Arts & Humanities

13 ‘Green’ Buildings from Columbia Architects

By
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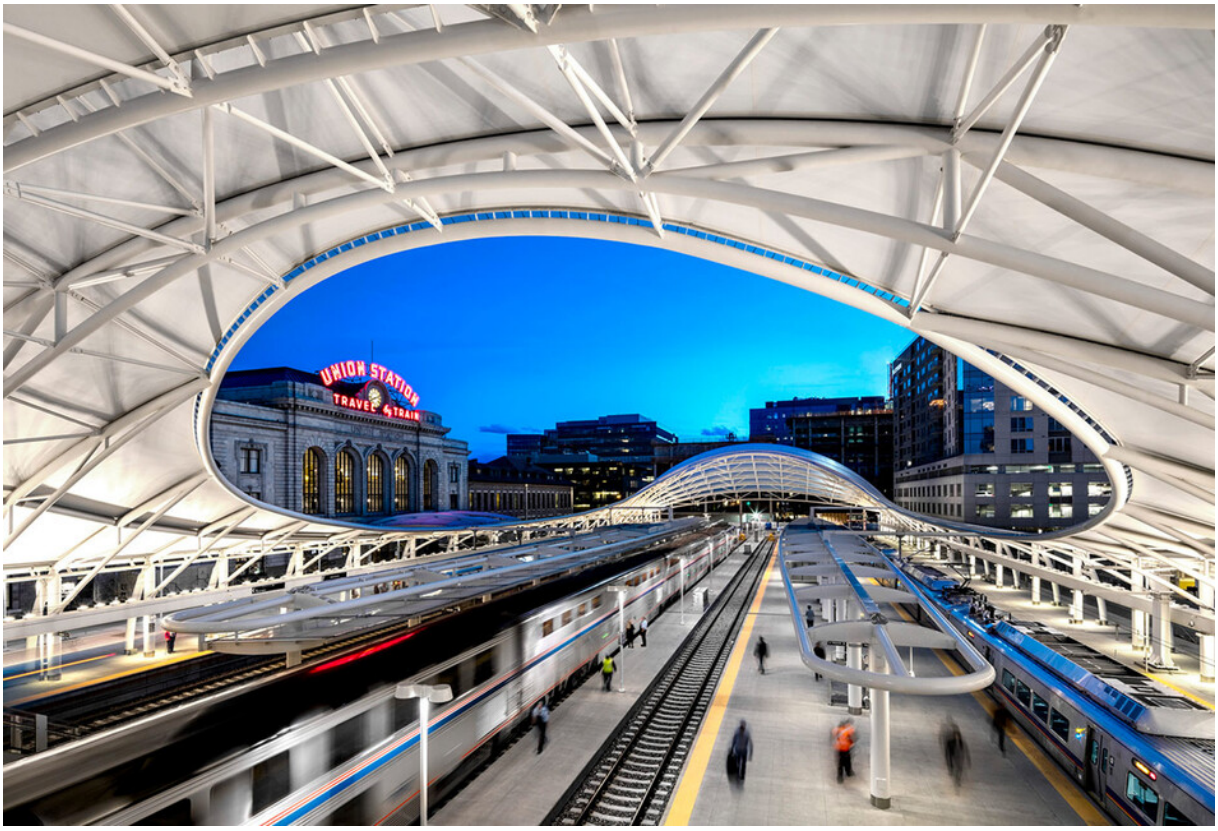
To earn a LEED rating — the coveted certification for sustainable design granted by the US Green Building Council — a project must meet rigorous standards for energy and water efficiency, indoor air quality, and the incorporation of sustainable materials. These eco-friendly projects from alumni architects have all made the grade.



SOM

Denver Union Station

As a principal architect at Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM) specializing in airports and transportation hubs, Derek A. R. Moore ’88GSAPP led the transformation of Denver’s historic Union Station rail yards into a modern, open-air terminal connected to the original Beaux-Arts train hall. The project, completed in 2014, received a LEED gold certification. Moore, who has previously taught at Columbia as an adjunct instructor, has said that “spaces of transport can address the full spectrum of sustainability. They should also move us, in every sense.”

SOM architects also designed Barnard College’s Milstein Center, which earned a LEED silver rating, and the firm helped create the master plan for Columbia’s Manhattanville campus.



