeline and increase opportunities for Latinos to enter and complete college. Building on a track record of success with community partners, the LARES program sought to enter into a collaborative educational effort aimed at strengthening the educational pipeline and the college success of Latino students with principle Latino agencies such as The Resurrection Project. The program's mission is to reinforce current efforts and provide services that are not extensively available to the Latino community; specific attention is placed on access to higher education, college success rates, and the promotion of educational opportunity and advancement. La Casa plays an important role in meeting the goals of the LARES program.

Today, the LARES program provides several resources to students who dorm at La Casa. Tutoring is offered in cooperation with the Confederation of Latin American Students (CLAS). General tutoring, especially in mathematics and English, is provided by individual tutors. LARES arranges trips to conferences for student associations, especially those with a pre-professional focus. LARES also assists students in finding employment, including summer employment, on campus and in the city of Chicago and surrounding areas. LARES also offers financial aid advising and assistance. In addition to one-on-one counseling, workshops on how to apply for scholarships and fellowships are offered throughout the year.

2. Describe the impact that this project has had on the your community. Please be as specific as possible. Approximately 400 words.

The LARES program has been in existence since 1975. Its mission is "to provide personal growth and educational opportunities to UIC students and prepare leaders who will make individual and collective contributions toward the cultural and social advancement of the Latino community." The program was founded through the efforts of Latino college students, community leaders, and university staff and faculty. These constituents felt it necessary to establish a specific program to meet the comprehensive recruitment and retention needs of Latinos, particularly those from underserved communities. As the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) continues to experience an increase in the Latino population it serves, enrollment of Latino students and the presence of first-generation students. LARES has grown from serving a handful of students to become the largest Latino support initiative in Illinois and the Midwest and the largest support unit on the UIC campus. LARES has an established track record of contributing to UIC's leadership in Latino education.

La Casa student housing in Pilsen allows the LARES program to outreach current and prospective UIC students in the community. Students have taken advantage of many recruitment and academic activities organized by the LARES program. The program has worked closely with La Casa to support students in the admission process and other retention initiatives by organizing workshops. In addition, LARES has participated on various panel discussions on education and leadership development at the La Casa Student Center.

La Casa partnership and involvement with the LARES program at UIC has allowed the program to maintain a high visibility in the Latino community and reach more prospective students than it would have otherwise.

Community agencies and programs like La Casa are critical in helping facilitate college access and provide a space where Latino students can benefit from the outreach services the University of Illinois at Chicago provide. Those students, having a place to thrive and services to support them, can then move towards graduation and beyond with much greater ease and success.

3. What trade-offs and compromises were required during the development of the project? Did you participate in making them? Approximately 400 words.

N/A

4. What do you consider to be the the most and least successful aspects of this project? Approximately 400 words.

LARES has created relationships with grammar schools, high schools, community colleges, and Latino social service agencies, such as La Casa. LARES currently recruits at more than 60 Chicago area high schools. In addition to attendance at college days, the program visits classrooms, disseminates college information and organizes admissions and financial aid workshops. In collaboration with La Casa, the program provides current information on academic programs and acquaints Latino families with the many services that are available to students. LARES works closely with administrators in La Casa to help facilitate college access for students.

LARES sponsors several financial aid workshops at La Casa for prospective and continuing Latino students and their families. Current and prospective students are especially encouraged to attend these sessions. The workshops provide information on available resources such as financial assistance, scholarships, study abroad, internships and summer enrichment programs. Other workshop areas include such diverse topics as time management, career choices, computer literacy, study skills, test-taking strategies, and more. Workshops are designed to help students succeed at UIC as well as enhance their undergraduate experiences.

Our collaborative efforts with La Casa have been quite impactful on the students residing in the dorms as well as the surrounding community. We can only hope to fill any vacant spaces in those dorms with more students heading towards UIC so we can foster even more success on our campus and beyond/

PROCESS DOCUMENTATION

Streetscape Analysis



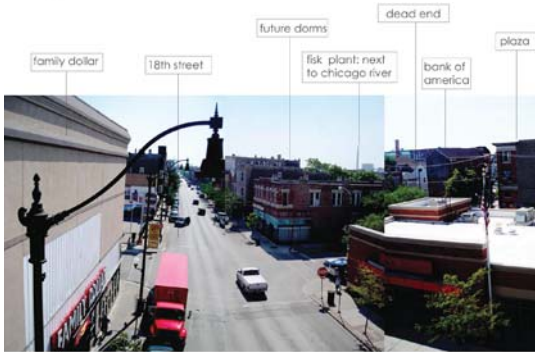
Previous storefront at current La Casa site



(2)



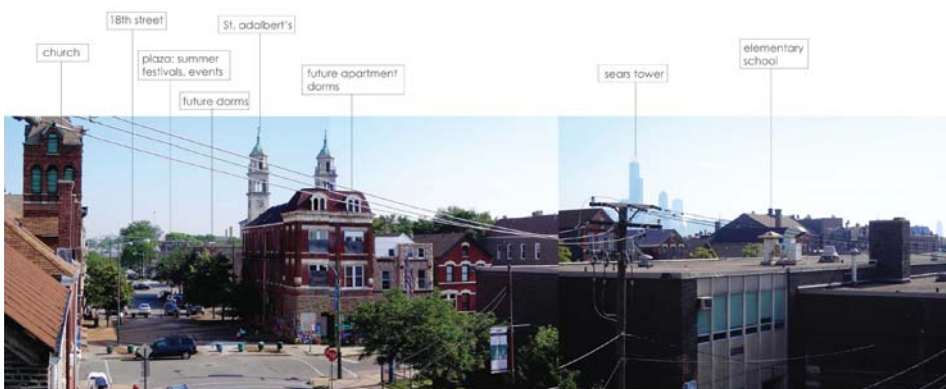
(3)



(4)



