

'Green' building sets standard for efficiency

The Intercultural Mutual Assistance Association is taking a "LEEDING" role in Rochester's newly developed interest in environmentally friendly buildings.

The organization's new headquarters building at 2500 Valleyhigh Drive sets exceptionally high standards for energy efficiency and sustainability. The building, built by AE Benike Construction, meets all the LEED standards. LEED stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design.

The IMAA, which occupied the building on June 18, gave a tour of the building recently for members of the Olmsted County Clean Energy Resources Team.

Christy Arend, development director of IMAA; Ron Buzard, director, and Armin Budimlic, associate director, led the tour.

They said that every effort had been made to meet the high standards for the building's energy efficiency, but that they did not seek LEED certification because that would have cost an additional \$30,000.

The building covers 8,000 square feet and cost approximately \$1,600,000.

Here are some of the building features designed to make it sustainable:

1. Geo-thermal heating and cooling to reduce the need for natural gas or other external energy sources.

2. Located on bike trails and bus lines to reduce the need for using cars.

3. Maximizes use of natural light to reduce the need for interior lighting.

4. On-site retention ponds, rain gardens and rain barrels to capture and re-use rain water.

5. Maximizes use of recycled materials. All the cabinets used are recycled from the Mayo Clinic.

6. Regional materials featured. All materials in the building came from sources within 500 miles.

7. All paints and adhesives used are low in volatile organic compounds.

8. Building has a small-sized asphalt parking lot to avoid heat island effects.

9. Water-efficient plumbing features.

10. Future plans include a "green roof" area to provide insulation and control rain water.

IMAA is a non-profit organization that helps newcomers to Olmsted County by providing culturally appropriate, bilingual programs and services. It helps refugees and immigrants to become independent by helping them find jobs and assisting with language, health care and social services.

Arend said that, in addition to meeting environmental goals, the organization wanted

The Intercultural Mutual Assistance Association's new building at 2500 Valleyhigh Drive in Rochester utilizes state-of-the-art construction materials, methods and design to increase its energy efficiency.

to build a headquarters that will be an asset to the whole community. She said that, because the building is the first building in the county built to LEED standards, it has already resulted in a record number of visitors to the IMAA's offices.

IMAA leaders have said that the group's "philosophy is that

caring for our natural resources is not only the right thing to do; it promotes unity in diverse communities through a shared goal — caring for our Earth." The IMAA recently was awarded the Environmental Achievement Award from Olmsted County and Rochester Public Utilities for its comprehensive recycling program.

The building has a number of features designed to serve its clients. They include a meeting room, a prayer room and a foot-washing station. That area was designed for Muslim clients who wash their feet before their daily prayers.

In addition to helping its clients, the IMAA performs a valuable service to the entire

community by helping new residents to make a difficult transition to employment and citizenship. By adopting top-level environmental standards for its headquarters, it has reinforced its reputation for excellent community service.

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