Brett Beyer / MoMA

The Museum of Modern Art

Diller Scofidio + Renfro, a firm founded by Elizabeth Diller ’18HON and the late Ricardo Scofidio ’60GSAPP, and currently led by Diller, Charles Renfro ’94GSAPP, and

Benjamin Gilmartin, has left its mark on New York City landmarks from the High Line to Lincoln Center. The firm's LEED-certified projects include 15 Hudson Yards, a residential tower that opened on Manhattan's west side in 2019, as well as gold-rated buildings for Columbia's business and medical schools.

For the 2014–2019 renovation and expansion of the Museum of Modern Art (originally codesigned by Philip L. Goodwin 1912GSAPP), DS+R's design helped reduce water use and integrated a temperature-control system that automatically adjusts based on foot traffic. The project ultimately earned a LEED platinum rating — the highest possible sustainability score.



Percival Kestreltail

One Vanderbilt

As a LEED-accredited managing principal at Kohn Pedersen Fox (KPF), Charles Ippolito '88CC oversaw the design of One Vanderbilt, which landed not only a

platinum rating but also the honor of being Midtown's tallest office tower. The seventy-three-story skyscraper, which was completed in 2020 and is known for its public observation deck, was designed to maximize the flow of natural light and has a combined heat and power plant and a rainwater-collection system.

Ippolito additionally worked on Hysan Place, the first LEED platinum building in Hong Kong, along with KPF principals Robert C. Whitlock '85GSAPP and Bruce Fisher '93GSAPP, and KPF is the firm behind Columbia's forthcoming all-electric biomedical research facility.



Courtesy of Barclays Center

Barclays Center

Before designing skyscrapers like the Steinway Tower and Brooklyn Tower, SHoP Architects — a firm founded by Gregg Pasquarelli '94GSAPP, Kim Holden '94GSAPP, William Sharples '94GSAPP, Coren Sharples '94GSAPP, and Christopher Sharples '90GSAPP — helped conceive the unique look of Brooklyn's Barclays Center. The domed, grass-covered venue, which is home to the Brooklyn Nets and New York

Liberty basketball teams, was designed to be one of the most sustainable arenas in the United States and ultimately achieved a LEED silver rating after its 2012 completion. SHoP's other sustainable buildings include the gold-rated National Veterans Resource Center at Syracuse University as well as Uber's new San Francisco headquarters, which is expected to meet gold requirements.