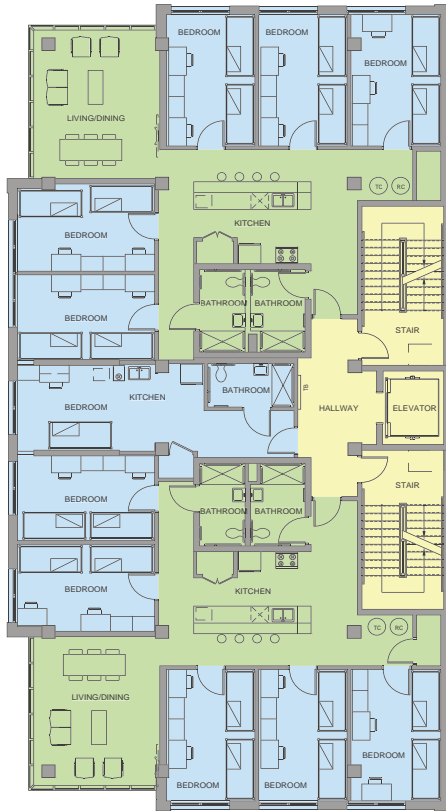
(5)






(6)

PROCESS DOCUMENTATION

Floor Plans



common space 
 private space 
 flow 

TYPICAL FLOOR PLAN 

Each floor features 10 double occupancy dorm rooms, 2 communal kitchens, 2 living/dining areas, 4 full baths, as well as an RA room complete with its own kitchenette and full bath.

18th street

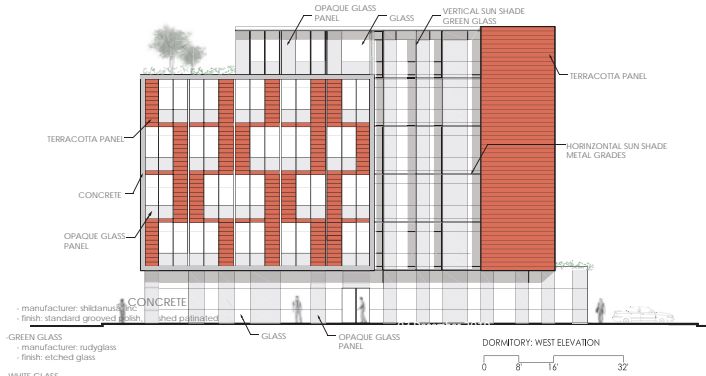


SITE / FIRST FLOOR PLAN 

The first floor holds a large resource center/retail space as well as a fitness center. The large open areas on this floor delineate public space.

PROCESS DOCUMENTATION

Material Studies



- manufacturer: shildanusa, inc
- finish: standard grooved polish
- GREEN GLASS
- manufacturer: rudyglass
- finish: etched glass
- WHITE GLASS
- manufacturer: rudyglass
- finish: etched glass
- OPAQUE GLASS
- manufacturer: skylinedesign
- finish: opaque



TERRACOTA PANEL



HORIZONTAL SUN SHADE METAL GRATES



VERTICAL SUN SHADE GREEN GLASS



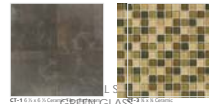
OPAQUE GLASS PANEL



CONCRETE



STRUCTURAL CLAY BRICK - Exposed Interior Masonry



GREEN GLASS



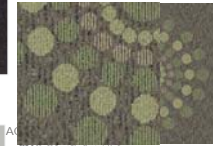
HORIZONTAL SUN SHADE METAL GRATES



BAMBOO VENEER - Chinying, Gls



PT-3 Accent Brick - Color 1



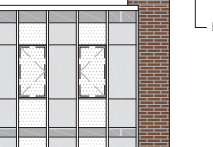
PT-4 Accent Brick - Color 2



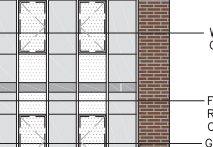
PT-5 Accent Brick - Color 3



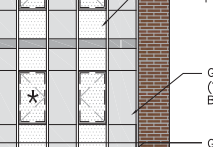
PT-6 Accent Brick - Color 4



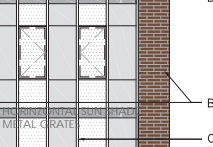
PT-7 Accent Brick - Color 5



PT-8 Accent Brick - Color 6

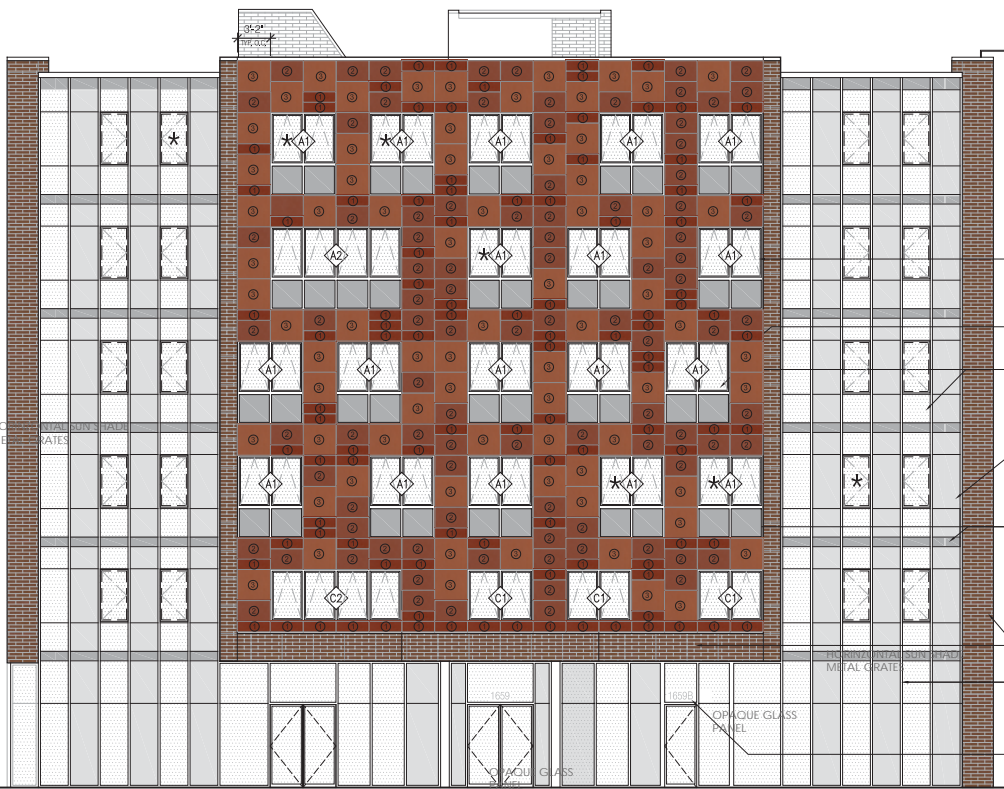
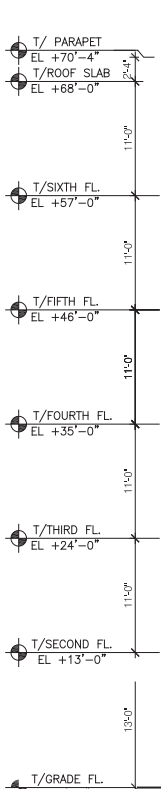


