WESTMARK SCHOOL

Encino, CA | Design Phase

Role of the firm: Structural Engineer of Record Area: 15,500 ft² (1,440 m²) Budget: Undisclosed Architect: NBBJ Client: Westmark Sustainable Features: Targeting ILFI Zero Carbon Certification and LEED Gold

Westmark Lower School, a ground-breaking net-zero carbon campus in Encino, California, was created to educate students with learning differences and give them access to a secure, engaging, and outdoor-focused environment. It serves as a paradigm for future educational institutions thanks to its creative design, sustainable features, and dedication to diversity.

Placed around a central courtyard, the school houses ten classrooms featuring various activity areas, including creative labs and reading nooks, to accommodate flexible learning. Large windows that let in natural light, as well as architectural elements made of raw materials like stone and wood, make the classrooms bright and roomy. To provide a direct connection to nature, each classroom has a hangar door that opens to the yard. The outdoor spaces are equally inviting, with a large playground and a sensory garden where students can explore, learn and play.

A cross-laminated timber (CLT) system is at the heart of its construction. This technique involves layering, gluing, and stacking lumber boards into a crosswise pattern, delivering unparalleled strength, stability, and rigidity to the structure. The visible mass-timber elements showcase the raw beauty of the materials used, creating a warm and inviting atmosphere that inspires learning and creativity. Apart from the renewable mass timber elements, the design includes solar panels, and a central sycamore tree that collects rainwater for reuse, making sustainability a prime focus.







