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ARCHITECTURE **DC**

Outstanding: The 2008 Awards Issue



Inside:

At Home with Good Design

Office Spice: A New Generation of Workplaces

Storefront Business: Retail Spaces Bring Life to Streets

Merit Award in Architecture

22 West Condominiums

Washington, DC

Shalom Baranes Associates, PC

Contractor: Bovis Lend Lease, Inc.

City Living: New Condominiums Span the Spectrum

By Steven K. Dickens, AIA

Until recently, one could be forgiven for thinking that DC's zoning laws required all new buildings to be condominiums. The national condo boom washed over Washington like a tsunami, transforming entire blocks and neighborhoods. From an architectural perspective, these buildings have run the gamut from highly traditional to strikingly progressive. The boom may be receding, but the buildings left behind have won awards this year in almost every category.

The **22 West Condominium** by **Shalom Baranes Associates** is a high-end, high-profile, high-design building that received a Merit Award in Architecture. The jury cited the building's transformation of difficult site characteristics into design assets. "The limitations of the site forced innovative formal solutions," they said.

The site comprises most of a triangular block created by the slicing diagonal of New Hampshire Avenue, NW, intersecting the grid at 22nd and M Streets. The northwest corner of the site was occupied by a gas station that could not be closed. Forced to make the most of this minor "LULU" (Locally Unwanted Land Use), the architects mitigated views of the gas station with a sleek canopy featuring the same zinc panels as used on the condominium tower. The canopy is covered with a landscaped green roof, which affords adjacent residential units a meadow view somewhat unexpected for such an urban site.

The tower has two distinct facades. The New Hampshire Avenue elevation features an almost square, two-story grid within which a variety of elements are placed. The jury found this façade "elegant," noting that "the articulation of recesses for decks, planters, and trellises helps diminish the scale of a large multifamily building." On the opposite side is an entirely different grid—flatter, with smaller-scale elements, and with vertical proportions—spread across a façade that curves in plan. Window panels shift every two stories, providing a highly distinctive effect that breaks down the scale of the building and provides variety for the units within.



Photo © Maxwell MacKenzie.

Above: The 22 West Condominiums.

Opposite: Lobby of the Kenyon Square Condominiums.

Hickok Cole Architects won an Interior Architecture award for its design of the lobby and adjacent lounge space at **Kenyon Square** in Columbia Heights. The project is a mixed-use building consisting of 153 condominiums on six stories above retail spaces at the street level. The lobby is shoehorned into a leftover space at the rear of the building where commercial 14th Street transitions to residential Kenyon Street.

The building's facades are muscularly historicist, but the lobby introduces modernity into the mix in a clever and sophisticated way. "We spent a lot of time looking at this project," said juror Chris Parts, "It's almost a retro expression, but not quite." As they looked, they came to appreciate the complex interplay among straightforward traditional elements (the wall panels, most notably), semi-modern elements (for example, the chandeliers and stair railings), and overtly modern expressions (especially the Mondrian-in-stone concierge desk and fireplace mantel wall). The jury was particularly fascinated by material inversions, such as wood bull's-eye motifs on the stair railing (which one would expect to be metal) and stainless steel ceiling coffers (which one would expect to be wood).

The massive **Jefferson at Penn Quarter** project earned not one, but two awards—a Merit Award in Historic

Merit Award in Interior Architecture

Kenyon Square

Washington, DC

Hickok Cole Architects, Inc.

Contractor: S.E. Foster Corporation





Photo © Maxwell MacKenzie.



The Jefferson at Penn Quarter.
Inset: Historic view of the same corner.

Historic American Buildings Survey/Library of Congress.

**Merit Award in Historic Resources
Catalyst Award**

The Jefferson at Penn Quarter
Washington, DC

Esocoff & Associates | Architects, Lead Architect
Oehrlein & Associates Architects, Historic Preservation Architect

Contractor: JPI Apartment Development, LP

Historic Building Restoration Contractor: Worcester Eisenbrandt, Inc.

Preservation, recognizing the work led by **Oehrlein & Associates Architects**, and a Catalyst Award, which goes to **Esocoff & Associates Architects**, lead architects for the overall renovation and new construction.

