

Monday, January 4, 2010

## BUSINESS TODAY

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### TODAY

■ The Commerce Department releases its November construction spending report.

### TOMORROW

■ Associated Industries of Massachusetts releases its Business Confidence Index for December. The prior month, the index was at its highest level since September 2008.

■ The Boston Entrepreneurs' Network holds a panel discussion titled "Legal Challenges for Start-ups," 7 to 10 p.m. at the Bay Colony Conference Center in Waltham. For more info, visit [www.boston-enet.org](http://www.boston-enet.org).  
 ■ Major automakers report sales for December.

### WEDNESDAY, JAN. 6

■ The Federal Reserve releases the minutes for last month's meeting on interest rates and the economic recovery.

### THURSDAY, JAN. 7

■ Major retailers report sales results for December, shedding light on how they fared in the 2009 holiday shopping season.

### FRIDAY, JAN. 8

■ U.S. Sen. Paul Kirk Jr. addresses the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce government affairs forum, 8 to 9 a.m., at the InterContinental Hotel.

■ The U.S. Labor Department releases its unemployment report for December. The jobless rate edged down to 10 percent in November.

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# Brand new in Boston

Fresh look builds with stars, glass, 'green' tech, expressionism

By PAUL RESTUCCIA

Boston architecture broke out of its conservatism in the past decade with many outstanding and innovative buildings that have garnered national attention.

"The general quality of architecture in the city in the past decade has been ex-



tremely high," said Kairos Shen, director of planning for the Boston Redevelopment Authority.

There's always tension in the city between architecture that fits the "Boston" brand and innovative work. But Shen said the best buildings "absorb the lessons of Boston architecture and offer thoughtful and fresh interpretations."

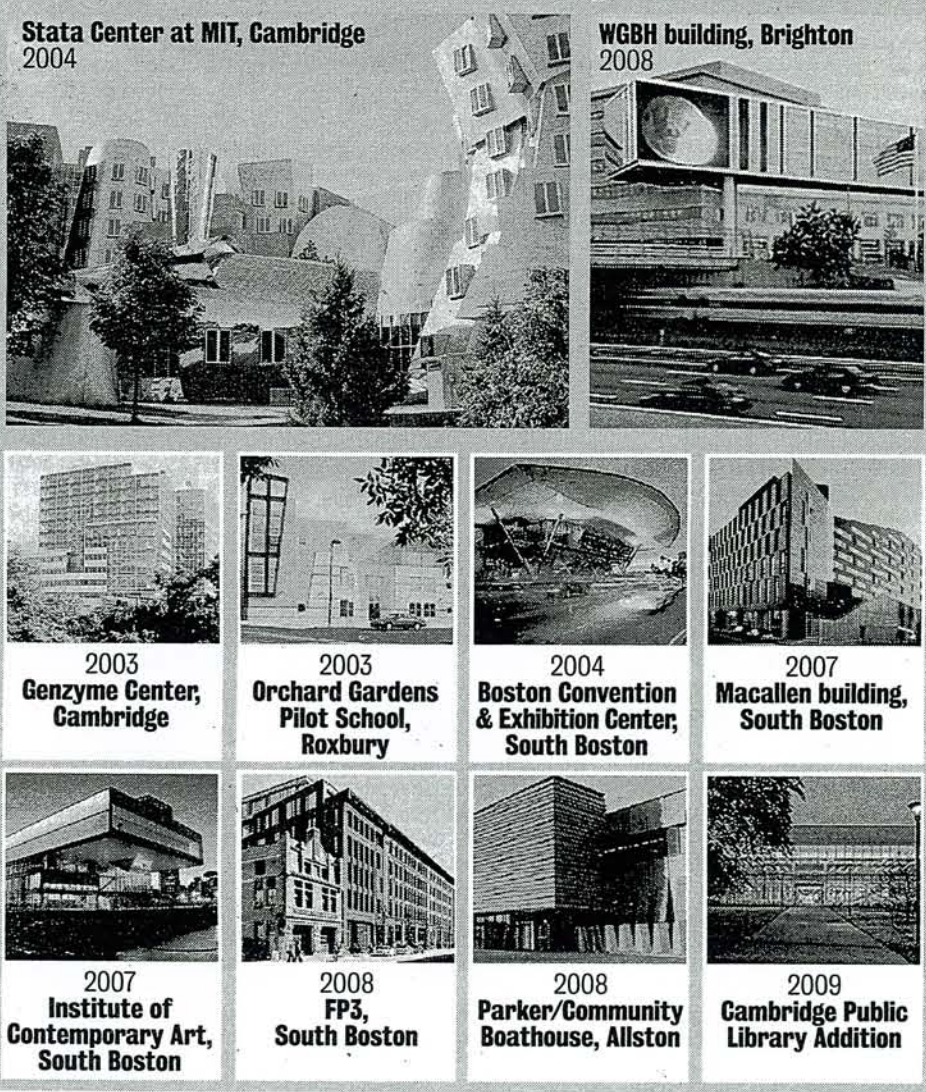
The Boston area got great buildings designed by local architectural firms — such as William Rawn Associates, Office dA Inc. and Hacin Associates — and some noteworthy designs from some of the country's leading architects, including Frank Gehry, Rafael Vinoly and Diller Scofidio + Renfro.