PT-9 Accent Brick - Color 7



PT-10 Accent Brick - Color 8

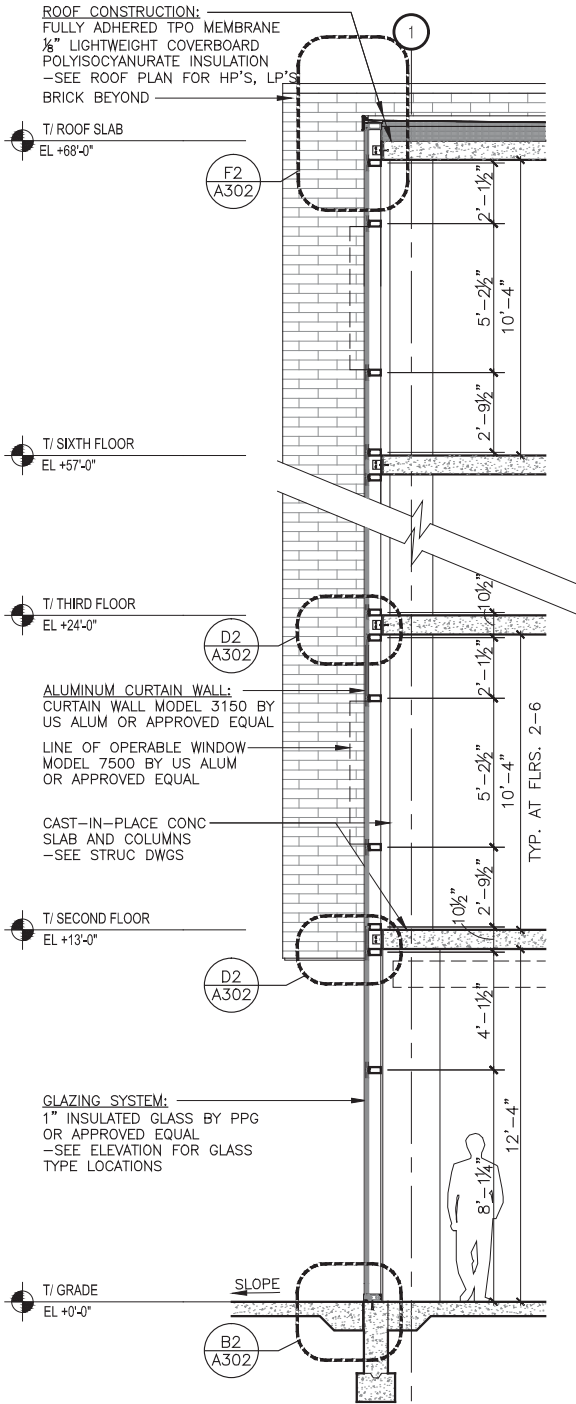
- TERRACOTA PANEL
- manufacturer: shildanusa, inc
- finish: standard grooved polish, brushed patinated
- GREEN GLASS
- manufacturer: rudyglass
- finish: etched glass
- WHITE GLASS
- manufacturer: rudyglass
- finish: etched glass
- OPAQUE GLASS
- manufacturer: skylinedesign
- finish: opaque custom interlayers



- EXTERIOR LIGHTING
- WINDOWS BY TRACO OR APPROVED EQUAL
- FIBER CEMENT BOARD RAINSCREEN BY SWISSPEARL OR APPROVED EQUAL
- GLASS TYPE CW1 (VISION) BY PPG OR APPROVED EQUAL
- GLASS TYPE CW2 (TRANSLUCENT) BY PPG OR APPROVED EQUAL
- GLASS TYPE CW3 (SPANDREL) BY PPG OR APPROVED EQUAL
- HORIZONTAL SUN SHADE METAL GRATES
- BRICK TYPE B (VENEER)
- CURTAIN WALL MODEL 3150 BY US ALUM. BASIS OF DESIGN (SYSTEM TO MEET CBC 13-32-100 FOR THRUST ON HANDRAIL & GUARDS)
- FRITTED ADDRESS DESIGNATION

