

Spencer Foundation

Sustainable Goals:

- Recycled content in carpet tile
- Reduced material usage by omitting ceiling in open areas
- Low VOC paints, adhesives, furniture
- Maximize daylighting through use of glass partitions

The Spencer Foundation's mission is to "investigate ways in which education, broadly conceived, can be improved around the world." In order to facilitate this ambitious and laudable mission, the Spencer Foundation wanted to examine their current facilities. The resulting design addressed the shift not only in their facility, but also in the structure and thought process of the organization.

An intensive programming phase allowed analysis of their hierarchical business model. Borrowing from Deleuze and Guattari's "Rhizome Theory," programming shifted their organizational structure from an arborescent or tree-like organization to an organic, fluid and non-hierarchical strategy. This involved a decentralization of power allowing the environment to facilitate casual interface and the exchange of ideas. The focus of the new 13,000sf space consists of informal public communal spaces, evenly distributed throughout the facility. Each corner is designed as lounge-like meeting areas including the board room, a traditionally exclusive space, that can now be made completely porous to the rest of the office, through the use of oversized pivoting doors.



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location: Chicago, Illinois
total square feet: 13,000 sq ft
total budget: \$85 / sq ft
completion date: November 2005
The Spencer Foundation
625 N. Michigan Avenue
16th floor
Chicago, Illinois

