

December 12, 2012 | By Christine Clark

UC San Diego's Keeling Apartments Earn Top Honors for Innovative and Sustainable Landscape Design

The Charles David Keeling apartments on the campus of the University of California, San Diego have won the 2012 President's Award by the San Diego chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects.

The awards recognize professional excellence for outstanding works of landscape architecture and environmental planning that promote an enhanced quality of life in San Diego County and beyond.

The Keeling apartments' landscape, designed by Spurlock Poirier Landscape Architecture, was awarded in the commercial, institutional and urban design category. The landscaping was selected out of 49 architectural projects that were reviewed by a multi-industry jury in November. The project was selected for its elegant system of vegetated roofs, downspouts, channels and bioswales that are creatively integrated with outdoor recreation and gathering spaces.



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“Having the opportunity to be considered among the top landscape design projects in San Diego is very rewarding and reflects UC San Diego’s true commitment to protecting and preserving the environment,” said Mark Cunningham, assistant vice chancellor of Housing and Dining at UC San Diego. “We’re deeply appreciative of this outstanding recognition.”

The 158,000 square feet of landscaping that surrounds the Keeling apartments also runs along La Jolla’s North Torrey Pines Road.

One of the many unique features of the Keeling apartments’ landscape is its “green roof.” The roof has a garden with more than 4,000 plants; this project creates energy savings as well as provides more study and relaxation space for students. The roof also helps absorb rainwater, provide insulation to reduce heating and cooling costs and creates new wildlife habitats.

In addition, the Keeling landscape features a system to capture storm water and route it into the landscaping rather than send it into the city’s storm drain system above the fragile ecosystem of nearby Skeleton Canyon.

The Keeling apartments already have the prestige of being UC San Diego’s first Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) platinum certified structure.

The Keeling apartments’ sustainable features pay homage to their namesake, UC San Diego’s Scripps Institution of Oceanography professor Charles David Keeling, the first scientist to record the rise of carbon dioxide in the Earth’s atmosphere. The “Keeling Curve” measurement has been cited as the most important geophysical measurement of the 20th century.

The energy-efficient apartments house 510 beds and feature sustainable building strategies including recycling gray water, solar energy and utilization of the San Diego / La Jolla microclimate for natural air conditioning (ocean air) and day-lighting.

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