

COMING SOON TO ATLANTA:

the **LIVING BUILDING**

By Nikki Welch



Over the past few decades, the Georgia Institute of Technology (Georgia Tech) has focused its attention on creating a standard of institutional excellence within not only the state, but across the globe. The University continues to set records, make monumental discoveries and push the boundaries of advancement. One recent noteworthy project is known as The Living Building Challenge.

In 2015, Georgia Tech received a \$30 million grant from The Kendeda Fund, a private Atlanta-based philanthropy organization, to help catalyze the creation of a Living Building: “the most environmentally advanced education and research building ever constructed in the Southeast,” according to a press release from the school.

According to the Cascadia Green Building Council, a leading advocate for progressive green building laws and sister organization of the Living Building Challenge, Living Buildings are a structure that “generates all of its own energy with renewable nontoxic resources, captures and treats all of its water, and operates efficiently and for maximum beauty.” To become fully certified, a building must meet requirements listed under seven ‘petals:’ site, water, energy, health, materials, equity and beauty.

Given the complexity and novelty of the project, an ideas competition – a completely new concept for Georgia Tech – was held to help select the design team for the venture. “The ideas competition was a fascinating process that set the perfect tone for this important project,” said Barry Berlin, a long-time advisor for the Kendeda Fund who

oversees the Atlanta program. The competition served as an environment to share ideas and designs, engage together as a community and promote a learning atmosphere for students and professionals, alike.

Three teams participated in the design competition: Collins Cooper Carusi/Eskew + Dumez + Ripple/Hellmuth + Bicknese; Perkins + Will; and Lord Aeck Sargent/Miller Hull.

Each of the teams had to focus attention not only on the architecture behind the building, but also civil, electrical, mechanical and structural engineering, as well as plumbing, hydrology and sustainability – taking special care to consider the local community and climate needs.

The winning Living Building concept was designed by Atlanta-based architecture firm Lord Aeck Sargent, in partnership with Seattle-based Miller Hull, the company responsible for creating The Bullitt Center – the first urban building of its kind and commonly regarded as “the greenest office building in the world.”

“Lord Aeck Sargent’s deep knowledge of the Southeast, coupled with Miller Hull’s experience designing one of the most iconic commercial living buildings in the world, make this an optimal partnership for all involved,” said Berlin.

Joseph Greco, President of Lord Aeck Sargent, added, “Georgia Tech is where I first learned to love architecture as an undergraduate student, so the opportunity to be involved with a project as transformative as this is really an honor.”

The winning design is expected to go into construction in 2017 and will take 12-18 months to complete.



Design projection created during the ideas competition by Lord Aeck Sargent and The Miller Hull Partnership. The lifelike rendering depicts the Georgia Tech Eco-commons post-construction.