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HISTORIC SCHOOLS

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

Adams School and Community Center *St. Louis, Missouri*

For more information about the National Trust's historic neighborhood schools initiative, contact:

Western Office (AK, AZ, CA, HI, ID, NV, OR, WA): Mike Buhler, 415-956-0610

Mountains/Plains Office (CO, KS, MT, NE, ND, SD, UT, WY): John Mitterholzer, 303-623-1504

Midwest Office (IL, IN, IA, MI, MN, MO, OH, WI): Royce Yeater, 312-939-5547

Southwest Office (AR, NM, OK, TX): Megan Brown, 817-332-4398

Southern Office (AL, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, PR, SC, TN, VT): Mary Ruffin Hanbury, 843-722-8552

Southern Field Office (DC, MD, VA, WV): Rob Nieweg, 202-588-6107

Northeast Field Office (DE, NJ, PA): Adrian Fine, 215-848-8033

Northeast Office (CT, MA, ME, NH, NY, RI, VT): Marilyn Fenollosa, 617-523-0885

In May 2000, the Forest Park Southeast Community Council, St. Louis Public School District, McCormack Baron and Associates, Barnes-Jewish Hospital Foundation, BJC Healthcare and Washington University Medical Center partnered to renovate and expand the Adams School. The deteriorated school is located in a diverse community that had



witnessed a steady decline in population, housing stock and retail shops. In order to direct the design, construction and operation of the school and community center, a non-profit organization known as the Adams Park Community Center, Inc. was created. As a result, the late 1800's urban public elementary school, which stood vacant for nine years, was successfully renovated as a school and community center and was in use by the beginning of the Fall 2001 school year.

The Adams School renovation and expansion project included renovating two of the three existing school buildings and constructing a modern addition. The project consisted of renovations to the north and south sides of the Adams School, which were restored to their original beauty. The addition connects the existing school to a new community center, which has a number of amenities, including a day care center, teen center and provides adult education classes.

The Adams School and Community Center is part of a larger development plan for the entire Forest Park Southeast neighborhood. An investment ranging from \$168 and \$180 million will go to improving and bettering the neighborhood. This includes improving health care, housing, reducing crime, increasing employment opportunities and strengthening business growth. The Adams School and Community Center serves as a model for other School Districts striving to not only renovate a historic neighborhood school but also for encouraging urban neighborhood revitalization.

Architect/Builder

Mr. Jamey Alverson
Project Manager
Trivers Associates
100 North Broadway, Suite 1800
St. Louis, Missouri 63102
314.241.2900
314.241.2909 (fax)
www.trivers.com

Description of Project

Address: 1311 Towers Grove Avenue
St. Louis, Missouri 63110

Date of construction: The Adams School originally consisted of three buildings, all of which were constructed in the late 1800's. The buildings were constructed in 1878 and 1899.

Date of renovation: The renovation took place between August 2000 and August 2001. The renovation initiative was completed by the beginning of the Fall 2001 school year.

Date of previous renovation: The school's gymnasium was added in 1964.

Use

Use: The Adams School serves the K-5th grade level and has 450 students.

Size: The school consists of 44,218 square feet of renovation and 50,284 square feet of new construction.

Alternative uses: The newly constructed community center has a weight training room, teen center, day-care, computer lab, police substation, laundry facilities, administrative and community offices and provides adult education programs. The school and community center serve as a venue for social and recreational events for neighborhood residents.

Location

Location/Historic district: The school is located in the Forest Park Southeast neighborhood in the City of St. Louis. The turn of the century neighborhood consists of single and multi-family homes, as well as commercial and mix-use buildings. The



neighborhood is bounded by US Highway 40/I-64 on the north, Kings Highway on the west, Interstate 44 on the south and Vandeventer on the east. The Washington University Medical Center is located northwest of the neighborhood.

Bussing vs. walking: The urban school is conveniently located in the Forest Park Southeast neighborhood, allowing students to easily walk to the school.

