

Integrated Design Services, Master Plan, and Invasive Species Management for Winston Preparatory School

Norwalk, Connecticut



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A multi-faceted campus transformation that enhances learning and ecology is completed without finalized construction documents well within a tight schedule and budget.

Formerly a grand 19th century estate, a reformatory school, and a daycare facility, the 13-acre campus of the Winston Preparatory School contains an intriguing mix of derelict buildings, relics, and a spring-fed, concrete-lined, algae-coated swimming pool. When the school acquired funding for a new classroom building, they assembled an integrated design/construction team to help transform Winston’s learning environment into one that not only fostered

academic education, but an understanding of the school’s “place” and its role in the ecological health of the region.

A series of charrettes with staff, faculty and students yielded the school’s new vision: a state-of-the-art, ecologically sustainable classroom and landscape that would enhance community, local ecology, and student understanding of how water leaving the campus could impact Long Island Sound.

Biohabitats performed an ecological inventory and analysis which not only informed siting of physical improvements but identified invasive species and recommended forest management. The site plan located new buildings and paved areas on previously disturbed lands, minimized impervious cover, and addressed stormwater management holistically. The plan also included green infrastructure, such as bioswales, bioretention filters, a dry detention basin, an infiltration gallery, replacement of turf with low-maintenance native plants, and conversion of the algae laden “swimming pool” to a vegetated wet pond BMP. Biohabitats was responsible for all regulatory coordination with the local wetlands board for the conversion of the swimming pool, a regulated waterbody, as well as the associated wetland buffer encroachments.

Due to a compressed project schedule, and a move-in date dictated by the start of the school year, construction began with little more than the entitlement drawings required for site plan and building permit approval. Working closely with the construction management team to stay on schedule, Biohabitats’ designers often prepared detailed concept drawings while in the field. With the original design goals and concept in mind, many site details were altered or new details created to reuse vast amounts of rock found during site excavation. The landscape design incorporated over 200 native tree, shrub, grass, perennial and annual wildflower species.

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