Division Street Dance Academy

A model for symbiotic development in mature Chicago neighborhoods

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Spring 2012
Division Street Dance Academy:

This project is the new home for a contemporary dance academy in a mature Chicago neighborhood, with a 300 seat theater and residences for boarding students.

This project aims to create a symbiotic and mutually beneficial relationship between an arts organization and the community in which it sits. Taken as a critique of recent private development in the established and gentrifying neighborhoods of Chicago, which focus solely on creating capital as opposed to architecture that benefits the community, the Academy will act as an anchor to Wicker Park, creating an institution that extends into the community, as opposed to myopic private development.

This project developed as a response to recent development of large parcels of property in Chicago neighborhoods. Contemporary infill often brings more traffic and congestion, through development that encourages private automobile use, while not offering a larger benefit to the community which they are affecting. The establishment of a dance academy with a performance venue and student housing offers the opportunity to create meaningful connections between the new development and its neighborhood. The venue creates a destination that will attract Chicagoans from across the city, while the academy fills the project with life every day, precluding the problem of unused space on days that the theater is dark. By incorporating housing on site, the academy creates a self contained destination imbedded in an exciting and vibrant part of a great city. The academy further strengthens its connection to the community by buying nearby residential properties as the residence hall is no longer able to meet demand. The project strives to be a good neighbor by building adjacent to an existing CTA Blue Line station. Additional reductions in direct local impact can be pursued through sustainable building practices; reduction in heat island effect with a green roof, landscaping to collect and absorb rain water on site, and others.

It is possible to attract people to live, dine and be entertained in an area without increasing automobile traffic. It is generally considered beneficial for a community to have additional people living, shopping, dining and being entertained in your neighborhood, but their cars are a detriment, adding pollution, noise, congestion and pedestrian hazards to the area as well. As oil prices continue to rise and the city administration further encourages alternatives to private automobile travel, a new model for large neighborhood developments can be pursued.

Symbiosis- n.
1: the living together of two dissimilar organisms in more or less intimate association or close union
2: the intimate living together of two dissimilar organisms in a mutually beneficial relationship; especially : mutualism

Symbiotic- adj.
1: relating to, characterized by, living in, or resulting from a state of symbiosis

http://www.merriam-webster.com
For the new home of a dance company, with performance hall, studios, offices, school facilities and on-site housing for student boarding

1. Strong desire for a continuous plot.
2. Immediate adjacency to public transportation.
3. Location in a mature Chicago neighborhood outside of the loop.
4. Having street frontage on multiple lot lines.

A neighborhood with a culture of supporting the arts seems like a natural candidate to become the host of a dance academy, more capable of forming the desired symbiotic relationship.

Wicker Park/Ukrainian Village

- Site A: the southwest corner of Division St and Ashland Ave
- Blue Line access at corner
- Large continuous plot
- Artistic and cultural hub in Chicago
- Three lot lines on streets

Logan Square

- Site B: near the northwest corner of Milwaukee Ave and Kedzie Ave
- Blue Line access at corner + bus routes
- Large continuous plot
- Logan Square
- One lot line on street

River North/Gold Coast

- Site C: the southwest corner of Chicago Ave and State St.
- Red Line access at corner
- Large continuous plot
- Gold Coast/River North
- Three lot lines on streets

Lakeview

- Site D: the northeast corner of Wellington St and Sheffield Ave
- Brown Line access mid-block
- Continuous plot
- Lakeview
- Three lot lines on streets
Site Analysis

1951 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map

Early uses at the site included the Division St branch of the YMCA and the Crown Theater, a vaudeville house.