Cost

Total renovation cost: The renovation project cost \$12,610,149.

Per square foot: \$133.43

Per student: \$28,022.55

Source of funding: Public and private entities contributed to the design, oversight, funding and operation of the school and community center. The project was subsidized by grants from the Washington University Medical Center and Firststart Bank. Financial support also came from the St. Louis Board of Education and Barnes-Jewish Hospital Foundation.

Local: Yes

State: Yes

Private: The new Jim Edmonds field located behind the school and community center was paid for by Cardinals Care, which is the philanthropic arm of the St. Louis Cardinals.

Problems and/or Threats

Close the school building: The Adams School stood vacant since 1993, until its reopening in the Fall of 2001. While the school was successfully renovated, the construction and renovation team was confronted with several challenges, including broken glass, peeling paint, destroyed moldings, fallen plaster, rusting lintels, severe structural damage, the discovery of old foundation, ground water problems, rerouting of utility lines and limited site access.

Resolution

Strategies or state/local polices utilized to achieve success story: The Adams School and Community Center project is the result of a unique partnership between public and private entities. The Forest Park Southeast Community Council, St. Louis Public School District, McCormack Baron and Associates, Barnes-Jewish Hospital Foundation, BJC Healthcare and Washington University Medical Center are credited with enabling the expansion and renovation project.

Renovation Success

Undertakings: Prior to the renovation undertaking, the Adams School had greatly deteriorated due to leaking roofs, broken windows and vandalism. The project consisted of renovations to the north and south ends of the existing building. A gymnasium and the central portion of the school was demolished while a new addition was constructed to connect the existing school to a new community center. The school and community center share a new cafeteria and gymnasium. The original buildings were restored to their original beauty. The red exterior brickwork was restored and millwork details were reproduced as accurately as possible.

State-of-the-art facility: Yes.

Computer technology: Each classroom is high tech.

Meets education programmatic needs: Yes.

Building codes: Up to code.

Asbestos: Hazardous materials were removed from the site.

Fire safety: Up to code.

Air quality: Up to code.



Handicapped accessibility: The school and community center are handicapped accessible. The complex has ramps and two elevators.

Playing fields: Improvements were made to an adjacent city park, which contains a playground and a baseball and soccer field.

Awards Granted

Achievements/Recognition: The Adams School and Community Center was the winner of the 2002 Regional Excellence Award, which recognizes construction projects that combine excellence in design and construction and provide a positive contribution to the St. Louis community. It was also listed as a "most enhanced" project by the Landmarks Association of Saint Louis, Inc. in 2002.

Description of Outcome

Community Response/ Neighborhood stability: The Adams School and Community Center are part of a larger development plan for the entire Forest Park Southeast neighborhood. An investment ranging between \$168 and \$180 million will go to improving and bettering the neighborhood. The Forest Park Southeast neighborhood has five improvement associations, including the Adams Grove Neighborhood Improvement, New Boyle Neighborhood Improvement, Adams Grove Block Unit, Gibson Heights Neighborhood Association and the Ranken East Neighborhood Improvement.

Safety: The development plan includes targeting and reducing crime in the neighborhood.

Community reinvestment: The development plan includes improving housing in the neighborhood.

Economic growth: The development plan includes generating economic growth and increasing employment opportunities in the neighborhood.

Quotes

"Adams School closed during the winter of 1993-94, after hard work by the neighborhood to keep open the local school with a diverse student body. When the building was closed, a lone wreath with a tiny electric bulb was left shining in a second-floor window. That wreath — and the hope that prompted leaving it there — motivates our neighborhood to work for another springtime for Adams School and for the whole Forest Park Southeast neighborhood. Our first priority is a quality school and family center at our new Adams School."

—Forest Park Southeast Home Page

"Forest Park Southeast, a diverse community that witnessed a steady decline of population and business over the years, is now an example of an urban neighborhood revitalization, thanks to a team of dedicated residents and community planners."

—Washington University Medical News, October 18, 2002

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