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Photos attached

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AIA Baltimore Honors Russell W. Peterson Urban Wildlife Refuge Education Center Design

October 21, 2006 (Baltimore, MD). The design for the new Education Center planned for the Russell W. Peterson Urban Wildlife Refuge in Wilmington, Delaware has been selected as an Honor Award recipient by the AIA Baltimore 2006 Awards program jury. One of more than sixty entries received and just fourteen projects selected for recognition, the project was the only “un-built” design recognized at the Honor Award level.

Selection of the project demonstrates the jury’s confidence in its appropriateness for the urban, yet environmentally significant site and the contribution it will make to environmental education on the Wilmington riverfront.

Named in honor of former Delaware Governor Russell W. Peterson, a longtime environmental activist, the new Education Center is part of efforts by the Riverfront Development Corporation of Delaware to restore marshlands along the Christina River, while creating economic vitality, enhancing the environment and promoting public access.

The site for the new facility is an open expanse of reclaimed wetland located at the southernmost edge of the burgeoning urban environment. The client’s goal was “to enhance the relationship between urban development along the waterfront and the natural environment.” To fully realize the client’s objectives it was critical to locate the building within the refuge, according to GWWO president and design principal Alan E Reed.

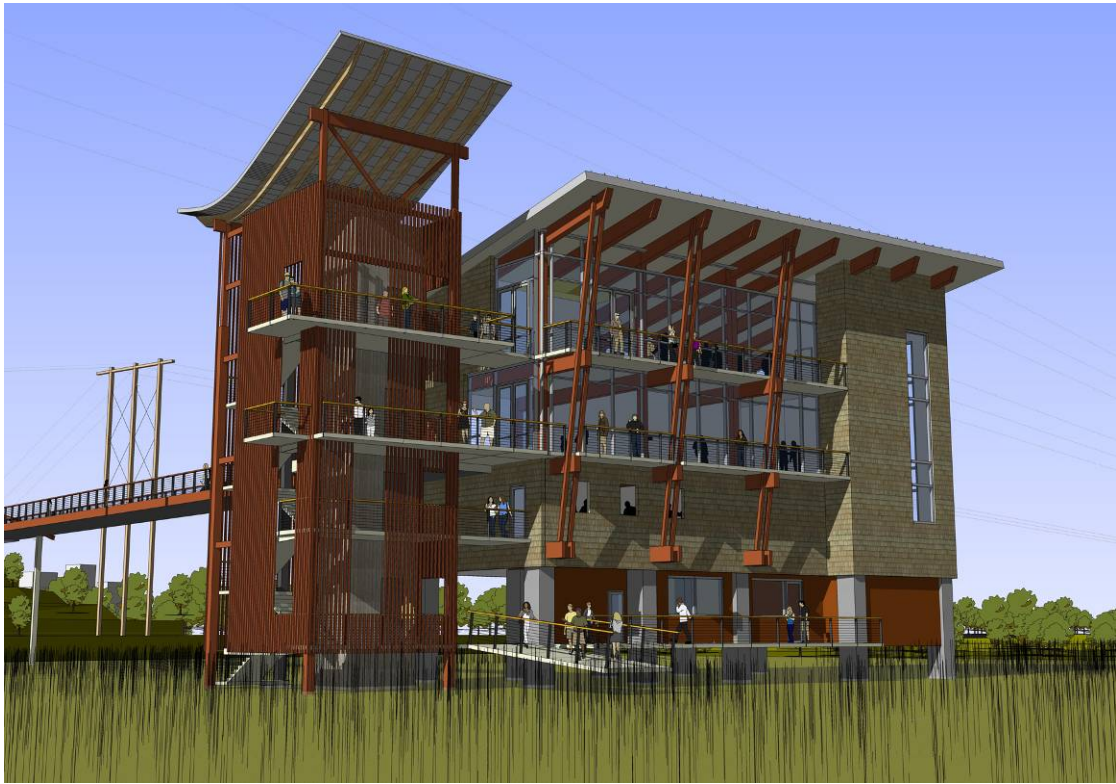
Elevated above the marshlands, the design responds to the dynamics of the natural systems, tidal river and wetlands, as well as infrastructural elements: an adjacent railway, high voltage power lines, and multiple utility rights of way. The center is at once a sentinel standing guard over the refuge and a gateway between the urban environment and the last vestige of natural marshland.

As they traverse the delicate bridge, visitors will experience the tenuous connection between man and nature. Seen from afar, the building will act as a beacon marking the terminus of the city's riverwalk. From within, windows on the north façade will frame views to the city while the vast expanses on the south open toward the natural setting. The building will house exhibits, classrooms, offices and support spaces for nature education and related recreation activities, as well as community meeting and gathering space.

GWWO is serving as the Design Architects for this project, in partnership with Architect-of-Record Becker Morgan Group of Wilmington, Delaware.

The annual AIA Baltimore Design Awards competition honors outstanding work by Baltimore-area architects and students. Entries are judged by a panel of architects and prominent industry professionals, each year selected from a different city. This year's jury hailed from New York City and included national recognized architect Hugh Hardy, FAIA, Roberta Washington, FAIA, and Ray Gastil, AIA.

GWWO, Inc./Architects is a full service architectural firm that specializes in the planning and design of cultural and educational facilities, with emphasis on quality design that is both inspirational and evocative. Other current projects include the new Visitor Center for Fort McHenry National Monument & Historic Shrine, the expansion of the Gibson Arts Center at Washington College, an addition to Kenwood High School in Baltimore County, and the adaptive reuse of an historic bank complex to house new facilities for the Fredericksburg Area Museum and Cultural Center in Fredericksburg, Virginia.



Perspective from the Refuge



Approach from Parking