The holistic blending of architecture, landscape and the site is a common goal of designers. This was especially the case for the design team from HOK that was challenged with the national headquarters of the National Wildlife Federation. With a client that places climate change, the loss of habitat and people becoming more disconnected from nature as top priorities, the design program statement needed to address these challenges, but also be able to incorporate them into visible teachable opportunities and examples of successful design. The successful result is a building that blends seamlessly into its context and embraces the landscape instead of dominating it.

The reason for the success is based upon the conscious holistic approach taken to blend architecture and landscape. The building is a LEED certified building, a 2002 AIA/COTE Top Ten Award Winner and is an Energy Star partner, but the environmental benefits blend seamlessly once outside the door thresholds. The landscape is a tapestry of native plant materials that extend to the vertical plane through the use of greenscreen®. Native vines grown on greenscreen® help to shade and cool the southern elevation of the headquarters in the summer, while the deciduous vines drop their leaves in the fall and the interior office space benefits throughout the colder months through passive solar warming. Energy modeling confirmed that this deciduous sunscreen is more effective at improving energy performance than more expensive design options that rely on fixed architectural sunscreens.

The panels are mounted to a structural steel frame that is held off 4’ from the face of the building and are mostly standard size panels to help maximize use of materials and minimize costs. The vertical landscape is then anchored by native plantings that are part of the site stormwater management system that extends across the entire front facade. The designers have taken landscape elements that are typically relegated to unaesthetic engineered solutions and have successfully integrated them into an amenity that becomes the welcome mat to the front door. The seasonal aspects of this holistic approach actually make the structure “change” with the seasons and give the building a living quality.

The greenscreen® Education Series - Case Studies is a series reviewing specific greenscreen® installations for a variety of climate zones, building types, site and landscape conditions.

Also available: The greenscreen® Education Series - Research Reviews is a series of briefs composed as summaries to help educate our design partners about important issues supported by international research efforts. Document titles and authors are listed, and we encourage you to read original transcripts for a complete understanding of methodologies, intent, and the original research summaries.

Commercial - Office: National Wildlife Federation Headquarters

Site Specifics: 95,000 Sq. Ft. Class B+ Office Space, completed 2000
11100 Wildlife Center Drive
Reston, VA 20190
Additional Hi Resolution photos for this project are available.

Contractor: James G. Davis Construction Corp., Rockville, MD.