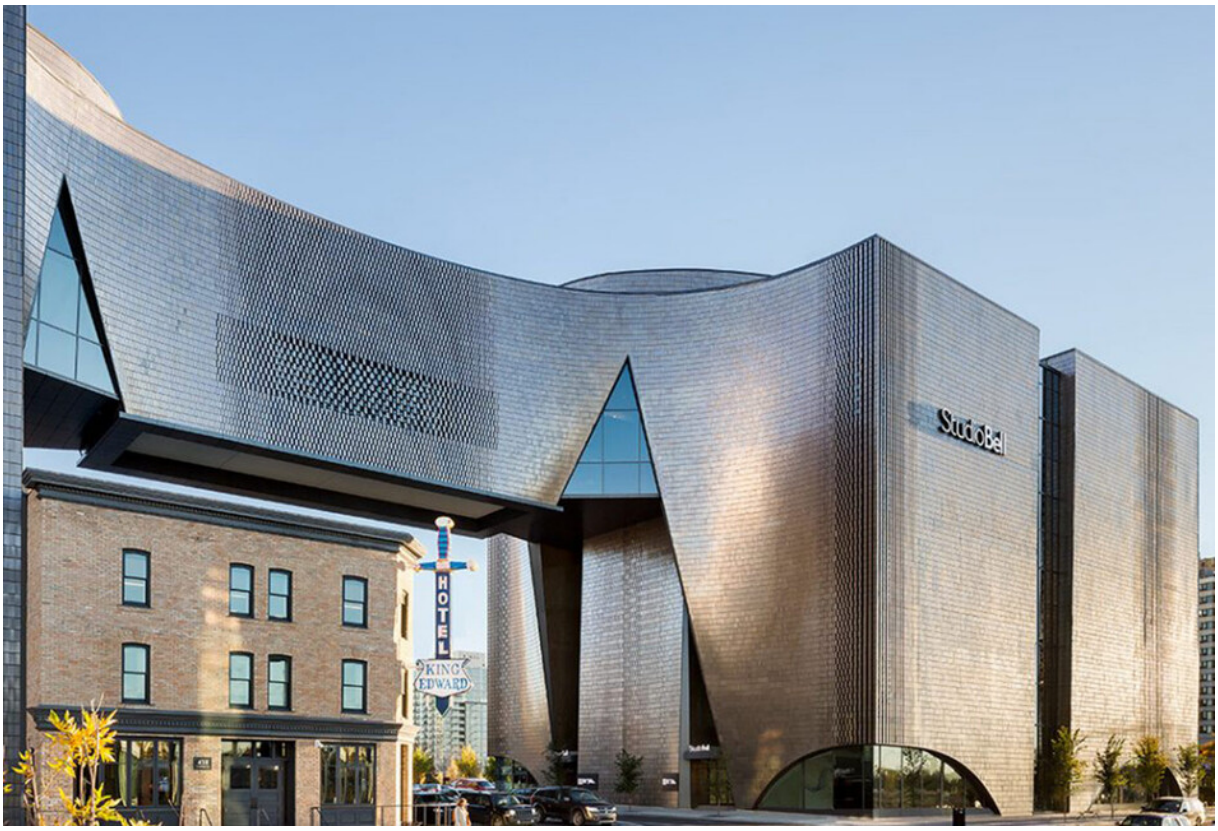


Handel Architects

The House at Cornell Tech

Deborah Moelis '94GSAPP, a principal and founding member of Handel Architects, is a certified architect of passive houses — buildings designed to use as little energy as possible though insulation and innovative construction. Moelis's design for the House at Cornell Tech, a passive house apartment tower on Cornell Tech's Roosevelt Island campus that was completed in 2017, holds a LEED platinum certification. Among Moelis's other sustainable projects are the 709-unit Sendero Verde building in East

Harlem — the world’s largest passive house residential development — and a passive house dorm for the University of Toronto Scarborough.



Allied Works / Studio Bell

National Music Centre of Canada

Brad Cloepfil ’85GSAPP, founder of the firm Allied Works, based in Portland, Oregon, led the design of Canada's National Music Centre, a museum, concert hall, and recording studio completed in 2016. The building, which consists of nine interconnected towers and an attached auditorium in downtown Calgary, received a LEED gold certification as well as a 2022 Prairie Design Award of Excellence. Allied Works also designed the US Embassy in Mozambique, which earned a gold rating in large part for its integration of a wrapping “veil” to provide shade for the building, and the Pixar Animation Studios Brooklyn Building, which holds a silver rating.



Michael Moran / Rice + Lipka Architects

Woodstock Library

Rice + Lipka, a New York-based architecture firm founded and led by Lyn Rice ’94GSAPP and Astrid Lipka ’00GSAPP, has worked primarily on public and cultural spaces, including the New School and the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit. The firm’s gold-rated renovation of the Woodstock Library in the Bronx increased the flow of sunlight while giving the original 1914 space a contemporary makeover. Rice + Lipka’s expansion of the Arverne Library in Queens is expected to achieve a LEED silver certification.



WORKac

Mission Rock Building B

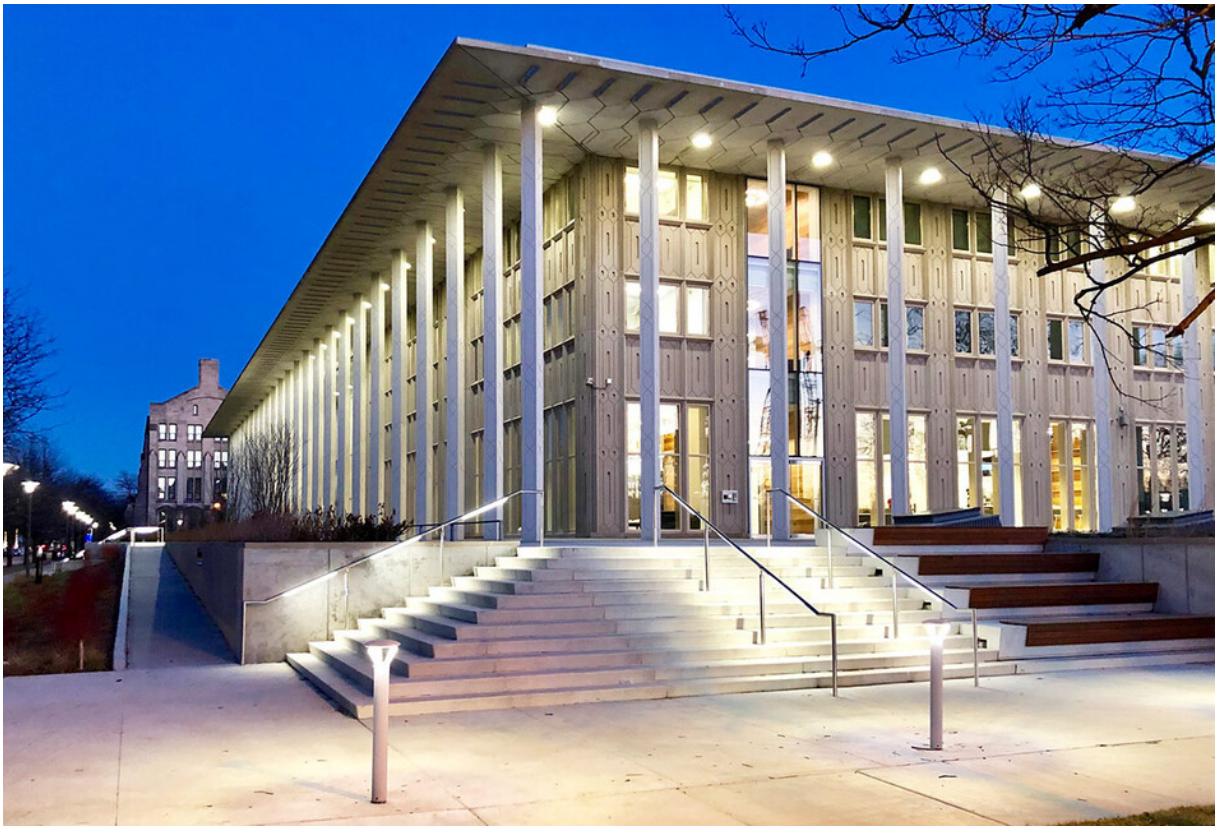
Amale Andraos, an architecture professor and dean emeritus of Columbia’s Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation, and Dan Wood ’92GSAPP, an adjunct associate professor, are the cofounders of WORKac, a New York firm known for its eclectic homes and public spaces. Building B at Mission Rock, a San Francisco office building designed by WORKac and completed in 2024, earned a LEED gold rating for features such as increased natural light, energy-efficient windows, and a water recycling system.



