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## A look inside El Centro de la Raza's new early learning center in Roosevelt

By [JOURNAL STAFF](#)

CAST architecture recently completed a 6,470-square-foot four-classroom early learning center on the ground floor of Cedar Crossing, a new mixed-use building, at 6600 Roosevelt Way N.E. next to the Roosevelt Link Light Rail station, which opened in August.

The center is operated by El Centro de la Raza and is intended to complement the array of resident services that serve Cedar Crossing's affordable housing units. The center will provide affordable childcare for families living in the development and in the neighborhood. It has space for up to 68 children.



Photos by Quanta Collective [\[enlarge\]](#)

CAST said that an essential part of this project was to balance the requirements and layout of El Centro's space with the evolving design of the larger project. The center has four large, well-proportioned classrooms filled with daylight. These are organized around a central spine that connects a secure entry vestibule at the north sidewalk to an elevated outdoor play area on the opposite side of the building. Two interior gathering spaces provide extra room and an opportunity to include culturally-appropriate identity elements at classroom entries. The center also includes a full commercial kitchen and administrative spaces.

**The rooms are organized around a central spine that connects to the center's lobby and entry.** Photos by Quanta Collective



[\[enlarge\]](#)

**Classrooms are bright and light-filled.**

“The architecture is designed to create a clean, muted backdrop to help organize the huge variety of educational materials and children's projects in a rainbow of colors, shapes, and texture,” CAST explained. “A unique aspect of CAST's involvement was to be a part of the larger team early in the feasibility stage of the project. We have played a crucial role in shaping the evolving design of the overall building to ensure that the space would be viable as an ELC, from big picture design elements like the location of the play yard and the relationship of the main entrance to the sidewalk and courtyard; to detailed technical aspects, such as maintaining at-grade egress from toddler classrooms and ensuring that the five floors of apartments above wouldn't impinge on the necessary duct and exhaust shafts that allow us to include a full commercial kitchen,” the architect continued.

The project team also includes El Centro de la Raza, client; Bellwether Housing, developer; Mercy Housing NW, developer and Walsh Construction Co., general contractor.