

gb&d
GREEN BUILDING & DESIGN

VOL. 1, NO. 2
SEPT 2010

SONGDO CITY
Korea's Green Gateway





modern western wilderness

John Carney first visited Wyoming as a boy; now his firm, Carney Logan Burke Architects, is responsible for the state's first LEED Platinum building in the midst of a donated nature preserve

by Zipporah Porton

WHEN JOHN CARNEY MOVED TO JACKSON, WYOMING, in 1992 he had no idea what to expect. He went to enjoy the scenery and start his own architecture firm. Eighteen years later, the company has expanded from 5 to 16 employees, and is responsible for creating the first LEED Platinum building in Wyoming: The Laurance S. Rockefeller Preserve Center.

With a master's degree in architecture from Harvard, Carney worked at a number of firms before heading to Wyoming in 1992 and forming Carney Architects. In 2006, Eric Logan and Kevin Burke became partners, and in early 2010 the name was changed to Carney Logan Burke Architects (CLBA). The firm focuses on a variety of projects, such as community facilities, commercial buildings, resorts, homes, and mixed-use complexes.



INTERPRETIVE DESIGN. The Preserve's mission is to inspire appreciation and reverence for the beauty and diversity of the natural world, to demonstrate the importance of protecting the land while providing public access, and to foster individual responsibility for conservation stewardship. Laurance Rockefeller challenged CLBA's design team to make the Preserve a model of environmental stewardship within the National Park System that could be emulated throughout the country. The buildings were constructed using 69 percent FSC-certified wood products. Other sustainable materials include ICF walls, SIP roof panels, zinc roofing and siding, and high-performance glazing. Photo: Nic Lehoux.

"We've enjoyed being able to do a range of building types and coming up with creative ways to reinterpret and expand the architectural language of the region," Carney says.

The founding principal has a long-standing interest in both nature and the West, born, in part, by summer vacations to Wyoming during his childhood, which was spent in Beverly Hills. The same interest drew him into sustainability. "My first visit to Wyoming as a kid made a huge impression," Carney says. "I was captivated by the old barns, log lodges, and ranch sheds—the practical, vernacular forms that fit so comfortably in the vast landscape."

Graduating from Harvard in 1977, Carney was one of numerous progressives already committed to sustainable practices in what was a booming era for holistic design—and

the precedent for the green movement. "We've always had a commitment to passive-solar design to take advantage of sitting, orientation, daylighting, and natural ventilation," Carney explains.

It was a natural evolution for the firm to move in a sustainable direction as clients became more environmentally aware. But despite an understanding of environmental issues and this subtle evolution, it wasn't until 2001 that Carney began work on his first LEED project in the Rockefeller Preserve.

The concept began with Laurance Rockefeller himself, who decided to donate his family ranch to the National Park Service after removing the 35-building compound from the shores of Phelps Lake and creating a network of trails on the 1,100-acre property. The new vision for the land included a 7,700-square-foot interpretive and educational center that would focus on stewardship, conservation, and the power of nature.

The notion of going for LEED status evolved during the first two years of the design process. Since the project was going to be taken over by the National Park Service upon completion and there was a mandate to make all new park buildings sustainable, the client embraced the idea and directed the team to go for the highest level possible.



LEFT, BELOW: The sheltering roof of the Interpretive Center provides protection from the elements and monitors daylight for naturally lit interior exhibit spaces. The carefully detailed and expressive structural system supports generous overhangs and adds texture, scale and character to the building. Photos: Nic Lehoux



"We've enjoyed being able to do a range of building types and coming up with creative ways to reinterpret and expand the architectural language of the region."

—John Carney, Principal

The environmental efforts began immediately, in the earliest design stages. 3D drawings were shared over computer interfaces, greatly reducing the amount of necessary paper. Collaboration was required at every turn, such as reconciling the exhibit designer's request for "black-box" spaces with the architect's desire to use natural daylighting. To reach LEED Platinum status, sustainable features were implemented throughout the entire complex—composting toilets, FSC-certified lumber for almost 70 percent of all wood products, a photovoltaic system that harnesses energy from the sun and provides 45 percent of the building's electricity needs. It was a building deserving of its environment.

"We thought of the building as a chapel that would prepare you for the experience of hiking the trails that lead to the shores of Phelps Lake," Carney says. "The building was meant to heighten the awareness of our connection to nature, preparing the heart and mind for what was to come."

Work began on the center in 2001 and was completed in 2008. The project, which did earn the LEED Platinum distinction, reassured Carney that this was just the beginning of his firm's involvement in sustainability.

Up next, CLBA will tackle a welcome center in Jackson and again target LEED certification. The town has committed to reducing its carbon footprint through the Jackson Hole Sustainability Project, and Carney feels that a high-profile public building must set a strong example. The firm is also working on a number of sustainable residential projects.

Working in a smaller community like Jackson might make it harder to find consistent work, but CLBA has been fortunate to see the practice grow and evolve even throughout its short history. "I think we are seen as a collaborative firm whose work reflects a synthesis of our clients' goals with the stunning landscape we inhabit," says Carney of the firm's success. "We've been able to attract and keep good people, allowing the practice to build on our body of work. We've created a studio atmosphere that seems to produce great results, and we're having fun." **gbd**