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**Alexandria City High School Minnie Howard Redevelopment features Rockfon acoustic stone wool ceiling systems**

Chicago (Feb. 2025) – Virginia’s Alexandria City High School (ACHS) newly opened Minnie Howard Campus redefines the high school experience for future generations. [Perkins Eastman](https://www.perkinseastman.com/projects/) designed the new school with a concentrated focus on creating an equitable, inclusive, innovative, energy-efficient learning environment. Aligned with Alexandria’s Green Building Policy, ACHS Minnie Howard Campus is targeting Net-Zero Energy and LEED® Gold Certification through the U.S. Green Building Council.

According to Perkins Eastman, the project was designed as a national model for sustainable, healthy and high-performing schools. The Minnie Howard Campus high school offers enhanced daylight, thermal comfort, acoustics and indoor air quality. The architectural team specified [Rockfon acoustic stone wool ceiling systems](https://www.rockfon.com/our-story/why-stone-wool/) to support the new high school’s multiple performance requirements and to create a modern appearance aligned with 21st century educational facilities.

Minnie Howard Campus replaces and repurposes the former T.C. Williams High School, made famous from the movie “Remember the Titans.” More than a new high school, ACHS Minnie Howard Campus fosters connections to support health and wellness of students, faculty and the surrounding community. The revitalized campus helps address the immediate challenges of a growing multicultural student population and the emerging business needs of the D.C. metro region.

“It is an honor to have worked with the school and community of Alexandria to create a design that celebrates ACHS’ legendary Titan culture while providing a new environment that will inspire more active and experiential learning and promote the health and wellbeing of students, staff and the entire community. This new building will complement the existing King Street campus to redefine the high school experience for future generations of Alexandrians and become a central part of Alexandria’s innovative model for a connected high school network,” said Sean O’Donnell, FAIA, LEED AP, Perkins Eastman’s principal and K12 practice area leader.

Complementing Minnie Howard Campus’ contemporary aesthetic and each educational area’s designated functionality, Perkins Eastman specified three types of Rockfon acoustic stone wool ceiling panels: Rockfon Alaska®, Rockfon Tropic® and Rockfon® Hygienic Plus™. [Freedom Materials](https://freedommaterials.com/) supplied Rockfon products to [Summit Construction](https://www.summitconstruction.com/), who installed a total of 180,000 square feet of the stone wool acoustic ceiling tiles in Chicago Metallic® ceiling suspension systems.

Meeting Perkins Eastman’s project selection criteria, Rockfon ceiling systems help optimize sound absorption, enhance daylighting and support indoor air quality. In schools, these attributes are recognized as contributing to greater comfort, concentration, comprehension and ultimately, to better test scores. In addition, they are associated with health, wellbeing and reduced absenteeism for both students and faculty.

Hearing clearly is a critical part of students’ success and essential in creating an inclusive learning environment. Providing best-level sound absorption in classrooms and collaboration zones, Rockfon’s acoustic ceiling solutions deliver high Noise Reduction Coefficient (NRC) ratings, up to 0.90. A minimum NRC of 0.70 was required for the majority of the rooms in ACHS Minnie Howard. An NRC of 0.80 or higher was needed for the media center and its small group collaboration spaces. Full-height walls with appropriate Sound Transmission Class ratings for the wall and floor/ceiling assemblies, and proper background sound levels complement the ceilings’ high sound absorption for an optimal acoustic experience.

Rockfon acoustic ceiling solutions met Perkins Eastman’s specification requirements for the Minnie Howard project. These products were evaluated with consideration to LEED for Schools v4, ANSI acoustical performance standards for schools, ACPS Educational Specifications and the Virginia Department of Education Guidelines for School Facilities. Rockfon ceiling panels also comply with all acoustic ceiling requirements for LEED v4.

“The shared vision for this school resulted in a building that will enhance education, enrich Alexandria’s community, and serve as a national model of sustainable, high-performance school design,” said Omar Calderón Santiago, AIA, LEED AP, Perkins Eastman’s design principal.

Aligned with Alexandria’s Green Building Policy and ACPS’ commitment to sustainability, Rockfon’s stone wool material is manufactured using abundant basalt rock and recycled materials. Both Rockfon ceiling systems’ stone wool and metal components can be recycled at the end of their long lifecycle on the high school.

Throughout ACHS Minnie Howard, Perkins Eastman selected Rockfon stone ceiling panels with a bright white finish. This highly reflective surface helps maximize daylight from exterior windows and enhances energy-efficient interior illumination. To accomplish the project’s net-zero goals, the design team established an aggressive “energy budget” for the campus, taking into account the tremendous energy needed for the competition-level 12-lane swimming pool and aquatics facility.

Along with acoustic comfort and energy efficiency, indoor environmental quality is key to achieving LEED criteria. Rockfon stone wool ceiling products have earned UL® GREENGUARD® Gold certification for low emissions in schools. This stringent certification is recognized by LEED, the Collaborative for High Performance Schools (CHPS), the WELL® Building Standard, and other green building and wellness programs as contributing to healthy indoor air quality. Good air quality is important to everyone’s wellbeing, and especially for children with developing lungs.

