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An International Campus in Switzerland

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PROJECTS

AN INTERNATIONAL CAMPUS IN SWITZERLAND

A need

The development of Geneva due to the presence of international and multinational organisations has led to an increased need for infrastructure. Over the past ten years, the International School of Geneva has seen its enrolments grow by 1 000 pupils, and the number of pupils whose parents work in international organisations has risen from 600 to over 900.

The International School of Geneva has three campuses in the region of Lake Geneva and now has a total enrolment of some 3 500 pupils; more than 100 nationalities are represented. In order to prevent overcrowding on existing campuses and to meet the growing demand, the Foundation of the International School of Geneva plans to build a fourth campus, at Saconay. It wishes the architecture of this new site to reflect the school's ideal of service to the local and international communities, while effectively meeting the challenges that it must face at the beginning of the 21st century.

Criteria

For the design of this new campus, the school's Foundation launched a competition in which architects were invited to submit projects. The selection criteria included functional aspects and an organisation of the site and buildings that would:

- encourage pupils to participate in school life;
- develop a spirit of belonging to an educational and social community;
- be responsive to new educational practices;
- provide for flexibility;
- solve problems of access and of pedestrian and vehicle traffic.

The future campus will house 1 000 primary, lower and upper secondary pupils and 150 adults. The campus, which will be highly innovative, will be a place where people can meet and develop, a place conducive to learning and facilitating the integration and interaction of pupils from around the world. The campus, which will be multi-



functional by nature and will be structurally adaptable to new developments in education, will meet current educational needs while being adaptable to changing needs at lower cost. It will also allow for individual work and accommodate the activities of different sized groups. Some areas (the cafeteria, physical education rooms, etc.) will be separated from teaching areas so that they will be accessible outside school hours and can be made available to the community. Lastly, as this campus is located near prestigious international institutions, its identity as an educational institution will be clearly affirmed.

The available land is in the area where Geneva's international organisations are traditionally located. This extensive district is one of Geneva's assets that enables it to fulfil its major international role and is a key area, not only in relation to the activities of international organisations, but also for the urban development of greater Geneva.

The project selected

The project chosen is appropriate for an international institution and is adapted to the urban characteristics of the site. The interior and external architecture are designed to promote exchange and contacts between the future occupants. The project comprises buildings of simple design, which are placed at the front of a site that is integrated into the natural slope of the terrain. Access and traffic flow are clearly defined: to the south, private and public transport have easy access to the school and an underground parking lot, while to the north, by the playgrounds, access is reserved to pedestrians and two-wheel vehicles.

The site includes a terrace with a panoramic view of the alpine landscape on one side and of the neighbouring arboretum on the other. It is a meeting place for pupils and teachers and is the focal point of the life of the school. Located nearby are the cafeteria and media library, art rooms, study halls and a large space housing pupils' lockers.



The project's modular concept provides for great flexibility. Levels 1 and 2 of the main building are devoted to general education. The primary division is organised as an independent unit around two patios, which creates a safe and quiet area for young children. The rooms for lower and upper secondary education facing to the south-east and the administrative offices facing north-west have extraordinary views of the Jura Mountains, the Alps and neighbouring parks. In the project's initial design, which was later modified, the administrative offices had been grouped on the top floor of the building; but in the final project, they were integrated into the two educational levels, which made it possible to reduce the upper building to two floors, thereby allowing for more sunlight on the terrace. The four sports rooms are located at the far end of the buildings, leaving a large, open area at the back of the site for outdoor sports activities. Outside regular school hours (8 a.m. to 5 p.m.) when facilities are being fully used, some activity areas will remain open at the end of the day, in the evening and on Saturday and Sunday.

John Boggs, chair of the Foundation's Governing Board, already foresees the changing use of the school: "To tell the truth, it is certain that in a few years' time the Saconay building will no longer function exactly as was originally

planned in the models and plans submitted during the competition, given the increasingly rapid pace of change in all fields, and especially in education. The application of technology to education, the constantly changing needs and diverse origins of our pupils, the changes in the outside environment and many other factors will have an impact on the vision of Saconay presented in the competition projects."

The competition provided an opportunity to reflect on the school's programme and to take fuller advantage of the site's potential and new developments in education. The flexibility of the project selected has already made it possible to make some major changes in the programme for the premises, without making any fundamental changes in the design or internal functioning of the future building. This demonstrates the great interest of this project in terms of its educational objective and adaptability.

The Saconay campus is scheduled to open in August 2004. The volume of the project is 124 500 m³, and its cost is estimated at CHF 67 000 000 (excluding VAT). For economic reasons, the Foundation's Governing Board plans to build in two stages, the first being a volume of 84 000 m³ at an estimated CHF 55 000 000 (excluding VAT).

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