

It's Alive!

The Living Building Challenge Design Competition

BY STEPHENS SMITH FARRELL

Question: "If not now, when; if not here, where; if not us, who?"

Answer: The Asheville Collaborative of the Living Building Challenge Design Competition.

It's on, people; it is so on. The Asheville Collaborative of the Living Building Challenge is hosting an architectural competition to design a mixed-use building based on the incredibly demanding sustainability and resiliency guidelines of the Living Building Challenge (LBC).

The LBC is a design and construction program that stresses the critical work of creating buildings and communities that are not only "less bad" but actually restore the environment, the economy, and the societies in which they exist. The LBC envisions a future that is "ecological restorative, culturally rich, and socially just." How's that for a beautiful vision?

A simple flower inspires the LBC. Like a building, a flower doesn't

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move. Unlike most buildings, a flower gets all its energy and water from its fixed location, creates habitat and food for animals (including humans), and stabilizes the soil. A flower creates no waste; in fact, the byproducts of a flower are oxygen and nutrients.

And flowers are beautiful! The LBC requires, essentially, that buildings do the same; they

must get all their energy and water from on site (or from closed loops), create no waste, and be beautiful. The program is organized into seven sections or "petals" which further contain twenty imperatives that must be met.

This inspiring vision of the built environment is based on the work of the biomimicry movement, which invites culture and industry to study and benefit from millions of years of Mother Nature's research and development. Lessons in sustainability are all around us, we just have to look carefully at what has worked evolutionarily in botany and in the animal kingdom, paying special attention to the interconnectedness of living things.

The Asheville Collaborative (hosted by WNCGBC) invites teams of students, professional architects and engineers, and other green thinking planners to design a building comprised of affordable housing and other uses on a high-profile site in downtown Asheville. This academic exercise is intended to introduce this exciting and essential vision of the built environment to the community and to demonstrate the viability of the LBC to local and regional planners and design professionals.

A jury of local and regionally renowned green thinkers is being assembled to judge the merits of submissions based on adherence to the program, to LBC imperatives, and to the site's appropriateness for this high-profile competition.

Teams within 500 miles of Asheville are invited to submit designs and to participate in a workshop focused on the LBC and affordable housing. Locals interested in learning more about the LBC in general and the competition in particular can participate (for a small fee) in the workshops even if they do not join the competition or submit a proposal.

Farrell is chief cook and bottle washer at Stephens Smith Farrell Architecture in Asheville. He is Architect of Record for the first LEED Certified Building in WNC and sits on the WNCGBC Board of Directors. He is an ambassador for the Living Building Challenge (LBC) and is a member of the Asheville LBC Collaborative. He lives and gardens in a net-zero energy home.

Websites

- www.biomimicry.org
- www.living-future.org
- www.eowilsonfoundation.org
- www.collaboratives.living-future.org/asheville



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