

A Snapshot of Living Future '08

Canada's emerald city took on an even deeper hue on April 16-18, as nearly 400 of North America's greenest building practitioners descended upon Vancouver for Living Future 2008. Hosted by the Cascadia Region Green Building Council, a Chapter of the Canada and U.S. Green Building Councils, Living Future provided a forum to capture and share the most cutting edge ideas in green building and to enable the most progressive green professionals to create synergies that will drive the movement forward.

With the theme "From Living Buildings to Living Communities," Living Future provided attendees with a unique community of its own. The 30 educational sessions and 70+ presenters covered broad territory, with topics ranging from creating low-carbon communities to green building finance and codes, and even included a tour of the Vancouver Convention and Exhibition Centre, which is going for LEED® Gold. True to the *unconference* approach, the sessions provided solid educational content to segue into lively group discussions and knowledge sharing. The end result: immense information download, dynamic dialogue, and connections made that will last much longer than the conference. In fact, one of the most oft-heard praises from attendees referenced the high caliber networking opportunities, allowing for the kindling of new connections, as well as the stoking of those already established.

The keynote speakers certainly left lasting impressions. Author Paul Hawken, the signature keynote and conference opener, received an overwhelming response of inspiration with his urgent, yet positive call to collaborative action. With the firm belief that something big is going to happen in the next few years, he reminded attendees that we need to gather and deploy our diverse strengths as change agents in order to incite progress.

Cascadia CEO Jason F. McLennan commenced the educational sessions in a tongue-in-cheek manner, using a concise history of poop to illustrate his notion of the "three-quarter" baked idea – a not-quite-finished idea that is set free to be molded by the world into a completely finished product. His three-quarter baked idea: a composting toilet design challenge – an effort to give one of the most functional elements of green design a sense of "inspiration and beauty," a petal of the Living Building Challenge™. He maintained that setting free one's three-quarter baked ideas, like this design challenge, is the only way to make the leaps of progress that need to happen.

At the Big Bang Dinner and Awards, Thomas Mueller, President of CaGBC, used poignant metrics to remind attendees of the need to take action and shift the mainstream of building. Rounding out the keynote presentations, Sim Van der Ryn began his with a bold on-stage change of clothes, donning the (100% organic cotton and PVC-free) Cascadia "living" t-shirt – a moment that is still being talked about. Sim helped attendees reframe the notion of design with nature's own principles of beauty and elements of inspiration.

The Big Bang dinner also featured the unveiling of the 2008-2009 Cascadia Board of Directors and the winners of the Cascadia Fellowship Awards. Cascadia Board member Dale Mikkelsen moderated the evening with a wit that had attendees rolling with laughter.

2008 CASCADIA FELLOWS

- G.Z. Brown, Professor of Architecture and Director of the Energy Studies in Buildings Laboratory, University of Oregon
- Ray Cole, Professor, School of Architecture, University of British Columbia
- Deb Guenther, Principal, MITHUN
- John Jennings, Manager, BetterBricks New Construction
- Thomas Mueller, President, Canada Green Building Council
- Kathleen O'Brien, President, O'Brien & Co., Inc

Another *unconference* highlight was 15 Minutes of Brilliance – presentations by five individuals with brilliant solutions that are pushing the envelope of conventional ways to address big world problems. Finally, the Emerging Green Builders’ Natural Talent Design Competition, which was judged by an impressive panel of design experts, closed the conference, with the award going to a team of young professionals from Weber + Thompson – Brian Geller, Dan Albert, Chris Dukehart and Myer Harrell – for their design “Eco-laboratory.” Honorable Mention was given to a team from the Emerging Green Builders of Victoria – Carla Safrany, Nadine Anseeuw, Stewart Burgess, Sarah Stoner and Melissa Lawrence – for their design “The Junction.”

15 MINUTES OF BRILLIANCE PRESENTERS:

- *The Life Work of Anders Nyquist: Eco-Cycle Design, Eco-Village Approach* - Bruce Hostetter
- *The Commons* - Dustin and Garrett Moon
- *Sunnyside Neighborhood Energy, Powering the Community* - Seth Truby
- *Luz - Girl of the Knowing* - Claudia Davila
- *The Other Half of the Challenge: Green Lifestyles* - Greg Searle

Cascadia paid acute attention to detail in making Living Future walk the green talk to the best of its capacity. The “Red List Ready” Trade Show showcased a small, yet selective group of exhibitors that had to prove they put their money where their mouth is. Using protocol that was reflective of BuildingGreen’s Greenspec Directory and the Pharos Project, the exhibitors passed strict screening for products and practices that support their mission of sustainability. Conference details also evoked this sense of striving for true sustainability, with such features as a digital program projected on Plasma TVs instead of a printed program, serving organic and local foods as much as possible, providing recyclable and reusable nametags, and offering life balance sessions to help conference attendees create sustainability in their own lives.

In the end, Living Future 2008 provided the opportunity for green professionals to recharge their batteries, so to speak – to regain equilibrium and collect the resources necessary to make the leaps of change that are needed to support a truly living future.

RED LIST READY TRADE SHOW EXHIBITORS

- Sustainable Solutions International
- Forbo
- Green World Now
- Tayco
- Dura Pure Coatings
- Trane
- Green Building Services
- Northwest Climate Change Center and PacifiCAD
- Ecotone Publishing
- Whole Water Systems
- Panel Source International
- Abbotsford Concrete Products
- Pacific Alliance Technologies
- CMHC
- North American Rammed Earth Builders Association
- Pharos Project

But don’t take our word for it; here’s what some attendees had to say:

“I particularly liked that the conference was genuinely on the forefront of sustainability. There was a general sense of people not wanting to re-iterate the same things again, but rather really push forward for the next step. [T]here was a lot of determination to make the next big leap.”

“My favorite part [of Living Future] was sensing the incredible Zen in the air from the growing awareness for the environment.”

“The overall atmosphere was quite inspiring. The enthusiasm was high among most participants and, in addition to quality sessions and speakers, it was refreshing to brainstorm and talk with other practitioners.”

“I talk about the ideas in the office and spread the words from the conference to all the people in my life.”



Charged with the immense energy generated this year, Cascadia is already gearing up to host **Living Future 2009 on May 6-8 in Portland, OR.** Stay tuned to www.cascadiagbc.org/living-future/09 as details unfold.

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