Boston became a leader in so-called "green" building design, with the country's first green zoning code, and the Macallen building in South Boston, designed by Office dA, becoming the first green residential tower in the city. Its stepped-back pyramid form and layered landscaped roof has inset decks for great views and its sustainable materials, such as zebra wood, made for distinctive interiors.

Cambridge also has two outstanding energy-efficient building designs.

The Genzyme Center — by German firm Behnisch, Behnisch and Partners — was a pioneering effort in green

## Ten best Boston-area buildings of the decade



Stata Center at MIT, Cambridge 2004

WGBH building, Brighton 2008

2003 Genzyme Center, Cambridge

2003 Orchard Gardens Pilot School, Roxbury

2004 Boston Convention & Exhibition Center, South Boston

2007 Macallen building, South Boston

2007 Institute of Contemporary Art, South Boston

2008 FP3, South Boston

2008 Parker/Community Boathouse, Allston

2009 Cambridge Public Library Addition

STAFF GRAPHIC BY SARAH KAEMPFE

building with its double-layered glass facade that earned it the highest LEED, or Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, rating. And the just-completed Cambridge

Public Library addition by William Rawn Associates, with its distinctive double-skin glass wall bringing daylight deep into the building, uses 50 percent less energy than a conventional building.



Rawn's designs have given a new face to Northeastern's West Campus this decade and his just-completed W Hotel and Residences' sharp-angled glass exterior adds a new sophistication to the Theater District.

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology raised the bar on innovative architecture in the decade with its hiring of L.A.'s Gehry, New

York's Steven Holl, Japanese great Fumihiko Maki and Indian Charles Correa to design major campus buildings. The critical opinion of these buildings has been mixed, with Holl's strikingly clad dormitory and Gehry's massive Stata Center evidencing design defects. But despite its leaking problems, the Stata Center is a tour de force in Gehry's expressionist style. With its curved metal and glass walls, it seems to defy gravity, and its interior labs

**'It's important that buildings work in context, rather than stick a thumb in someone's eye.'**

**TOM KEANE,**  
 Boston Society of Architects

are designed to promote collaboration. In addition, Maki's just-opened Media Science and Arts building is a case study in the beauty of transparency.

"It's important that buildings work in context, rather than stick a thumb in someone's eye," said Tom Keane, executive director of the Boston Society of Architects. "It's important how they connect with what's around them."

Keane feels the Institute of Contemporary Art on South Boston's waterfront, designed by New York architects Diller Scofidio + Renfro, is one of the decade's best in Boston because, "It's a provocative building that attracts people to it. And because it draws people, it's made the ICA into a successful institution."

Shen added: "What I especially love about the ICA are the views of the water from inside the building and how it makes the harbor the main attraction."

Hacin Associates' FP3 residential and restaurant complex in Southie's Fort Point Channel area gets a nod — as it combined a renovation of an existing warehouse, and a new infill building topped by a slightly askew glass box, in a project that fit the context and had stylistic flair.

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## Fresh look from decade's buildings

ARCHITECTURE, from Page 16

Both cite the Boston Convention & Exhibition Center, designed by New York architect Rafael Vinoly, as noteworthy for its natural lighting in a building type that is often a windowless box. And they laud New York firm Polshek Partnership's WGBH headquarters in Brighton, with its LED mural that greets motorists on the Mass. Pike.

"WGBH is a big, bold building that fits well onto a small site and it's an iconic presence when you enter the city on the Pike," Keane said.

Keane added that the highlights of the decade aren't just buildings themselves but their revitalizing effect: the moves by Emerson College and Suffolk University in the Theater District, the emergence of the Seaport area in South Boston, the revival of the Kenmore Square-Fenway district anchored by the Fenway Park restoration and the new Boylston Street apartment towers, and the teardown of the Central Artery and the resulting

Greenway.

The city's unprecedented hospital expansion produced a gem — the Yawkey Center for Outpatient Care at Mass. General by Cambridge Seven Associates and New York's Michael Fieldman.

Cambridge Seven scored again with its 2007 addition to the Boston Children's Museum, which presents a striking and playful glass, metal and wood facade to the Fort Point Channel.

Emerging Cambridge firm Anmahian Winton has been getting national press for several of its projects and just won the BSA's Harleston Parker award as the building of the year for its geothermal-heated Parker/Community Rowing Boathouse complex on the Charles River, with its slatted-wood exterior.

Boston architects Todd Lee of TLCR Architecture and David Lee of Stull and Lee brought design flair in bold "school bus yellow" to the well-designed Orchard Gardens Pilot School along Albany Street and Melnea Cass Boulevard in Roxbury.

The decade also saw noteworthy work by prolific

local firm Elkus/Manfredi, particularly its Tufte Center for Performance and Production for Emerson, tucked behind the school's Majestic theater, which the Elkus firm admirably restored. Boston's CBT Architects also did outstanding restoration work on the John Adams Courthouse.

While the Boston area had many successful buildings this decade, there were a few failures. The Hotel Commonwealth in Kenmore Square, designed by Boston firm Ahearn Schopfer Associates, was derided for its part-Fiberglas facade, before the BRA stepped in to demand better materials, and the Second Empire-styled exterior comes across as flat and lifeless.

Also, local firm Machado & Silvetti, which scored with the mixed-use Atelier project in the South End and the Honan Library in Allston, designed what is arguably the worst local building of the decade — the 360-bed One Western Ave. dorm complex for Harvard University, which looks like 1950s-style public housing with wacky windows.