



Project of the Month: Swanke Hayden Connell Architects designs 100,000 s/f Spruce Street Educational Campus

September 12, 2011 - Design / Build

In a public-private partnership, Forest City Ratner Companies (FCRC) retained Swanke Hayden Connell Architects to design the new 100,000 gross s/f Spruce Street Educational Campus. Built for the NYC School Construction Authority (SCA), this new Primary/Intermediate School is built within the podium of a new Frank Gehry designed 76-story residential tower and accommodates 648 students from pre-kindergarten through 8th grade.

Challenges stem from composing the school within this larger mixed-use iconic tower, balancing its needs and requirements within the tower. Swanke worked closely with FCRC and the A/E tower team to meet the needs of their partner, the SCA, for the school. The design was an interactive and collaborative effort that required:

- * Reconciling programmatic needs of the residential, retail, hospital and school at the ground floor
- * Reconciling the structural grid of the residential tower with the school
- * Shared egress and MEP systems
- * Adapting the podium shell to meet the SCA design standards
- * Respecting the spirit of this iconic tower

The planning concept groups the special program functions along the diagonal (East) side of the building to create a "Main Street" on each floor and tying them vertically by stairs and elevators. Main Street creates a sense of hierarchy and connection to the outside by terminating with large windows and small reading alcoves with views to the surrounding cityscape. Way-finding is expressed in the use of different colors on each floor and super-graphics.

By incorporating curvilinear forms within the volume in both the vertical and horizontal planes, the design respects the tower's curvilinear form. The "Main Street" walls at the interior are subtly shaped in curvilinear forms to contrast with the smooth rectilinear walls of the classrooms, thus serves to activate the corridors. The stadium-style auditorium creates a dynamic form in section, which creates a striking double-height school lobby entry at the Ground Floor with a curvilinear sloped ceiling flowing into the cafeteria seating area. The concept is further carried into the cafeteria with the use of curvilinear soffits over the serving area.

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