

Carnegie Institute Atomic Physics Observatory

Original Name: Carnegie Institute Atomic Physics Observatory

Address: 5241 Broad Branch Road, NW
Washington, DC 20015

Architect(s): Edward Burton Corning

Year Of Construction: 1937

Current Status: Endangered

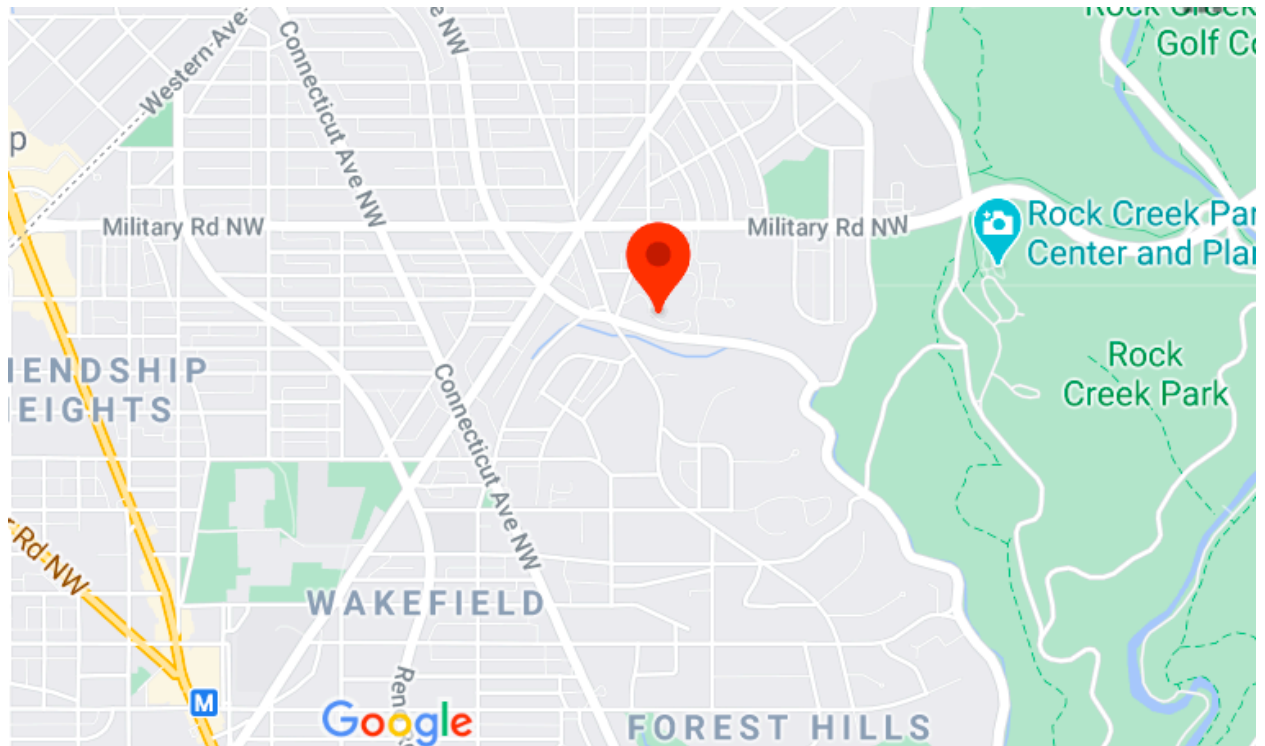
Original Use: Atomic Particle Separator

At roughly 40' in diameter and over 55' tall, the cylindrical domed structure looks much an observatory for viewing stars, but there is no telescope inside. Rather, it houses a Van de Graaff particle accelerator, also known as an atom smasher. The accelerator resembles a large ice cream cone, with a single "scoop" on top that forms the dome. Basically, the spherical dome (the "scoop") on top was used to generate large electrical charges that were then funneled vertically down the inverted "cone" and aimed at atoms in a chamber just below the ground. The Observatory's first experiments involved such notable physicists as Neils Bohr and Enrico Fermi. Work at the facility contributed to the development of the atomic bomb during the Manhattan Project the following decade. The Observatory continued to be used for experiments well into the 1960's and has sat idle since the 1970's.

Mr. Corning's elegant architectural enclosure takes the form of a beige brick cylinder and features interesting vertical pilasters formed with angled bricks, large glass block panels and a nice complement of stone trim. The prominent dome was originally covered with heat reflective aluminum paint, but is now painted white. While no longer in use, the structure is in relatively good condition and is fully intact.



Static (Fixed) Google Map:



Dynamic (Searchable and Expandable) Google Map:

<https://tinyurl.com/y2voybwj>