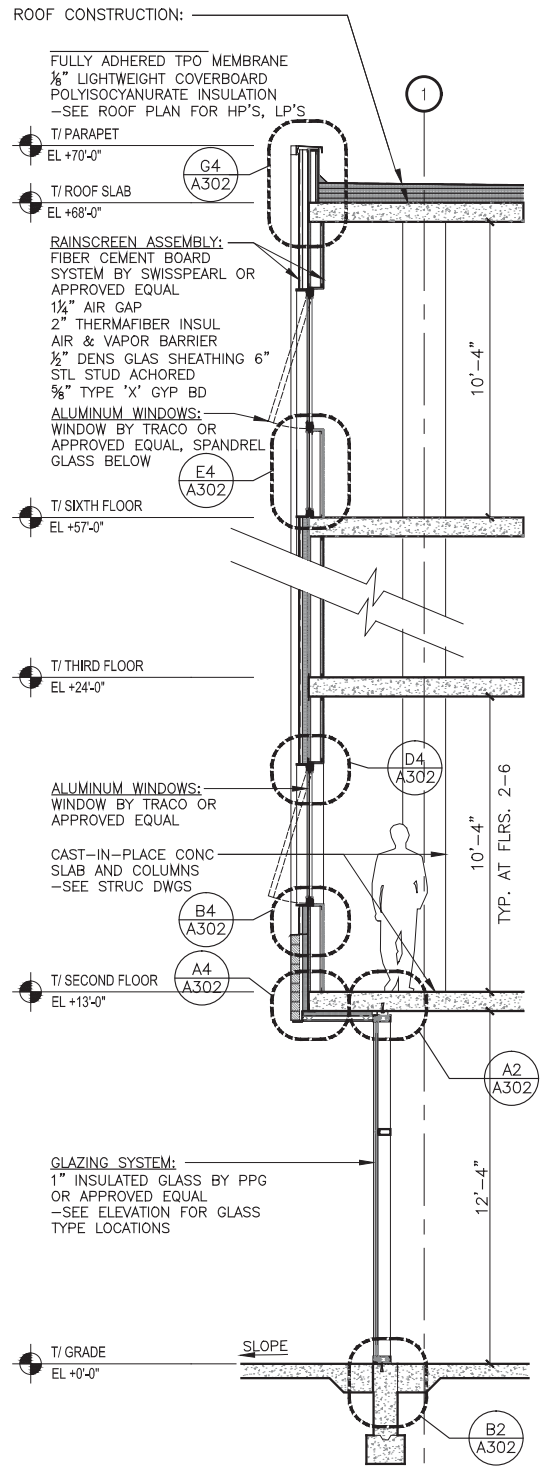
PROCESS DOCUMENTATION

Wall Section Analysis



A6 WALL SECTION @ CURTAIN WALL

SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0"



A4 WALL SECTION @ RAIN SCREEN

SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0"

PERFORMANCE QUALIFICATIONS

and Green Initiatives

Central Location

La Casa is centrally-located in a designated Transit-Oriented Development area. It is a half a block from a City of Chicago CTA 'L' station as well as a prominent bus route. This proximity to public transportation also allowed the project to provide less than the city required parking spaces. Additionally, bike stands and recycling areas are located at La Casa's front door.

Energy-Efficient Lighting

The building's public area lighting, including lobby, corridor and stairwells, are controlled by occupancy sensors. Community area lighting within the dorm units are controlled by multiple light switches so there is always a convenience switch available to turn off a light when leaving the space. All mechanical closets have door operated lights so a light will not be left on unknowingly.

Mechanical Systems

All mechanical systems follow the stringent Chicago Energy Code and utilize Energy Star equipment, high efficiency water heaters and energy saving appliances. In addition, all plumbing fixtures are low flow.

Sustainable Materials

The Chicago Energy Code also requires an efficient building envelope, so LaCasa utilizes thermally broken glazing systems, with Low-E glass and high r-value wall profiles. The average r-value of the roof is R42. All paints, stains and caulks used in the building are low VOC. The building utilizes a highly efficient exterior composite wall system with a rain screen.

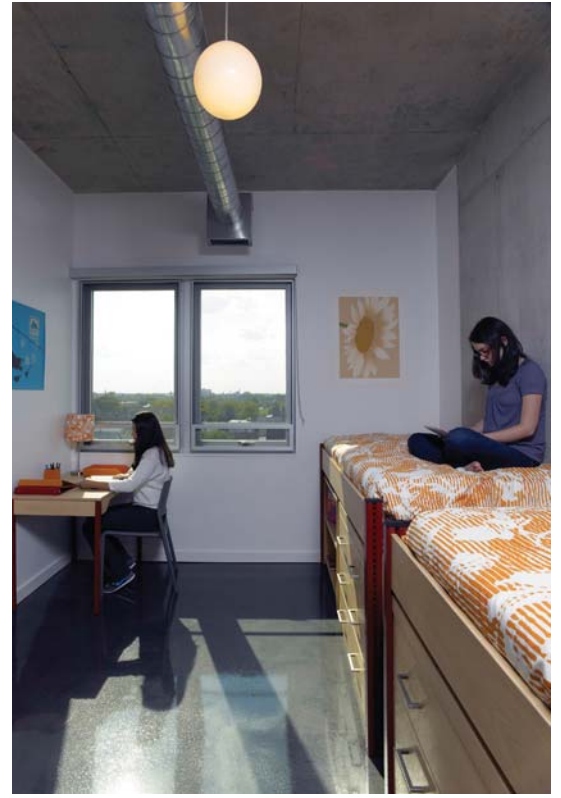






Restored from
Delish Salsola
Ferrari Support
Aug. 2008







BOY ROOM

THE GREAT LAKES

STUDENT LIFE

and parent involvement



Residents volunteering at family workshop, La Casa Facebook



Weekly yoga at La Casa, La Casa Facebook




Student dinner, La Casa Instagram




College planning workshop, La Casa Instagram

LA CASA FACEBOOK PAGE



Email or Phone: Password: [Log In](#)

Keep me logged in [Forgot your password?](#)



La Casa Student Housing
Non-Profit Organization

La Casa | Live. Learn. Thrive.
a Resurrection Project initiative

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To connect with La Casa Student Housing, sign up for Facebook today.

Timeline | [About](#) | [Photos](#) | [Likes](#) | [More](#)


PEOPLE >

331 likes

ABOUT >


- La Casa student housing is an innovative model in student housing that surrounds students with many of the benefits and resources of on-campus living.
- <http://www.lacasastudenthousing.org/>

PHOTOS >




La Casa Student Housing
4 hrs ·

Did you know that La Casa has a college resource center?
www.lacasastudenthousing.org



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La Casa Student Housing created an event.
December 2 ·



(Charla Universitaria) No Somos Ricos: Cómo Pagar La Universidad
Saturday, December 20 at 10:00am in CST
Chicago, Illinois 60608
Be the first person to join

A Dorm for All Colleges

By [MICHAEL WINERIP](#)

Published: November 2, 2012

ON that August morning, when the new college dormitory was scheduled to open here in the Pilsen section of Chicago, Martha Elena Nieto and her son, Teohua Villalobos, were first to arrive. It was 7 a.m. Move-in time wasn't for several hours — the dorm director wasn't even there yet — but Ms. Nieto was anxious to get on with it. She and Teohua hadn't slept the night before, they were so excited. That this dormitory even existed felt like a small miracle, almost as if someone had built it specifically with Teohua and his mother in mind.

[Enlarge This Image](#)



Nathan Weber for The New York Times

La Casa was not built on a campus but in the community, the Pilsen section of Chicago. [More Photos »](#)

Multimedia



Slide Show

[Inside La Casa](#)

[Go to Education Life »](#)

papers printed for school.”

