

York Academy's new school to be a hub of York's northern gateway

Students break ground, York-area leaders hail start of \$22 million project for charter school

By **David O'Connor**, September 8, 2017 at 11:29 AM



York Academy CEO Dennis Baughman, with academy students, joined York-area political, economic and other officials to celebrate the beginning of the construction on the new 65,000 square-foot York Academy Regional Charter School. - (Photo / Amy Spangler)

It will be a centerpiece of the northern entrance of downtown York, a new \$22 million school that means dozens of construction and teaching jobs.

And it's just part of a \$100 million investment in a one-block area, a clear sign that York "is not a static city by any means," as one economic leader said.

But to 11-year-old Ian Byrd Jr., his new **York Academy Regional Charter School** most of all will mean more room for two of his favorite things, science classes and basketball.

As York-area political, economic and other officials watched, Byrd and 10 of his fellow York Academy students grabbed shovels early Friday morning and broke ground for the new building for York Academy along the Codorus Creek.

The new 65,000-square-foot school, along Hamilton Avenue between North George and Beaver streets, is slated to open by the start of the 2018-19 school year. It is being built on property that once was home to York's old Pensupreme Dairy buildings.

Designed as a school where students from York City and York County could join together in a challenging academic environment, the academy opened in 2011 with students in kindergarten through second grade.

It has been adding a grade level each school year since, and the new building will house students from grades 8 through 12, with 75 students per grade level, school officials have said.

"I'm especially glad for the students. That's why we're here," York Academy CEO Dennis Baughman said after the ground-breaking ceremony.

The project is being led by two well-known nearby York businesses – **Wagman Inc.** is the general contractor and Warehaus, formerly **LSC Design Inc.**, is handling the design.

Wagman began work at the site this summer, expects to have the first steel sections of the building coming out of the ground in coming weeks, and is aiming to have the building done by this coming July, Wagman Construction President and COO Kevin Snoke said.

York Academy will continue even more strongly with its mission to offer what the president of its board of directors, Nancy Ahalt, called “a challenging, very rigorous academic curriculum. Students are invited to take the initiative, develop ideas, pose questions ... and in general, enrich their academic life” and that of other students, she said.

York Academy now is housed in a former foundry on West North Street, just south of the new school, and serves primarily elementary-age children.

The new York Academy project is one of several either built, underway or planned in the industrial northern area of York City.

The school is just west of North George Street from York’s PeoplesBank Park, which opened in 2007, and is east of a new York County History Center slated to open at the corner of North Pershing Avenue and West Philadelphia Street in 2020.

And just across George Street from the new school, two York-area businesswomen, Jenn Tansey and Jess Brubaker, this spring announced plans to buy York’s historic National Guard Armory and redevelop it as a community educational facility called Keystone Kidspace by 2019.

By that time, elementary-school student Byrd hopes to be further along in his career at the new school. The new York Academy also excited his mother, Kristal Byrd.

“It will be nice to have a larger building that can accommodate more families who want their kids to go here,” she said.