

INDUSTRY *Trends*

Green Building with Cypress

Cypress is earning points with architects

LOCATED AT A BUSY intersection in downtown Raleigh, the North Carolina Chapter of the American Institute of Architects' new Center for Architecture and Design is the first-ever AIA chapter headquarters built from the ground up.

Clad in cypress and other locally available materials, the 12,000-sq. ft. building also is a flagship for the future of sustainable design. It meets design standards set by AIA's Committee on the Environment

(COTE), as well as the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program at the Platinum level—the highest level of recognition.

Architect Frank Harmon said he deliberately emphasized building materials that are sustainable and that reflect the history and heritage of the Tarheel State. Included in that mix is locally sourced cypress—used on the center's southern and northern

facades—as well as native zinc and stone.

“Cypress is readily available in North Carolina, and its appearance is warm, friendly, and familiar,” said Harmon. “The cypress on this new, modern building's exterior is the same species of wood that's been used for generations to build shrimp boats on the Carolina coast.”

Harmon became familiar with cypress as a teenager, when he began studying Frank Lloyd Wright's archi-



AMERICAN INSTITUTE of Architects' new regional center in Raleigh, N.C., demonstrates a sustainable way to build, with local materials.

All photos courtesy Southern Cypress Manufacturers Association



NEW CENTER hosts events for the public, ranging from art classes for youth to lectures on energy-efficient home improvements.

ecture. “Wright was a master at using natural, unfinished cypress in his iconic houses—inside and out,” he said. “He used cypress like Rembrandt used oils, except Wright’s canvas was architecture.”

By specifying cypress, Harmon did more than honor a native building product. He also equipped the center with a durable cladding that will provide decades of service and good looks. “Used in siding applications, cypress will easily last 100 years with proper care and maintenance,” he noted.

Unlike composite materials or pressure-treated wood, cypress is naturally durable thanks to *cypressene*, a preservative oil in the wood that makes it naturally resistant to decay, insects, and other damaging elements. “Cypress will weather beautifully over the years, even in a harsh, salty coastal climate,” said Harmon.

With abundant and readily available materials such as cypress at their disposal, Harmon believes that architects are moving towards more environmentally responsible designs. And as the country continues to recover from the recession, Harmon says design and construction methods are changing.

“We won’t be building in the same wasteful ways,” he explained. “With new emphasis on alternative energy and sustainable design, the AIANC center demonstrates a new way to build. It is a flagship for green architecture in North Carolina, and a blue-

print that can be adapted across the country.”

Other green features of the impressive facility include a geothermal heating and cooling system, a rainwater collection system, and efficient water and light fixtures. The building is also oriented to take advantage of

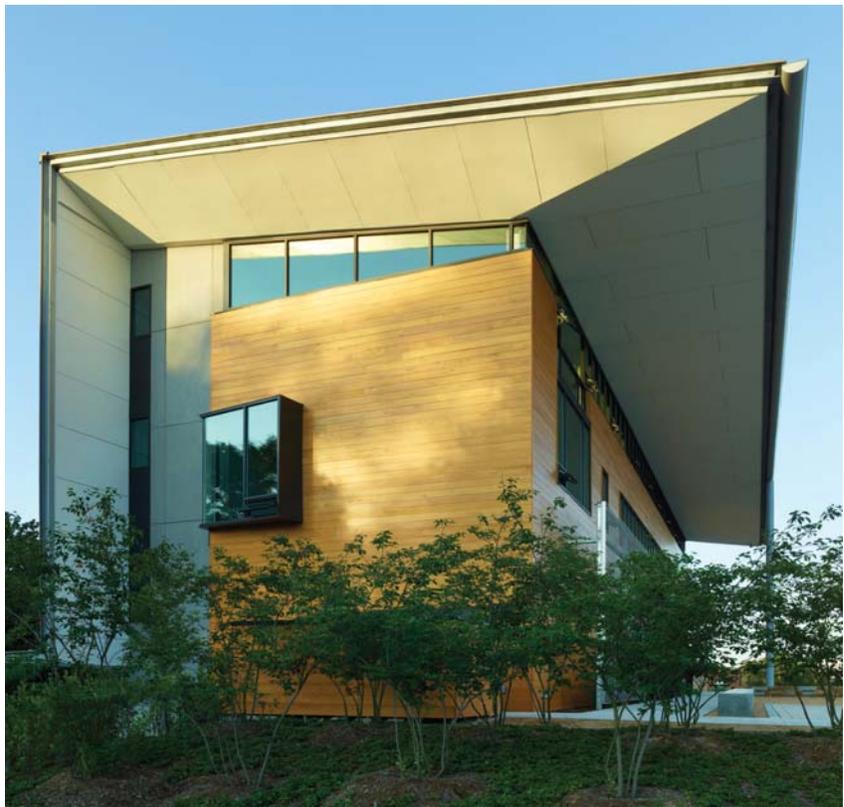
passive ventilation and daylighting, while an overhanging roof provides shade in the summer.

Harmon views the facility as a monument to his profession’s commitment to sustainability and to the perseverance of his colleagues throughout the building industry. “This was a really bold gesture—maybe the boldest in the country. It was built during the recession, as a gesture of faith and belief in what we do.”

The new facility transformed what was formerly an unused and awkward piece of land in downtown Raleigh into a people center that is encouraging business and residential development. It also hosts events for the public, ranging from art classes for youth to lectures on energy-efficient home improvements.

“The center is a compelling example for responsible revitalization of the cores of towns and cities across our state,” said Harmon. “It demonstrates sustainable urban development and puts Raleigh on the map as a leader in this endeavor.”

For more information on the many uses of cypress, visit the Southern Cypress Manufacturers Association at www.cypressinfo.org.



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