The idea is so simple, it is surprising that no one thought of it sooner. College is hard enough when students live on campus and have all the support they need. For commuter students in poor neighborhoods living with their families in cramped quarters, just finding somewhere to do schoolwork can be a challenge.

The new six-story dorm, for 100 students, is called La Casa and was built by the

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[Resurrection Project](#), a nonprofit organization serving Latino families in the area. Students living in the dorm attend colleges all over the city, including the University of Illinois at Chicago, Columbia College, DePaul and Loyola as well as two-year schools like Truman and Malcolm X.

Joe Agron, editor in chief of American School and University, a magazine that monitors campus construction, believes La Casa is the first of its kind in the country. "Most dorms are owned and run by colleges, and there are dorms run by private companies for colleges," he said. "But setting up a dorm for students in the community from many colleges — I've never heard of it."

Accommodations are spacious four-bedroom suites with a shared kitchen and dining area. The cost is \$350 to \$700 a month, depending on a family's income. Ms. Nieto pays \$450 monthly, not including food. A dorm room at the University of Illinois's Chicago campus costs \$1,100.

The idea came from the Resurrection Project, founded by a neighborhood activist named Raul Raymundo. Mr. Raymundo grew up in Pilsen and returned after graduating from Carleton College in Minnesota in 1987, starting the organization two years later in a church basement with a \$30,000 grant from six area parishes. They began small, concentrating at first on safety issues, like controlling rowdy customers at the many seedy corner bars.

It turned out Mr. Raymundo had a gift for getting what he needed from politicians, much like another Chicago community organizer before him, the legendary Saul Alinsky. In 1991 Mr. Raymundo gathered 1,000 residents from Pilsen, along with Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, and invited Mayor Richard Daley to speak. Then, before the large crowd, he asked the mayor to commit \$2 million for community housing. The mayor was angry about being sandbagged, but in the end delivered the money, which was used to build 24 units of subsidized housing. When more than 100 families qualified, he held a lottery and arranged for the Cardinal to pick the winners' names, a surefire way of signaling that all was above board.

Since then, the Resurrection Project has developed more than 600 low-income units around Pilsen, created two child-care centers, a health clinic at a local school, youth recreation programs and support services for immigrants. On several projects, including the dorm, they have worked with the Local Initiatives Support Corporation, which has provided start-up grants and connected them to national philanthropic groups. In two decades, the Project has raised \$250 million.

The dorm was financed with an \$8.4 million state grant, \$600,000 in donations and a \$3 million mortgage. With the building not fully ready by the start of the school year, only 20 of 100 beds are occupied this semester.

La Casa is meant to be more than a place to live. There are a variety of student support services, including on-site counseling and tutoring. One common room is filled with computers and printers for general use. There are resident assistants who come from the same neighborhoods as the students, including Omar Michel, who is writing his master's thesis at Loyola University on Latino student development.

For the students, just to have made it this far has taken considerable drive.

Lauren Spearman, a University of Illinois freshman, contributes \$400 a month. She earns \$8.50 an hour working 18 hours a week as a floor model at Abercrombie & Fitch and does another 10 hours at the campus bowling center. Her father is a teacher, her mother a nurse's assistant. They could not afford university housing.

Megan Galarza, a second-year student at Truman College, has a job three nights a week as a cashier at Au Bon Pain, and contributes \$250 toward the \$650 rent; her mother pays the

rest. Last year, when she lived at home, it was a two-hour commute to school by train and bus. She would leave at 7:30 and many nights did not return until midnight. This year, she can ride her bike to campus. This year, she can ride her bike to campus. "When Megan wants something, Megan will find a way to get it," said her mother, Duvina, a manager for United Airlines.

Ms. Nieto has high hopes for Teohua, a psychology major who will graduate this year. When he was living with his mother, crime was such a worry that he spent much of his time indoors. Most of his old school friends had moved away; pretty much anyone who can, gets out of Chicago Lawn.

"It's like a whole other city he's living in now," his mother said. Once a week, she stops by the dorm to drop off groceries but doesn't go in. She doesn't want to intrude. She is a 43-year-old single mother and he is her only child. She pays for the dorm out of her earnings as an assistant at a beauty salon; her brother helps them.

Ms. Nieto went to a trade school to study skin care. Last summer, when they were visiting friends in New York City, her son asked to visit Columbia University.

"You want to see his bedroom?" she asked me. "It's very interesting."

There may be no other like it in Chicago Lawn. On the bookshelf are Don DeLillo novels and a copy of James Joyce's "Ulysses." There are also several quotations her son had written out in longhand and taped to the walls. One, from Nietzsche, reads: "The individual has always had to struggle to keep from being overwhelmed by the tribe. If you try it, you will be lonely often, and sometimes frightened. But no price is too high to pay for the privilege of owning yourself."

Ms. Nieto waited for me to read to the end, then said, "That's something, isn't it?"

Michael Winerip oversees the Booming blog for The Times.

A version of this article appeared in print on November 4, 2012, on page ED16 of Education Life with the headline: A Dorm for All Colleges.

Pilsen community leaders say neighborhood college dorm will help more kids graduate

March 6, 2012

A community organization in Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood has introduced La Casa, a student housing development. The six-story building will house 100 students and five resident aides. It is also includes a resource center with computer lab, tutoring, mentoring and other resources for college students.

The Resurrection Project is the group behind the college residence. The Pilsen-based organization proposed the idea ten years ago.

Raul Raymundo, CEO of the Resurrection Project, describes La Casa as a community living-and-learning environment designed to help students succeed in college.

Raymundo says he's been concerned about the low number of Latino students attending college and graduating from college. He says not much has changed over the past ten years.

"One of the challenges in the Hispanic community is that even though there is an increase for enrollment for Latino students, the retention rate and graduation rate for Latino students is very poor and La Casa is going to assist in the graduation rate and retention rate for those [students]," Raymundo said.

Maria Bucio is the director of La Casa. She says having the college residence in the Pilsen community sends an inspiring message to students who live in the area.

"The community is saying, we want you to go to college, we want you to succeed, you can do this and we are here to support you," said Bucio.

Jessenia Martinez is a senior at Benito Juarez high school. She got teary-eyed when she spoke at the opening of La Casa's resource center.



