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Omega Center for Sustainable Living First Green Building in America to Achieve Both LEED® Platinum and Living Building Challenge™ Certification

Living Building Challenge™ Certification Marks New Era in Sustainable Design: World's First "Living Buildings" Announced

October 12, 2010 – The [International Living Building Institute](#) today announced the long awaited results of the Living Building Challenge™ audit – confirming the [Omega Center for Sustainable Living \(OCSL\)](#) in Rhinebeck, New York, and the Tyson Living Learning Center in Eureka, Missouri, are the first buildings in the world to have achieved full certification under the Living Building Challenge™. The OCSL is the first green building in America to receive both LEED® Platinum and Living Building Challenge™ certification.

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.

"Omega is thrilled to have crossed the finish line, and hopeful that projects like ours will mark a new era in sustainable design, one that reflects a truly integrated approach to creating built environments that are in harmony with the natural world," said Skip Backus, chief executive officer at Omega.

"From the moment we launched the Living Building Challenge at GreenBuild in 2006, Omega has been a leader. They were among the first to register a project and officially take up the Challenge. Over the past four years, they've kept up the momentum, blazing a trail for others in the building industry to follow. It's not easy being out front on something this difficult and risky—it takes courage and conviction. Luckily, these are two qualities that the team at Omega has in spades," said Jason F. McLennan, chief executive officer at the International Living Building Institute and creator of the Living Building Challenge.

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. Version 1.3 of the Living Building Challenge is comprised of six performance areas, or "petals," including site, energy, materials, water, indoor quality, and beauty and inspiration. Projects may apply for individual petal designation by satisfying the

requirements within that petal, or earn “Living Building” status by attaining all requirements within the system. Today the International Living Building Institute also announced Eco-Sense, a private residence in Victoria, British Columbia, has been awarded partial program certification for achieving four of the six stringent “petals” included in version 1.3 of the program.

Launched just four years ago, the Living Building Challenge has attracted the attention of deep-green building industry professionals worldwide, with more than 70 Living Building Challenge projects already in some stage of design or construction. The Living Building Challenge is comprised of a set of stringent prerequisites that include generating all energy with renewable resources; capturing and treating all water used on site; and eliminating building materials that contain hazardous chemicals. The Living Building Challenge is primarily performance-based, requiring a minimum of 12 months of continued operation prior to certification.

“Through its mission, Omega provides experiences that awaken the best in the human spirit. Our team took that idea to heart in designing this building and landscape through a collaborative process of integrated, high-performance design. As a Living Building, it was critical that the OCSL be exemplary in its relationship with nature by being beautiful, offering rich sensory experiences, acting as a teacher, and connecting authentically with nature,” said Steve McDowell, a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects and principal with BNIM Architects, who served as design leader of the OCSL design team.

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. The Eco Machine™ incorporates technology first seen in similar systems known as Living Machines. Dr. John Todd, and his son, Jonathan Todd, of John Todd Ecological Design, Inc., were the ecological architects for Omega's Eco Machine™.

Leading green building practitioners and thinkers will explore the OCSL's performance and the next era in sustainability at [Design by Nature: Creative Solutions with Biomimicry, Permaculture & Sustainable Design](#), a conference taking place October 15–17 on Omega's Rhinebeck campus. An award ceremony and press event with Jason F. McLennan and the OCSL project team is planned for Saturday, October 16 at 11:30 a.m.

For more details about Omega's Design by Nature conference, or to register, visit eOmega.org or call 800.944.1001. Media passes are available. To apply for a media pass, visit eOmega.org/press.

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

About BNIM Architects

With 40 years of experience as a multidisciplinary architectural firm, Berkebile, Nelson, Immenschuh, McDowell (BNIM) has built a reputation for thoughtful and responsive design through technical competence and conscientious service. With offices in Kansas City, Missouri; Des Moines, Iowa; Houston, Texas; San Diego, California; and Los Angeles, California, BNIM 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, planning and urban design, stormwater management, educational facilities, campus master planning, health care and residential and corporate office spaces. BNIM is committed to regenerative design, which aims to maximize human potential, productivity, and health while increasing the vitality of natural systems. bnim.com

About International Living Building Institute

Founded in 2009 by the Cascadia Region Green Building Council, the International Living Building Institute is a nongovernmental organization dedicated to the creation of Living Buildings, Sites and Communities in countries around the world. The Living Building Challenge is a philosophy, advocacy tool and certification program that addresses development at all scales and has quickly become the most advanced green building rating system in the world. ilbi.org

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