



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **BNIM Architects and the Omega Center for Sustainable Living Receive Prestigious Living Building Award at Greenbuild 2007**

*Design of Environmental Facility and Education Center Embodies Highest Level of  
Environmental Performance*

**CHICAGO, Nov. 15, 2007**—At the world's premiere green building conference, BNIM Architects and Omega Institute were honored as winners of the Greenbuild 2007 Living Building Competition for exemplary planning of the Omega Center for Sustainable Living (OCSL). Located in Rhinebeck, New York, the OCSL will be a state-of-the art environmental facility and education center that brings together wastewater recycling, clean energy, green architecture, and other sustainability elements. The project received the On the Boards Award, which acknowledges a project in design or under construction most likely to meet Living Building performance criteria.

"The OCSL provided us with a unique challenge: Create the most environmentally sustainable wastewater processing facility possible that educates by example," said Steve McDowell, FAIA and principal with BNIM Architects, design leader of the OCSL design team. "This award validates that our design achieves a high level of sustainability and environmental stewardship that we originally intended."

The U.S. Green Building Council, in partnership with the Cascadia Region Green Building Council, hosted the Greenbuild 2007 Living Building Competition, based on Cascadia's Living Building Challenge. The competition celebrates the highest level of environmental performance currently achieved in buildings in the United States. Living Building criteria is intended to exceed the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED® Platinum standards, and move the building industry toward achieving truly restorative design.

"The OCSL is a beautiful example of the transformation that needs to take place in architecture—good design coupled with a deep green philosophy. It gives me hope for the buildings of the future," stated Jason F. McLennan, CEO Cascadia Region Green Building Council and founder of the Living Building Challenge.

The OCSL will recycle wastewater, supply all its own energy needs using photovoltaics, and be an educational model to inspire sustainable living practices. It will serve as the heart of Omega's ongoing environmental initiatives and will include a laboratory, greenhouse, water garden, constructed wetland, and a classroom which will be open year-round to visiting students of all ages.

"The lack of fresh, clean water is not just a problem of the developing world, it is a problem we all face. With this facility, Omega is demonstrating steps that can be taken toward a more sustainable future," said Skip Backus, Executive Director at Omega Institute.

The self-sustaining, high thermal-mass building will utilize passive solar heating (supplemented by geothermal heating as needed) and natural ventilation cooling strategies. The \$2.3 million construction project broke ground in October and is expected to be finished and fully operational next year. Omega's capital campaign to raise funding is underway.

"We were impressed with Omega Institute because they encouraged us to bring together a highly collaborative team of experts in wastewater, civil, landscape, mechanical, and structural design—all with deep experience working on high-performance buildings," said Laura Lesniewski, principal with BNIM Architects. "Together the project team was able to turn Omega's vision into a highly integrated design that embodies the Living Building criteria."

The core of the center will be a 4,500-square-foot greenhouse containing a water filtration system called the Eco-Machine™. This living system will use plants, bacteria, algae, snails, and fungi to recycle Omega's wastewater (approximately 5 million gallons per year) into clean water that can be used to restore the aquifer. The Eco-Machine™ incorporates technology first seen in similar systems known as Living Machines. Dr. John Todd is generally credited for the initial development of Living Machines and is the founder of John Todd Ecological Design, Inc. His son, Jonathan Todd is one of the ecological designers working on this project.

"Along with their in-depth knowledge and experience, BNIM Architects brings a refreshing perspective to sustainable design and truly understands what we are trying to achieve with this project. Both Omega and BNIM are honored to be the only project selected by Cascadia to receive the On the Boards Award," said Backus.

For more information on the Living Building Competition, see <http://www.cascadiagbc.org/news/greenbuild-2007-living-building-competition>.

### **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 20,000 people to its workshops, conferences, and retreats in Rhinebeck, New York and at exceptional locations around the world. For more information, visit [www.eomega.org](http://www.eomega.org)*

**About BNIM Architects**

*With 37 years of experience as a multidisciplinary architectural firm, Berkebile, Nelson, Immenschuh, McDowell Architects has built a reputation for thoughtful and responsive design thorough technical competence and conscientious service. With offices in Kansas City, Missouri, Houston, Texas, and Des Moines, Iowa, BNIM Architects has completed many significant public and private projects at both local and national levels. The firm's areas of expertise include sustainable design and community redevelopment, urban planning and design, educational facilities, campus master planning, and residential and corporate office spaces. BNIM is committed to restorative design, which aims to maximize human potential, productivity, and health while increasing the vitality of natural systems. For more information, call Kathy Achelpohl at 816.783.1500 or visit [www.bnim.com](http://www.bnim.com).*

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