"I want to live at La Casa because at home... it's a two bedroom apartment and it's really small. And I live with my mom, my brother, my little sister, my dad and it gets really loud in there...I need time to study," said Martinez.
"If I live at La Casa I know it will help me so much in studying and branching out myself [while] being able to stay close to home and also be with my family."

Organizers say La Casa is currently accepting applications from college students across the Chicago area, including community college students who intend to transfer to four-year institutions. The dormitory opens in the fall.

Pilsen dorm gives college students a home

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11

August 19, 2012 6:28PM

Updated: September 21, 2012 6:13AM

For several months, the construction of a building in the heart of Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood has created a buzz among its Latino residents and business owners.

It is a modern six-story dormitory appropriately named La Casa (the house) that opened its doors last week to 100 middle- to lower-income undergraduate students attending college all over Chicago. The concept was rooted in wishful thinking about 18 years ago, according to La Casa Director Maria Bucio, as in wouldn't it be great if we could provide housing and educational support to students in need?

Ten years ago, La Casa began taking shape thanks to the Resurrection Project, a community service organization in Pilsen founded in 1990 by six churches. The nonprofit has since invested more than \$200 million in the neighborhood, spokesman Ulises Silva said.

The group secured \$8 million in state funding and an additional \$1 million in donations for La Casa.

The result is a thing of beauty.

Like in a typical dorm, two students share a room. Five rooms share a common lounge with a flat-screen television and a beautiful kitchen with granite countertops and breakfast bar.

The intangible resources are even better: Students will have access to tutors, educational workshops and professionals willing to donate their time as mentors.

"We will be there to support them," Bucio told me last week. "They will always have someone to go to. We will remove the barriers."

The goal is to help the 100 students receive their bachelor's degrees in a four-year period, Bucio said. Ninety-eight of the students are the first in their families to attend college.

They range from freshmen to seniors attending DePaul, Loyola, the Illinois Institute of Technology, Columbia, Malcolm X, the University of Illinois at Chicago and community colleges on a full-time basis. Most will go to school via the CTA's Pink Line just a minute away.

Anahi Tapia moved in Wednesday after attending an information session at Navy Pier for the Obama administration's

deportation deferral program for undocumented immigrants.

Since graduating from Curie High School in 2007, Tapia has been in college, first at Harold Washington and now IIT as a psychology and sociology major. Her home environment is far from conducive to studying because her family lives in a cramped apartment.

“I don’t have a big enough room to study,” she says. “I sleep in a computer room. I needed resources to concentrate.”

Tapia could not afford housing until La Casa came along. She is a Presidential Scholar, and IIT has awarded her a partial privately funded tuition scholarship (because she is undocumented she does not qualify for federal- and state-based financial aid). But housing there would cost more than \$8,500 for the school year.

La Casa costs \$6,300 and offers need-based scholarships for which Tapia qualified. Bucio and her colleagues are trying to raise more money to offset costs further in the future.

In a perfect world, college students from all ethnic and economic backgrounds could spend their first year or two living in campus dorms to soak in the college experience and meet people from diverse cultures — from the children of wealthy CEOs to those who grew up on farms.

But skyrocketing college costs make that unattainable for many. That’s why La Casa, whose organizers say is a one-of-a-kind project in the U.S., is a vital and inspiring concept.

While most of its students this year are Latino, that’s not a requirement, Bucio said. La Casa is open to students all over the country who qualify for financial aid and want to attend a Chicago college full time.

“As a former member of this community, it’s a very emotional project,” Bucio said. “It seems idealistic, but it’s doable. This is going to work. We’re here to help.”

Video: Unique student housing initiative ensures Latino students graduate from college



LatinaLista — May is the month for graduations. Yet, not all students just graduate from school. Some students in Chicago also graduate from student housing, if they were part of the special La Casa student housing initiative.

Founded two years ago by the Resurrection Project, La Casa student housing provides low-income students a full service support net to ensure they not only graduate from college but thrive during their time in school.

Though open to all students, it's primarily Latino students who live at La Casa which is located in the predominantly Mexican American area of Chicago known as Pilsen.

While the multi-story building mimics traditional college dorms — roommates, shared bathrooms, fitness center, wi-fi, cable, laundry, computer room, etc — this student housing has one distinct difference — it's home to students from different universities and colleges.

The purpose of La Casa is to give students, who are first-generation college students, the opportunity to have a quiet place to study and easy access to resources that help them with everything from financial aid and basic job preparedness workshops to actual internship positions and networking opportunities to find their first job — no matter which college they attend.

Recently, the second class of La Casa graduated from their respective universities. To celebrate the milestone, La Casa administrators held their own graduation ceremony. In the featured video, students, parents and La Casa administrators talk about this unique program and its impact on the academic and employment success of its students.

With Homelessness on Rise, Housing Program Addresses Student Need

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by Anthony Settiani (<http://www.chicago-bureau.org/author/anthonysettiani/>), 09/09/2014 0 comments (<http://www.chicago-bureau.org/chicago-student-housing-resource-program-addresses-homeless-student-need/#respond>)

Homelessness is on the rise across Chicago, according to the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless (CCH), which found not only increasing numbers of homeless adults and families, but also growing numbers of youth and unaccompanied minors.

According to an August 2014 analysis for the 2013-2014 school year, CCH estimated a 19.4 percent increase in the number of homeless people in Chicago since the year before. Their estimated figure increased from 116,042 to 138,575.

This total includes the growing number of homeless students enrolled in Chicago Public Schools, which was estimated at 22,144 during the 2014 fiscal year, and is up from 18,669 in 2012-2013.

CPS defines student homelessness as any one of a half-dozen criteria to include the following: “Living in a shelter, motel, or hotel,” “doubled up at someone else’s home,” but also “children staying with grandparents or others who are not the legal guardian.”

Sol Flores, executive director of La Casa Norte, a Humboldt Park-based outreach and resource center for the homeless, said she believes there are more Chicagoans threatened with homelessness than ever before despite city and national efforts to cut into the homeless population. Her organization recently partnered with The Resurrection Project and La Casa student housing to give dormitory-style housing for Chicago students struggling to find a place to live on or near their college campus.

Maria Bucio, director of La Casa, said that cost is one of the most prohibitive factors for students looking to experience on-campus college life. La Casa can house students for close to half of what they would be paying on most college campuses in the area, which ranges anywhere from \$6000 per year to just over \$3000.

