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'COMMUNITIES LEAD, COMMUNITIES SUCCEED': AUBURN-GRESHAM HEALTHY LIFESTYLE HUB RECEIVES RICHARD H. DRIEHAUS FOUNDATION AWARD FOR ARCHITECTURAL EXCELLENCE IN COMMUNITY DESIGN

CHICAGO, IL, JUNE 23, 2023 — MKB Architects (MKB)'s Auburn Gresham (AG) Healthy Lifestyle Hub has been selected as the first place recipient for **The Richard H. Driehaus Foundation Award for Architectural Excellence in Community Design at the 29th annual Chicago Neighborhood Development Awards (CNDA) on June 22nd**, which are "centered around lifting up the essential role community, public, and private partnerships have in building communities in Chicago-area neighborhoods," as described by Meghan Harte, Senior Executive Director of LISC Chicago.

For over 20 years, the four-story, historic 1926 Rusnak Brothers Furniture Showroom sat vacant on 79th Street, Auburn Gresham's once-thriving business corridor that has faced generations of disinvestment. Carlos Nelson and his team at **Greater Auburn Gresham Development Corporation (GAGDC)** have collaborated with MKB for nearly twenty years to turn portfolio-ready investments in their neighborhood into catalysts for a revitalization of the Auburn Gresham community.

The furniture showroom was only part of an ambitious master plan GAGDC collaborated with MKB studying phased planning for under-utilized properties along 79th Street, west of the Dan Ryan Expressway & east of Ashland Avenue. This master plan, informed by LISC's Quality of Life Plans in [2005](#) and [2016](#), yielded three key developments within the Always Growing, Auburn Gresham portfolio: Green Era Campus, New Pigsah Homes, and the building renovation dubbed the "AG Healthy Lifestyle Hub".

The 55,000 SF renovation project was divided into a core/shell phase and a tenant buildout phase. The core and shell project was surgical in nature: establishing a new centralized circulation core (elevator shaft and stairwells), all new MEP infrastructure, opening up the previously infilled storefront at street level on 79th Street, and restoring the historic terra cotta facade.

During extensive community engagement sessions, GAGDC and MKB listened to which services were most needed. Those needs were realized GAGDC's strategic selection of tenants now inhabiting the Healthy Lifestyle Hub. Tenants include: UI Health, Heartland Human Care Services, UIC Neighborhood Center, a pharmacy tenant, Bank of America, Chicago Bears-sponsored Multipurpose Room and Training Kitchen, and GAGDC's new office headquarters.

The fully transformed, mixed-use development serves thousands of people in the Auburn Gresham neighborhood, targeting the goals envisioned and supported by the community. From the inside out, the 'hub' is transformed - but its impact goes far beyond the physical. **Auburn Gresham residents now have access to 100 living-wage job opportunities, providing services to support youth, seniors and families.** The result is a catalyst for future developments.

ABOUT MKB ARCHITECTS | Since 1980, MKB Architects is recognized for its unique range of clientele. From leading national foundations to grassroots efforts, the firm walks alongside each partner to realize spaces that best allow them to help those in need, steward our earth, and strengthen ties to their communities they serve- together.

MKB Architects specializes in working with the top community-based non-profits in the areas of affordable permanent and interim supportive housing, special needs housing, health and wellness, social and mental health services, and places of worship. For more info, please visit mkbdesign.net.

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