2012 Existing Site Conditions

A Wendy’s franchise and lots of surface parking. Automobiles access the block via multiple sidewalk crossings, endangering pedestrians.
The Division Street Dance Academy is designed to be the home of a professional modern dance company, teaching academy with residences for out of town students and a performing arts venue with a three hundred seat mainstage auditorium, 99 seat convertible black box theater and a 120 seat lecture hall. Combining these elements into a single project encourages both dense and diverse land use and fosters a symbiotic relationship with Wicker Park.
Dance Precedent

The Stevie Eller Dance Center
Tucson, AZ
Gould Evans Architects-2002

Performance
Studios
The Juilliard School
New York City
Pietro Belluschi and Eduardo Catalano-1969
DS+R and FXFowle-2009
The Laban Dance Centre
London
Herzog & DeMeuron-2002

Pre-Design       Site and Neighborhood Analysis        Program         Precedent Analysis       Design Process Models      Design Process Drawings      Final Drawings      Final Model

performance
studios
Pre-Design
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Symbiosis Precedent

Granoff Center for the Creative Arts
Brown University
Providence, RI
Diller Scofidio + Renfro
2008
Logan Center for Creative and Performing Arts
University of Chicago
Chicago, IL
Todd Williams Billie Tsien Architects
03.09.2012

Post Joffrey Ballet Visit Notes:

I meet John Kurtz, Joffrey’s Director of Facilities Operations in the third floor lobby of the school. It is very small.

Third Floor: Academy level

The Joffrey handles about 600-700 students a week in classes.

All studios are ADA compliant; “for all the handicapped dancers,” says John.

The studios are all on the west side of the building, leaving the remainder program to be tucked around the building’s two elevator/service cores.

Dancers want the dance studios to be at 78°F all the time; it keeps their bodies loose.

The Joffrey is an academy; classes have schedules, but studios have no synchronized clocks.

Everything is sound isolated. 3:4 time in one studio cannot bleed into adjacent studio that has 4:4 time. Urban noise is less of a factor on account of it being random, not rhythmic.

Studios all have ample natural light, electronic sound system, and a piano. Each studio is an independent heating/cooling zone.

The studio floors are “basket weave construction”; subfloor, neoprene pucks; three layers of yellow pine 1x sleepers; double layer plywood; marley finish surface.

When seven studios are about to end class and seven studios worth of students are waiting to begin class, there is not enough room to walk down the hall; need more breakout space in academy.

Faculty has own locker rooms, apart from the students.

Wardrobe dept. has large on site operation; dye tank; storage.
The act of weaving creates a symbiotic relationship between the weft and the warp, which, once woven together, form a whole greater than the sum of its parts.
Placing concept models into the site informs massing and program placement.

Explorations of form led to towers of space that become a loom of sorts to weave program onto and around.
Early Building Models

Explorations of program space woven around organizing nodes
Early Building Models

- Third floor studios and locker rooms
- Fourth floor slab lets light into studio level
- Dormitory footprints
- Early dorm layout
24 hours at Division St Dance Academy

Early morning
- Resident dancers rise in their dorms
- Sunrise yoga class in jewel box studio
- Administrative staff arrives
- Neighbors and students get coffee and breakfast at the cafe

Throughout the day
- Company dancers and students use initiate classrooms, library, and physical therapy on second floor
- Administrative staff conducts business at street level
- Cafe continues to serve the neighborhood

Evening through late night
- Performances in main stage and black box theaters
- Drinks in the lobby
- Lectures in the studio auditorium
- Late evening yoga classes in the jewel box studio
- Resident dancers retire to the dorm level
Division St. Dance Academy

Division Street Dance Academy is designed to form a symbiotic relationship with the neighborhoods of Wicker Park and Divisionaire Village. At the center, new development in the area allows for public spaces that contribute little other than commercial activity. The wider appeal of the dance studio is enhanced by the surrounding buildings, including the public spaces that surround the studio. The studio is designed to be an integral part of the neighborhood, providing a meeting place for the community.

The Division Street Dance Academy is designed to be a beacon for the neighborhood, providing a place for people to come together and connect. The building is designed to be both a physical and visual presence in the neighborhood, creating a sense of community and belonging.

24 Hours at Division St. Dance Academy

- Ground floor: Entrance, lobby, and administrative offices
- 1st floor: Dance studios and classrooms
- 2nd floor: Meeting rooms and administrative offices
- 3rd floor: Rehearsal rooms and classrooms

The building is designed to be a hub for the neighborhood, providing a warm and welcoming space for people to come together and connect.

Pre-Design
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Final Model