PERKINS EASTMAN DC

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BARD HIGH SCHOOL EARLY COLLEGE DC MARKS NEW FRONTIER IN SUSTAINABLE URBAN DESIGN

Perkins Eastman DC has designed a new home for an innovative early college program in Washington, DC, that is targeting Net Zero Energy

Photograph © Joseph Romeo / Courtesy Perkins Eastman

Washington, DC, (June 11, 2024) Award-winning architecture and design firm Perkins Eastman DC (PEDC) has designed Bard High School Early College DC, an early college program located in Ward 8 in Washington, DC. Through adaptive reuse measures, and by addressing carbon holistically while enhancing thermal comfort and indoor environmental quality, PEDC transformed a brutalist 1960s-era building into the new Bard High School, a diverse and light-filled learning landscape focused on civic presence, community connection, student experience, and academic excellence.

Located at the current site of the former Malcolm X Elementary School, PEDC's modernization of the new Bard High School was completed in two phases. The first focused on providing administrative and academic spaces, dining services, and some performing arts and physical education spaces that could open during the first year. During the second phase, the team wrapped up renovation of the school's former multi-purpose space to allow for a regulation-sized basketball court in the gym, a new stage, and additional performing arts spaces. The goal for this modernization was to provide an innovative learning facility that provides a collegiate ambiance appropriate for the accelerated program, supports academic

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achievement, and establishes new standards for sustainable urban school design. Through strategic interventions in the existing building, PEDC's design, which is targeting Net Zero Energy, proves how effective sustainability measures can be integrated within modernized school facilities.

Designed in collaboration with the DC Department of General Services, District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS), MCN Build, CMTA, Inc., and community stakeholders, the 108,200-sf school features an array of innovative indoor and outdoor places that afford a wide range of educational activities and connect literally and metaphorically to Bard's mission. Inspired by a desire to increase access and success in higher education among low-income and historically underrepresented communities, the school provides a free college program of study. Upon graduating, students receive both a high school diploma and a tuition-free Associates in Arts degree from Bard College. It is the first early college program of its kind located east of the Anacostia River in Washington, DC.

PEDC's innovative design wholeheartedly supports this mission. The team held extensive interactions and conversations with school faculty and administrators to develop organizational and design principles to aid in the design. These principles then helped create a vision for a campus that will inspire Bard students to succeed in the 21st century and beyond. By keeping the original structure intact and building a new thermal envelope, the project was able to save a significant number of resources while enhancing the thermal performance of the building. This allowed the team to replace the existing uninsulated and windowless masonry walls with a new envelope that now has continuous insulation, higher performing windows, and a continuous air and weather barrier. The new thermal envelope has more windows and skylights that allow for daylight to illuminate the core learning rooms of the school, while creating higher quality spaces for students and teachers to thrive.

"Bard High School Early College DC exemplifies the next frontier in Net Zero Energy," says Mary Rose Rankin, AIA, principal and managing director of PEDC. "While fellow PEDC schools like John Lewis Elementary School and Benjamin Banneker Academic High School represent sustainable designs for new buildings, Bard illustrates how important sustainable features can be integrated into an existing structure. This school sets a new benchmark for learning environments that promote academic achievement, enhance community engagement, and foster health and wellness among the students, teachers, and staff who use the building every day."

Bard High School Early College DC was completed in July 2023 and has begun to garner national attention. The project recently received a 2024 Education Facility Design Award from the American Institute of Architects (AIA), with one of the jurors commenting, "It's so impressive to have a net zero school in an urban center renovation. It's clear the team went to great lengths to involve the students and the community so they would all feel connected." The school also won the 2024 Grand Prize Award for Adaptive Reuse in *Learning by Design Magazine*'s Spring 2024 Educational Facilities Design Awards. "Sustainable practices and a modern aesthetic modernize the campus, with interior spaces

promoting inspiration and collaboration," shared the *Learning by Design* jury. "Daylighting and exterior shading enhance comfort and energy efficiency, creating a dynamic and interconnected learning environment." In addition, Bard won the 2024 IIDA Mid-Atlantic Premiere Design Award in K-12 Education, with jurors noting the school's "energizing interconnected stairwell [that] fosters a sense of alertness, high engagement, and student well-being" and commenting that the design "is a novel approach that promotes serious learning and high-quality teaching."

The school, which has been fully operational for almost one year now, is currently one of the highest performing schools, from an energy standpoint, in the United States. Bard High School Early College DC is currently performing at an Energy Use Intensity (EUI) of 21.3 kBtu/sf/year, which is lower than what was targeted during the early stages of design. In addition, the whole-building blower door test that was performed at the end of construction showed that the overall air infiltration rate of the building was 0.13 CFM/SF at 75 pascals, which is lower than the 0.15 CFM/SF at 75 pascals the team was targeting. Added to the very efficient design, the high-quality construction, and the educational programs developed by the design team and school leadership, the new Bard High School is operating at a very high level, encouraging the students, teachers, and administrative and faculty staff to save energy in the tasks they perform every day and serve as a teaching tool to encourage more sustainable lifestyles.

With its thoughtful design, sustainable features, and commitment to enhancing student success and well-being, Bard High School Early College DC is an award-winning, diverse, and natural light-filled learning environment that is paving the way for Net Zero Energy and informing not only Washington, DC's, but the nation's, approach to school design and infrastructure.

ABOUT PERKINS EASTMAN DC

Founded in 2011, Perkins Eastman DC (PEDC) taps a tradition of design dating back to 1959, as well as extensive experience in the District of Columbia. PEDC is a dynamic design practice with diverse expertise in the design of the community centers, government buildings, educational facilities, housing, and large-scale mixed-use projects that make up the nation's capital. The principals and staff of PEDC have been at the forefront of new developments in the field of education and community design for years in Washington, DC, and abroad. With expertise in architecture, master planning, urban design, historic preservation and restoration, and adaptive reuse, PEDC creates flexible, state-of-the-art community and learning environments for Washington, DC.

Photography available.

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