Benedict House

The 60,000 square foot Benedict House was constructed sustainably. The organ was removed, expanded and installed in the new Assembly Room (Chapel). Nine tons of building material were donated to Habitat ReStore, 12.5 tons went to the landfill and the remaining 8,628.6 tons were recycled, including the concrete which was crushed as a base for the parking and drives and sculpted into berms. The lowest level was saved and remodeled to create the Maintenance Building. The walk-in cooler was reduced in size and reinstalled in the Plant and Produce Room. In all, 99.75% of Benedict House was diverted from the landfill.

Design Intent

The focus of Holy Wisdom Monastery was to serve the mission of the community by providing contemplative and functional spaces within a connection to nature. The monastery also had to be designed and built as sustainably as possible and encourage others to do so by demonstrating that it could be done affordably. The building itself has a monastic simplicity to avoid being a distraction to quiet contemplation. The curving forms are feminine and relate to the contours of the land, while the rectilinear forms respect the existing buildings. Large, carefully placed windows capture and frame views of trees, prairies, and lakes and provide abundant daylight.

Introduction

The Benedictines moved from Iowa to the Madison Diocese in 1953 and opened a Catholic girls’ high school. They closed the school and in 1966 opened Saint Benedict Center, a retreat and conferenc facility that welcomed Christians and seekers of all world religions. In 1998, the monastic community extended its membership to women of any Christian tradition while remaining in federation with women of any Christian tradition while remaining in federation with other Benedictine sisters. They currently offer daily prayer, Sunday worship, spiritual guidance, private and group retreats and an oblate community. The mission of the community is: weaving prayer, hospitality, justice and care for the earth into a shared way of life.

In 1996, the sisters began a ten-year project of restoring 95 acres of farmland to prairie with the help of numerous volunteers, and from 1997-1999, a glacial lake was dredged and restored to its original size. With this level of commitment to care for the earth, the sisters concluded that Benedict House needed to be replaced with a smaller, more energy-efficient building that supported their values. To this end, they insisted that it be designed and built to earn the highest rating possible from U.S. Green Building Council—Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED®). Holy Wisdom Monastery was built in 2009 and certified under LEED-NC v2.2 at Platinum with 63 of 69 points, a world record for new construction projects.
The ceiling of the Oratory and Meditation Chapel is bamboo, a rapidly renewable resource. The four triangles cut into the southeast wall echo the sisters’ stained glass windows in the old monastery. On days of light entering the south facing windows is controlled with a new glass that provides glare reduction, minimizes unwanted heat gains and losses, and provides natural ventilation. The ceilings of the Assemblies Room (Chapel) ensure that all areas receive ample natural light during the daylight. At night, highly efficient, high quality light fixtures that provide an even, soft light are used. The library, sisters community spaces, offices, and conference rooms use direct/indirect light fixtures that have fewer fixtures.

The ceiling tile has a high recycled content and good sound absorbency. The low volatile organic compound (VOC) carpet is 100% recyclable and has recycled content. The beverage fountain and vending machine in the cafeteria are people-powered. They are illuminated by skylights during the day. The trees cast a shadow on the southeast corner of the building.

The three bells were removed from the old monastery (now the Assembly Room (Chapel)) and are displayed on a pedestal in the new bell tower and call people to prayer. The ceilings of the Oratory and Meditation Chapel are bamboo, a rapidly renewable resource. The ceiling tile has a high recycled content and good sound absorbency. The low volatile organic compound (VOC) carpet is 100% recyclable and has recycled content. The beverage fountain and vending machine in the cafeteria are people-powered. They are illuminated by skylights during the day. The trees cast a shadow on the southeast corner of the building.

A 19.7 kW photovoltaic (PV) solar system providing 8% of total energy cost was installed on the southwest slope of the Assembly Room roof as part of the 2009 construction. The Benedictine Sisters’ long-term vision is to provide 100% of the monastery’s needs from on-site renewable sources. A large step towards that vision was made in 2014 when 125.6 kW of solar PV was added. The total solar energy is now equal to about 10% of the monastery’s energy use. The renewable energy is fed into both the monastery and the retreat and guest house buildings.

The boulders used for retaining walls came from the trench for the Когда у меня есть 4000 рублей, я могу купить...