



On Middle Ground

PLANS FOR LOVETT'S NEW MIDDLE SCHOOL BUILDING

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THIS PAST SUMMER, *Excellence in Learning, Character & Community: Lovett's Strategic Plan for 2007–2011* showcased the first architectural drawings for Lovett's new Middle School.

Since that time, there has been much progress and many plans made. Construction on the Middle School is scheduled to start this spring, in June 2008, thanks in great part to the generosity of Lovett parents and grandparents Jan and John Portman. Their \$10 million unrestricted gift—the largest gift in the school's 82-year history—has allowed us to proceed with the development of the building, which will be named in the Portman family's honor. (See page 7 for more about their gift.)

The planning that has gone into the new school has been extensive. Fourteen Middle School teachers worked with the architects to come up with the program for the building. Along with lending their own expertise as the end users of the space, they visited many new independent middle schools in the Nashville and Atlanta areas to take notes of what worked—and what didn't. The end result will be a 75,000-square-foot brick-and-glass building, designed by Shepley, Bulfinch, Richardson, and Abbott, containing many exciting features:

Above:
The Middle School's south elevation
Below:
The school's entrance lobby

- Technologically advanced classrooms, all equipped with SMART Boards;



- A spacious study lounge and carpeted, comfortable breakout rooms for doing homework and group projects;
- A computer lab, complete with an IT help desk;
- A naturally lighted art room with gallery space; and
- A multipurpose room with retractable bleachers for dances, team and grade-level meetings, and recreational activities.

"If I had to say what I thought defined the new Middle School,"

says Debbie Franks, the school's principal, "it would be the much-needed places to move and places to gather."

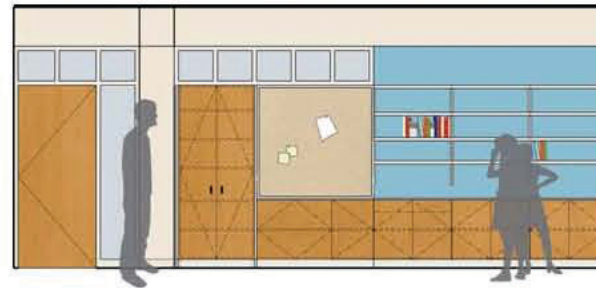
Lovett's new Middle School, on the site of the former Middle School, will reflect Lovett's ongoing commitment to environmental sustainability. The school is seeking Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification for the building, and is designing the building to achieve at least a silver rating. A program of the U.S. Green Building Council, LEED evaluates a building's environmental performance on five



factors: site selection, water efficiency, energy use, material and resource use, and indoor air quality. Certification will demonstrate that respect for the environment is not just something Lovett students learn about in the classroom, but something Lovett puts into practice every day.

One of the exciting things about the "green" Middle School is that the school itself becomes a teaching tool. This will be especially evident in the Middle School's roof garden.

Teachers will be able to use the roof garden as an outdoor classroom and laboratory, with space to conduct science experiments and enjoy lectures beneath the clouds and sun. Drought-tolerant plant species, all native to Georgia, will be cared for by the students, offering yet another learning opportunity. A water runnel flowing across the garden will be a small ecosystem for the students to observe—as well as a conduit for rainwater, which will then flow into a nearby cistern. This "harvested" rainwater, along with condensate from the heating and air conditioning systems, will irrigate the roof garden.



Above:
View of a storage wall in a typical classroom
Left:
The west elevation of the Middle School; the blue area is a wall of Lovett-blue glazed bricks
Below:
An aerial view of the 5,000-square-foot roof garden

The garden also serves the practical purpose of helping to diminish the solar energy absorbed by the school's roof, thus reducing energy use and utility costs. Solar panels on the roof will also collect solar energy to heat water for the school's restrooms.

The building's education function will also be served through informational plaques placed throughout the space. These plaques will explain some of the building's "green" features, and highlight the amount of resources that are being saved in their use. For example, a placard in the

boys restroom might point out that each waterless urinal saves an average of 30,000–40,000 gallons of water per year! The school's energy controls will also be on display, so that students can see how much power is being used—or saved—during periods of peak demand. And, built-in recycling bins, especially near printers and other areas of high paper use, will serve as a tangible reminder for students and faculty to recycle.

The building's design theme will echo this emphasis on environmental awareness. The Middle School will be decorated in earth tones, including blue—reflecting the neighboring Chattahoochee—and will feature earth-friendly materials, such as rapidly renew-

able hardwoods like bamboo and "stone" surfaces that are actually made from recycled paper. Natural light will be a key component, with most rooms taking advantage of daylighting, thus reducing dependence on electric power.

As anyone who has been around Middle Schoolers knows, spaces to play and burn off excess energy are key. The school will front the grassy quadrangle adjacent to the Lower School, while the rear of the school will open to an outdoor play center offering four-square and basketball courts, as well as easy access to the Lovett Tennis Center. Such proximity to outdoor spaces—along with the new multipurpose room—will ensure that much-needed recess and "play time" remains alive and well in the school.

In this construction project, there will be no displacement of the Middle School students during construction. Students will continue to enjoy the features of the current Middle School until the new building is ready for the start of school in August 2009. The "old" Middle School will then be renovated for fine arts space, Breakthrough Atlanta offices, and an expanded Academic Resource Center. ■



Above:
The new play area in the back of the Middle School will include a walkway to provide easier access to Lovett's tennis facility.

Below:
A typical classroom corridor

