

2012 Land Development



GERMANTOWN ACADEMY, PHASE 1 Whitemarsh Township

Germantown Academy, located in Whitemarsh Township, earned a 2012 Montgomery Award for environmentally sensitive site planning, sustainable building design, and restoration of natural features. This outstanding project successfully integrates the school's natural environment into the campus design and incorporates environmental education into the academic curriculum.

Concept

The Germantown Academy campus has many beautiful natural features, including the Wissahickon Creek, which runs through the property. A master plan, completed in 2011, was developed for the future expansion of the campus. The plan was the result of successful collaboration between the school, alumni, professionals,



environmental groups, and educational institutions. The major goals of the plan were to reconnect the school with its surrounding natural environment and integrate sustainable practices into all future campus projects. The master plan will be implemented in three phases. Phase 1 involved removing outdated buildings and inappropriate uses along the creek, constructing a new upper/middle school, reconfiguring the athletic complex, and restoring natural habitats. The successful site planning of this project integrates and embraces the site's natural features. School buildings, using innovative green building practices, were reoriented to face the creek, and service areas and athletic fields were relocated from riparian and floodplain areas.

Building Design

A new 160,000-square-foot 2-story middle school and 3-story upper school was constructed on the original building's footprint. The new structure was built in an "H" configuration with each school having its own wing surrounding an interior courtyard. A 2-story glass structure connects the two buildings containing a shared entry lobby, library, computer lab, and common space. The original administration building was preserved and renovated and connects to the new building by a glass-enclosed walkway, successfully blending the old with the new. An appealing feature of the new building is the mixing of materials such as stone, glass, and steel. The stone facade facing neighboring properties and the original campus green respects the traditional architecture of the campus, while elements, such as glass and steel, bring a contemporary feel to the interior facades. An attractive entry plaza serves as the main entrance and student gathering area, providing unique natural stone benches and rain gardens for managing stormwater. Surrounded by the upper and middle school, the academic courtyard provides views to the creek, bringing the natural environment inside the classroom. Areas of this courtyard will be transformed into student gardens as part of the school curriculum.



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Environmental Sustainability

Germantown Academy hopes to attain gold certification under the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program of the U.S. Green Building Council. This environmentally friendly building contains a green roof and utilizes sun and wind for heating and ventilation, rainwater harvesting, solar collection, water conservation, and energy efficiency. The building is a living educational laboratory for students to learn about sustainable design principles.

As part of the sustainable goals of this project, a new athletic complex was created. The complex includes a new stadium, reconfiguration of the athletic fields, a well-landscaped parking lot, running trail, tennis courts, and maintenance facility. Several athletic fields were relocated out the floodplain and wetlands adjacent to the Wissahickon Creek. This allowed for the creation of a 6-acre area known as the Preserve.

This unique feature contains restored wetlands, ponds, wet meadows, woodlands, walking trails, and various wildlife habitats. This outstanding asset is an example of the school's commitment to environmental responsibility and has enhanced the curriculum by providing an exceptional opportunity for outdoor educational experiences. The athletic complex incorporates an innovative stormwater management system that directs runoff into the wetlands. The wetlands, planted with native species, filter the runoff before entering the creek and help reduce flooding downstream.

This exceptional project demonstrates Germantown Academy's commitment to sustainable design, environmental stewardship, and the education of future community leaders. Germantown Academy is a true community asset, inviting the public to visit and enjoy its appealing natural environment.



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Location

340 Morris Road
Whitemarsh Township
Montgomery County

Project Data

Land Use

Institutional – Educational

Zoning

Institutional District Overlay

Tract Size

126 acres

Building Area

160,000 square feet (new middle and upper school)

Key Features

- Site planning
- Sustainable design/environmental sensitivity
- LEED/energy efficiency
- Adaptive reuse

Owner

Germantown Academy
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Fort Washington, PA 19034

Engineer

Charles E. Shoemaker, Inc.
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Abington, PA 19001

Architect/Land Planner/ Landscape Architect

Wallace Roberts & Todd
1700 Market Street, 28th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19103

Construction Manager

Rufo Contracting
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Conshohocken, PA 19428

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