

















Pepper Family Wildlife Center

Chicago, Illinois, USA

Sitting at the heart of Lincoln Park Zoo, the historic lion house was originally designed by architect Dwight Perkins and completed in 1912. With its decorative brickwork and terra-cotta ornament, lion mosaics and grand hall with a vaulted Guastavino tile ceiling, it was designated a Chicago Landmark in 2005. With limited work done since the last significant renovation in 1990, the building was due for improvement. The zoo wanted to substantially improve the lion habitat, with a focus on the animals, as well as the experience for visitors.

Through a complete renovation, restoration and expansion, the 54,000-square-foot state-of-the-art facility nearly doubles the size of the previous lion habitat and provides increased transparency and a more immersive experience for visitors while restoring the architectural integrity of the original landmarked building.

Designed in collaboration with Seattle-based zoo exhibit specialists PJA, the habitat focuses on providing choices for the animals and enhanced wellbeing. The facility is home to a pride of eight African lions, as well as Canada lynx, red pandas and snow leopards.

The design team worked closely with the Commission on Chicago Landmarks to preserve, restore and enhance the architecturally significant features of the original Arts and Crafts structure, including the masonry, clay tile roof, and copper gutter, along with windows and doors.

The new lion habitat spans the full northern side of the building, with the design informed by data collected by the zoo over the last several years on lion behavior and space use to understand their preferences. Large 1 ½"-thick glass panels provide expansive views of the outdoor lion space. The savanna-style habitat includes detailed rockwork to introduce climbing features and expand environmental options for the lions while providing embedded heating and cooling elements for climate control. Tree structures and deadfall are made from trees certified by the Forest Stewardship Council, and food ziplines, simulating prey, provide an enrichment opportunity for the lions.

Guests now have immersive, "nose-to-nose" viewing opportunities from both inside and outside the building. The unique design also facilitates viewing from the Lion Loop, a sunken elliptical path leading visitors down from the main hall into the center of the habitat. The loop provides visitors the opportunity to view lions from all around—even through skylights overhead. The project also includes a demonstration

Project Data

SIZE

54,000 sf total

FEATURES

Exhibit Designer:
PJA Architects + Landscape Architects

CLIENT

Lincoln Park Zoo

Recognition & News

RECOGNITION

2023 Special Mention, Cultural & Expo Centers – Architizer A+Awards

2023 Finalist, Merit Award for Renovation & Adaptive Reuse Over \$20 Million – Chicago Building Congress

2022 Chicago Innovation Award

2022 Richard H. Driehaus Legacy Award – Landmarks Illinois

2022 Richard H. Driehaus Foundation Preservation Award for Rehabilitation – Landmarks Illinois

2022 Project of the Year – ENR Midwest Magazine

2022 Best Project, Cultural/Worship – ENR Midwest Magazine

2022 Special Achievement of the Year – Chicago Commercial Real Estate Awards

2022 Redevelopment of the Year – Illinois Real Estate Journal Awards

2022 Chicago Landmark Award for Preservation Excellence – City of Chicago Commission on Chicago Landmarks

2022 Metamorphosis Award 3rd Place, Historic – Retrofit Magazine

NEWS

Chicago Innovation Awards Honor Third GP Building

Pepper Family Wildlife Center at Lincoln Park Zoo Receives Two Awards from Landmarks Illinois

GP at the National AIA Conference on Architecture

Chicago Commercial Real Estate Awards Honor Three GP Projects

Goettsch Partners Completes Pepper Family Wildlife Center at Lincoln Park Zoo

GP's Loughran and Barrett Present at Facades+ Conference

training wall where visitors will be able to view the lions working with zoo staff to participate in their own care. The overall educational focus of the building is the zoo's ongoing conservation efforts in Africa.