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PERKINS EASTMAN ANNOUNCES START OF CONSTRUCTION FOR ASTROPHYSICS BUILDING AT UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

Renovations and Expansion to Midcentury Modern Building Will Create a New Campus Center for Physics

Chicago, IL (July 21, 2016) Top international design and architecture firm Perkins Eastman is pleased to announce the start of construction on a two-story expansion and renovations to the Laboratory for Astrophysics and Space Research (LASR) building on the University of Chicago campus in Chicago, Illinois. Once complete, the 63,500 sf building will be the renewed home to the University's renowned Department of Physics. The building is expected to be complete in summer 2017.

A two-story addition and complete renovation of the existing LASR building will create a new campus center for physics that will allow the Theoretical and Experimental research groups to work and collaborate under the same roof, and provide a permanent home for the Enrico Fermi Institute, which strives to harness the synergies of collaborative research spanning disciplines in the Physical Sciences, and the Kadanoff Center for Theoretical Physics.

Jerry R. Walleck, Managing Principal of Perkins Eastman's Chicago office and Principal-in-Charge of the project, says: "We are so pleased to contribute to the architecturally distinguished University of Chicago campus. In addition to bringing into modern use an existing campus building, the new LASR building will contribute to the University's vibrant North Science Quadrangle and create a strong and mature building befitting the quality and caliber of intellectual pursuits by the Department of Physics."

The original building was designed by SOM in 1964 and has seen few modifications since. An embodiment of the architectural spirit of its time, the square, monolithic cast-in-place concrete structure features a storefront window system at the perimeter and a symmetrical interior layout.

Perkins Eastman's architectural response in both the renovation and the two-story addition extends the life of LASR while transforming it into a building that is more responsive to the future of experimental and theoretical physics and reinforcing the evolving campus context. A contemporary steel-hung glass and stone façade will complement the existing structure's clean lines, clear building massing, and restrained material palette, while at the base, the identity of the existing design will remain intact.

A mix of offices and collaboration spaces will line the building's interior perimeter, bringing daylight and views into the corridors. Light-sensitive laboratories will be located in the basement and interior of the building.

The addition's two largest gathering spaces are clearly expressed on the building's exterior. In order to provide an unobstructed interior space that could accommodate large groups of people, a cantilevered seminar room with a large picture window will extend beyond the existing building's structural footprint, creating dramatic views out and providing those outside a glimpse of the activity inside. A double-height commons will connect with an outdoor roof terrace overlooking the Quad to provide a place for the physicists to gather informally and socialize, while generous natural light will stream in through the double-height glass wall.

Designed to achieve LEED Silver, the new building will use daylighting to significantly reduce the need for artificial lighting. Perimeter glazing is sized to maximize views while still protecting against excessive solar heat gain. Overhead chilled beams provide hydronic heating and cooling throughout the building, a more efficient solution than conventional forced air systems.

About Perkins Eastman

Perkins Eastman is among the top design and architecture firms in the world. With almost 1,000 employees in 15 locations around the globe, Perkins Eastman practices at every scale of the built environment. From niche buildings to complex projects that enrich whole communities, the firm's portfolio reflects a dedication to progressive and inventive design that enhances the quality of the human experience. With work in 46 states and more than 40 countries, the firm's portfolio includes high-end residential, commercial, hotels, retail, office buildings, corporate interiors, schools, hospitals, museums, senior living, and public sector facilities. Perkins Eastman provides award-winning design through its offices in North America (New York, NY; Boston, MA; Charlotte, NC; Chicago, IL; Dallas, TX; Los Angeles, CA; Pittsburgh, PA; San Francisco, CA; Stamford, CT; Toronto, Canada; and Washington, DC); South America (Guayaquil, Ecuador); North Africa and Middle East (Dubai, UAE); and Asia (Mumbai, India, and Shanghai, China).

Renderings available.

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