

frank harmon architect pa

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## Historic Initiative Results In Landmark Commitment to Sustainability

**February 1, 2008 (RALEIGH, NC)** -- In an unprecedented initiative, the North Carolina component of the American Institute of Architects (AIA/NC) announced in November 2007 that it would hold a design competition to select the architect for its new headquarters building on a high-profile site in downtown Raleigh. In all 50 states, an AIA component has never built its own headquarters from the ground up, so conducting a competition to select the designer “was the obvious and only solution,” said David Crawford, executive vice president of AIA/NC.

What made the competition more profound, however, was the understanding that this 12,000-square-foot building, representing a \$4.5 million investment by AIA/NC, “will be our testament to sustainable architecture, the built environment, and the role of architects in this endeavor,” said Walt Teague, immediate past president of AIA/NC. Crawford added that the organization “made it a goal to use [the] new facilities to teach the public about what it means to design with the environment and future in mind.”

Architects who entered the competition understood that the headquarters was to be designed to meet both LEED® (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) standards and AIA’s COTE (Committee On The Environment) objectives, which address appropriateness to the region, land use and site ecology, sustainable materials and methods of construction, water usage, and energy efficiency.

On January 23, the jury of esteemed architects from across the nation completed its deliberation of the 48 projects entered and announced that Frank Harmon Architect PA of Raleigh had won First Place with a proposal that they praised for being “of its place,” for making good use of a difficult site, for integrating sustainable design principles rather than using them as applique, and for “embracing the community.”

Second place went to Pearce, Brinkley, Case + Lee, PA of Raleigh, and third place went to Kenneth E. Hobgood, Architects, also of Raleigh.

According to Frank Harmon, FAIA, principal, his firm’s design “aspires to become a role model for *healthy* urbanism, both for chapter members and future development in downtown Raleigh.” He pointed out that the previous AIA/NC headquarters did this in its time by adaptively re-using an historic structure: an old water tower also in the downtown area. “The new headquarters faces a 21<sup>st</sup> Century challenge, however,” he said, “which is the global necessity to conserve and protect our natural resources.”

In Harmon’s plan, a slim, three-story building composed of regionally appropriate materials – stone, wood, concrete and glass -- is situated along one edge of the site, leaving the majority of the property for landscape. Paying deference to the natural topography, the project will reuse every shovelful of earth: Where soil is removed from one position on the site, it is reused in another.

The architect describes his concept as “a Modern shell with a green heart.” Besides site orientation and the narrow footprint, both of which will maximize natural ventilation and lighting, other “green” features include:

- a building shell that collects rainwater, shades from southern sun and protects against winter wind

- broad roof overhangs to shade the glass-faced interior from the harsh summer sun
- a geothermal energy system to provide heat from the ground in winter and cool air in summer
- photovoltaic panels for generating electricity from the sun
- a vegetated roof to filter rainwater, mitigate the heat-island effect in the inner city, and introduce the concept of “green” roofs to downtown Raleigh.
- cisterns for storing and reusing every drop of rainwater on the site – a particularly important element for a city that continues to confront drought conditions
- a porously paved “parking garden” to mitigate storm-water runoff and serve as an open, green space – another role model for downtown development
- all native landscaping materials and locally available construction materials

The scale of the building focuses on human comfort and socio-cultural concerns. It greets the Peace Street neighborhood at its natural grade – a friendly gesture – and establishes an “urban edge” along that rapidly developing section of the city. An open porch at that elevation underscores the sense of outreach and welcome towards the community “in the same manner, perhaps, that Moses Mordecai extended open arms to the town when he added a large front porch onto his house a few blocks away,” Harmon said, referring to the Greek Revival home of one of Raleigh’s most prominent 19<sup>th</sup> century families and a designated historic landmark.

At the opposite end of the building, structure and landscape rise, both physically and symbolically, to greet the Government Complex along the higher elevation and forge a strong tie with the government entities there.

The overriding objective of this concept is to “demonstrate and encourage aesthetic and ecological integrity – to create a flagship for North Carolina architecture that is architecturally, environmentally, politically, socially and aesthetically inspiring,” Harmon said. “We commend the AIAI for the open, fair and inclusive nature of this project and the example it sets for design and sustaining architecture. We are obligated to be exemplary.”

William McMinn, FAIA, Dean Emeritus of Cornell University’s College of Architecture selected the judges for the competition. They were: Daniel Bennett, FAIA, Dean of the College of Architecture at Auburn University; Allison Ewing, AIA, LEED® AP, a partner in Hayes + Ewing Design in Charlottesville, VA; David Lee, FAIA, partner in Stull & Lee, Boston, MA; and jury chair Susan Maxman, FAIA, founder and design principal of SMP Architects in Philadelphia, PA.

Drawings of all the winning design can be see at [www.aianc.org](http://www.aianc.org). For more information on Frank Harmon Architect, go to [www.frankharmon.com](http://www.frankharmon.com).

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