“They have students who are going to college,” she said, referring to La Casa Norte. “And we have beds.”

The two-building facility is more than just a place to sleep. It also offers study rooms and a support staff to assist students with navigating their college careers. La Casa was founded in August 2012, and its facility has been to house 100 students.

This school year it housed 94, 10 of whom graduated this year.

“It’s pretty modern,” said Aaron Davis, who spent the last year living at La Casa after being referred there by a guidance counselor. “There’s a double security door, and it needs a key card so not just anyone can walk in.”

Davis, 21, recently finished his first year in City Colleges of Chicago. He said he found the organization’s mindset even more helpful than its facilities.

“I was in a homeless program, and my mind wasn’t on education,” he said. “It was on safety and security.” He said all that changed when he got to La Casa.

“Now you’re in a place where you can be more education-focused. It’s very refreshing,” Davis said.

The pilot program sends six youths from La Casa Norte to live in the dormitory as they pursue their studies. In order to remain eligible for housing, they must maintain a minimum 2.0 G.P.A., and acquire an internship within two years of living in the facilities.

Bucio said she believes the urban setting contributes strongly to the students’ success.

“It’s this idea that they feel like they’re part of the neighborhood, but also a secure, dormitory environment,” she said. “La Casa is a labor of love for many of us.”



(<http://www.chicago-bureau.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/photo-71.jpg>)

Youth homelessness is a persistent problem, and with numbers apparently on the rise, La Casa student housing hopes to fill a great need.

Oct. 17, 2012

La Casa Student Housing Development Opens in Chicago's Pilsen Neighborhood

By Gabriel Circiog, Associate Editor

Governor Pat Quinn, representatives of The Resurrection Project and local legislators have announced the opening of the La Casa Student Housing development. Located in Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood at 1818 S. Paulina St., the six-story residence hall offers students all the benefits of on-campus housing, including live in-resident advisors for ongoing academic support.

La Casa, which is closely located to public transportation and major highways, provides students with easy access to the major universities and colleges in the Chicago area. The development, which will house 100 students and five resident aides, also includes a resource center that features an onsite computer lab and academic advisors to offer career guidance and access to financial resources.

"La Casa is the world's first community-based college dormitory designed to increase our young people's likelihood of college success," said Raul Raymundo, CEO of The Resurrection Project. "It was created for the commuting college student who is living at home in a two-bedroom apartment with no place to study other than the bathroom at two in the morning. It was created because we want all children in our community to know that a bachelor's degree is not an option, but a requirement."

In the pursuit of increasing access to higher education, the state provided over \$8.4 million of the \$12.2 million total project cost to construct the La Casa Student Housing development and resource center. The state's grant funds were used to acquire the land and to cover costs associated with the design and construction of the residence hall and resource center. The first floor of the residence hall will feature various amenities including a fitness center, a retail shop and laundry facilities.

"Higher education is the key to improving our economy and preparing our students for the workforce of tomorrow," said Quinn. "This new student housing development will provide more resources to students to help them as they pursue their degrees."

Image Courtesy of: www.lacasastudenthousing.org



A Day of the Dead celebration brings La Casa students together

By *Claudia Martinez*



On October 20, La Casa students got together for a different kind of study break. In celebration of one of Mexico's most famous holidays, Dia de los Muertos, they built a Day of the Dead altar.

Traditionally, families build altars in their homes during the weeks leading up to November 1 as a way to celebrate and remember loved ones who have passed to the other side. In Pilsen, many events and festivities lead up to Day of the Dead, including the traditional Muertos de la Risa procession hosted by ElevArte Community

Studio.

Maria Bucio, Director of La Casa Student Housing, wanted to give La Casa's student a chance to take part in these festivities.

The study break brought students of different backgrounds together to celebrate this Mexican holiday and understand the traditions associated with it. But it did more than expose non-Latino students to this holiday. Many of the students currently at La Casa come from Mexican families but have never actually experienced the tradition of building an altar.

"I grew up knowing about it but I never celebrated it," says Sam, a student who was born and raised in Chicago. "As a child I think I might have even confused it for Halloween."

This is the problem many second- and third-generation Latinos face today: not being really connected to their traditions. La Casa events like these gave students the opportunity to embrace their culture.

"It connects us to our ancestors and families," says Maria Bucio. "Sometimes it is not until we get to universities that we get exposed to these traditions."

The altar honoring those who have passed is scheduled to be up until November 3rd and it is dedicated to three TRP co-founders and pioneers as well as loved ones of La Casa students.

Bucio plans to make this an annual tradition for La Casa students, but wants to make sure it doesn't just stop there.

"This won't be the only tradition that we have," she says. "We will continue to celebrate the different cultures that we have at La Casa by doing something for Chinese New Year and Martin Luther King Jr. Day. Anything that celebrates diversity is definitely worth celebrating."

From La Casa to Your Casa: A La Casa Student's resilience inspires others by Claudia Martinez



Sam moved to [La Casa Student Housing](#) with the goal of graduating from the University In Chicago (UIC) with a neuroscience degree and applying to medical school. Since then, he has focused on his studies and has made education a priority. However, before moving to La Casa, he was a struggling high school student who wasn't getting the support he needed. He grappled with his studies but did not graduate on time with the rest of his classmates.

When he finally graduated, Sam moved to Texas to work and save some money. He returned to Chicago to continue his education and enrolled at Harold Washington College. However, his academic troubles continued; he ended up failing three out of four classes and getting a D in the last class.

"After that semester I was completely defeated," said

Sam. It was clear to him that he was not ready for college. On top of this, he began having family problems at home and he ended up moving out and working full-time.

Sam eventually realized that the only way he would be able to go back to get an education was with the support of his family. In the spring 2013, Sam enrolled as a full-time student at Harold Washington College and ended up doing excellent. He went from being a D student to being an exceptional student.

During this semester, Sam took his first human biology class and was completely fascinated. He was introduced to a book called *County: Life Death and Politics at Chicago's Public Hospital* by David A. Ansell. Sam notes, "After reading this book, I was so inspired and realized that I too was capable of becoming a doctor."

