

## News Release

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Award-winning Gwinnett Environmental & Heritage Center Receives LEED Gold Certification from the U.S. Green Building Council**

BUFORD, Ga., June 25, 2007 – The U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) has awarded the Gwinnett Environmental & Heritage Center (GEHC) a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)<sup>1</sup> Gold-level rating in the category of new commercial construction. The LEED system is the nationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction and operation of high performance green buildings.

The GEHC is the owner's (Gwinnett County, Georgia) first green building. It was designed by architecture firm Lord, Aeck & Sargent. Juneau Construction Co. was the general contractor. The project recently received an Excellence in Design award in the government category from *Environmental Design + Construction* magazine, an Award of Excellence from the Associated Builders and Contractors of Georgia in its *Excellence in Construction* awards program, and an American Institute of Architects Huron Valley Chapter Honor Award.

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A building project is a viable candidate for LEED certification if it can meet all prerequisites and achieve the minimum number of points. Projects are awarded Certified, Silver, Gold or Platinum certification depending on the number of points they achieve.

“From the very beginning, one of the County’s criteria for this facility was that it should pursue a LEED rating,” said Steve Cannon, GEHC executive director. “This is not a square box building that you would find on any architect’s shelf; it’s highly complex and something that’s never been done before. Yet it came in on time, under budget and exceeded our design expectations. I don’t know of many projects that have achieved that kind of success.

“And even more important is that the Center is a living, working, breathing tool that is educating people about management of our precious natural resources and about building water- and energy-efficient structures. In this building, the citizens of Gwinnett County truly have a jewel that they can treasure far beyond my time,” Cannon said.

According to Jim Nicolow, AIA, LEED AP, who leads the Sustainability Initiative at Lord, Aeck & Sargent, the USGBC’s LEED Gold certification of the GEHC is verification that the building is environmentally responsible.

“LEED buildings conserve energy and water and reduce harmful greenhouse gas emissions,” Nicolow said. “This is especially important to us at Lord, Aeck & Sargent in light of our adoption early this year of The 2030 Challenge. The long-term goal of the Challenge is to design carbon-neutral buildings, or buildings that use no fossil-fuel greenhouse gas-emitting energy to operate, by the year 2030.”

Developed through a collaboration of the Gwinnett County Board of Commissioners, the Gwinnett County Public School System, the University of Georgia (UGA) and the Gwinnett Environmental & Heritage Center Foundation, the GEHC teaches about the importance of

water. Its programs and interactive exhibits – designed for K-12 and adult audiences – explore the impact that water has had on our history and everyday lives as well as the water management challenges we face in the future.

The building and grounds are a model for sustainable design and construction – exhibiting creative techniques to minimize disturbance to the site and to maximize energy efficiency. Due to the use of a wide array of water- and energy-saving strategies and products, the two-story, 59,000-square-foot GEHC uses 75 percent less potable water and 35 percent less energy than a conventional building of the same size. Among the most innovative strategies are a 40,000-square-foot extensive green roof – the largest sloped green roofing system in the United States<sup>2</sup> – and a cascading water feature that draws non-potable reuse water from the nearby Gwinnett County wastewater treatment facility and uses it to provide air conditioning, to irrigate vegetation on the building site, and to flush toilets. Other important strategies include the use of regionally and locally harvested materials; a fan-assisted, natural ventilation system; and daylight harvesting.

### **The GEHC project team**

- Gwinnett County, Georgia, owner
- Lord, Aeck & Sargent (Atlanta), architect
- The Jaeger Co. (Gainesville, Ga. and Athens, Ga.), landscape architect
- Juneau Construction Co. (Atlanta), general contractor
- Uzun & Case (Atlanta), structural engineer
- Newcomb & Boyd (Atlanta), MEP/FP engineer
- RMI/ENSAR Built Environment Team (Snowmass, Colo.), energy consultant
- Lose & Associates (Lawrenceville, Ga.), civil engineer
- Van Sickle & Roller (Medford, N.J.), exhibit designer
- Waveguide Consulting (Atlanta), AV and acoustics consultant
- Huie Design (Atlanta), signage consultant

### **About Lord, Aeck & Sargent**

Lord, Aeck & Sargent is an award-winning architectural firm serving clients in scientific, academic, historic preservation, arts and cultural, and multi-family housing and mixed-use markets. The firm's core values are responsive design, technological expertise and exceptional service. In 2003, The Construction Specifications Institute awarded Lord, Aeck & Sargent its Environmental Sensitivity Award for showing exceptional devotion to the use of sustainable and environmentally friendly materials, and for striving to create functional, sensitive and healthy buildings for clients. In 2007, Lord, Aeck & Sargent was one of the first architecture firms to adopt The 2030 Challenge, an initiative whose ultimate goal is the design of carbon-neutral buildings, or buildings that use no fossil-fuel greenhouse gas-emitting energy to operate, by the year 2030. Lord, Aeck & Sargent has offices in Ann Arbor, Michigan; Atlanta; and Chapel Hill, North Carolina. For more information, visit the firm at [www.lordaecksargent.com](http://www.lordaecksargent.com).

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<sup>1</sup>The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System™ is the nationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction, and operation of high performance green buildings. LEED gives building owners and operators the tools they need to have an immediate and measurable impact on their buildings' performance. LEED promotes a whole-building approach to sustainability by recognizing performance in five key areas of human and environmental health: sustainable site development, water savings, energy efficiency, materials selection, and indoor environmental quality. For more information on LEED, visit the U.S. Green Building Council web site at [www.usgbc.org](http://www.usgbc.org).

<sup>2</sup>the greenroof projects database: <http://www.greenroofs.com/projects>