

THE WRITER'S CENTER

Bethesda MD
Institutional / Non-Profit

The Bethesda Youth Center, located just off Wisconsin Avenue in downtown Bethesda, was designed in the 1960's by the young firm of Keyes Lethbridge & Condon, who would go on to play a major role in the modern development of the Washington area. The Montgomery County-owned venue provided the local teenage community with classes, dances, and other social activities.

The youth center closed in 1970, and the building spiraled downward over the years, serving a variety of uses but chronically uncared for and poorly maintained.

Fast forward to the present day, and this mid-century

modern building is now the home of the Writer's Center. The non-profit community-centered organization is dedicated to the creation of an independent home for the literary arts, nurturing writing talent and celebrating writers through classes, lectures, workshops, publications, and readings

A master plan calls for a renovation of the entire building. The completed first phase reorganizes the lower floor, largely a basement except for one line of high windows located above a service ramp. Spaces that were largely uninhabitable have been recaptured, and the offices and classrooms on that level have been reconfigured and

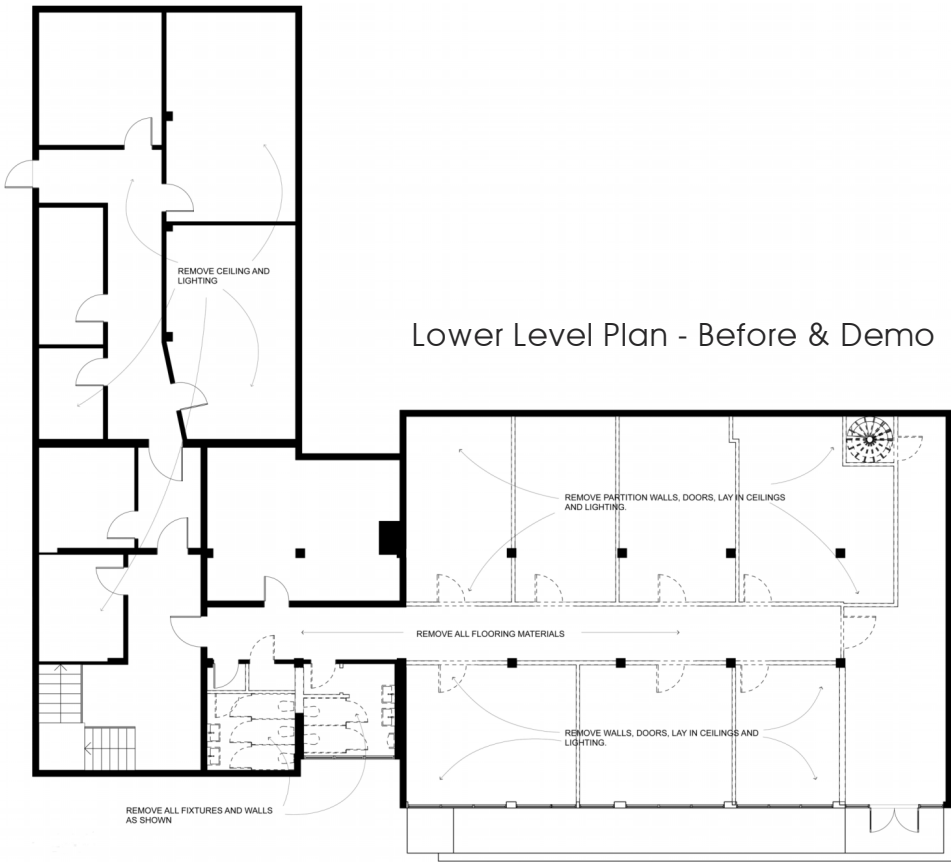


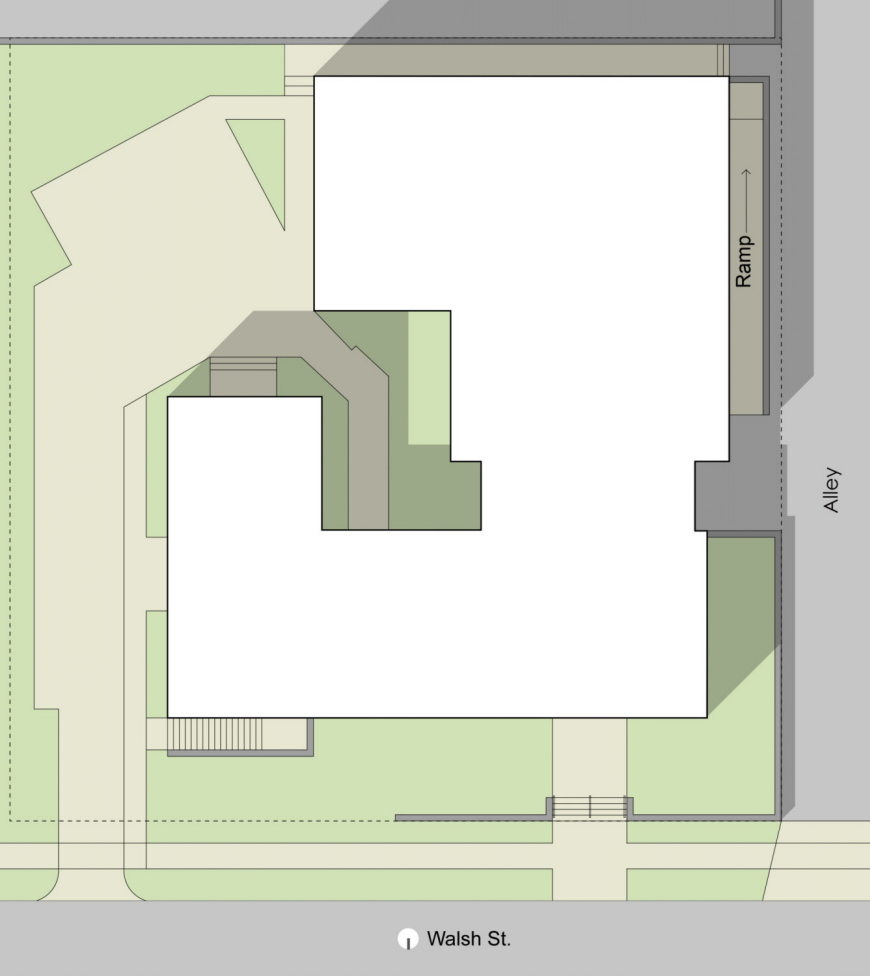
rejuvenated. The now-efficient plan allowed space for additional classrooms, a lounge/coffee area, and the creation of a Writer's Studio. Here, local writers can come and work at private work stations, on their own schedules; lockers in the lounge area are available to rent. The Studio can be accessed directly during off-hours by the exterior ramp.

The removal of a dropped ceiling revealed the existing main floor structural system, a

cast-in-place concrete waffle slab, now exposed and painted white. Daylight is maximized throughout by taking advantage of the windows along the original service ramp; glass walls in the classrooms extend the natural light into the formerly windowless adjacent spaces. Douglas fir woodwork and punches of vivid color further enliven what still is, but no longer feels like, a basement level.















Before



