



CYPRESS Is Earning Points with Architects in North Carolina

Located at a busy intersection in downtown Raleigh, the North Carolina Chapter of the American Institute of Architects' (AIANC) 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-square-foot building also is a flagship for the future of sustainable design.

Frank Harmon Architect PA, Raleigh, was selected as the Center's architect of record, topping more than 70 other firms in a statewide design competition. Principal Frank Harmon said his company's design deliberately emphasizes building materials that are sustainable and that reflect the history and heritage of the Tarheel state. Included in that mix is locally sourced cypress, which is a signature feature of the Center's southern and northern facades.

"Cypress is readily available in North Carolina, and its appearance is warm, friendly, and familiar," he said. "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."

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.

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



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With abundant and readily available materials such as cypress at their disposal, Harmon feels 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 blueprint that can be adapted across the country.”



Aided by its use of cypress, the Center for Architecture and Design meets design standards set by the AIA’s Committee on the Environment.

Harmon also views the facility, which began construction in late 2010 and serves 2,300 chapter members, as a monument to the sustainability of his profession 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 in the midnight of the recession, as a gesture of faith and belief in what we do as architects.”

With the new facility, AIANC has 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.

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

Aided in part by its use of cypress, the Center for Architecture and Design meets design standards set by the 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.

For more information on the many uses of cypress, please visit the Southern Cypress Manufacturers Association at www.CypressInfo.org or scan the QR code below.

