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GREEN-BUILDING ALLIANCE

Bill Brooks and Mark Ayers of Ferraro Choi and Associates are shaping Hawai'i's built environment with sustainable design

In 2003, right around the time local boy Bill Brooks became a principal at Ferraro Choi and Associates, Chicago transplant Mark Ayers relocated to Hawai'i and joined the architectural firm. Both architects fervently embraced the sustainability principles that founders Joe Ferraro and Gerald Choi worked hard to set in stone.

Ayers' strong design skills and commitment to service meshed well with Brooks' sustainability-focused design strategy and client-relations savvy. Their first collaborative project, the cafeteria at Waipahu Intermediate, demonstrated Ayers' experience with school design and Brooks' background in sustainable building features such as the thermal cavity roof and heat chimneys. Before long, the Department of Education's first LEED-certified facility was born. The two have continued to build upon their combined strengths over the past decade, creating the Lahainaluna High School cafeteria on Maui and, most recently, the Stevenson Middle School Science and Technology Center—what they consider to be the new model of sustainable school design for the DOE. When the science center is completed this spring, the 14,000-square-foot LEED-equivalent structure will operate about 30 percent more efficiently than the energy-consumption standards required by code, with innovative features like daylighting, window shading, mixed-mode ventilation and a large learning lanai complete with a garden and water-catchment system.

The two are currently working on a STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) facility for Kohala High School and are deep into the design of the DOE's new East Kapolei Middle School, which could become the nation's first CHPS (Collaborative for High Performance Schools) verified campus. Ayers and Brooks are constantly exploring new opportunities to get their creative juices flowing, like when they leveraged Brooks' prior partnership with the National Science Foundation's U.S. South Pole Station in Antarctica to enter design competitions for new stations in India and Brazil.

Ayers says the duo's shared vision and respect are central to their powerful design chemistry. "Due to our years of working together, I think we can anticipate each other's motivations and design direction," he says. "At the same time, we can turn it off and enjoy social banter over a beer." Brooks' explanation is a bit more simplistic: "Mark and I believe that architecture matters." —*Lindsey Kesel*



Photo: Dave Miyamoto