

Program Summary:

A mission-driven interior transformation of a 110-year-old icehouse into a youth-focused nonprofit headquarters organized around healing, belonging, and functional resilience.

Program Statement:

The Son of a Saint Headquarters reimagines a century-old icehouse as a therapeutic and operational hub for a nonprofit serving fatherless boys in New Orleans. The interior architecture is central to the project's success—leveraging material restraint, spatial sequencing, and organizational clarity to create an environment of care and empowerment.

The design retains the industrial character of the original structure while introducing a new spatial hierarchy tailored to program needs. A tripartite organization—public, private, and communal—emerges through floor zoning and interior transparency. The central lounge acts as a connective hub, while therapy suites, a teaching kitchen, and fitness areas are acoustically and spatially insulated for focus and safety.

Interior interventions are deliberately light-touch yet impactful. Custom millwork, flexible partitions, and donated FF&E stretch limited resources. Glass walls, warm textures, and restrained color support emotional regulation and supervision without surveillance. Existing skylights and clerestory glazing bring natural light deep into the plan. This is not a building about spectacle—it is a building that works: socially, operationally, and emotionally. The interior design frames a daily experience of stability and dignity for the boys who inhabit it. It demonstrates how architecture can operate at the scale of personal transformation.

RR170.01

Building Area: (sf)
15,605 SF

Cost per Square Foot:
\$211/SF

Construction Cost
\$3.3M

Date of Completion:
May 2022



RR170.02

Adaptive Reuse & Insertion Strategy

Preserving the 1910 industrial shell and primary steel structure allowed for a focused investment in the building's interior. The design approach reframes adaptive reuse not just as environmental strategy but as an architectural opportunity: to stage new spatial experiences within a preserved frame.

New interventions hover within the volume—inserted floors, controlled voids, and new stair circulation create layered sectional connections between zones. Historic materiality and new surfaces remain legible in parallel.

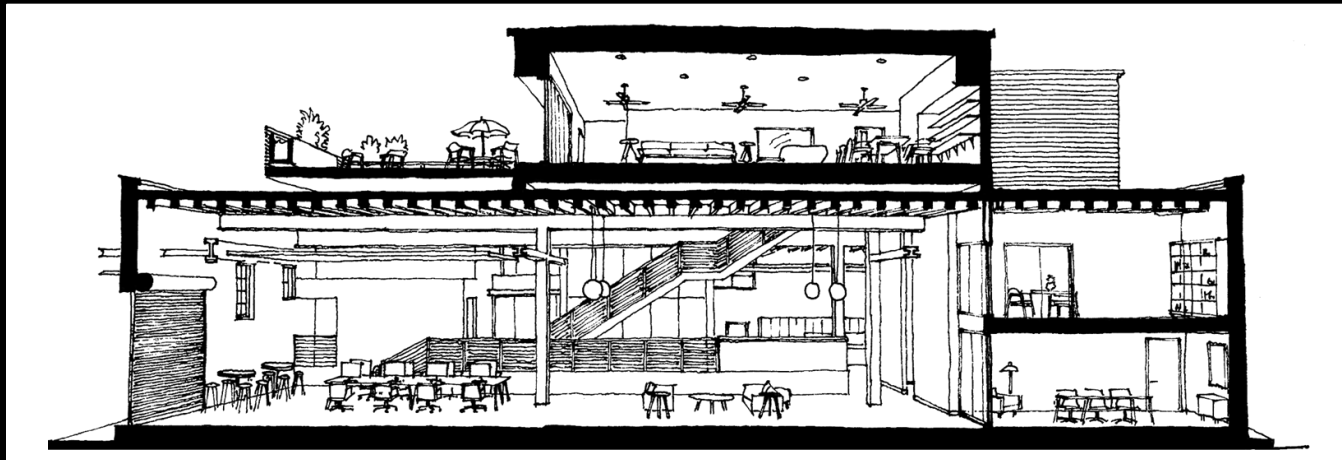
The suspended trolley, a vestige of the building's original use, was retained as a defining linear element.

