



THE BRANCH SCHOOL, HIGHTOWER MIDDLE SCHOOL HOUSTON, TEXAS



Kirksey Architecture

Client

The Branch School

Area

22,930 sq. ft.

Total cost

\$9,237,590

Cost/square foot

\$403

Completion

September 2022

Images

Slyworks Photography; Aker Imaging

The Branch School is an independent private school in west Houston for preschool, elementary, and middle school students. Its 21st-century

learning approach focuses on developing skills that “enable future leaders to communicate effectively, listen to other points of view, collaborate, and empathetically respect the dignity of all.” The goal was to create a middle school building that accommodates the school’s growth and approach to project-based learning. The building, now known as Hightower Middle School, is designed to achieve LEED Silver certification.

The building is climate-responsive and addresses wind, water, and energy through its design. Exterior and interior spaces use passive ventilation and have several wind strategies—wind scoop, “wind hearth,” breezeway, and operable windows—that create comfortable areas.





Water is collected for irrigation and experiments, and runoff is cleaned through native bioswales before leaving the site. Geothermal wells under the playing field create clean energy that helps reduce

emissions.

The site consists of a playing field, a detention pond, a walking/running trail, EV charging parking, and an educational courtyard with working gardens. ■

“Using the building as a shading element to amplify the outdoor classrooms is brilliant. It is clear that the design supports educators and students throughout the interior and exterior environments.”

— 2023 JURY

