

WINTER 2009  
FREE

# ARCHITECTURE

10<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

## Raising the Bar:

The 2009 Chapter Awards



### Inside:

Houses Combine Elegance and Practicality

State-of-the-Performing-Arts Facilities

Infrastructure Projects Benefit from Architects' Efforts



The townhouses with courtyards.

Close-up view  
of the townhouses.

Photo by Robert C. Lautman

Photo by Robert C. Lautman

# Multiple Advantages:

## Four Well-Designed Multi-Family Projects Improve Their Communities

by Ronald O'Rourke

Among this year's award winners are four multi-family projects, two of them designed by **Suzane Reatig Architecture**, the other two by **Bonstra | Haresign Architects**. Although the projects differ in their details, they are all case studies in how talented DC-area architects are generating beautiful, functional, and economical designs for clients with a desire to improve their communities. Together, these four projects illustrate a theme often set forth in these pages—that high-quality architectural design is for everyone, not just the well-to-do, and that it can act as a powerful force for improving neighborhoods and cities.

### Award for Excellence in Architecture

#### Ashland Avenue Townhouses

Baltimore, Maryland

#### Suzane Reatig Architecture

**Architectural Team:** Suzane Reatig, FAIA, LEED AP; Wakako Tokunaga; Elizabeth Waites; Winson Wong

**Landscape Architects:** Suzane Reatig; John Joseph Russo

**Contractor:** Harkins Builders



The Ashland Avenue Townhouses project, by **Suzane Reatig Architecture**, occupies a lot in a distressed neighborhood of Baltimore that was given to Reatig's client by the city, with the stipulation that the client (a non-profit organization) construct affordable housing. The lot is adjacent to one of the client's churches, and is surrounded by dilapidated buildings and other vacant lots.

Reatig says the site posed two design challenges. The first concerned the lot's dimensions. The site is zoned for townhouse construction, but given its narrow width, only three traditional, street-facing row houses could have been accommodated. To increase the number of units that could be built, Reatig created a plan in which eight townhouses are set at right angles to one another, forming an E-shaped arrangement with two small courtyards.

The site's second challenge concerned the neighborhood context. "In a neighborhood dealing with crime, the client was concerned

with the safety and security of the residents," Reatig says. Rather than designing the project in a fortress-like style, "Our solution involved addressing these security concerns while at the same time opening up the units to the neighborhood through the use of ample glass and shared outdoor courtyards and walks that would promote visibility."

One of the jurors, Darragh Brady, AIA, noting that she is from Baltimore, said "I was very impressed with this project because I know where it was sited. It is affordable housing in a very tough neighborhood on the east side of Baltimore, and yet at no time do you feel like it is affordable housing."

Another juror, David Mayner, called attention to Reatig's uncluttered, rectilinear design. "Projects of this type often adopt vernacular décor to appeal to the families that are expected to live there, and this project didn't do that. Even though [the design] is severe in discipline, it is very friendly and attractive in our view."



Photo by Suzane Reatig, FAIA

## Merit Award in Architecture

### 7th Street Mixed Use

Washington, DC

## Suzane Reatig Architecture

**Architectural Team:** Suzane Reatig, FAIA, LEED AP; Winson Wong; Wakako Tokunaga

**Contractor:** Harkins Builders

This project, located on 7th Street, NW, in DC's Shaw neighborhood, includes two street-front retail spaces, 12 assisted-living units on its first two floors, and 20 additional apartments on three upper levels. Architect **Suzane Reatig, FAIA, LEED AP**, says the goal of the project "was to create sustainable, efficient, and affordable housing which will provide its inhabitants with comfort, light, and pride."

Most of the U-shaped building's 32 living units have views to a landscaped courtyard at the rear. The six assisted-living units on the first floor have private patios on the courtyard itself. Although

the assisted-living units have small kitchens, their residents take most of their meals in a common space equipped with a full-service kitchen that is located above the retail spaces. The 20 apartments on the upper levels range in size from studios to three-bedroom units, and have floor-to-ceiling windows with views to the city and courtyard.

In contrast to the rather plain rear facades of many apartment buildings, the rear façade of this project is a visually dynamic combination of masonry, glass, and metal. The interiors of the living units are clean, modern, and rational—a characteristic of many of Reatig's projects.

"The project makes the most of its urban setting," Reatig says. "By incorporating retail space along 7th Street and accommodating a variety of living arrangements from assisted living to families with children, [the building] contributes to the vibrant diversity of the city."

The jury said the project was "designed well with difficult constraints." The building, they added, "looks good and the plan is very simple and effective."

