

# BEST NEW DEVELOPMENT OR RENOVATION EDUCATION

## WINNER



PHOTO PROVIDED BY WILLIAMS DEVELOPMENT CORP.

## LAD LAKE EDUCATION AND LIFE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT CENTER 225 W. CAPITOL DRIVE, MILWAUKEE

### PROJECT CREDITS

#### OWNER/DEVELOPER:

Phillip Katz Project Development;  
Williams Development Corp.

#### GENERAL CONTRACTOR:

Briohn Building Corp.

#### TENANT IMPROVEMENTS:

MSI General Corp.

#### ARCHITECT:

Phillip Katz Project Development;  
Briohn Design Group LLC

#### ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANT:

Sigma Group

#### LEGAL COUNSEL:

Godfrey & Kahn SC

#### LEAD FINANCE:

Johnson Bank (New Markets Tax  
Credit loan)

#### PROJECT COST:

\$5 million

The leaders at Lad Lake spent six long years looking for a new school in Milwaukee and their first glance at a vacant 77-year-old former manufacturing facility on Capitol Drive last year could easily have suggested the search would continue.

The 40,000-square-foot building had been abandoned for more than a decade. With boarded windows, a leaky roof, hidden contaminants and an asbestos-laced heating system, the structure seemed better suited for wrecking balls than students.

But the developers who bought the building from the city wanted to save it; partly because it was designed by renowned Milwaukee architect Herbert Tullgren and partly because they had a vision for filling its space.

"They showed us drawings of what it could look like and we really liked what we saw," recalled Tom Casper, director of community education for Lad Lake, a nonprofit agency that helps troubled youths.

Tullgren designed the building in 1930. For more than 40 years it was home to Crane Plumbing.

The city bought it under a blight control program and in 2006 it was purchased by Capitol Crossing LLC, formed by Williams Development Corp. and Phillip Katz Project Development LLC, both of Milwaukee.

Bill Orenstein, president of Williams Development, said the developers' goal was to revitalize an abandoned relic, preserve its architectural integrity and

put it to a worthy use.

A zoning variance was needed before work could begin and area residents, merchants and city officials endorsed the plans during a series of public hearings.

Besides essentially gutting the interior of the structure, the renovation required cleaning up contaminants, an onerous task that benefited from a \$400,000 Brownfields Grant awarded by the state Department of Commerce.

"A lot of that was done during construction as the issues were identified," said Chuck Biller, vice president of Williams Development.

Among the first things visitors are apt to notice inside are the concrete support columns spaced 18 feet apart that were deliberately left exposed. Artist Julie Schappe turned four into colorful tree trunks with brush strokes that appear to give the smooth-as-glass columns texture.

Others became the center's "Pillars of Values" when painted and bear attributes the staff seeks to instill in the young people who use the facility — forgiveness, spirituality, integrity and respect.

The two-story center, which opened in November after about six months of restoration, is divided into separate zones devoted to the services it provides:

education, transitional living skills and outreach services. All are aimed at children and young adults who are at risk of failure in school or the community, in many cases because of emotional or behavioral problems.

The building's classrooms can accommodate up to



PHOTOGRAPHER / SCOTT PAULUS

140 students who are referred to the facility by Milwaukee Public Schools because of learning issues.

The only addition was a full-size gymnasium in the rear.

"For us the location is ideal," Casper said. "We wanted to be on a main thoroughfare that would give us exposure. What we have here is a real dream come true."

— David Doege