

# RENEWAL

A POAH CHICAGO NEWSLETTER

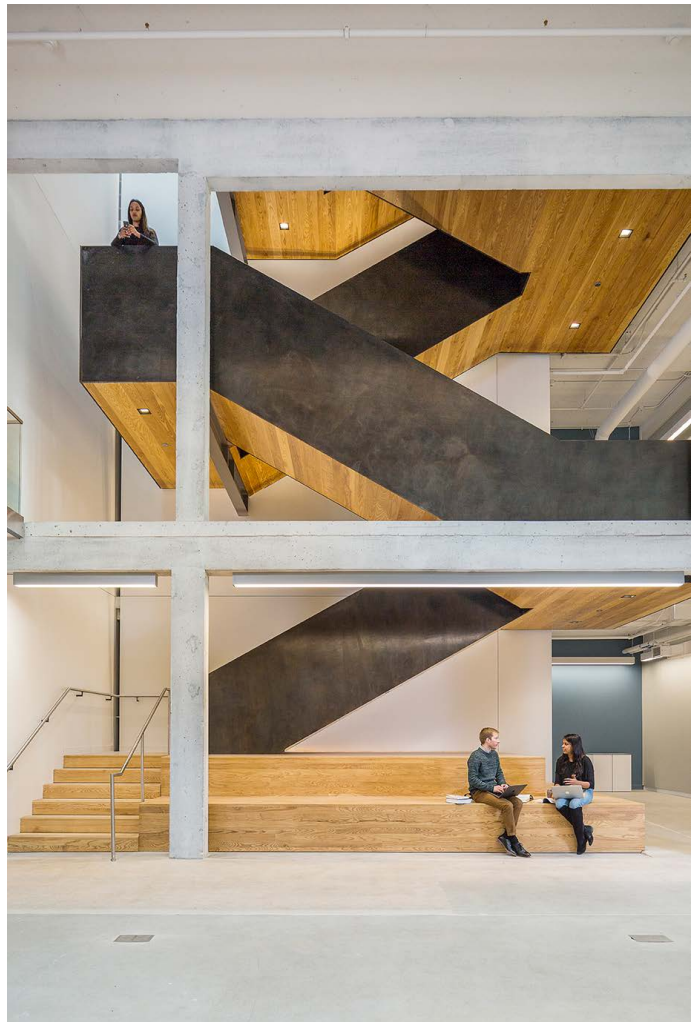


## Local Lumber Mill Recycles Ash Trees to Create New Skills and Products

While trees felled by the Emerald Ash Borer have decimated the natural landscape of many Chicago neighborhoods, renowned local artist Theaster Gates has turned this misfortune into a positive community development activity. In a former ComEd substation at 6913 South Kenwood Avenue, which Theaster previously converted into a lumber mill, under-employed residents are getting an opportunity to acquire new skills by turning the fallen trees into new products.

The [Dorchester Industries Mill](#), which was born out the Rebuild Foundation's workforce development program, has played an instrumental role in the \$80 million restoration of the Keller Center, the new home of the Harris School of Public Policy at the University of Chicago. Its new interior wood paneling and grand social staircase – among the most prominent features of the iconic building's four-level atrium – were constructed from trees felled by the Emerald Ash Borer and milled by local residents.

In fact, the milling and use of other reclaimed materials throughout the building, along with energy efficient adaptations like installing a green roof and an innovative rainwater capture system, has helped the Keller Center gain global recognition as one of the most sustainable buildings in higher education and the city of Chicago. The restoration project, spearheaded by the architecture firm [Farr Associates](#), achieved LEED-Platinum certification and earned three prestigious 2019 American Institute of Architects' awards this fall, including one specifically for the staircase.



*Credit: Jacob Hand*