

MANN REPORT

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THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE DEALS IN THE NY REAL ESTATE SCENE

Architecture/Engineering/Construction

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Richter+Ratner and Architect Beyer Blinder Belle Complete Xavier High School



The new hall houses multiple informal meeting and social areas, including the Staff Sgt. John Simonetti Student Commons on the fifth floor, named after the U.S. Army Ranger killed in action in France in 1944. Simonetti was an uncle of a Xavier graduate John Salerno.

Construction manager Richter+Ratner (R+R) and architect Beyer Blinder Belle have completed the interior fit-out of Xavier High School's 45,000-square-foot Fernandez-Duminuco Hall. The project is located on six floors and the cellar level of a new 25-story, mixed-use building at 35 West 15th Street. Xavier is a Jesuit college preparatory school for young men founded in 1847 in the Chelsea neighborhood of Manhattan. The school's campus includes six buildings located alongside the Church of Saint Francis Xavier.

"Fernandez-Duminuco Hall is Xavier's first campus expansion in more than 90 years. It has provided our community of nearly 1,100 students and 84 full-time faculty members with state-of-the-art classrooms, large common spaces, and a special emphasis on robotics and music education," said Xavier President Jack Raslowsky.

"The nine-month-long project called for the construction of a STEAM classroom, ultramodern music facilities, a recording studio, a student project space, and a flexible multi-use area that hosts theater productions and major assemblies," added R+R CEO and President Marc Heiman.

Fernandez-Duminuco Hall is located within the luxury residential condominium tower named 35XV, which was designed by FXFowle. The developer, Alchemy Properties, obtained the air rights for the new building from Xavier High School in exchange for locating the hall inside the new development.

The 55-condominium residential portion of the building begins almost 100 feet above ground level, and the school section is accessible through a dedicated, separate entrance. There is a separate glass-clad

entrance for residents. The base building is clad in stone on the first six stories to indicate the location of the Xavier School and reflect the architecture of the neighboring buildings.

According to R+R Executive Vice President David Brown, "The project team faced numerous logistical and technical challenges related to the age of the original school buildings and the work taking place within a larger structure that was still under construction." There was a several month overlap with the base building construction, so the R+R team had to coordinate site logistics – access, deliveries, debris pickup, and vertical transportation – with other building crews.

Constructing connections between the buildings was the most challenging part of the project. "The existing Xavier High School building, to which the new hall is connected, is over 100 years old and there were no plans or records for the original structure," said Kristin DiStefano, P.E., LEED AP, R+R's project manager. "When we took the protection off of the walls of the old building, all we saw was brick. We had no idea how thick the walls were or where we would wind up when drilling through. In addition, in the areas of the wall where we had to cut through, there were previously existing arches. We weren't sure whether the arches were there for structural or ornamental purposes, or whether windows had been bricked up at some point. Upon inspection and consultation with a structural engineer McLaren Engineering, we opted for installing steel-angle lintels within seven-foot-wide openings, where the connections between the buildings would be built," further explained DiStefano.

In addition to R+R, Beyer Blinder Belle, and McLaren Engineering, which served as

structural engineer for the building connections, the project team included owner's representative Sterling Project Development; structural engineer for the tower Nash Engineering; mechanical, electrical, and plumbing (MEP) engineer AKF Group LLC; and acoustical consultant Acoustic Distinction.

The Design in Details

The first floor houses a 300-square-foot conference room and a 500-square-foot lobby meeting space. One wall is fitted with a large white board. The flooring is a rubber tile by Armstrong that is made to look like wood. The ceiling is an acoustical grid ceiling. This floor also houses bathrooms and a UPS generator room.

The second floor features a music suite that includes four 100-square-foot practice and live rooms, a 250-square-foot control room with recording and mixing capabilities, a 320-square-foot ensemble room, and one large music room of 1,300 square feet. Supporting the school's popular musical education program, operators in the control room can listen to and record performances in the music rooms, talk to students and teachers in other studios, and broadcast performances between the rooms.

