



WEBSITE BRIEF CONTEST REPORT

Prior to July, many of the architectural, engineering, and branding details of the 2005 CU Solar Decathlon House were still being designed and redesigned. As a stopgap measure, an attractive and professional Website was created as a placeholder whereby information about the project could be disseminated to the general public and sponsors. With the branding details having been consequently finalized, CU is performing an extensive redesign of its Website in order to provide a strong identity to the CU project that is also true to the spirit of the competition.

Website Goals

The new face of the Website will reflect more closely the branding and philosophy of the project. Updates include:

- Branding
- Accessibility and ease of use
- A focus on the integration between nature and technology
- Educational awareness
- Entertainment value

One of the most important aspects of any multimedia competition is having a constant theme between all the different components. Creating a common brand theory will help the public, along with the jury, identify with the University of Colorado project. CU is doing this in three main ways: font, color, and logo. The Website team has selected three fonts with which to do all the publications and one information font, used only for information that is time-consuming to read. The information font is the same font used by the transportation authority on all its signs. The team selected this font to convey information because of its filamentary and iconic use. The purpose of the second font type is to grab the user's attention. It is a bold impact font with no curving, designed to read as much as an image as a text and act much like a flag stating that this is a University of Colorado publication. The last font that CU has selected accompanies an iconic symbol used often with or in place of the logo. It is meant only to be used for the university name and project. The team selected the primary color of the 2005 University of Colorado Solar Decathlon project as sangria (dark red); sangria is ranked as the second most favored color in the U.S. and the most favored color in the world. The CU team is using this color extensively throughout the house as paints and washes on various surfaces. The secondary color that we are using is finch yellow (yellow/green), which serves as an accent color to the sangria. It will be used in the house to offset all the hues of red. CU feels that these two colors used together will symbolize an aspen leaf in the autumn, the season in which this competition is being held. The final aspect of the Website branding is the logo, an aspen leaf entitled "Aspen Sun." The aspen tree is the most common species in Colorado and the most widely distributed tree in North America. The parallel between the photosynthetic process of a leaf and the photovoltaic process of a solar cell furthers this image as an effective logo in line with the CU Team's design philosophy.

Alongside the physical accessibility of the House for all members of the public, the Website has also been designed with accessibility and ease of use in mind. Any aesthetics or flash is carefully balanced with the desire to keep the Website as simple and intuitive to browse as possible. This design aspect includes a logical organization of content, familiar navigation, and concise, but descriptive, heading names. The Website has been developed for both the individual who only wants a specific piece of information as well as the individual who wishes to delve deeply into the inner workings of the House.

Content-wise, one of the most important aspects of the House is its association with nature. With materials based on wheat, soy, and corn, much of the House is derived from agricultural feedstock rather than petroleum-based products. This integration between nature and technology demonstrates the ability to provide a comfortable and sustainable environment while minimizing the impacts on our environment. Therefore, the Website prominently highlights this reliance on natural materials by exploring each of these materials in detail. By drawing parallels between the House's materials and their origins in nature, the public can begin to realize the ecological impacts that occur with each and every material that is consumed and understand the necessity for minimizing resource consumption. The Website explores in depth all of the House materials, from the innovative Bio-SIP wall system to countertops to dishes, underlining the importance of a strong integration between nature and technology.

Educating the public about the relationship between nature and the House is just one of methods in which the Website seeks to raise awareness. In keeping with the CU design philosophy, the Website aims to provide a wealth of information for a wide range of lifestyles and users. While the Bio-S^(h)IP is CU's example of a sustainable, cost-effective, and architecturally pleasing house, its impact on the world will be demonstrated through its ability to foster communication within our society about issues such as energy efficiency, solar energy, and natural materials. Thus, while the Website serves as a record of the team's sweat and tears from beginning to end, it is also more importantly a resource for any individual who seeks to reduce their ecological footprint in the world. With CU's project touching on such elements as biodiesel fuel, zero-energy homes, and sustainability, so too the Website expands on each of these topics. The CU team's updated Website is truly one of its principal mechanisms for planting the seeds of awareness in the minds of the public.

Lastly, while the Website is largely intended as a form of educational awareness and outreach, it should also be an entertaining and enjoyable experience for the user. This enjoyment is achieved not only through aesthetically pleasing design, but also by bringing the fun and excitement of building an environmentally friendly, energy efficient house to the user. Indeed, the project has entailed long days and longer nights filled with work, but it has also cultivated fun, friendship, and a sense of family among team members. The Website strives to bring across the team's excitement and illustrate to the public that green building design is not a chore, but an exciting challenge to live up to one's own sense of the "greater good."

Summary

If the public does not leave CU's Website with the desire to question its own houses and lifestyle impacts, then the site's job is not complete. The site intends to provide the user with all the tools that he needs to educate himself and put his beliefs or ideas into action. From natural building to innovative technologies, the Website is a showcase of what is possible when a group of strong-willed, inspired individuals puts their collective head together and strives to make a positive change. The message – if the CU team can do it, so too can the user.