## **The Shelton**

Arlington, Virginia

### **Bonstra | Haresign Architects**

**Architectural Team:** David Haresign, AIA, design partner in charge; David Baker, AIA, LEED AP, design architect/project architect; Matt Corell, project architect/construction administration

**Landscape Architects:** Landscape Architecture Bureau

**Contractor:** Harkins Builders

The Shelton, a new apartment building located at Shirlington Road and 24th Street in Arlington, was built on land previously occupied by an outdated, 22-unit apartment building, a surface parking lot, and an adjacent, dilapidated house. The project, says **David Haresign, AIA**, who was the design partner in charge, “supplies 94 affordable housing units with market-rate design character.”

**Bonstra | Haresign’s** design for the Shelton skillfully employs changes in masonry color and setbacks of various kinds to reduce the building’s apparent height and length. The U-shaped building also includes a landscaped courtyard with an energetic design, a community room, 30 below-grade parking spaces, and a green roof.

The Shelton was designed within the guidelines of a new plan for revitalizing the area called the Nauck Village Center Action Plan (NVCAP). “Nauck Village was once a thriving residential neighborhood, but the community has since deteriorated,” Haresign says. “Recently, citizens partnered with Arlington County planning staff and politicians to develop the new vision for the area.” The new plan, adopted in 2004, provides an urban design framework that includes land-use and zoning provisions and guidelines on building mass, architecture, and streetscaping.

The Shelton received both a Merit Award in Architecture and a Presidential Citation for Sustainable Design. “The Shelton uses a full range of sustainable design strategies,” Haresign says, “from additional storm water management, to a highly efficient building skin, to selection of [green] mechanical equipment and appliances.”

In selecting the project for a design award, juror David Mayner said it “looked like a completely regular-market housing project. A lot of work went into making the landscaped courtyard and this [entire] place appealing. We wanted to commend people who can do good projects [that provide] affordable housing.”

“The courtyard,” he continued, “is really quite enticing. So often, landscaping gets value-engineered out [of the design] at a crucial point. We think the architects and the landscape architects worked very hard to keep it in there as a very important part of the project.”



Photo © Hoachlander Davis Photography



Views of the Shelton.

Photo © Hoachlander Davis Photography





Lobby of the renovated building.

Photo © Hoachlander Davis Photography



Interior of an apartment in the main building.

Photo © Hoachlander Davis Photography

## Award for Excellence in Historic Preservation

### Parker Flats at Gage School

Washington, DC

## Bonstra | Haresign Architects

**Architectural Team:** David Haresign, AIA, design partner in charge; Jennifer Marca, AIA, LEED AP, project manager; Joseph Corridore, LEED AP, design architect/project architect

**Associate Architects/Technical Advisors:** Oehrlein & Associates Architects

**Historic Research and Consulting:** EHT Traceries


**Landscape Architects:** Slater and Associates

**Contractor:** James G. Davis Construction Corp.

This project, located on 2nd Street, NW, in DC's Bloomingdale neighborhood, involved the restoration and conversion of the Gage School—a Georgian Revival-style building erected in 1905—into a residential structure. The restored and converted building forms the core of a residential development on the block that includes a total of 92 apartments, two underground parking levels, a landscaped courtyard, and a green roof.

The project included substantial restoration of the basic school building, the conversion of attic space in the building into an additional living level, and the widening of the “hyphen” that connects the main part of the building to a secondary wing at the rear.

“We chose this for an award of excellence,” said Nancy McCoy, “because this is a very difficult building type. The National Trust for Historic Preservation has put a lot of effort in recent years into explaining to developers and to the public that school buildings actually make excellent adaptive-use candidates. This project demonstrates that in its own way.”

For additional coverage of this project, see the Summer 2008 and Spring 2009 issues of ARCHITECTUREDC. 