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sound isolation between spaces, R+R created a "floating" floor slab raised above the building's concrete base floor on springs. This flooring system, developed by Vibration Products, significantly reduces the transmission of vibrations into the building's structure and other spaces.

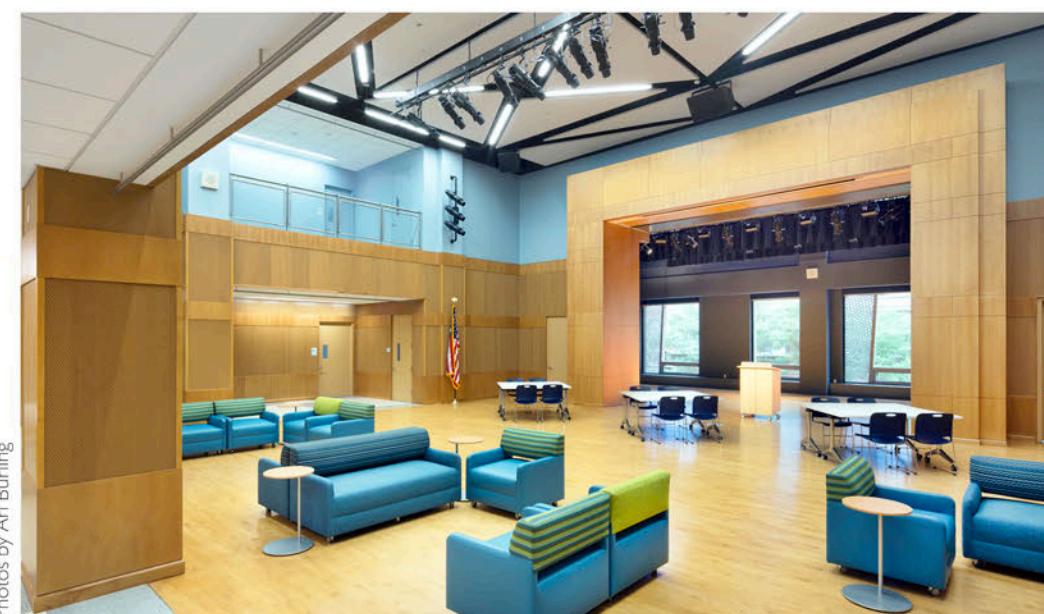
A 3,000-square-foot, double-height auditorium occupies the third floor. Addressing the diverse needs of an urban school with limited available real estate, Beyer Blinder Belle designed it as a highly flexible, multipurpose performance and event space. For example, the auditorium has a big proscenium, but no permanent

stage – the school brings in a demountable stage when needed. This allows for a variety of events to take place in this space, some of which would be obstructed by a built-in stage. Similarly, chair seating is brought in only when needed.

The fourth floor is a mezzanine level wrapped around the double-height auditorium. It has one classroom stacked atop the third-floor classroom as well as two offices.

The fifth and sixth floors are education spaces. The fifth floor has two 700-square-foot classrooms, a 1,300-square-foot Science, Technology, Engineering, ART and Math (STEAM) classroom, a 500-square-foot student project room/lounge, and an office. The STEAM classroom features a robotics workshop, tunable lighting, video production equipment, and 3D printers, as well as ergonomically adjustable furniture. In the lounge area there are monitors, collaborative furniture, and a plethora of outlets for plugging in laptops and other electronics.

The sixth floor houses several classrooms as well. There are three 700-square-foot standard classrooms and a super classroom at 900 square feet. Two faculty offices are on this floor, as well as a faculty office/lounge/conference room for meetings.



The 3,000-square-foot, double-height auditorium on the third floor serves as a highly flexible, multipurpose performance and event space. It is equipped with theatrical lights, speakers, curtains, and rigging.