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SMMA's Blue Cross & Blue Shield headquarters project wins design award

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Design firm Symmes Maini & McKee Associates (SMMA) earned a 2010 Excellence in Design Award from Environmental Design & Construction Magazine for planning and designing the new Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island headquarters. The 13-story tower is one of only five projects in the nation to receive such recognition, and the sole commercial building honored. The project is expected to receive LEED Silver Certification, possibly LEED Gold.

The 13-story tower is the first commercial building to qualify for LEED Certification in Providence. The design consolidates the company's 1,100 employees into a central location designed to promote health and wellness principles in the workplace. The building combines high energy performance with context-sensitive architecture designed to enhance the Providence skyline and complement the diverse mixture of buildings downtown.

Mark Spaulding, AIA, director of architecture for SMMA, said, "We are particularly excited about this award because of its emphasis on the best examples of delivering both great design and environmental sustainability. Integrating the two is essential in designing a building with lasting value for its owner and occupants."

Marie Fitzgerald, IIDA, director of interior design for SMMA said "The award reflects the work of the entire team, including Blue Cross & Blue Shield, in staying true to the initial vision for this important headquarters project, and for creating a vibrant, productive and healthy workplace the company can be proud of for decades to come."

Among the project's sustainable results are advanced HVAC equipment, building envelope technology and creative lighting design expected to save upwards of \$1million annually in utility costs. Rainwater, collected from roofs and drains, is recycled. Three vegetated "green roofs" reduce stormwater runoff and ease urban heat island effect. Sunlight reaches 75% of all interior spaces through high-performance insulated glass, and much of the building's materials contain recycled content. Green practices for food service, cleaning and printing are in place, and the downtown location is adjacent to bus and commuter rail options.

"The building is a big hit with our employees, and is attracting a lot of interest from other companies looking to provide a more eco-friendly workplace," said Tom Bovis, vice president of corporate real estate and administrative services for Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island. "To the extent we can influence others and contribute to sustainable best practices, we are thrilled."

"All winning projects use notably less energy and water than a baseline building," said Michelle Hucal, LEED AP, Environmental Design +Construction (ED+C) editor and a 2010 awards judge.

Now in its 10th year, the Excellence in Design Awards program draws from a diverse panel of judges to evaluate projects on overall design excellence and sustainable building criteria including innovative interior and exterior design, energy efficiency, indoor air quality, water conservation,

sustainable or recycled materials and resources, site selection and budget.

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