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Architects announce 10 best "green" buildings

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WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The best environmentally friendly buildings in the United States include a visitor center in Texas, a water treatment plant in Connecticut and a house in California, U.S. architects announced on Monday.

In presenting the Top 10 Green Awards, the American Institute of Architects celebrated the best examples of sustainable architecture and environmental design.

"What few people realize is that buildings have the greatest impact on climate change -- more than transportation and industry -- because they consume so much electricity and natural gas, and they're all powered by power plants that themselves produce carbon emissions," Scott Frank, the group's spokesman, said by telephone.

Frank said the winners in this competition show that a lot of energy-efficient design innovations do not add a lot to the cost of a building, especially when spread over the expected lifetime of the building.

He noted that there were 95 entries in this year's competition, compared with 54 entries last year. Started 11 years ago, the competition has drawn between 40 to 50 submissions in the past.

The winners are:

- EpiCenter, Artists for Humanity, Boston, Massachusetts, by Arrowstreet Inc., which features a grassy courtyard irrigated by rainwater collected on the roof;
- Global Ecology Research Center, Stanford, California, by EHDD Architects, a low-energy laboratory and office building that cut carbon emissions associated with building operation by 72 percent;
- Government Canyon Visitor Center, Helotes, Texas, by Lake/Flato Architects, where big overhanging roofs, flaps and deep porches shield interior spaces from the sun and the building itself oriented toward the prevailing summer breeze;
- Hawaii Gateway Energy Center, Kailua-Kona, Hawaii, by Ferraro Choi and Associates, which has a cooling system that uses deep seawater;
- Heifer International, Little Rock, Arkansas, by Polk Stanley Rowland Curzon Porter Architects, Ltd., where waste water from sinks and drinking fountains, along with rainwater, is reused in toilets and a cooling tower;
- Sidwell Friends Middle School, Washington DC, by Kieran Timberlake Associates, which uses solar chimneys and windows to provide ventilation by drawing cool air into the building;
- Wayne L. Morse U.S. Courthouse, Eugene, Oregon, by Morphosis & DLR Group, featuring raised courtrooms and an air distribution system under the floor;
- Whitney Water Purification Facility, New Haven, Connecticut, by Steven Holl Architects, which provides water and includes a public park and sanctuary for migrating birds;
- Willingboro Master Plan & Public Library, Willingboro, New Jersey, by Croxton Collaborative Architects, PC, where a former shopping mall was transformed with skylights to capture maximum daylight;
- Z6 House, Santa Monica, California, by LivingHomes, Ray Kappe, a single-family residence that uses natural ventilation and optimizes passive solar heating.

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