

It's All in the Eye of the Beholder Maneuver Center of Excellence Headquarters

Some people know it as the largest renovation project in the Army; others say it stands as a symbol of the Army's integration of its Armor and Infantry elements at Fort Benning, Ga. Still others see it as a fitting tribute to the two Medal of Honor recipients—Spc. Ross McGinnis and Cpl. Jerry Wickam—it's named after. Another group would call it the epitome of modern, environmentally-friendly design with classic architecture elements that meld it to the existing buildings at Fort Benning.

To the men and women who built it, the Maneuver Center of Excellence (MCoE) Headquarters symbolizes all these exceptional attributes. But it also showcases the capabilities needed to take a 50-year-old building and transform it into a highly functional, aesthetically pleasing, training and administrative hub for today's modern Army.

The challenges for the team—the Savannah district construction and project managers, along with Fort Benning representatives and the general contracting firm McCarty Corporation—were huge.

"The team essentially had to gut the 50-year-old facility and build it new," said Joseph Savage, senior project manager, Savannah district. "The building was stripped down to its skeleton at the beginning and then reassembled with modern, energy-efficient components."

The new building also had to meet security requirements. It has the latest force protection and progressive collapse design, according to Savage.



Officials celebrate during the ribbon cutting and dedication ceremony for the Maneuver Center of Excellence Headquarters at Fort Benning, Ga. USACE South Atlantic Division Commander Maj. Gen. Todd Semonite (front right) attended the ceremony on behalf of the Corps of Engineers. Photo by Cheryl Rodewig.

MCoE HQ by the Numbers

The Base Realignment and Closure Plan called for the consolidation of a number of Army schools and installations to create "centers of excellence." As a result of this decision, the U.S. Army Armor School moved from Fort Knox, Ky., to a co-located headquarters with the Infantry School at Fort Benning, Ga. The combination of the two schools formed the Maneuver Center of Excellence.

- Phase I – 340,000 square feet (sq. ft.) / \$125M
- Phase II West – 90,000 sq. ft./\$17M; Phase II East – 90,000 sq. ft./\$16M
- Marshall Auditorium – 1,320 seats; small auditorium – 400 seats
- Four classrooms with 200 seats; six classrooms with 18 seats
- One computer classroom
- 180,000 sq. ft. administrative area
- 8,000 sq. ft. for the Army & Air Force Exchange Service
- 4,000 sq. ft. Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility
- 85 percent of construction waste and demolition debris was recycled
- 40,000+ sq. ft. of solar panels

"The first phase restored the six-story tower, portions of the east and west classrooms wings, and the auditorium," said Alan Bugg, Savannah district's area engineer for the project. "The remainder of the east and west wings will be refurbished in Phase 2, scheduled for completion in the spring of 2012."

When the renovation is finished at a cost of \$168 million, the headquarters will encompass 520,000 square feet, about 1,500 more than before. The total occupancy, including students, may exceed 800 people on a daily basis. (See box: MCoE by the Numbers.)

"A historic landmark since the 50's, the building is now ready for its next fifty years of service to the Army and its soldiers," said Bugg. "It is a fitting home for the MCoE Headquarters and will stand as a showpiece at Fort Benning for the next 50 years." 

By Joyce McDonald, Corporate Communications Office