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Ascent MKE Becomes the First Building in the U.S. to Achieve LEED v5 O+M Certification

Milwaukee, WI – March 5, 2025 – Ascent MKE has once again made history, becoming the first building in the U.S. and only the third in the world to earn LEED v5 Operations + Maintenance (O+M) Certification. This recognition underscores Ascent MKE’s commitment to sustainable building operations and resident well-being.

Unlike certifications focused solely on construction, LEED v5 O+M evaluates how a building performs over time, ensuring ongoing environmental efficiency and occupant health. This latest milestone follows Ascent’s previous recognition as the world’s tallest mass timber structure, further reinforcing its dedication to sustainability and decarbonization.

To achieve this certification, Ascent MKE engaged Engineering Economics, Inc. (EEI), a facility consulting firm specializing in performance improvements for building environmental systems. EEI was instrumental in working alongside New Land Enterprises, the building's developer and property manager to guide the certification process and ensure that Ascent MKE met the rigorous LEED v5 O+M standards.

“EEI proudly celebrates Ascent MKE’s outstanding achievement, highlighting the power of innovation, sustainability, and collaboration.” commented Jeff Nichols, President of EEI. “Embracing the vision of LEED v5 for a more forward-thinking future, we guided this multi-family property to the first certification in the country. This milestone reflects a commitment to advancing responsible practices, reducing carbon footprints, and enhancing occupant health and well-being. With a focus on sustainability and community wellness, New Land Enterprises is redefining the future of multi-family living and setting a new benchmark for excellence.”

Why LEED v5 Matters

LEED v5 isn't just about today’s buildings; it’s about building a better future. It is a comprehensive framework designed to move toward a near-zero carbon reality that is equitable, resilient, and promotes the wise, safe use of all resources. At its core, LEED v5 focuses on three key impact areas:

- Decarbonization – Reducing operational, embodied, refrigerant, and transportation emissions to lower environmental impact.
- Quality of Life – Enhancing health, well-being, resilience, and equity for building occupants and their communities, ensuring spaces are people-friendly as well as environmentally



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responsible. Because residents occupy the building 24/7, LEED v5 standards proactively address air quality, ventilation, and pollutant reduction, ensuring greater comfort and safety.

- Ecological Conservation & Restoration – Encouraging strategies that limit environmental degradation and contribute to ecosystem restoration, ensuring that buildings exist harmoniously with nature.

Ascent MKE's LEED v5 O+M certification reflects excellence across multiple categories, including transportation, energy efficiency, water conservation, waste management, and indoor environmental quality.

Sustainability in Action

Ascent MKE's certification highlights excellence in key areas:

- **Transportation:** Ascent MKE received a Location Efficiency Score of 97, demonstrating high walkability and access to public transportation. Residents have access to free public transit, and 54% of building occupants use alternative transportation, exceeding LEED benchmarks and reducing overall emissions.
- **Water Efficiency:** The community implemented high-efficiency plumbing fixtures and water conservation strategies, achieving a 43% reduction in water use, and earning the highest possible rating in this category.
- **Decarbonization & Energy Efficiency:** Ascent MKE's Decarbonization and Capital Plan is aimed at long-term emissions reduction, including:
 - A 94% reduction in direct emissions by 2050.
 - A 58% reduction in site energy use by 2050.
 - A 17% reduction in direct emissions and site energy use achieved over five years.
 - Integration of energy-efficient systems and renewable energy sources to reduce dependency on fossil fuels.
- **Waste Management:** Robust recycling, composting, and waste reduction programs have led to a 47% landfill diversion rate, minimizing environmental impact. Residents have access to a composting program with all necessary equipment provided to encourage participation.
- **Indoor Air Quality & Comfort:** Ascent MKE achieved a 98% resident satisfaction rate, reflecting the building's commitment to superior air quality, ventilation, and comfort. Ascent



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MKE also underwent an elective APPA Cleaning Audit, where it was recognized for maintaining the highest standard of cleanliness. Advanced air filtration and the use of low-emission building materials contribute to a healthier living environment.

- Light Pollution: An elective night illumination assessment determined that light levels produced by the property did not exceed 20% above baseline (lights off) levels, ensuring increased night sky visibility and reduced impacts of development on wildlife and people.

Beyond Certification

Ascent MKE fosters sustainability through ongoing education, green building initiatives, and eco-friendly programs such as resident composting and alternative transportation incentives. Digital displays, newsletters, and resident programming ensure that sustainability remains at the forefront of daily living.

“Ascent MKE isn’t just a building—it’s a benchmark for sustainable, wellness-focused living,” said Laura Kleczkowski, VP of Property Management at New Land Enterprises. “This certification proves that sustainability is about more than construction—it’s about how a building functions, supports its residents, and minimizes its environmental impact every day.”

By redefining green living, Ascent MKE is shaping the future of high-performance, sustainable communities.

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Since 1993, New Land Enterprises has been building, renovating, and managing residential communities and commercial space in Milwaukee. The company has become a leader in mixed-use development, having designed and developed over 1,500 units. Recent projects include NOVA, Ascent MKE, Crossroads Collective and Black Cat Alley. For more information: NewLandMKE.com