After another semester at Harold Washington College, Sam transferred to the University in Chicago (UIC). He joined the Hispanic Center of Excellence at UIC and over the summer was able to do undergraduate research. "This was the first real stepping stone in my medical career," said Sam. After finishing this summer program, he joined another program called Medicina Scholars, which prepares lowerclassmen for medical school.

Currently, Sam continues his path to becoming a great candidate for medical school. He also volunteers his time with Rush Hospital and as a soccer coach for Cristo Rey. This semester he is trying to volunteer as an interpreter at a community health clinic in the West Town neighborhood.

For many students like Sam, being able to have a quiet place to study like the La Casa Resource Center is a blessing. Before coming to [La Casa](#), he had a hard time finding a place to study because a second family lived in his parents' home. He would spend long nights at the UIC library preparing for exams and studying. Today, things are different.

"I now have the privilege to study whenever I want," said Sam. "The La Casa Resource Center is a great place to study and the coordinators are always willing to help."

Despite his past academic struggles, Sam is now in an academically supportive environment and among students who understand exactly what he's gone through. [La Casa's programs](#) have given him all the tools and support he needs to continue being the exceptional student he is. La Casa students also look up to Sam, but what they don't know about him is that his motivation comes from his family. Sometimes, his niece tells him she wants to be a doctor too. "Hearing her say this is what keeps me going," he says.

Sam continues to pursue his ultimate goal of becoming a doctor in osteopathic medicine. After he graduates from medical school, he hopes to work in an underrepresented community in Chicago. There's no doubt that with Sam's determination, he will accomplish his dream of becoming a doctor.

College Talks

Get college survival tips and information to help you through the application process and to make the most of your experience while in college.

WHERE

La Casa Student Housing & Resource Center
1815 S. Paulina Street
Chicago, IL 60608

MORE INFORMATION

María Bucio, Director of La Casa
lacasa@resurrectionproject.org
Ph (312) 880-1889
www.lacasastudenthousing.org

WORKSHOPS | DATES | TIMES

Countdown to College

Thursday, October 9, 2014 (3:30 PM – 4:30 PM)

Get advice about going to college! From course selection in high school to optimizing your chances of getting your hands on some cash for college, we will provide you with an overview of the steps you need to take to make high school count and to get you ready for college.

Show Me the Money: How To Find and Win Scholarships

Thursday, November 13, 2014 (3:30 PM – 4:30 PM)

When is the best time to start searching for scholarships? Is it ever too early? Is it too late? Contrary to conventional wisdom, you don't need the best grades, rocking ACT/SAT scores, an athletic talent, or a slim bank account to get your hands on some cash for college. Winning scholarships has much more to do with knowing how to find trusted funding sources, meeting requirements, and keeping track of deadlines.

DACA & DREAMer's Pathways to College

Saturday, November 15, 2014 (10:00 AM – 11:00 AM)

In Illinois, colleges are open to undocumented students and some scholarships are available. At this information session you will be introduced to the process of planning for, applying to, and paying for college. Experts will share tips and answer your questions.

Campus Compass: Getting to Know the Resources & Services on Campus *

Wednesday, November 19, 2013 (6:00 PM-7:45 PM)

In your quest to earn your first college degree, learn how to maximize on your college's student supports and campus services. A variety of college representatives will visit us to share tips and provide insights about their department's role on campus.

Dollars & Sense: How to Pay for College

Thursday, December 11, 2014 (3:30 PM – 4:30 PM)

Let's talk about paying for college. At this workshop, an expert will outline the steps to get your hands on some cash for college, identify trusted sources of information, summarize state and federal aid programs, and introduce the *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA).

Transfer Process: Community College to University

Thursday, December 18, 2014 (3:30 PM – 4:30 PM)

If you're planning to attend more than one institution as you work toward earning your college degree, relax! Learn about the transfer process, different types of transfer credit and what you can do to ensure a smooth transition from community college to a four-year university. At this workshop, we will introduce you to the *Illinois Articulation Initiative* (IAI), a statewide transfer agreement among more than 100 participating colleges and universities.

2015-2016 FAFSA Step-by-Step

Saturday, January 17, 2015 (10:00 AM – 12:00 PM)

Are you looking for scholarships, grants, student loans or on-campus job opportunities? The *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA) is the first step in the financial aid process. Join us for a hands-on FAFSA completion workshop. Bring a copy of your family's most recent tax forms.

Deal or No Deal: Did I get a good financial aid offer?

Thursday, February 12, 2014 (3:30 PM – 4:30 PM)

Beyond beautiful and shiny brochures, give special attention to the college's financial aid offer. The financial aid award letter outlines information about costs, and scholarships and grants that are available to help you pay. There is no standard format for award letters, making them difficult to interpret and to compare and contrast. But don't despair; there are tools available to help you decode your financial aid award letter.

College Choice: Does It Matter Where You Go?

Thursday, February 19, 2014 (3:30 PM – 4:30 PM)

It's crucial to compare graduation rates and student support systems on campus, along with financial factors, when choosing a college, rather than focusing too much on prestige. If you're having trouble choosing a college that will put you on the right track for graduation, this workshop can help you sort through the college choice maze.

It's a Big, Big Loan: An Introduction to Federal Student Loans

Thursday, March 12, 2015 (3:30 PM – 4:30 PM)

Is your family's share of college costs still more than you can afford? Are you trying to make sense of the loans included in the college's award offer? It seems simple: You borrow money, you pay it back. But the amount you have to repay is more than the amount you borrow. In some unique instances, however, your loans may be forgiven. To help you get started, we will introduce you to the basics of federal student loans, alert you to borrower rights and responsibilities, and provides an overview of interest rates, grace periods, promissory notes, and loan forgiveness options.

What Can I do With this Major? How To Choose the Right Major for You

Thursday, March 19, 2015 (3:30 PM – 4:30 PM)

Choosing a major, thinking about a career, getting an education -- these are the things college is all about. Learn about career options, job trends in Illinois, and the types of employers that hire people with your major.

My Credit Score: Building Financial Security

Thursday, April 9, 2015 (3:30 PM – 4:30 PM)

With all the excitement college offers, staying on track financially is critical to your success. This workshop will help you build financial security by introducing topics such as money management, credit (the myths, the rumors, the facts), identity theft and financial products for long-term financial health.