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Connolly leads project team for New England Academy's new site: Project team includes Colliers and Hayes Engineering

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Connolly began working with the co-founders of New England Academy (NEA), Dr. Ryan Plosker and John Vogus, in 2010 as they searched for a new, more suitable campus for their unique school. The academy is a private, special education school devoted to providing students in grades 7 through 12 with identified social and/or emotional disabilities the academic challenge and clinical support they need to succeed in school.

Dr. Plosker, who serves as the school's executive director, defines the school's mission, "The heart of New England Academy's mission is to help students gain the skills and confidence necessary for future success in college and beyond. It has been my experience as a school psychologist, educator and school administrator, that many bright students with social and emotional disabilities never reach their full potential. New England Academy is designed to ensure that each student has a seamless support system in place that fosters student success."

Steve Connolly, president of Connolly, was introduced to NEA by Greg Klemmer, senior vice president at Colliers International, as Klemmer assisted NEA in their search for a new home. Connolly subsequently worked with NEA and Klemmer to identify and determine the feasibility of several properties on the North Shore. This process included the evaluation of properties with existing structures that would need to be renovated and properties that were yet to be developed.

In order to properly evaluate properties, Connolly provided preliminary design services to NEA to establish the programmatic requirements for the school building that would serve their current needs and provide for growth. Together, under the direction of Harry Samolchuk, vice president of design at Connolly, the team determined that the school would need to be 40,000 s/f including a gymnasium, have an athletic field, and have adequate and convenient parking.

This valuable preliminary design effort helped to focus the property search, fostered a cooperative, trusting relationship between NEA and Connolly, and eventually led to the identification of two undeveloped sites in Beverly on Cherry Hill Dr. At this point, Connolly proceeded to further evaluate the two sites with NEA and to determine the financial feasibility of both sites.

With Klemmer's assistance, Connolly headed up the negotiation and site evaluation process and determined which of the sites would be the most favorable for the school. This process led to an offer to purchase the property contingent on receiving the required permits and approvals from the various regulatory authorities having jurisdiction.

The city of Beverly, through the office of then mayor William Scanlon, was very supportive from the beginning of the project. The city clearly realized that the school was a tremendous asset and wanted the school to remain in Beverly. The site plan was developed by Connolly and Hayes Engineering utilizing a building footprint developed by Connolly from the previously determined programmatic requirements of the school.

The site plan review process went smoothly and the site plan approval was quick. Due to the location of the property, the approval of the Beverly Airport Commission and the Federal Aviation Administration were also required. The airport commission was very supportive of the project, was cooperative from the start, and was instrumental in garnering the required approvals.

Once all the approvals were acquired, the Connolly Bros. design team headed began the work of further refining the design of the facility with the NEA team. Construction drawings and project specifications for the project were developed in-house at Connolly Bros. and these documents were utilized for pricing, permitting, and construction.

Ground breaking for the facility was conducted with the NEA team and several students in September 2013 with an anticipated grand opening scheduled for August 2014. The new two story, stand alone campus building features an arched entry canopy, brick facades, insulated steel wall panels, tinted and reflective glass, an exterior student courtyard, classrooms with technology, modern science labs, a library, a 10,000 s/f gymnasium with elevated suspended running track, a fitness/yoga center, athletic fields, a college resource center, an art studio, and a music studio.

"Connolly Brothers is proud to have been an integral part of the team that acquired, developed designed, permitted, and built this valuable North Shore asset," said Steve Connolly.

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