

Teach For America makes move to Crosstown Concourse

MICHAEL WADDELL | TUESDAY, JULY 18, 2017



Teach For America has completed its relocation to the fourth floor of the new Crosstown Concourse mixed-use redevelopment project, moving from its previous home at the Toyota Center Downtown.

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“The design for Teach For America is very unique, and it has a great impact for them,” said Juan Self, partner with Self + Tucker Architects.

“Part of what they wanted was access to parking and to be a little more centrally located so they could bike to work. Plus there are some sister organizations for them already at Crosstown that they interact with quite a bit.”

The 6,500-square-foot renovation at former Sears Crosstown building represents a downsizing for TFA, which had taken up approximately 13,000 square feet at the Toyota Center.

“Part of the challenge was to cut in half the amount of space they were occupying and still meet their needs,” said Self. “The final designs look very open and feel a lot larger than it actually is.”

Floor plans feature a “brain break” room that is ideal for teacher collaboration and practicing presentations, an area with some relaxing swing-style seats, and a conference room that opens up into an area with a view of the building’s atrium.

“The break room is somewhat innovative, as we took some scrap steel and created counter space,” said Self. “There’s a lot of reuse of found materials that we incorporated into the project.”

Grinder Taber & Grinder was the general contractor on the renovation, which was completed very quickly over the first part of this year because TFA had to be out of its previous digs by the end of May.

TFA entered the Memphis market in 2006. More than a decade later, its incoming corps members are increasingly more diverse with half of its incoming 2016 teachers coming from a low-income background and more than half identifying as a person of color. The Tennessee Higher Education Commission's report card found that TFA Memphis is among the state's top teacher preparation programs, and the only one to earn that distinction for six years in a row.

There are roughly 250 TFA alumni who teach in Memphis, along with more than 20 serving as principals and more who work as assistant principals or deans.

TFA joins the Memphis Teacher Residency at Crosstown, which moved in to the building in March.

Other current and future tenants at the large mixed-use community include Church Health, the YMCA, City Leadership, Tech901, Area 51 Ice Cream, Curb Market, French Truck Coffee, Juice Bar, and many others. Crosstown will also be home to Crosstown High School.