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AIA Names Top 10 Sustainable Projects

April 30, 2015 Dan Boeckman, Eastern U.S., Granger Construction Company, James T. Powers, Regional Medical Center, St. Clair County Correctional Facility, William DeJong

WASHINGTON — The American Institute of Architects (AIA) and its Committee on the Environment (COTE) have chosen the top 10 examples of sustainable architecture and ecological design projects that protect and enhance the environment.

The COTE Top Ten Awards program, is a program for sustainable design excellence. The program celebrates projects that are a positive contribution to their communities, improve comfort for building occupants and reduce environmental impacts through strategies such as reuse of existing structures, connection to transit systems, low-impact and regenerative site development, energy and water conservation, use of sustainable or renewable construction materials, and design that improves indoor air quality.

AIA recognized the following projects and their architects:

The Bullitt Center, Seattle (The Miller Hull Partnership, Seattle)

The Bullitt Center is a high-performance office building that has almost no environmental footprint. It is the largest certified building that meets Living Building Challenge standards. Sustainable design features include floor-to-ceiling windows for daylight and fresh air and heavy-timber framing. The building serves as a living laboratory for high-performance architecture and sustainability education.

CANMET Materials Technology Laboratory, Ontario, Canada (Diamond Schmitt, Toronto, Canada)

The 174,300-square-foot CANMET Materials Technology Laboratory's lab and office space incorporate an industrial program of pilot scale casting, rolling and welding, corrosion and mechanical testing alongside microstructure evaluations and radiation testing. CANMET is a complex energy use intensive building, according to AIA. The pursuit of LEED Platinum triggered a comprehensive Integrated Design Process (IDP). A building charter targeted significant energy use reduction to achieve a 70 percent energy use reduction.

Collaborative Life Sciences Building, Portland, Ore. (SERA Architects of Portland, Ore., and CO Architects of Los Angeles)

Oregon Health & Science University, Portland State University, and Oregon State University partnered to create a new allied health, academic and research building. Located on a former brownfield site constrained by adjacent roadway and bridge construction, the building serves as a model of interdisciplinary health sciences education, research and education. As one of only two projects in the U.S. with more than a half million LEED Platinum-certified square feet, this project incorporates a number of sustainable design innovations including light pollution reduction, stormwater management, eco roofs to reduce stormwater runoff, nonpotable water for toilet flushing, atrium heat recovery and low ventilation fume hoods.

Highland Street Townhouses, Boston (Interface Studio Architects of Philadelphia and Ubanica Design of Boston)

The project was conceived as a prototype for family-friendly, energy-efficient, urban townhomes. Each unit is approximately 1,850 square feet with flexible living areas, three bedrooms and 2.5 bathrooms. The project was the first completed under the city of Boston's Energy Plus (E+) Green Building Program, a pilot initiative to develop energy-positive sustainable housing.

Hughes Warehouse Adaptive Reuse, San Antonio (Overland Partners, San Antonio)

This adaptive reuse project transforms an early 20th century warehouse into a functional studio space. The balance between maintaining the historic integrity of the building and improving energy efficiency was critical for the nearly 100-year-old building. As a result, the design team focused on preserving the open plan space and kept interventions light in order to maximize flexibility for future users, as well as to encourage collaboration amongst staff and minimize material usage, achieved through the elimination of private offices. Though it decreased leasable square footage, the project's newly inserted courtyard became integral to the design, providing a place for public life, improving daylighting and decreasing the amount of conditioned space.

Military Medical Hospital, San Antonio (RTKL, Washington)

San Antonio Military Medical Center (SAMMC) is home to a burn treatment and recovery unit, with a design that both accommodates this function and draws its architectural inspiration from it. A long trellis canopy spans the length of the south elevation, throwing dappled shade on the building and presenting the welcoming image of a large veranda. Under this umbrella, the footprint of the façade varies to break down the scale of a very long elevation while shading the building as the sun moves toward the west. Surfaces at the front edge have no fenestration, avoiding heat gain, while the surfaces at the back of the trellis are extensively glazed and shaded.

New Orleans BioInnovation Center (NOBIC), New Orleans (Eskew+Dumez+Ripple, New Orleans)

The NOBIC, a LEED Gold research facility, serves as an incubator for biotech startups, helping ideas conceived locally to become local jobs and industries. The facility includes a flexible 100-person conferencing center, breakout spaces and a 2,000-sqaure-foot café. The facility captures rainwater and diffuses it to plants and soils on site, and is supplemented by the AC condensate (up to 20,000 gallons per week), which provides all landscape irrigation on-site.

Sweetwater Spectrum Community, Sonoma, Calif. (Leddy Maytum Stacy Architects, San Francisco)

Sweetwater Spectrum is a new national model for supportive housing for adults with autism. The project includes four homes, a community center, therapy pools and urban farm. Sustainable design strategies promote health and wellness and reduce energy consumption. A variety of passive and active strategies — including building orientation, high performance envelope, building integrated photovoltaic and solar thermal panels —reduce energy consumption by 88 percent from baseline.

Tassafaronga Village, Oakland, Calif. (David Baker Architects, San Francisco)

This project includes a 60-unit affordable apartment building, 77 affordable attached townhouses for rent (clustered in 13 buildings) and 20 supportive apartments with an on-site medical clinic. Deep roof overhangs, fin walls, site plantings, and thoughtful window placement provide resilience against heat spikes. The building design provides daylight, views and airflow by increasing the exposure in individual rooms and units.

University Center — The New School, New York (Skidmore, Owings & Merrill LLP, Chicago)

The LEED Gold building has 200,000 square feet of academic space on the first seven floors with a 150,000-square-foot, 600-bed student residence on the levels above. A thermal energy storage system was developed to create and store ice at night, helping with the load of the building's daytime operations and allowing systems to be both downsized and right sized. Constructed with an extensive 13,500-square-foot green roof and able to detain up to 40 percent of annual rainfall, this project enabled the design team to take advantage of a joint heat and power system, combining onsite generation with domestic hot water preheating for the dormitory areas, and a black water treatment system combined with low flow features reduce the building's potable water consumption by 75 percent over baseline.

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