



For Immediate Release

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Wisconsin Monastery Achieves Platinum Certification from U.S. Green Building Council

The U.S. Green Building Council has awarded the Benedictine Women of Madison's Holy Wisdom Monastery a Platinum rating – the highest level of Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED®) certification available. The monastery earned 63 out of a possible 69 points under LEED-NC version 2.2, the most of any LEED-NC building in the United States to date.

Located at 4200 County Highway M in Middleton, Wisconsin, the monastery is a 30,000 square foot, two-story structure with a detached, 4,000 square foot remodeled maintenance building on 130 acres overlooking Lake Mendota. Partnering with Hoffman LLC, a Wisconsin-based planning, design, and construction management firm, the Sisters spent two years exploring and defining their vision for the monastery.

Holy Wisdom Monastery offered an opportunity to explore what a 21st century Benedictine monastery could be. With no prototype to follow, the project team was guided by the Sisters' mission of *weaving prayer, hospitality, justice, and care for the earth into a shared way of life as an ecumenical Benedictine community*. While it was not their original intent to set a LEED record, they were determined to build as sustainably as possible and to encourage others to do so by demonstrating that it could be done affordably.

"For us, sustainability is not a trend," says Sister Joanne Kollasch, "but a commitment to the earth – a 21st century expression of 1500 years of Benedictine tradition." Adds Sister Mary David Walgenbach, the monastery's prioress, "It's not **the** thing to do; it's the **right** thing to do." Their goal is to expand their photovoltaic system to ultimately provide 100% of the monastery's net energy requirement from an on-site renewable source. While the Sisters had no previous experience with a building project, they have made bold moves before this. Examples include their ecumenical stance, the restoration of 95 acres of farmland to prairie, and the dredging of a glacial lake that had been filled with silt from previous farming practices.

The monastery is "right-sized", providing 50% less space than its obsolete predecessor, Benedict House, which was deconstructed responsibly: 99.75% of the 60,000 square foot building was recycled or reused. The new facility provides prayer, concert, and conference, dining, reading and administrative spaces.

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A sampling of green highlights includes:

- Andersen® windows provide ample natural light to 85% of regularly occupied spaces. All but the north facing windows transmit only 20% of daylight to the interior, minimizing glare and unwanted solar heat gain, eliminating the need for blinds which would have obscured the spectacular views. Many windows and all clerestory windows are operable to provide natural ventilation and reduce the need for air conditioning.
- An anticipated 60 percent savings in energy cost and over 40 percent savings in indoor water usage compared to a LEED baseline building.
- The restoration and reuse of the pipe organ and bells.
- A geothermal heating and cooling system uses 39 closed-loop wells, each 300 feet deep. When the outdoor temperature is in the 60's to low 70's, the building controls system sends an email to the building occupants inviting them to open their windows, should they wish to adjust the temperature in their space.
- Solatubes and a dramatic skylight provide natural light for some interior spaces.
- It is anticipated that photovoltaic system on the Assembly Room (chapel) roof will generate 13% of the monastery's energy needs. Photovoltaic light fixtures illuminate the parking lot.
- Exterior signage indicates preferential parking for carpool and low-emitting vehicles.
- The parking lot drains to areas of pervious concrete. Four rain barrels collect and store water for plant care and there are two rain gardens. Five additional acres around the new building will be restored to prairie and two vegetated roofs over the maintenance building and garage are planted with prairie forbs and grasses. Together, these measures reduce storm water run-off to 13% below pre-development levels.
- Almost 30% of the material came from within a 500 mile radius and over 20% of materials are recycled.
- Bamboo, a rapidly renewable resource, was used for flooring in the Assembly, gathering and dining rooms and for the ceiling of the Oratory and Meditation Chapel.

In addition to fulfilling its primary role as a monastery, the Sisters are using Holy Wisdom Monastery to help inspire and encourage others to build and live sustainably.

Holy Wisdom Monastery was completed at a cost of \$246 per square foot, a figure that contains all project-related costs—except for land—including the responsible deconstruction of Benedict House. Both the Sisters and Hoffman take great pride in the fact that one of the greenest buildings in the United States was built for such a moderate cost.

The monastery continues to accept donations toward the remaining \$1 million of their \$2 million campaign goal. For more information, visit www.benedictinewomen.org.