The project, completed in 2006, is large and complicated. It includes several hundred residential units, 35,000 square feet of retail space, and the Woolly Mammoth Theatre’s new facility (which was featured in the Spring 2008 issue of *ArchitectureDC*). It incorporates two historic buildings and four historic facades that were retained and restored in place, seven reconstructed historic facades (three of which were originally within the site footprint, and four of which came from nearby sites), and a new eleven-story building with underground parking. The site was the last undeveloped parcel controlled by the now-defunct Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation (PADC), a quasi-private entity charged with revitalization of Pennsylvania Avenue between the Treasury and the Capitol.

The Historic Preservation jury was impressed that the project encompassed almost every aspect of preservation work, from the reconstruction of dismantled facades, to the *in situ* recreation of the heavily-altered facades of the corner building, to the restoration of interior spaces discovered during demolition to have been Clara Barton’s office and

apartment during the Civil War. They also commented, “We were inspired by the technical thoroughness of the façade preservations,” many details of which were included in the submittal.

The Catalyst Award jury appreciated the “energetic program” and its architectural articulation. Especially noteworthy was the careful work to integrate units into upper floors of the historic facades so that the facades are “authentically inhabited at every level.” The injection of residents helps support the retail, the retail helps attract residents, and careful planning keeps the peace between the two. Dedicated restaurant exhausts were installed going all the way to the high roofs—before any restaurant tenants were even signed on. Windows in noisier locations have upgraded acoustical ratings, and acoustic separation between residences and noisier retail and theater uses was specially engineered. A center-block courtyard provides tranquility and dedicated outdoor space for the residents, while also concealing the theater and retail space below.

There is a lesson in the two awards won by the Jefferson: while fastidiously preserving our past, we can simultaneously create new buildings and spaces that expand possibilities for the future. 🌿

Merit Award in Interior Architecture

DC Navigators

Washington, DC

RTKL Associates Inc.

Contractor: Hitt Contracting, Inc.

Photos © Paul Warchol Photography.

Office Spice:

A New Generation of Workplaces

By Steven K. Dickens, AIA

Photos © Paul Warchol Photography.

Left and inset: Interior views of the DC Navigators office.

Opposite top: Atrium at the offices of DLA Piper US LLP.

Opposite bottom: Main entrance to the Harman Center for the Arts.

Washington remains the quintessential office town, so it's no surprise that an office project won in every awards category except Historic Preservation. While all of the office buildings and interiors that received awards this year are fundamentally modern, they reflect a range of tastes, ideas, and strategies for making pleasant and productive workplaces.

Inside Stories

Among the winners in the Interior Architecture category were the offices of **DC Navigators**, a consultancy located on one floor of the former Marlo furniture showroom building in the Gallery Place/Chinatown area. Architects **RTKL Associates** took full advantage of the raw space's high ceilings, huge windows, wood floors, exposed brick, and cast iron columns and plumbing stacks to lend texture and character to the finished project. These existing elements helped determine the floor plan configuration, and their earthy character contrasts with new drywall, glass, and metal interventions. Timbers from a former mezzanine space (removed as part of the work) reappear as the main wall of the conference room. While the workstations, doors, ceilings, and most of the walls maintain a loft-chic white, black, and silver metallic color palette, a "limited but strong use of color" in other elements was cited by the jury as a positive distinguishing feature. Simply put, the jurors felt that the project represented a "very nice juxtaposition of old and new."

According to the Interior Architecture jurors, offices constituted the majority of entries in that category, and overall, those submissions were generally of high quality. "Everyone had great furniture!" enthused Ronnette Riley, noting that the jury's principal task was to determine "of all those great white modern interiors, what elements are distinguishing?"

With that in mind, the jurors agreed that the offices of the law firm **DLA Piper**, designed by **Lehman Smith McLeish**, were exceptional. One of the client's primary goals for the project was to enhance interaction among the firm's staff, a broad directive that led the architects to undertake dramatic design gestures, including a complete reorganization of the building's circulation, an extension of the existing atrium, and the liberal use of translucent and transparent materials. "This [submission] was highly successful at telling the story of what they did, what their design intent was, and how it was articulated," said juror Audrey O'Hagan, speaking to the size and complexity of the project. Riley called DLA Piper "the most architectural interior that we saw," noting the substantial modifications to the base building, as well as the seamless integration of *architecture* and furnishings. DLA Piper was the subject of a feature article in the fall 2008 issue of *ArchitectureDC*.

