

ACAI NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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ACAI Embraces “Green” Design

Fort Lauderdale, FL (March 2008) -- Green is white-hot in the design and construction industries.

“The energy conservation and efficiency of tomorrow’s buildings is paramount to our future,” states Adolfo Cotilla, AIA, president of ACAI Associates, a full-service architecture firm with offices in Broward, Miami-Dade and Palm Beach Counties. “I believe that architects have a responsibility to play a leading role in reducing the affect of our work on the environment. In today’s world, if an architect’s work is responsible, it’s inherently sustainable design.”

“Interestingly enough, the ‘green’ emphasis is nothing new to either our firm or even my early training as an architect,” notes Cotilla. “When I was getting my Masters Degree at the University of Florida, we evaluated the plusses of a design effort very much from the standpoint of blending functionality with environmental, economic and occupant-oriented performance. I’ve brought that approach forward with our projects these past 25 years. I guess we were country before country was cool! That being stated, it’s wonderful that the industry has formulated a structure for these extremely important initiatives, and that the rest of the world is paying more attention to our environment.”

Importantly, the ACAI team “walks the walk with green initiatives,” states Cotilla. Examples include providing financial incentives to use public transportation (e.g., giving Tri-Rail passes to employees to promote use of South Florida’s commuter rail service); use of ultra-efficient toilets (specifically designed to operate effectively at low flush volumes) in the ACAI offices; turning lights off in unoccupied rooms; and actively encouraging recycling in the ACAI offices. Further, ACAI recently purchased hybrid electric vehicles to help reduce the environmental impact of the firm’s automobile and truck use. “Green initiatives extend to how we live, work and play,” concludes Cotilla. “Reuse-and-reduce approaches save natural resources, reduce energy use and emission of greenhouse gases, cut down transportation costs and pollution, and result in less materials being dumped in landfills. As architects, we can do our part by focusing on smart, sustainable design to make an important ‘green’ difference to consumers, schools, businesses and communities. It’s an approach that makes sense.”

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The logo for ACAI, featuring the word "acai" in a lowercase, red, serif font.

Leadership in Environmental & Energy Design (LEED) is the nationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction and operation of high-performance “green” buildings. LEED gives building owners and operators the tools they need to have an immediate and measurable impact on their buildings’ performance by recognizing performance in five key areas of human and environmental health: sustainable site development, water savings, energy efficiency, materials selection and indoor environmental quality.

“Simply put, LEED design and practices are cost efficient and environmentally sound,” says Cotilla. “First-rate ‘green design’ will not only result in a building that is easier to maintain and healthier for users and the environment, it has the added bonus of, in certain instances, accelerating a project’s approval process with local governmental agencies.”

Environmentally conscious designs that embrace stringent LEED-certification requirements utilize particulars such as energy-efficient mechanical and electrical systems, daylighting, drought-tolerant plantings, cool-roof and other alternate energy systems, high-performance glass, water clarifiers, recycled or renewable building materials, and many other environment-friendly initiatives. Even the selection of construction materials and a building’s orientation come into play. Design that is truly sustainable considers a structure’s long-term operating costs, and strives to minimize energy consumption and incorporate renewable resources. “In essence, a green building struggles less and performs better,” states Cotilla, “and that’s a real plus to its owners, its users and our ecosystem.”

A member of the US Green Building Council, ACAI is firmly committed to “green design.” Cotilla stresses that acting responsible with regard to the economic and environmental sustainability is the only way to go. “With every project we tackle, we seek to identify strategies that work together in a whole-building approach. We integrate green-design elements wherever possible regardless of whether a building is to be LEED-certified.”

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ACAI has two projects currently in design that are striving for a LEED-certification rating from the USGBC. The award-winning firm is the Architect for the forthcoming Pompano Beach Regional Library -- the new 30,000 sf library will be the first facility in the City's history (and one of the first in Broward County) to be LEED certified. ACAI was also recently awarded by the School Board of Broward County a two-phased project -- 1) remodeling and expansion of an automotive service technology suite [including labs, classrooms, storage, parking, etc.]; and 2) design of the Atlantic Technical Center, a new 16,500 sf media center that will include a reading room, technical processing area, equipment storage, a CCTV/distance-learning lab, a conference room, a network special and media specialist area, restrooms, etc. As with the above-noted library, the design of the new media center, which will also include a cyber café open to the public, will be in accordance with sustainable design practices and the USGBC's LEED green-building rating system. In addition to LEED certification, the goal for this first-ever "green" media center for Broward County is that it becomes a prototype structure for future such facilities built on school campuses in the County.

"Doing what is environmentally friendly is at the core of the healthy-building concept," states Cindy Baldwin, a certified LEED Accredited Professional at ACAI who makes time to speak to elementary-aged children regarding the importance of "doing the right thing" in one's everyday life so as to make a difference in our environment. "Fresher air, enhanced green space, energy savings and natural lighting are just a few components of how a project's environment has a direct bearing on a building's future users. We believe that ACAI's environmentally sensitive approach to planning a project -- plus our experience and keen eye for functional, inspiring design -- makes the 'green' difference for our institutional, commercial and mixed-use projects."

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ACAI is an award-winning, full-service architecture firm with offices in Broward, Miami-Dade and Palm Beach Counties. Founded in 1985, ACAI's project-tested architects, engineers and construction professionals consistently deliver innovative, functional, sustainable and cost-effective design solutions. A minority-business enterprise, ACAI has built a longstanding reputation for excellence in the planning and design of universities, schools, local and state government buildings, healthcare facilities, industrial and commercial businesses, and private and public corporations. To learn more, contact Sandra Smerkers, LEED AP, ACAI's director of marketing, at 954-484-4000, ext. 38, or ssmerkers@acaiworld.com.