“To boost the success of these goals, the building provides a sustainable, high-performance learning environment that offers enhanced daylight, thermal comfort, acoustics and indoor air quality. Celebrating Alexandria’s Green Building Policy, the building is designed to target Net-Zero Energy; to reach that mark, the design team established an aggressive ‘energy budget’ for the campus, starting with orienting the building to get the most advantage of the sun’s natural light, but also protecting indoor spaces from heat gain and glare. Shading systems on the building’s exterior incorporate photovoltaic arrays as awnings, and the site’s existing, renewable-energy geothermal system was greatly expanded to reduce the demand on mechanical heating and cooling,” noted Perkins Eastman.

Adding to its other beneficial material properties, stone wool naturally resists moisture, mold and mildew. In areas where an even higher level of cleanliness is necessary, Rockfon Hygienic Plus prevents the growth of Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA) and can achieve ISO Class 5 cleanroom classification. These ceiling panels have a sealed edge design and are tested to meet ASTM cleanroom standards for washability, scrubbing and chemical resistance. These qualities make Rockfon Hygienic Plus ceiling products ideal for the Athletic Center, health and wellness center, kitchens, dining areas and laboratories.

Labs and specialized classrooms, such as within ACHS Minnie Howard’s Career and Technical Education (CTE), provide instruction for high-demand fields like firefighting, emergency medical services, nursing, surgical technology, robotics, aerospace, energy efficiency, biomedicine, game design, media, cybersecurity, computer science and teacher training. In these purpose-built learning spaces, Rockfon suspended ceiling systems accommodate mounted assisted-lift hoists, learning station power supplies and other subject-specific equipment.

In ACHS Minnie Howard’s media center, offices, hallways, stairways, communal areas and open-plan learning spaces, Rockfon ceiling systems integrate numerous light fixtures, audio/visual, security and life-safety systems. The ceilings also conceal mechanical, electrical, plumbing and HVAC systems, while presenting an attractive, modern appearance. Rockfon stone wool ceiling panels will not sag or fall out of the suspension grid, making them a high-performing, long-lasting solution. Reducing repairs and minimizing maintenance supports school districts’ budgets and efficient operations.

ACHS Minnie Howard Campus celebrated its grand opening at the end of May 2024, one month earlier than originally scheduled. Gilbane Building Company began construction in April 2022 and implemented a successful fast-track approach. Throughout the new facility’s construction, the existing T.C. Williams High School remained in operation for nearly 900 ninth grade students. After the new Minnie Howard Campus was finished, Gilbane demolished the former school and repurposed the site for the athletic fields. The early completion allowed teachers and staff ample time to transition before the 2024-2025 school year.

“The Minnie Howard Campus represents the future – merging dynamic CTE [Career and Technical Education] programs with sustainable, state-of-the-art facilities. It is a generational project that we are thrilled to have been a part of. ACPS and the City of Alexandria, along with all the partners on the project, have set the new standard for what educational facilities can be,” said Tyler Swartzwelder, LEED AP, Gilbane Building Company’s vice president and Washington, D.C. business leader.

The newly opened Alexandria City High School (ACHS) Minnie Howard Campus in Virginia was designed by Perkins Eastman to create an equitable, inclusive, innovative, energy-efficient learning environment. Targeting Net-Zero Energy and LEED Gold, the project offers a national model for sustainable, healthy and high-performing schools. Contributing to its goals, the architectural team specified Rockfon acoustic stone wool ceiling systems to support the new high school’s performance requirements for enhanced daylight, thermal comfort, acoustics and indoor air quality while presenting a modern appearance aligned with 21st century educational facilities.

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* Architect: Perkins Eastman; Washington, D.C.; https://www.perkinseastman.com
* Associate architect: Maginniss + Del Ninno Architects; Alexandria, Virginia; https://www.mdnarch.com
* Construction manager: Gilbane Building Company; Washington, D.C.; https://www.gilbaneco.com
* Ceiling – installing contractor: Summit Construction; Frederick, Maryland; https://summitinc.com
* Ceiling – distributor: Freedom Materials; Newark, Delaware; https://freedommaterials.com
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*At ROCKWOOL Group, we are committed to enriching the lives of everyone who experiences our product solutions. Our expertise is perfectly suited to tackle many of today’s biggest sustainability and development challenges, from energy consumption and noise pollution to fire resilience, water scarcity and flooding. Our range of products reflects the diversity of the world’s needs, while supporting our stakeholders in reducing their own carbon footprint.*

*Stone wool is a versatile material and forms the basis of all our businesses. With approximately 12,000 passionate colleagues in 40 countries, we are one of the world leaders in stone wool solutions, from building insulation to acoustic ceilings, external cladding systems to horticultural solutions, engineered fibers for industrial use to insulation for the process industry, and marine and offshore.*

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