



HISTORIC SCHOOLS

S u c c e s s S t o r i e s

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Carl Schurz High School

Chicago, Illinois

Carl Schurz High School in Chicago, Illinois is representative of Prairie style architecture, a style used almost exclusively for residential architecture. By the early 1990's, the school had significantly deteriorated. The school's wooden windows were weather-beaten and the clay rooftop was hidden under a layer of pollution. The School District's challenged financial disposition made it difficult to foresee adequate funding for restoring and rehabilitating the school. The ultimate renovation has instilled a renewed sense of pride in the neighborhood.

Carl Schurz High School, which was constructed between 1908 and 1923, was designed by Dwight H. Perkins, Chief Architect for the Chicago Board of Education between 1906 and 1909. In addition to other noted architects such as Frank Lloyd Wright, Mr. Perkins was a charter member of the Chicago Arts and Crafts Society. The school is representative of the Prairie School style as well as the English Arts and Crafts movement. The school is widely acknowledged as a major Prairie School/Chicago Style building, in which the Prairie school design vocabulary is translated into an institutional use. The renovation project has won several design awards, including one from the Chicago Chapter of the American Institute of Architects .



Carl Schurz High School has served as a focal point to its surrounding community. Prior to the reinvestment initiative, students and faculty displayed little pride in the dilapidated building. There is however a sense of pride sweeping the community since the renovation and rehabilitation. The City of Chicago's decision to reinvest in the school has not only enhanced neighborhood stability but also enabled a civic treasure to be restored.

Architect/Builder

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Description of Project

Project Address:

3601 North Milwaukee Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60641

Status:

Local, state, national designation: The school is a Chicago Landmark (1979) and listed on the National Register of Historic Places (1987).

Architect: Carl Schurz High School was designed by Dwight H. Perkins. The school was Mr. Perkins's masterpiece and is named for a Prussian immigrant who was a Union general in the Civil War.

Date of construction: The school was constructed in three phases between 1908 and 1923.

Date of renovation: The renovation started in 1990 and was completed in the fall of 1996.

Date of previous renovation: Architecturally compatible additions were added to Carl Schurz High School in 1915 and 1924.

Use:

Size: 440,000 square feet

Student/teacher ratio: 30:1 (3,500 students)

Alternative uses: The school is utilized for



several alternative purposes, including police and fire academy classes.

Location

Historic district: While not deemed a historic district, Carl Schurz High School is located in a residential area with three story apartment buildings and single-family homes. The school is setback from the street to minimize noise as well as increase ventilation and light.

Walking distance:

Bussing vs. walking: Information not available

Cost

Total renovation cost: \$11.2 million

Per square feet: \$25.45

Per student: \$3,200

Source of funding:

Local: The Public Building Commission of Chicago paid \$3.5 million for a new tile roof.

State: Yes

Federal: Yes

Private: Information not available

Tax credits: Information not available

Cost estimates for new school construction: Information not available

Problems and/or Threats

Close the school building: Information not available

Raze existing building in order to build a new facility: No

Policies promoting the construction of school sprawl in outlying areas:

Acreage standards: Information not available

State funding biases: Information not available

Inadequate government funding:

Information not available

Acceptance of donated sites for new school construction:

Inflated school renovation cost estimates:

Poor or bad renovation job: Information not available

Resolution

Resolution

Strategies or state/local polices utilized to achieve success story:

The restoration undertaking included performing historic and technical research. Groups such as the National Park Service, the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency and the Chicago Commission on Historic and Architectural Landmarks contributed expertise such as consultation, material testing, field surveys and restoration task mock-ups.

Renovation Success

Undertakings: The renovation included roof replacement, masonry repair, window replacement as well as mechanical and electrical work.

Classroom size and circulation: Information not available

State-of-the-art facility: Information not available

Computer technology: Information not available

Meets education programmatic needs: Information not available

Building codes: Carl Schurz High School was brought 100 percent up to code.

Life safety codes:

Asbestos: Information not available

Fire safety: Information not available

Air quality: The school's mechanical system, including air and plumbing equipment, was updated.

Handicapped accessibility: Information not available

Parking: Information not available

Playing fields: The school's original design incorporated a large playground.

Awards Granted

The Richard H. Driehaus Foundation/Landmarks Preservation Council of Illinois, Preservation Award for Outstanding Restoration/ Rehabilitation (1998)

The Merit Award from the Chicago Building Congress (1998)

Distinguished Building Award from the American Institute of Architects in Chicago (1997)

Special Mention Award from the Illinois Indiana Masonry Council (1996)



Future Endeavors

Maintenance plans: Information not available

Maintenance funding: The Chicago Public School Improvement Plan will absorb the cost of future maintenance projects.

Description of Outcome

Community Response:

Neighborhood stability: The City of Chicago's decision to reinvest in the school has enhanced neighborhood stability.

Safety: information not available

Community reinvestment: Information not available

Economic growth: Information not available

Community Benefits

Students:

Increased academic achievement: There has been a positive change in the attitudes of students at the school.

Independence: Information not available

Teachers: Information not available

Parents: Information not available

Quotes

"The historic rehabilitation project was not a matter of preservation for preservations' sake. The cost was far more reasonable than new construction; a strong argument for the restoration of historic buildings integral to the fabric of our established communities. As the motto of the masonry cleaning contractor simply states: it is a matter of 'giving a future to the past.'"

—Ross Barney & Jankowski, Inc.

"The usable life of the 86-year-old landmark has been extended by at least a half-century, saving big bucks for the city treasury and, in the bargain, restoring a civic treasure."

—Blair Kamen "A Beautifully Renovated Prairie Gem on the Northwest Side Shows off its School Colors." *The Chicago Tribune*. May 19, 1996



Window detail before & after restoration.