

**Cary Street Gym
Virginia Commonwealth University
Richmond, Virginia**



With new and expanded opportunities for recreation, wellness, socialization and relaxation for students, the new 128,205-square-foot Cary Street Gym on the Monroe Park Campus at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) in Richmond, Va., has become the sole venue for recreational sports on the university grounds.

"What was unique is that we took an old building and built another building around it, and left the old building in place. It has unique architecture, where students come in the morning at 6 a.m. and use it as a study space because the library isn't open at that time," said Tom Diehl, director of recreational sports at VCU.

Cary Street Gym, originally built in 1891 as an open air market, boasts 20,000 square feet of fitness and weight training space; a 40-foot high climbing wall; a four-court recreation gym with a wood floor for table tennis, badminton, volleyball and basketball; a multi-activity/exercise/aerobic room; a three-lane suspended running track; two racquetball courts; a spinning room; a main lobby with a control desk; a multi-activity court (MAC) gym with artificial turf; **a natatorium with a five-lane, 25-yard activity pool, waterslide**, rock climbing wall, leisure pool and whirlpool; and various support spaces.

The total cost for construction was more than \$38.2 million.

"The administrators have said that this is the best thing VCU has done. It just turned out outstanding," Diehl said, adding that the new gym attracts about 4,000 people a day, compared with about 1,500 people a day at the old gym. "It used to be 40 percent of the study body, now it's 70 percent using it," he said.

Diehl also noted that the gym is not used for any rentals or special events. "It's strictly student priority and informal recreation first. It's always available for students," he said. "It's a very open building. You can almost see and sense everything that's going on."

The design team for the project had determined that the renovation to the existing 32,600-square-foot gym and a three-story 94,200-square-foot state-of-the-art addition would enable the Cary Street Gym to serve as the sole location for recreational sports on the campus. The challenge was to preserve the historical character of the original facility, while complementing the residential neighborhood to the east and south. The existing building's exterior was restored, while the interior

was renovated. Meanwhile, red-orange brick with pre-cast stone and trim accents match the existing architectural character on campus.

A key component to the historic renovation was the conversion of the existing interior of the building into a 20,000-square-foot, two-story fitness center. To boot, a 40-foot climbing wall and bouldering wall is featured right in the center of the fitness space. The facility's interior was designed to impart a visual connection to numerous recreation activities that would encourage health and wellness to the campus community and neighborhood.

The massing of the addition furthers the urban character of the neighborhood. Large windows allow students to view the neighborhood and offer a glimpse of the activities taking place inside to passersby. The main recreational sports elements are covered in shallow vaulted roofs that give them identity without overpowering the gabled roof of the existing Cary Street Gym.

Sustainable design was a critical part of the project, with solutions including utilization of recycled content, regional materials and low-emitting materials; **improvement of indoor air quality**; providing daylight and views; **water efficiency**; and energy-efficient HVAC systems. The project is **LEED Gold registered**, with certification expected in early 2011.

Hastings & Chivetta Architects Inc. in St. Louis

Size: 128,205 square feet

Project Cost: \$38.2 million

- 20,000 square feet of fitness, weight training space
- 40-foot climbing wall
- 4-court recreation gym
- Multi-activity/exercise/aerobic rooms
- 3-lane suspended running track
- 2 racquetball courts
- Spinning room
- Main lobby with control desk
- Multi-activity court
- Natatorium with 5-lane, 25-yard activity pool, waterslide, rock climbing wall, leisure pool and whirlpool
- Wet classroom
- Seminar room and fitness assessment lab
- Recreational sports administrative offices
- Locker rooms
- Storage
- Support spaces

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TMI Salt Pure Corp provided Salt Pure® systems and Chemistry Control for the Aquatic Facility