Two Buildings in One

Bearing a long name that reflects a mix of completely distinct uses, the **International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers Building/Sidney Harman Hall** was designed by **SmithGroup** of Washington with **Diamond + Schmitt Architects** of Toronto. The building is best known as the site of the new auditorium for Washington's esteemed Shakespeare Theatre Company, and as a result, many visitors may not even realize that it also incorporates substantial commercial office space. While the jurors praised the design of the performance hall, their focus was on the *tout ensemble*—the totality of the building—calling it a "smart execution of a complex program."



Photo by Mario Carrieri.

Award for Excellence in Interior Architecture

DLA Piper US LLP
Washington, DC

Lehman Smith McLeish

Contractor: Hitt Contracting, Inc.
Base Building Architect: Hartman-Cox Architects
Base Building Contractor: Clark Construction Group, LLC



Photo by Tom Arban.

Award for Excellence in Architecture

International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers and The Harman Center for the Arts/Shakespeare Theatre
Washington, DC

SmithGroup/Diamond + Schmitt Architects

Contractor: The Clark Construction Group
Fisher Daschs Associates



Lobby at 1110 Vermont.

Photo © Alan Karchmer.

Catalyst Award

1110 Vermont Avenue

Washington, DC

STUDIOS Architecture

Artwork: Höweler + Yoon Architecture/MY Studio

Contractor: Hiitt Contracting, Inc.



Columbia Center.

Photo © Prakash Patel.

Merit Award in Architecture

Columbia Center

Washington, DC

Hickok Cole Architects, Inc.

Contractor: James G. Davis Construction Corporation

The building completes an architecturally rich block and has numerous design moves that help it simultaneously fit in and stand out. Projections whose height and scale relate obviously and appropriately to the historic OBA building on the corner are found at both F Street (the crystalline theater lobby) and 6th Street. In the middle of the block is a “Winter Garden,” which serves as a forecourt to the union’s office lobby and completes a master plan connection to adjacent buildings. The building’s raised crown at the top of the F Street façade directly echoes a similar element in the office building to the west (which in turn is an abstraction of the massive terracotta cornice of the old Hecht Company building at the west end of the block). The combined office and theater building was profiled in the Spring 2008 issue of *ArchitectureDC*.

Best Impressions

Two of this year’s award winners, Columbia Center and 1110 Vermont Avenue, NW, are located a few blocks apart in a largely built-out, relatively dreary and lifeless part of the central business district. Both sought to “increase the value of a single building by expanding its sphere of influence to the entire neighborhood,” as STUDIOS Architecture stated in the competition entry for 1110 Vermont. Both are quite successful in that regard, using transparency and innovative lighting to reduce the barriers between inside and out, thereby animating the streetscape.

In 2004, **1110 Vermont Avenue** was a 1970s-era, utilitarian, mid-block building with failing retail tenants. **STUDIOS Architecture** was commissioned by a new owner to upgrade the building, but the budget precluded wholesale change to the exterior. So the architects focused on the streetscape, providing a largely transparent façade (of ultra-clear, non-reflective glass) at the first and second floors, capped by a large sunshade element that provides a sense of shelter and stops the eye from wandering further upward. Four LED light panels were installed, one outside, two in the lobby, and one at the elevator lobby, which project abstractions of real-time pedestrian traffic. Also in the sidewalk area is a grove of touch-sensitive light poles, which illuminate and emit chimes upon activation.

The new owners also attracted two upscale restaurants—one with a sidewalk dining area—and a coffeehouse as retail tenants. The end result is synergistic: the more animated streetscape attracts better office tenants, whose employees in turn further animate the streetscape. The stage is set for other buildings on the block to undergo similarly urbane transformations, which of course is precisely why this project was recognized with the Catalyst Award.