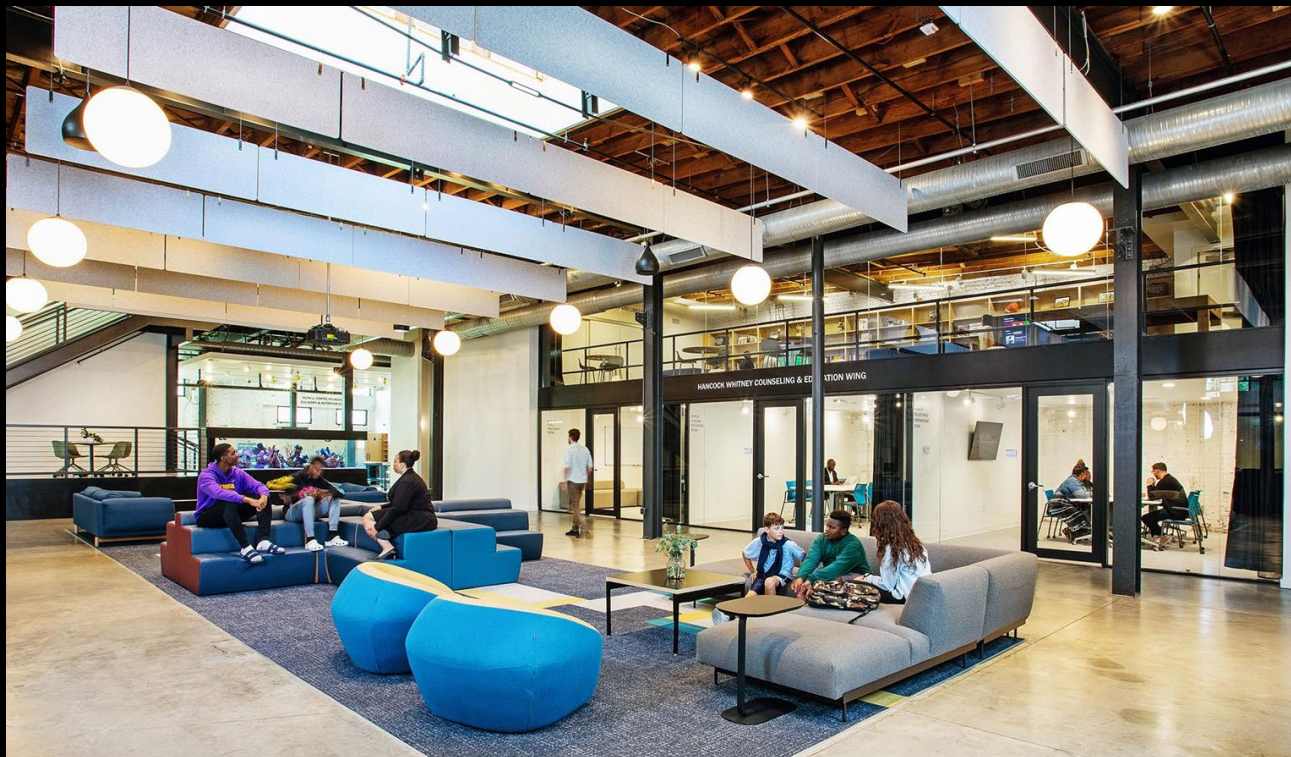


RR170.03

Contemporary Interiors Within a Historic Shell

New interior volumes were kept low to preserve sightlines to the existing trusses and skylights. Finishes are warm but restrained—industrial materials like steel and concrete are offset by tactile elements such as wood accents and soft seating. The preserved red trolley tracks traverse the ceiling, providing contrast and orientation. Touchdown work islands and open office configurations create flow between staff and mentees, promoting accessibility and mentorship at all levels.





RR170.04

Transparency, Safety & Supervision

Glass interior walls maintain acoustic separation while supporting clear sightlines across program areas—ensuring mentees are always visible without feeling surveilled.

Transparency allows passive supervision, reinforcing a culture of trust and safety. Offices and therapy rooms have controlled levels of openness based on function and privacy needs.

On the second floor, a full-height glazed wall frames views to the city beyond, creating symbolic orientation to the future while illuminating the space with shifting daylight.