Compass

MiMA and Yotel

Known for its bold modernism and innovative use of materials, Arquitectonica, a Miami-based firm cofounded by Laurinda Spear ’75GSAPP, designed New York’s MiMA apartment building and adjoining Yotel hotel, which opened in Midtown in 2012. With a LEED gold rating, the complex is considered one of the most energy-efficient high-rise developments in the city. Arquitectonica’s other sustainable projects include the Whirlpool Global Headquarters in Benton Harbor, Michigan, which holds a platinum rating, and the gold-rated Franklin County Courthouse, which is considered Ohio’s first “green” courthouse.



Farr Associates Architecture & Urban Design

University of Chicago Keller Center

Farr Associates, a Chicago-based architecture firm founded and led by Doug Farr ’87GSAPP, specializes in sustainable design. The firm’s LEED platinum-rated renovation of the University of Chicago Keller Center, home to the public-policy school, made the building one of the most sustainable in US higher education. Farr Associates’ other platinum-certified projects include Chicago’s Environmental Policy Law Center and Center for Green Technology, as well apartment complexes and small businesses. The Academy for Global Citizenship, a charter school designed by Farr Associates, is currently taking part in the Living Building Challenge, which the firm calls “the most rigorous sustainable building certification in the world.”



Claire Weisz Architects LLP

Javits Center Expansion

WXY Architecture + Urban Design, a firm co-led by Columbia associate professor Adam Lubinsky ’01GSAPP, was selected to design the Jacob Javits Center’s 2022 expansion. The project, which added an event space and an extended rooftop farm to the Hell’s Kitchen convention complex, earned a LEED gold rating for its incorporation of solar panels, a rainwater-collection system, and other green features. WXY previously contributed to the design of New York’s Spring Street Sanitation Garage and Salt Shed, which also achieved a gold rating.



MAP Architects

Sunset Park Library

Magnusson Architecture and Planning, a firm focused on affordable-housing developments and community centers, is led by founder Magnus Magnusson ’78GSAPP, with fellow Columbia alumnus Brian Loughlin ’02GSAPP also serving as a principal. The firm has designed multiple LEED-certified developments across the New York area, including the silver-rated Sunset Park Library. For the project, the architects helped transform a Brooklyn public library into a shared-use building with 49 affordable-housing units and two floors of library space.



SBJ Group

Edge

Isaac-Daniel Astrachan ’90CC, a LEED-accredited principal architect at SBJ Group, has brought to life a variety of residential and hospitality buildings, including the Edge, an apartment complex with adjoining commercial space in Brooklyn’s Williamsburg neighborhood. The waterfront development, which derives 70% of energy from renewable sources, was New York City’s largest gold-rated residential building at the time of its 2011 completion.

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