Columbia Center, a new speculative office building on 15th Street, NW, by **Hickok Cole Architects Inc.**, eschews the heavy, rigid Modernism of its neighbors, breaking down the relatively narrow street front into multiple, asymmetrically arranged elements. The tautly glazed curtain walls introduce a welcome lightness to the block and, in this case, the angled upper floors’ departure from the street wall plane provides needed visual relief. The show-stopper, however, is the multistory, transparent lobby, positioned at the southeast corner with the intention that it serve as a glowing beacon, an object (not just an entrance space) visible from MacPherson Square two blocks south. The jury delighted in the lobby’s architectural forest of columns—including large, structural columns and small, lighted poles inside and stainless steel bollards outside—calling them “sculptural follies which draw users in.”

The jury was also fascinated by the fact that the architecture firm had held a *charrette* in the early days of the project, in which



New entrance pavilion at the Richard B. Russell Federal Building.

Photo © Prakash Patel.

Merit Award in Architecture

Richard B. Russell Federal Building

Atlanta, Georgia

Gensler

Contractor: Holder Construction



Middle and bottom: Views of the main entrance and roof deck of the building housing the American Legacy Foundation.

Photo © Prakash Patel.

Presidential Citation for Sustainable Design

American Legacy Foundation

Washington, DC

OTJ Architects

Contractor: Hiitt Contracting, Inc.

all employees offered ideas for the design. These ideas were then distilled by the project team. The jury felt that this process was central to the generation of the “vibrant, exciting final design.”

For the renovation of the **Richard B. Russell Federal Office Building and Courthouse** in Atlanta, **Gensler** took the lobby-as-object idea a step further. The existing building is International Style, “derivative of Mies van der Rohe buildings,” according to the architects. In their review of Mies’ buildings, they noted that one often finds large sculptures in the entrance forecourts. This became the inspiration for the new lobby/security pavilion—essentially a large work of architectural sculpture. The jury commented that “the power of the simple idea holds its own against the preexisting tower.”

The new entrance is part of a larger “hardening” for security purposes. Normally, restriction of entrances and introduction of bollards and other hardening devices are not viewed as architectural positives. But in this case, a concrete plaza was transformed into a park-like courthouse square, and the new, consolidated entry (replacing eight previous entry points) not only provides compositional focus and a stronger public image, but also improves the clarity of circulation.

Clearing the Air

The mission of the **American Legacy Foundation** is to build a world in which young people reject tobacco and anyone can quit smoking. This goal overlaps quite neatly with one of the principles in the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) building certification system: “Environmental Tobacco Smoke Control” is a requirement within LEED’s Indoor Environmental Quality category. For this project, the client and architects, **OTJ Architects**, decided not only to seek LEED certification, but also to take a big step beyond that.

Notwithstanding that the project is the renovation of a 1981 building, they strove for LEED Gold status—a higher standard than basic certification—and decided to do so under the requirements of LEED for New Construction (LEED-NC) rather than LEED for Existing Buildings (LEED-EB). LEED-EB focuses on the criteria most readily achievable within the limitations of a renovation, whereas LEED-NC entails a broader set of standards. Moreover, LEED-EB generally requires a certain level of improvement relative to the preexisting condition, whereas LEED-NC has requirements fixed at a very high base level. In short, the choice to apply for certification under LEED-NC reflects the client’s commitment to sustainability in its headquarters, and made the job much more challenging for the architects.

LEED Gold certification cannot be achieved without earning points in almost every category, so it is not surprising that this project entails a smorgasbord of sustainable design moves: motion detectors for automatic control of lights, bicycle racks and parking spaces reserved for carpoolers and hybrid vehicles, FSC (Forest Stewardship Council)-certified wood, a green roof, low-flow plumbing fixtures, high-efficiency HVAC equipment, and so forth. Appropriately, there is a particular focus on air quality-related points: no-VOC paints; no urea-formaldehyde in millwork, carbon dioxide sensors, drywall without paper lining (to reduce the possibility of mold or mildew), and fresh air flow in excess of the LEED-required standard. Thanks to all these efforts, the American Legacy Foundation’s offices are literally a breath of fresh air—and that’s good for their occupants and good for the planet. 🌱