

Green museum gets gold award

National agency applauds
GR Art Museum's
environmental qualities

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GRAND RAPIDS — The Grand Rapids Art Museum has captured the gold.

The new \$75 million museum, built to be environmentally friendly, has been awarded gold certification from the U.S. Green Building Council, the national agency that rates the construction and operation of sustainable buildings.

GRAM becomes the first newly built art museum in the world to receive certification from USGBC's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design program.

That the 125,000-square-foot building also achieved the higher-level gold rating is a bonus.

"The gold standard was always our goal," said East Grand Rapids philanthropist Peter Wege, who donated \$20 million in 2000 toward the project with the proviso the downtown museum be "green."

The building that opened in October was designed with technologies to save energy and reduce water and was built to incorporate recycled material in its construction.

But day-to-day operations, such as stocking recycled and natural products in the museum's gift store, also earned LEED "points" toward certification.

Museum Director Celeste Adams described certification as "a moment in time" that is a process leading to long-term sustainability.

"It's nice that we're the first, but it's not like the Olympic Games," Adams said. "You cheer on those who are next."

SEE MUSEUM, B2

MUSEUM

70 PERCENT OF LIGHT IS NATURAL

CONTINUED FROM B1

The building, designed by architects Kulapat Yantrasast and Yo Hakomori of the Los Angeles-based firm WHY Architecture, was constructed to receive 70 percent of its light from natural sources and to use a water-collection system to reduce demand for city-treated water by 20 percent.

More than 20 percent of the materials used by Rockford Construction to build the museum were recycled.

Certification also weighed such factors as how far construction materials were transported to the site and the availability of public transportation nearby for visitors.

Officials were confident they had done their homework toward achieving LEED certification, said Thomas

Calmeau, director of project controls for The Rise Group, the Chicago-based company that served as the owner's representative and project manager.

"We spent a lot of time designing the features and building confidence in the points we were seeking," Calmeau said. "The success reflects the efforts of the team."

The gold-level award was an added achievement for the building Newsweek magazine named one of its "Six Most Important Buildings of 2007."

"One of the purposes is not to reveal that you and you alone are certified," Adams said. "Our position is, may there be thousands that follow."

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