The Commons Center
Green Features Summary
LEED Gold Certification

- The Commons Center was built on the site of the old Hill Center, which did not require the use of virgin greenspace for this new construction.
- 65% of the waste generated from the demolition of the old Hill Center was diverted from landfill disposal by reuse or recycling.
- Many materials used during construction were selected from within a 500-mile radius of the building site to help reduce the environmental impact of transporting those materials.
- The specially designed reflective roof and hardscape reduces the building’s impact on local microclimate by decreasing the urban “Heat Island” effect.
- In total, the project’s energy usage was reduced by approximately 26% due to inclusion of energy-efficient kitchen fume hoods, heat-reducing window glazing, and occupancy and daylight sensors.
- This building saves approximately 900,000 gallons of water per year by using low-flow faucets and showers, waterfree urinals, and dual-flush toilets.
- Drywall used on this project contains 5% post-consumer recycled content and 94% post-industrial content. Steel used throughout the building contains 95% post-consumer recycled content.
- Each office and workstation in the Commons Center has desk-side recycling. Additional recycling locations are readily accessible by all building users.
- Produce scraps from the dining facility are composted on-site behind the Commons Center, diverting usable resources from landfills and contributing to fertilization of flowerbeds on Vanderbilt’s campus. Additional post-consumer food waste material is reduced in volume by 85% and removed from the wastewater stream by a pulper installed in the dining operation.
- Special control systems have been implemented as part of the building’s lighting design to determine when a sufficient amount of daylight is available inside the building. Artificial lighting is turned off, saving energy.
- Occupancy sensors save, on average, 10% of the energy used by a building's lighting system. These sensors also control the conditioned airflow to a space. When a space is unoccupied, the heating or cooling is automatically reduced, saving energy.
- Cooking oil from the kitchen is refined and processed on Vanderbilt's campus into biodiesel fuel, which is used in some of Vanderbilt’s groundskeeping equipment.
- Vanderbilt has established a non-smoking policy in buildings and prohibits smoking within 25 ft of building entrances, ensuring air quality inside the facility and promoting individual health.
- The cleaning products used in this building are healthier than traditional cleaners, and all paper products used in restrooms meet the EPA’s criteria of 40% recycled content.
- To encourage the use of bicycles as transportation options, the Commons Dining center has provided ample parking for bicycles close to the building entrance and included showers and changing rooms.
- The area where students now enjoy playing Frisbee, sunbathing, and eating lunch was once an asphalt parking lot that was removed and reclaimed as green space so that students could enjoy more space outdoors while reducing the urban heat island and storm water runoff.