

While obviously good for the environment, the changes have been just as good for recruitment, retention and the morale of the company itself, says Captain Jeremy McPike, the volunteer captain who by day is the deputy director for general services for the city of Alexandria and a LEED-certified professional.

FINALIST
Envision Design

If there was ever an office that needed to walk the walk, it's the U.S. Green Building Council's D.C. headquarters. In planning its client's new space, architecture and design firm Envision Design faced a challenge: USGBC wanted to significantly reduce its energy use in 75,000 square feet on two floors, but had to do so without changing the existing base systems. Before pencil hit paper, architects, engineers, contractors and the USGBC sat down to strategize how the project could hit LEED Platinum. The group studied mechanisms such as light-colored carpeting near the glass perimeter to create a light shelf that dramatically improves natural light, and how people work, a choice that resulted in making more than 85 percent of workspaces flexible and able to be reconfigured. Completed in March 2009, the new USGBC office now saves more than \$106,000 annually in energy costs and was the first to earn LEED Platinum under its new version 3.0 rating system.

FINALIST
The George Washington University

The George Washington University has taken the region's drinking water into its own hands. Before this spring, rainfall that hit the GW campus would naturally drain into the Potomac watershed, the source of much of Washington drinking water.

Square 80 Plaza, a former .75-acre parking lot, changed all that. The site officially reopened on Earth Day this spring as an outdoor recreation space that doubles as a rainwater collection site.

FINALIST
Honest Tea Inc.

Honest Tea Inc. has worked for years to make its products as sustainable and green as possible. But when it comes to packaging beverages, that's a challenging task.

CEO Seth Goldman and the Honest Tea team began developing a new, lighter and more recyclable bottle immediately after releasing its first plastic bottle in 2004. Those bottles, which were made from PET-1 plastic, won several packaging awards.

It was a tough act to follow: The new bottle had to be able to withstand the heat of the boiling tea while also using less plastic. The new bottle, released in 2009, is 22 percent lighter than the previous bottle.

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