



Jury Statement on the 2012 Buckminster Fuller Challenge Winner:

The Living Building Challenge

Buildings use close to 40% of all the energy consumed in the U.S. (more than industrial or transportation uses), including roughly 65% of annual electric generation, and they produce close to a third of all greenhouse gas emissions. Very few tasks are more urgent, therefore, than radically rethinking how to build. The Living Building Challenge is setting the standard for how to build responsibly by defining the highest possible level of environmental performance criteria, pushing the building, planning and policy sectors to deeply rethink how infrastructure should function within ecosystems. Its certification standards are based on actual performance rather than prediction, and, though its criteria are exacting and far more stringent than those of the widely used (and insufficient) LEEDS certification system, they are all achievable using currently existing technology. Through developing a new model by which to assess the value of advanced green projects, The Living Building Challenge sets itself apart and truly defines a preferred state.

The jury was particularly struck by the potential that The Living Building Challenge has to push research and development in “green” building to new levels of innovation, fostering the most creative ways yet seen in which to think about the future of ecological building practices.

The Living Building Challenge allayed the jury’s initial concerns that its rigorous standards might only be realistic for high end “green” projects in the developed world by showing how its research is in fact directly applicable in all climates and all price ranges. The LBC team’s advocacy work at the local and professional level, its proven ability to navigate the political realm, and its work in the developing world all reveal that this is a wide-reaching initiative that squarely addresses issues of social justice, fairness, and equity as an integral part of the building process. Addressing needs that have otherwise been marginal or absent in design and building standards, it is a direct challenge to business as usual, and is evidence of a high level of systems thinking and potential broad global reach.

Deeply rooted in ecological design principles, The Living Building Challenge successfully shows how humans and their built environment can be harmoniously, benignly integrated within ecosystems. Above all, its rigorous standards and daringly innovative, revolutionary approach to building are already having a considerable impact on the thinking of designers and architects around the world, influencing all levels of design and technological approaches, radically pushing forward the field. Their work currently underway in Mexico, South Africa, Columbia, India, Lebanon and Romania, as well as their affordable housing projects in the United States, are strong evidence that the LBC’s principles and methods are translatable in settings as diverse as cutting edge, high tech environments, and the rapidly expanding urban slums of the developing world.