

**APA**



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***PLAN THIS!***

## NJAPA PLANNING TOUR SERIES

# THE WILLOW SCHOOL: A GREEN BUILDING EXPERIENCE

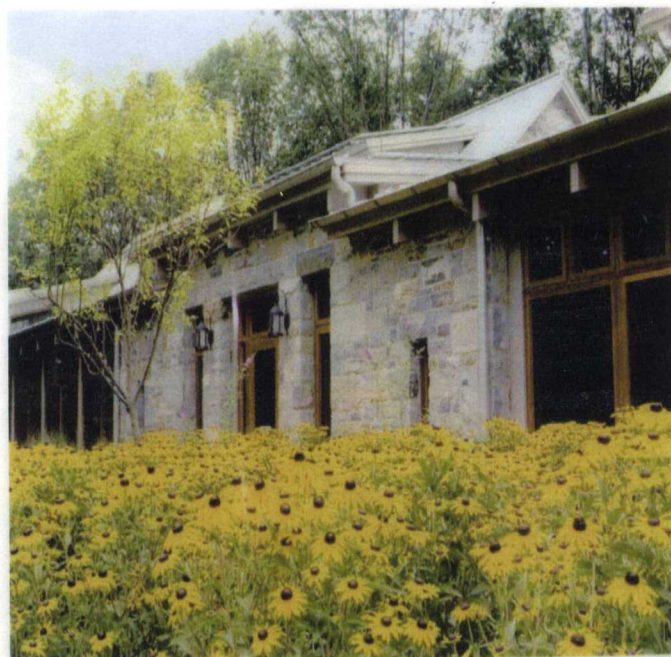
The most recent walking tour in the NJAPA Planning Tour Series was a guided tour of The Willow School in Gladstone, New Jersey on September 30th.

The goal of NJAPA's Planning Tour Series is to get New Jersey's planning professionals out into the field to see well-planned projects and areas in throughout the state. NJAPA also wanted to let our membership interact, in a small group setting, with experts on various planning topics.

When we received a request to host a green building tour, the first place that came to mind was the Willow School in Gladstone, New Jersey. The Willow School is an independent K-8 school which opened at its 34-acre Gladstone site in 2003.

The Willow School is the first independent elementary school building to be gold certified under the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Program. The building is nationally recognized for its environmentally innovative design, energy management practices, and native landscaping. This excellent example of sustainable design includes several unique design features, including:

- Rainwater harvesting system to use to flush toilets
- Recycled building materials and furnishings
- Natural treatment of septic water using plants
- Ultra low or zero VOC paints and adhesives to maintain high indoor air



- quality standards
- Clerestories that provide passive solar heating, supplemented by geothermal heating and cooling systems
- Rainwater and gray water recycling to maintain the surrounding plantings

The beautiful autumn day was perfect for the tour, and the expectations of all NJAPA participants who attended the tour were greatly exceeded. The tour's guide was Anthony Sblendorio, founding principal of Back to Nature Landscape Associates, Inc. of Oldwick New Jersey. Mr. Sblendorio, a licensed landscape architect and accredited LEED design professional, was also the inspiration behind the Willow School's ecological design.

Mr. Sblendorio provided the tour with a wealth of knowledge on green building design, utilizing the LEED rating system, and working holistically with experts and stakeholders to expedite the development process. Coming from an environmental planning and design background, he explained how the system was designed in harmony with nature. The ecologically inspired designs incorporated into the project illustrated how even a natural site can be improved.

While the Willow School is a prime example of green construction, it goes beyond just being a building — it is a wonderful example of environmental stewardship that teaches us that the actions we take today will impact those who come after us.