RR170.05

Spatial Organization & Flexibility

The plan centers on a large open lounge ringed by smaller enclosed rooms—an intuitive spatial hierarchy that scales from intimate counseling sessions to large mentoring events.

Interior elements like movable furnishings, overhead doors, and zoning strategies enable rapid transformation between daily uses and special programming.

Instead of prescribing fixed functions, rooms were designed to support multiple activities: ACT tutoring, therapy, weekend recreation, fundraising events, and communal meals. This flexibility ensures longevity of use and empowers the organization to evolve without requiring new space.



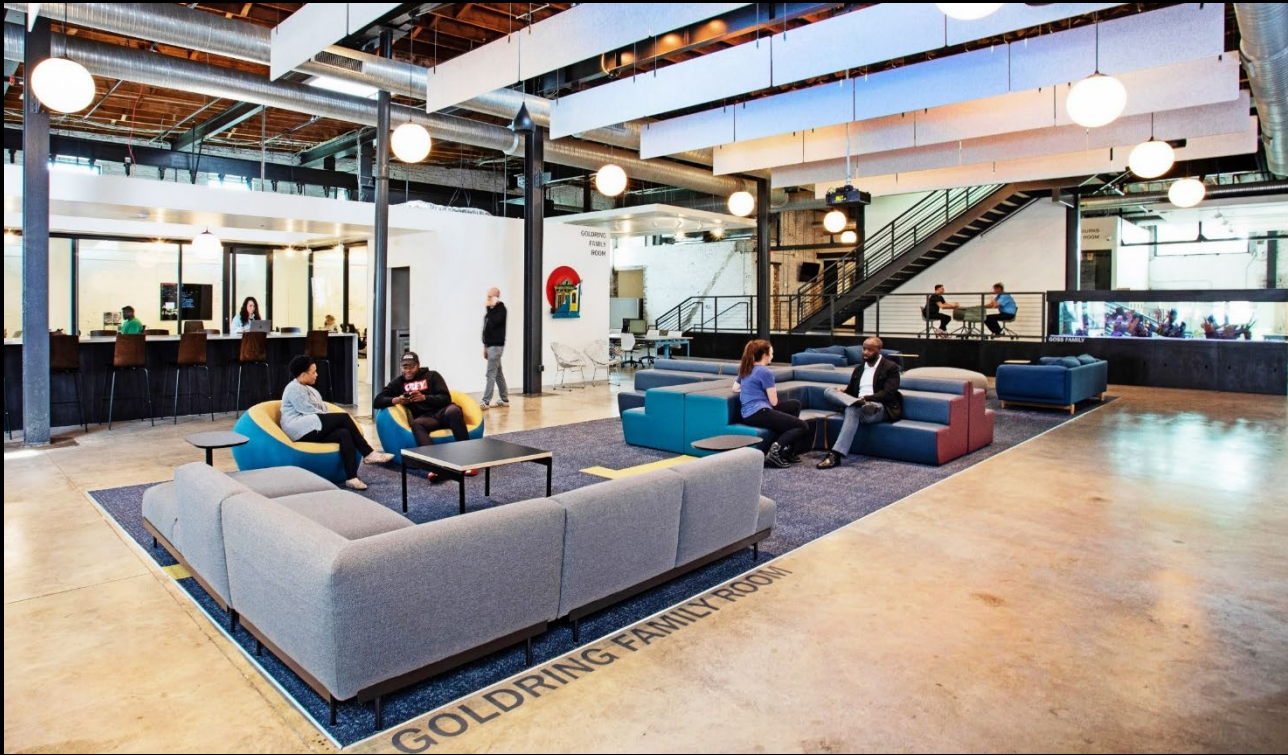
RR170.06

The Central Lounge as Anchor

At the project's heart is the second-floor lounge, a deliberately scaled and centrally positioned space that acts as both threshold and destination. It mediates between circulation and program zones, providing flexible space for tutoring, mentoring, quiet downtime, or spontaneous gathering.

Steel columns and beams frame the room, revealing the bones of the building while organizing circulation and activity. Acoustic baffles and a custom inset floor "rug" subtly define the space without enclosure. Natural light from historic clerestories was redirected by adding white finishes to monitor surfaces.

This space is where boys are seen—without being watched. It exemplifies how architecture can articulate care not just through program, but through spatial experience.



