

News Release

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**Construction Begins on Gwinnett Environmental and Heritage Center
Designed by Lord, Aeck & Sargent**
*Educational Facility's Architecture a Working Study
of Resource Management and Cutting-edge Ecological Design Strategies*

BUFORD, Ga., Jan. 17, 2005 – Construction is beginning on the \$15.6 million Gwinnett Environmental and Heritage Center (GEHC), a two-story, 50,000-square-foot educational facility that was planned, programmed and designed by the Atlanta architecture firm Lord, Aeck & Sargent, which also is in charge of construction administration. The facility's programs and interactive exhibits will explore the impact of water on our history and everyday lives as well as the water management challenges that we will face in the years ahead. The facility is anticipated to open in Fall 2006.

The GEHC, which will be energy efficient and ecologically sensitive, is targeted for LEED¹ silver-level certification from the U.S. Green Building Council. The facility design utilizes locally harvested materials and numerous energy- and water-saving strategies and will serve as a working model of cutting-edge resource management.

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The building is sited on the grounds of the F. Wayne Hill Water Resources Center, renowned as one of the nation's most efficient, high-tech water treatment facilities. More than 200 acres on the site have been preserved in their natural state for nature trails, outdoor exploration and interpretation. Funding for the facility comes from Gwinnett County's 2001 and 2005 Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax.

The GEHC will be a blend of indoor and outdoor classroom space, exterior landscapes and exhibits, a collection of permanent and rotating displays, and interactive and hands-on learning opportunities to teach K-12 and adult audiences about Gwinnett County and the state of Georgia's environmental heritage. Its sustainable design strategies are intended as a model for building water and energy efficient structures.

"The Gwinnett County Board of Commissioners selected Lord, Aeck & Sargent to design the building and exhibits because the firm is a key player in the sustainable design arena and because of its proven experience in designing nature centers, science centers, museums and other fine arts facilities," said Steve Cannon, GEHC executive director. "A big plus in our choice of an architect was that they're one of very few firms in the Southeast that has a studio dedicated to this type of facility design.

"The Center is an incredibly complex endeavor," Cannon added. "We've found that despite a very aggressive program – designing the project, putting it out to bid and starting construction in less than 12 months – the team members at Lord, Aeck & Sargent have been extremely thorough and attentive to addressing all of our requirements and concerns."

Design Knits Into Landscape, Incorporates Native Materials

"One of our major design intentions was to knit the building into the landscape, and we addressed this in part by incorporating native materials into the design," said John Starr, AIA,

a LEED accredited professional who is Lord, Aeck & Sargent's principal in charge of the GEHC project. "For example, the building's parallel east-to-west walls are made of Georgia granite, and instead of stopping at the building's edge, they continue into the landscape. And inside the building, there are exposed trusses of Southern Yellow Pine every four feet throughout the upper level.

"We also designed a continuous glass band around all of the spaces above eight feet high so that visitors can see out to the trees," Starr continued. "In all, the architecture is a working study of resource management and sets an example for intelligent use of current building technologies."

Sustainable Design Strategies

According to Starr, the daylighting and water management strategies that the firm integrated into the Center's design will result in a structure that reduces water and energy use by 50 percent and 35 percent, respectively.

Some of the most important features of the building and site resulting from those strategies include:

- Water feature – The GEHC is designed to span a dry ravine in which a cascading water feature will function like a cooling tower and be an integral part of the building's mechanical system. In lieu of using potable water, the water feature will use the non-potable but very clean reuse water leaving the nearby water treatment facility. The water feature will save an estimated one million gallons of potable water annually. Treatment facility reuse water also will be used for irrigation and for flushing toilets.
- Green roof – A planted roof – the first in Gwinnett County, according to Cannon – will reduce storm water runoff and mitigate the heat island effect. The roof will be planted with drought-resistant, low-growing plants indigenous to Gwinnett, eliminating the need for irrigation.

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- Pervious paving, bio-swales and wetlands – The use of pervious paving throughout the site will allow ground water recharge and minimize storm water runoff, which will reduce the impact on Gwinnett’s storm sewers and lessen the volume of surface runoff during flood conditions. Storm water runoff will also be directed to vegetated bio-swales and constructed wetlands that will help contain surface runoff on site. All plants on the site will be native to Gwinnett County as well as drought resistant.
- Use and control of natural daylight to reduce energy costs – All public spaces will be lit with natural light; artificial light will be used only as needed. The building’s design includes several daylighting features to maximize natural light while minimizing the discomfort of glare. These include high windows with Southern overhangs, east- and west-facing glass with deep vertical shading devices, and clerestory windows that let natural light into the deepest interior spaces.

According to Starr, the Gwinnett County Board of Commissioners also contracted with Lord, Aeck & Sargent to design the GEHC exhibits. “Often, exhibit design comes into play after a museum is designed. This way, we were able to ensure that the exhibit and building designs enhance each other. Also, along with our exhibit design partner Van Sickle & Rolleri, we met early on in the design stage with Gwinnett County teachers to develop dynamic, interactive interpretive exhibits that will correlate with Gwinnett K-12 classroom lesson plans and specific learning objectives.”

The Project Team

In addition to Lord, Aeck & Sargent as architect, the Gwinnett Environmental & Heritage Center project team includes:

- Juneau Construction (Atlanta), general contractor
- Uzun & Case (Atlanta), structural engineer
- Newcomb & Boyd (Atlanta), MEP/FP engineer
- ENSAR Group (Boulder, Colo.), energy consultant
- Lose & Associates (Atlanta), civil engineer
- The Jaeger Co. (Gainesville, Ga.), landscape architect
- Van Sickel & Rolleri (Medford, N.J.), exhibit designer
- Waveguide Consulting (Atlanta), AV and acoustics consultant
- Huie Design (Atlanta), signage consultant

About Lord, Aeck & Sargent

Founded in 1942, Lord, Aeck & Sargent is an award-winning architectural firm serving clients in scientific, academic, historic preservation, arts and cultural, and housing and mixed-use development markets. The firm's core values are responsive design, technological expertise and exceptional service. In 2003, The Construction Specifications Institute awarded Lord, Aeck & Sargent its Environmental Sensitivity Award for showing exceptional devotion to the use of sustainable and environmentally friendly materials, and for striving to create functional, sensitive and healthy buildings for clients. Lord, Aeck & Sargent is headquartered in Atlanta and has branch offices in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and Chapel Hill, North Carolina. For more information, visit the firm at www.lordaecksargent.com.

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¹ The LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Green Building Rating System® is a voluntary, consensus-based national standard for developing high-performance, sustainable buildings. Members of the U.S. Green Building Council representing all segments of the building industry developed LEED and continue to contribute to its evolution.