GREEN ROOTS: BURT HILL'S ROLE IN SHAPING ENVIRONMENTALLY CONSCIOUS DESIGN

Burt Hill has a strong record of successfully developing and implementing environmentally sound and sustainable concepts that transcend master planning, architecture, engineering, and commissioning. Throughout our 74 years, we have a history of balancing the design of human systems with the natural environment, one that became more pronounced in recent decades with the coalescing of engineering and landscape design into our architecture practice.

Harry Gordon, FAIA, Chairman, joined Burt Hill in 1974, just as the firm was laying the groundwork that would establish Burt Hill as the A/E expert in the design of solar building systems. Some of Burt Hill's research in the 1970s and 1980s included work for the AIA Research Corporation in developing regional guidelines for passive solar design that would help shape building energy codes. Like Dick Rittelmann, FAIA, Director Emeritus, before him, Harry was selected by the U.S. Department of Energy to serve as the U.S. representative for collaborative research conducted by the International Energy Agency (IEA). In addition to providing U.S. team leadership on IEA task projects, Harry testified before Congress in support of energy-conscious legislation.

As the prominence of energy concerns began to give way to environmental issues in the late 1980s, Harry and a group of like-minded professionals began a series of conversations that led to the formation of AIA's Committee on the Environment, or COTE, in 1990. Through COTE and funding from the Environmental Protection Agency, Harry helped to develop the Environmental Resource Guide (ERG), which was a manual of technical information on materials that made its debut in 1992. ERG application reports were based on a framework that Harry helped to create, and in the early 1990s issues expanded beyond energy use to waste management, land use, ecologies and water. As a member of COTE's Steering Committee, Harry helped develop symposia focused on issues related to environmentally-responsible design, which included the Environmental Design Charrette. In 1993, Harry and several other COTE leaders were involved in a series of high-profile design charrettes focusing on U.S. landmarks. The Greening of the White House charrette, in which Harry played a key role, led to the development of a process that is now an integral part of the green building movement.

1993 also marked the founding of the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), and Burt Hill became the first A/E firm to join the following year. As an active member, we have since contributed to the development of LEED certification guidelines. We are also participating in the Architecture 2030 Challenge, aiming to design only carbon neutral buildings.

As Burt Hill continues to build on our rich legacy and commitment to sustainable design, we recognize our accountability for the world in which we design; the world that we all not only share but also for which we're all responsible. Examples of our forward-thinking work include:

- A sustainable master plan for the Noisette area in North Charleston, South Carolina. For this project, Burt Hill worked with BNIM Architects to lead a team of national experts in creating a sustainable vision for the 3,000-acre historic center of the City of North Charleston.
- Doherty Hall at Carnegie Mellon University, which serves as a pilot project for the EPA sponsored LABS 21 program for improving energy efficiency and environmental performance of laboratories.
- Our engineers were part of the Rafael Viñoly design team responsible for designing the world's largest (at the time it was designed) Gold Rated LEED building, the David L. Lawrence Convention Center in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Taken as a whole, the integration of natural forces, architectural form, and engineering systems reduced energy costs a measurable 30%.
- As members of the Rafael Viñoly design team, Burt Hill's engineers designed the country's largest sun shading devices to minimize atrium cooling requirements in Princeton University's Institute for Integrative Genomics.
- Our office in Ahmedabad, India, is LEED Platinum certified for corporate interiors.
- We authored the "Small Office Building Handbook: Design for Reducing First Costs and Utility Costs." The book offers a step-by-step guide to selecting energy-saving strategies for office buildings consisting of less than 50,000 square feet in any of the five climatic regions in the United States.