

# Hillsdale project certified as "green"

**Watershed - The mixed-use building overcomes its start on fuel-contaminated land**

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A mixed-use Southwest Portland project, built on land long considered environmentally unsound, has received a national award for incorporating outstanding "green" practices.

Last week, project developers, architects and residents of the Watershed at Hillsdale gathered in the lobby to hang a circular glass plaque on a wall, honoring the building as worthy of a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design silver certificate.

The building, at 6388 S.W. Capitol Highway, opened in late 2007. It typically takes a couple of years before LEED will certify a building. Officials require the performance be evaluated over time.

"LEED is the national standard for certifying green buildings," said Craig Kelley, project manager with the Portland-based Housing Development Center, which oversaw the design and construction. The project includes commercial space and three floors of housing -- 91 units for seniors and low-income residents.

"It's rare for an affordable housing project to get this award," Kelley said. "There are so many upfront costs. We had to spend more money for mechanical systems, for example. That will pay for itself over time, but it's hard for most affordable housing projects to come up with that kind of money."

Kelley said the project tapped 14 funding sources.

"We had additional resources to work with, not typical in most affordable projects."

The site is in the heart of the Hillsdale shopping district, and during the 1930s and 40s it was used as a gas station. When that operation ended, the site -- contaminated with fuel -- sat unused for decades.

The project received a \$200,000 Environmental Protection Agency grant to clean up the site, Kelley said.

Sheila Fink, executive director of Community Partners for Affordable Housing, a nonprofit that developed and operates the Watershed, said the project was the first nonprofit in Oregon to receive such a grant. The Watershed was the agency's first building in Multnomah County. Four others are in Tigard.

She said the building used recycled materials, and all appliances are energy-efficient. In addition, the roof is white, which cuts summer cooling costs.

"We estimate the design will save 30 percent in utility bills over a conventional building," she said.

Bill Wilson of William Wilson Architects, which designed the project, said the neighborhood association wanted to make sure it was a green building.

"It turned out to be a project that everyone is proud of."

Wilson said he learned two weeks ago that the project had won a regional award from the Pacific Coast Builders Conference. He said the project, competing against others in 14 Western states, received the grand award -- the Gold Nugget -- for sustainability.

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