

## The Roebling Community School (Pre K - 8th Grade) wins a 2004 NJ Future Smart Growth Award

TRENTON, NJ

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Clarke Caton Hintz is pleased to announce that the Roebling School has won a 2004 New Jersey Future Smart Growth Award. New Jersey Future is the state's largest smart-growth advocacy group. It is a nonprofit organization which is leading the fight for better-managed growth under the State Plan, and for sustainable development: a strong economy, a healthy natural environment and a just society for present and future generations. The Smart Growth Awards honor town officials, developers and corporations for outstanding work that promotes the healthy growth of New Jersey communities, and so strengthens the prosperity and future of New Jersey.

The Roebling School is a new 1,200 student Pre-Kindergarten to 8th grade school in Trenton, New Jersey. As an urban center, Trenton does not have enough open space to build a new school of this scale, so the Trenton



Public Schools in concert with the New Jersey Schools Construction Corporation decided to utilize a largely abandoned block of industrial buildings in the historic Roebling complex for this facility. The Roebling complex was created to produce steel wire rope used in suspension bridges (most notably the Brooklyn Bridge in New York and the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco), elevators, and in early commercial aircraft. After almost 50 years of neglect, the Roebling complex has been transformed into a catalyst for Trenton's revitalization and growth. The function of the renewed complex includes an arena, senior housing, museums, shops, offices, high-tech entertainment studios, a transportation hub, and now high-quality public education.

The Roebling School will inhabit roughly 220,000 SF of renovated and new construction on a 6.5 acre lot. The historically significant structures on the site will be saved and incorporated for the school and the insignificant shed structures will be demolished to create appropriate spaces for courtyards, parking, and playgrounds. A gymnasium addition will be centrally located to serve all of the students at the school and will be oriented for after hours use by community groups. The Pre-Kindergarten classrooms will be located in building 52 while Kindergarten through 5th grades will be housed in the renovated building 54, a massive 96,000 SF building dated



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1924. Building 54 was a prototypical industrial building that maximized the amount of glazing at the exterior walls and brought even more natural light in through roof monitors (skylights). Recent studies prove that larger windows produced measurable improvements in test scores, attendance, and general morale at the school, making building 54 an ideal setting for classrooms. The older students (grades 6-8) will be located in buildings 58 and 62 but connected to the main building by a series of glass-enclosed links. These buildings were built in the late 19th century and typically have large arched windows at the exterior walls. In addition to the educational use of the site, the Trenton School District plans to utilize the two remaining buildings for administrative space and the City of Trenton plans to build a children's museum on an adjacent lot.

The Trenton School District has created a new program for the school to focus on technology and the history of technology—the building and site will become part of the teaching curriculum. The interiors of the school will expose the historic cranes and display salvaged machinery throughout the corridors. The exterior courtyard space will incorporate historic fragments such as rail lines, restored signage, and secured machinery to enhance the historic nature of the site. The vast expanses of glazing around the perimeter of the building have been reserved for classroom spaces while service elements are placed in the central core of the buildings. The tightly spaced concrete mushroom columns are celebrated in the first floor hallways, classrooms, and cafeteria while the impressive steel trusses and skylights on the upper floors are playfully exposed in the media centers and corridors. The main entry additions will create bold architectural gestures at the most public access points, welcoming students into the school and celebrating the future of a new Trenton.

The result of this work will not only be a fully restored and preserved historic site but also a unique, campus-like community of learning for the children of Trenton. The design of the school has been featured as an outstanding work in progress in the Fall 2001 edition of "American School and University Journal" and the design also won a 2002 Silver Medal Award from the American Institute of Architects (New Jersey chapter) design competition. It is the first Abbott Schools project to receive such an award. Construction of the school is expected to be completed in 2007.

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### **School Renaissance Zone**

In March of 2003, Governor James McGreevey outlined his vision for community revitalization, which combines smart growth ideals, school construction, and targeting state investment to spur private economic development in the neighborhoods around schools.

Standing in the shadows of the former factory on Clinton Avenue, the Governor announced that The Roebling School would be the first of New Jersey’s School Renaissance Zones (SRZ). Through this program, the abandoned complex will be transformed into a thriving and historically significant Pre-K through 8 educational facility developed through the cooperation of state agencies and funding through the state’s school construction program.

“This program is yet another initiative to ensure we are investing in the growth of our urban areas and older suburbs,” said Governor McGreevey, flanked by architectural designs and artistic renderings of the new school. “Through the collaborative efforts of our many State agencies, it enables us to create a school that will serve as a magnet for the rebirth of a community. By leveraging the State’s commitment, we can attract private and non-profit investment to energize the local economy, build safe neighborhoods for our students, and secure a successful future for our families.”

“This program—specifically this Roebling project—compliments Governor McGreevey’s plan to encourage smart growth throughout our state by prioritizing access to state funds in communities in need of revitalization,” said New Jersey Economic Development Authority Executive Director Caren Franzini. “EDA is committed to working creatively and cooperatively with other state agencies to ensure our public investment in educational facilities results in community rebirth.”

“The Roebling site is an outstanding example of what we are going to do with the construction of schools as the center of strengthening neighborhoods and partnerships,” said Education Commissioner William L. Librera. “We are very pleased at the initiation and excellent work that the Trenton school community and governing body, including the mayor, have done in this outstanding project.”

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