RR170.07

Nourishment & Teaching Kitchen

The kitchen supports both wellness and education. A large island enables cooking demonstrations by local chefs, with drop-down power to support table-top induction ranges for mentees.

The space flexes between daily meals and group classes, with a communal dining setup that encourages connection. Refrigerated grab-and-go stations make healthy food easily accessible.

Every material choice balances utility and comfort, framing nourishment not just as a service, but a design priority.



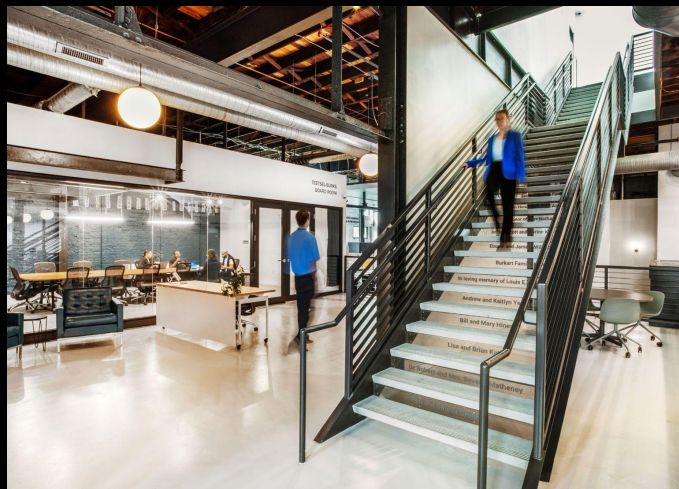


RR170.08

Monumental Stair & Donor Wall

The monumental stair, located on the historic loading dock, serves as both a connective element and a symbol of collective investment. Donor names are subtly embedded in back-painted glass panels and perforated stair risers, making recognition a visible part of daily life.

Throughout the building, donated materials and furnishings were carefully curated to align with the interior palette. A design review process ensured all contributions met spatial and functional goals. From acoustical panels to lounge seating, these elements were seamlessly integrated—amplifying impact without compromising cohesion. Together, these strategies celebrate generosity while reinforcing the building's identity as a community-supported, purpose-built space.



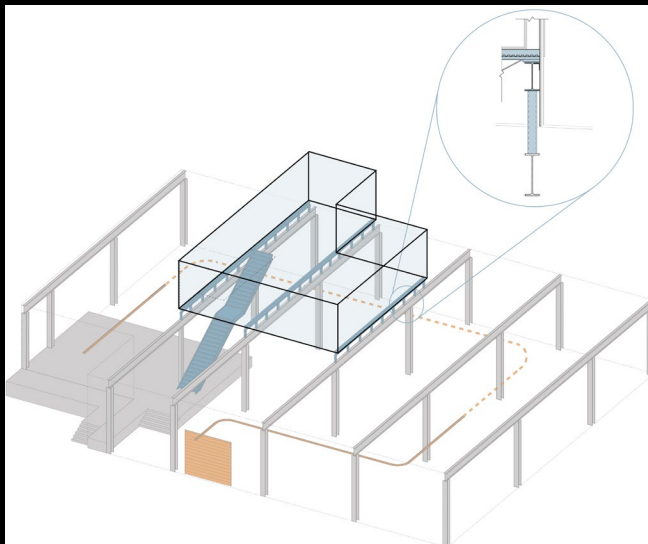
RR170.09

Rooftop Respite

The rooftop addition was designed as a sanctuary for older mentees and a space for programming like yoga, mentoring, and meetings. A foldable glass wall opens to reveal the skyline—a constant reminder of opportunity.

Structurally, the addition sits atop the preserved steel structure, supporting the oversized trolley once used to relocate large blocks of ice. The placement of the original structure eliminated the need for invasive foundation work within the historic envelope.

This elevated space offers light, quiet, and a sense of perspective—both literal and figurative—for those preparing for the next chapter.





RR170.10

Investing in the Future of New Orleans

For Son of a Saint, the utilization of the building cannot be overstated.

In addition to becoming a center and haven for the young men in the program, the headquarters will also allow the organization to bring previously outsourced programming in-house.