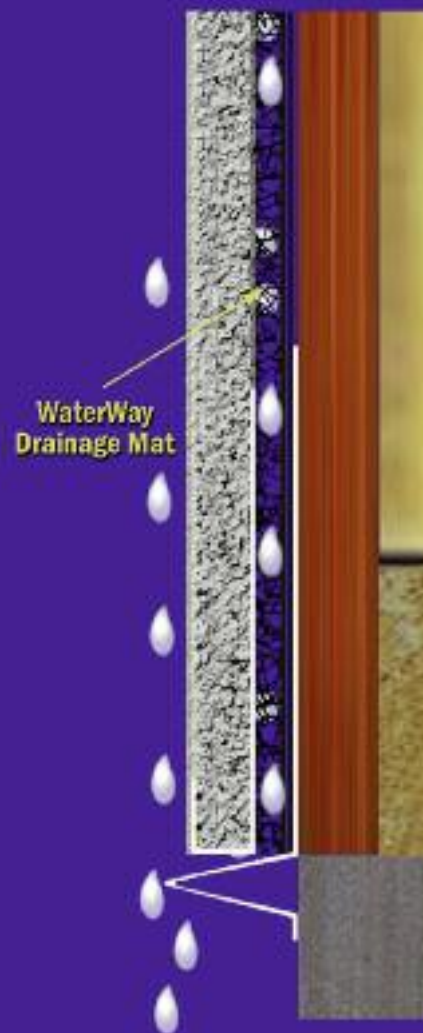
Exterior of the renovated building.

Photo © Hoachlander Davis Photography

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The service counter and sales area at Hello Cupcake.

# Design Means Business:

Photo © Maxwell MacKenzie

## Retail and Hospitality Spaces Show That Good Design Sells

by G. Martin Moeller, Jr., Assoc. AIA

### Award for Excellence in Interior Architecture

#### Hello Cupcake

Washington, DC

#### Bonstra | Haresign Architects LLP

**Architectural Team:** William J. Bonstra, AIA, LEED AP, design partner in charge/project designer; David Drobni, AIA, LEED AP, project architect; Brian Forehand, LEED AP, interior design

**Contractor:** Prill Construction Group

When conceiving her new retail cupcake shop, proprietor Penny Karas knew just what sort of space she wanted—one that felt more like a “boutique” or a “jewelry store” than a traditional bakery. With its elegant service counter of Carrara marble, its vividly backlit display boxes, and its mix of recessed lighting and crystal chandeliers, Hello Cupcake does indeed seem at first glance to be the sort of place where one might buy diamonds rather than delicately iced carbohydrates.

The shop, designed by **Bonstra | Haresign Architects**, occupies only about 1,000 square feet, and nearly half of that area is dedicated to back-of-house functions—the kitchen and a small office. That

left little room for the public spaces, which the architects therefore decided to compose of simple forms in neutral colors to maintain an airy atmosphere, with a few vibrant accents to lend distinction.

The sales area is defined by an array of planar elements, including three L-shaped forms that rise along the side wall and project over the marble service counter, the front of which is covered in pink gypsum panels sculpted so as to suggest swirled frosting on a cupcake. Two glass panels that prevent customers from reaching directly for the merchandise are anchored at the floor and secured by simple brackets just below the countertop. One juror quipped, “Those are the nicest sneeze guards I’ve ever seen.”

Another juror, Brian Malarkey AIA, IIDA, confessed that, *after* they had made their final decisions regarding the awards, the Interior Architecture jurors made a quick trip to Hello Cupcake to see the shop firsthand, which allowed him to declare that the project “was both sweet and delicious, literally and figuratively.”



Close-up view of the service counter.  
Photo © Maxwell MacKenzie

At the annual awards ceremony, Chapter President David Daileida, FAIA accepts a box of cupcakes from Bill Bonstra, AIA, whose design for Hello Cupcake received an Award for Excellence in Interior Architecture.



Washington Architectural Foundation President Tom Luebke, AIA presents the Firm of the Year award to Alissa Werres, of EYP.



# Provoking Positive Change:

## Great Washingtonians Make a Difference

by Mary Fitch, AICP, Hon. AIA

Each year, AIA | DC and the Washington Architectural Foundation give special recognition to individuals who have performed exemplary work on behalf of the community and the architectural profession. Below are this year's recipients.

### Firm of the Year: Honoring a Firm's Community Service

The 2009 winner of the Firm of the Year is **EYP**. Over the past several years, employees of the firm have given hundreds of hours of their time to the foundation. In particular, EYP staffers worked as volunteers during two semesters of *Architecture in the Schools*, a program that pairs architect volunteers with K-12 public school classes for a nine-week curriculum enrichment program. EYP has also been involved with the foundation's *CANstruction* program since it began 12 years ago. *CANstruction* is a design-build competition held during Architecture Week in which architects build fanciful structures out of canned goods that they have purchased (such as EYP's most recent entry, "Foil Hunger,"). The canned goods are then donated to the Capital Area Food Bank, making the Washington Architecture Foundation one of the bank's biggest donors. The canned goods used by EYP to build its structures over the last 12 years have provided more than 25,000 meals, or an average of more than 2,000 meals per year. This is an extraordinary amount of effort, by an extraordinary firm.

