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Omega Awarded Living Building Challenge™ Certification

Leaders in the Green Building Movement Gathered to Celebrate Recognition of One of the Greenest Buildings in the World

RHINEBECK, NY – Today the [Omega Center for Sustainable Living](#) (OCSL) was granted a Living Building Challenge™ award from Jason F. McLennan, chief executive officer at the International Living Building Institute, in front of an audience of more than 300 people, including some of the world's top thought leaders in the green design movement. The OCSL is one of only two green buildings in the world to be named "Living Buildings" earlier this week. The Living Building Challenge defines the most advanced level of sustainability in a built environment, and is currently the most advanced green building rating system in the world.

"As a nonprofit organization, Omega has been at the forefront of human development for more than 30 years. Our mission is rooted in lifelong learning, and there is a tremendous amount that can be learned from the intelligence of the natural world and applied to built environments. We hope projects like ours will help to move the culture forward, by setting a benchmark for sustainable design and by demonstrating new ways of being in relationship with our planet," said Robert "Skip" Backus, chief executive officer at Omega.

The OCSL, designed by Kansas City-based [BNIM Architects](#), is an environmental education center and natural water reclamation facility on Omega Institute's Rhinebeck, New York campus. The OCSL was recently selected for the American Institute of Architects Committee on the Environment (AIA/COTE) Top 10 Green Projects, and is the only building in the United States to achieve both LEED® Platinum and Living Building Challenge™ certification.

"This is not a 'light' green award. This is a challenge. It is a hard challenge to meet. Omega is paving the way toward a new paradigm for architecture all over the planet," said Jason F. McLennan, chief executive officer at the [International Living Building Institute](#), moments before presenting the OCSL project team with an award to commemorate "Living Building" certification.

The award ceremony and press event was held against the backdrop of Omega's prestigious environmental conference [Design by Nature: Creative Solutions with Biomimicry, Permaculture & Sustainable Design](#), where many environmentalists, policy makers, developers, academics, and press convened to explore the OCSL's performance and the next era in sustainability.

The day also included keynote remarks from Omega's leadership and notable speakers, including Dayna Baumeister, cofounder of the Biomimicry Guild; John Todd, biologist, developer of the OCSL's Eco Machine™ and founder of John Todd Ecological Design; Bob Berkebile and Laura Lesniewski, lead architects from BNIM; and Dana Levy, program manager for industrial research at the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA).

The OCSL supplies all of its own energy needs, and its operation is carbon neutral. The self-sustaining building is heated and cooled using geothermal systems, and utilizes photovoltaic power. It will serve as the heart of Omega's ongoing environmental initiatives and includes a greenhouse, an Eco Machine™, constructed wetland, and a classroom that is open to the public year-round. The core of the center is a 4,500-square-foot greenhouse containing a water filtration system called the Eco Machine™. This living system uses plants, bacteria, algae, snails, and fungi to recycle Omega's wastewater (approximately 5 million gallons per year) into clean water that is used to restore the aquifer.

To schedule a tour, contact Omega at OCSL@eOmega.org. For further information about the Omega Center for Sustainable Living, please visit eOmega.org/ocsl.

About Omega Institute for Holistic Studies

Founded in 1977, Omega Institute for Holistic Studies is the nation's most trusted source for wellness and personal growth. As a nonprofit organization, Omega offers diverse and innovative educational experiences that inspire an integrated approach to personal and social change. Located on 195 acres in the beautiful Hudson Valley, Omega welcomes more than 23,000 people to its workshops, conferences, and retreats in Rhinebeck, New York and at exceptional locations around the world. eOmega.org

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