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SPECIAL SECTION: **RESOURCE GUIDE 2006**—A DIRECTORY OF AREA BUSINESSES

# BUILDING

BY KAREN DAHOOD

# from the Best

From urban infill to green building, the Sonoran Institute applauds innovative development

**Every other year** conscientious caretakers of our community—led by the Sonoran Institute—celebrate the Building from the Best Awards. In March at Hotel Arizona winners were announced at the signature event underwritten by Rio Development Company, whose Rio Nuevo project—Mercado District of Menlo Park—honors Tucson’s natural, cultural, and historical character.

Jason Meininger, who oversees the awards program, says an increase in nominations this year signals a shift to a more progressive approach to building. “The judges had a hard time making the final decisions. There were a lot of discussions and site visits to every one of the 23 finalists,” he says. The judges were Teree Bergman, a planner in Oro Valley; Andy Laurenzi, a land-use specialist on the Sonoran Institute staff; Annie Nequette, University of Arizona professor and expert on Tucson’s historic architecture; and Jane Ragle, citizen-at-large.

This year’s winners represent so many significant innovations, they would need whole books to aptly describe them. Here we offer a few distinguishing details.

## \* MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT

**FINALISTS** Barrio de Tubac • Pennington Street Garage • Sam Hughes Place • Stone Avenue Standard

### **WINNER Pennington Street Garage**

*Located at the corner of 6th Avenue and Pennington Street*

The City of Tucson • Dick & Fritsche Design Group • D. L. Withers Construction

A trend-setting, record-breaking, eye-catching parking garage isn’t something most people would aspire to. But Chris Leighton, coordinator of the city program Parkwise, believes downtown revitalization depends on accommodating automobiles with innovation and sensitivity. His startling result combines a pleasantly lit, colorful parking structure with a high-class restaurant, a meeting room, and budget-friendly features.

The building operates economically and efficiently on 65-kilowatt photovoltaic solar power. Leighton’s entrepreneurial team also sees shade as a natural resource: All but four of the 750 slots have cover, making this garage all the nicer. The same kind of dashboard tag that speeds cars through electronic toll booths back East activates the gates. The building’s Pueblo Deco style, with a wide arcade to shelter outdoor dining, attracted Café Poca Cosa. More surprising is the occasional car show held on a ramp when parking isn’t in high demand.

Leighton also wisely decided to use ground-up concrete from the building razed to make room for the garage in the foundation. In the lobby the concrete is polished to a high sheen. ▶



Pennington Street Garage

## \* CREATIVE REDEVELOPMENT & REHABILITATION

**FINALISTS** 1202 Studios • Casa Buena • Ice House Lofts • The Pines

**WINNER** **Ice House Lofts**

*Located near 17th Street and Toole Avenue*

Fremont Partners One LLC • Rob Paulus Architects • CaliberWest LLC

The four partners who advanced “smart growth” by turning a 1923 ice plant into housing saw lots of “cool” advantages for the owners of 51 loft-style homes. Most exciting are the trains, barely heard from inside the tightly engineered interiors but thrilling to watch through floor-to-ceiling windows.

The unique landmark was not only salvaged, but the combination of its authentic high ceilings, exposed pipes, and seasoned wood, along with new high-end storage, sophisticated lighting, and sleek finishes, give the development the distinct qualities urbanites love. And passive-solar design means their spacious interiors with European-style kitchens and designer plumbing have guaranteed heating and cooling costs ranging from only \$15.50 to \$63.16 per month.

Plus, the reconstituted residential area sits within walking distance of two popular food markets at the edge of Armory Park Historic Neighborhood near the heart of downtown.

## \* URBAN INFILL DEVELOPMENT— SMALL SCALE

**FINALISTS** Barrio Metalico ■ The Double ■ Franklin Court ■  
Morton House

**WINNER** **Barrio Metalico**

*Located near 17th Street and Toole Avenue*

Fremont Partners One LLC ■ Rob Paulus Architects ■  
CaliberWest LLC

Barrio Metalico could be called a brainstorm development. When the Ice House Lofts project was being planned in the 80-year-old Millville neighborhood, the developers purchased adjacent domestic properties that needed improvement. The adobe houses couldn't be saved, so architect Rob Paulus designed a prototypical replacement dwelling that saluted the industrial character of the surrounding environment.

The nine loft-style, two-bedroom, two-bath homes (with super-insulated, energy-efficient but economical wall systems) have light-filled modern interiors and metal exteriors coated with a protective aluminum-on-steel finish called Galvalume. Huge cylindrical rain barrels for rainwater harvesting and solar-operated driveway gates count among the energy-smart features, as do the windows—small on the sunny walls, expansive where there are views of the distant mountains.

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Barrio Metalico