### The John "Wieb" Wiebenson Award for Architecture in the Public Interest

The Wiebenson Award is given each year to an architect who makes a difference through work done without fee for the public interest. The award honors John Wiebenson, an architect who worked tirelessly on behalf of others. The 2009 winner is **Darrel D. Rippeteau, AIA**. Darrel heads Rippeteau Architects, a successful DC architectural firm, but he's also the go-to guy to get things done in the non-profit/charity world. He has led the foundation's *CANstruction* program for almost a decade. He also leads the Builder's Ball, an annual event that raises millions of dollars for local charities. Darrel has also done many *pro bono* projects for organizations such as the Source Theatre and the Whitman-Walker Clinic. Less visible, but also important, are the many times that firms or charities have asked for his advice and help, which he has always willingly given. The awards jury stated, and the Wiebenson family agreed, that "His enthusiasm for helping the community and his generosity of spirit make him the ideal candidate to receive this award."



Emerging Architect Award recipient Jay Wilson, Assoc. AIA (center), with Malcolm Haith and Elizabeth E. Pavlick



## Glenn Brown Award

The Glenn Brown Award, given jointly by AIA | DC and the foundation, honors individuals who have raised public awareness of architecture and its benefits to society. The award is named for Glenn Brown, an accomplished architect who was also an author, scholar, presidential advisor, and a founder of AIA | DC. Our 2009 winner is **G. Martin Moeller, Jr., Assoc. AIA**. As a senior vice president of the National Building Museum, he has served as the lead curator for various exhibitions, including *Liquid Stone: New Architecture in Concrete* and *Reinventing the Globe: A Shakespearean Theater for the 21st Century*. Martin also edits this magazine, *ArchitectureDC*, with a sure hand and a good eye for the story behind the project. He was also responsible for writing the most recent addition of the *AIA Guide to the Architecture of Washington DC*, the chapter's guidebook, published by Johns Hopkins University Press. "With all that on his resume," said AIA | DC President David Daileida, FAIA, "one would be hard-pressed to think of anyone more deserving of recognition for enlightening the public about architecture."

## Emerging Architects Awards

Our jury this year decided to give awards to two emerging architects who have shown exceptional leadership and made significant contributions to the profession at an early stage in their career. **Josef Fuentes, Assoc. AIA**, graduated from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in May 2004 with a Bachelor of Architecture degree. In 2005, he founded the DC chapter of Architecture for Humanity. Through that organization, he contributes his time to promote socially responsible design. He's helped with a playground in Vietnam, a retail space for the National Center for

Children and Families, and a facility for a non-profit organization promoting peace in Rwanda. He also works with the healthcare studio of RTKL Associates. In presenting the award, AIA | DC President David Daileida said he was very pleased to be able to confer the award to Fuentes "for his already significant contributions to our profession and social justice."

The second Emerging Architect winner, **Jay Wilson, Assoc. AIA**, graduated from

Syracuse University with a bachelor's degree in architecture in 2003. He is a project manager for Wiencek & Associates, where he works on sustainable housing projects throughout the mid-Atlantic region. Wilson has been champion for

sustainable design in DC, working with the District of Columbia's Energy Office to develop an Affordable Housing Energy Efficient Rebate program. He's also president of the chapter's Committee on the Environment, where he promotes a number of programs that encourage members and the public to think about greening the built environment.

## Centennial Medal

Our final award, the Centennial Medal, is the highest honor the chapter can bestow upon a member. The recipient must be a member architect whose contributions of service to the chapter, the profession, or the community span at least a decade. This year, **David Cox, FAIA**, was named the 20th recipient of the medal. Cox has served the profession and the community for more than 40 years. He serves on the Executive Board of the School of Architecture and Planning at The Catholic University of America and on the Old Georgetown Board of the US Commission of Fine



David Cox, FAIA, speaks after receiving the AIA | DC Centennial Medal for 2009.

Arts. He has served on numerous award juries, been a guest lecturer and visiting design critic at architecture schools, and taught as an adjunct professor at George Washington University. He guides his firm, *cox graae + spack architects*, in a design approach that is innovative but at the same time grounded in the local neighborhood context. In nominating him for this honor, his partner Bill Spack said: "David Cox has long been

known as a careful listener who understands the special culture of each client while remaining sensitive to each project's broader context. He is dedicated to forming strong partnerships with his clients, their constituents and their communities in the service of provoking positive change."

*Congratulations to all our winners!*



All photos by David L. Hamilton Photography