

# It's Easy Building GREEN

by R.J. Foster and Monica Koch



New construction has an unavoidable effect on the environment. From the land we build on to the materials we use, construction impacts the world around us. There is, however, a growing movement in the building community to continually develop new techniques and technologies that help consumers build a dream home that is healthier for themselves and the environment, depletes fewer resources, and saves them more money on utilities than a traditional home.

“Building Green” is, according to the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB), a process that incorporates environmental concern into every stage of the home building process. Concerns are outlined by the U.S. Green Building Council’s Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, LEED®, Green Building Rating System™. LEED is a nationally recognized benchmark for design, construction, and operation of green structures.





# WHAT'S NEW AT THE WEIDNER

by Samantha Andrews

It's been nearly 15 years since the Weidner Center first opened its doors to the public, marking the dawning of a new era for performing arts lovers in Northeast Wisconsin. No longer was it necessary to travel afar to enjoy Broadway shows, chamber orchestras, pop acts, or family events. The Weidner Center for the Performing Arts – located on the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay campus – brought new life to the Green Bay community, drawing sellout crowds who enjoyed the facility's outstanding acoustics, beauty and state-of-the-art accommodations. The Weidner Center has even been hailed by avid theatergoers and traveling performers as one of the finest performing halls in the United States.

When it first opened, no one, including the facility's namesake and UW-Green Bay founding chancellor, imagined just how popular the facility would become. "I don't think Ed had any idea just how big the Weidner Center would be when they first starting planning for it," said Marge Weidner, wife of Dr. Edward Weidner, who passed away peacefully at the age of 85 on June 6. "I remember how he invited me to come to the campus and see the mockups for the building when they first began planning for it," Marge Weidner says, "We had great discussions about what types of events could be held there, such as chamber orchestras and plays. I believe it wasn't until *Les Misérables* sold out as one of its first big productions that he realized just how impressive the Weidner Center had become."

The Weidners subsequently attended hundreds of productions together, often bringing Dr. Weidner's children and grandchildren who live in Minneapolis. "We would send them a schedule and they would come over on weekends to spend time with us and see a performance together," Weidner adds, "Selfishly, it was a great way for us to get them to visit. In today's day and age when it is so easy to pop in a DVD and watch a movie, the theater is something so special to do together as a family. We looked forward to dressing up, using the valet parking, checking-in our coats and chatting afterwards about the performance. There is something so exciting about live theater."

Over the years, the Weidners and thousands of other theatergoers enjoyed world-class performances at the Weidner Center, from Broadway shows and musicals such as *The Phantom of the Opera*, *Miss Saigon*, *The Fiddler on the Roof*, *Cats*, and *Rent* to performers like Jerry Seinfeld,

Julie Andrews, Robert Goulet, Bill Cosby, Tony Curtis, Ann-Margret, Tony Bennett and more. Theatrical events like *STOMP* and *Riverdance* have continued to delight packed houses.

In December of 2005, the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay announced it would no longer provide programming for the Weidner Center. Through a cooperative agreement with UWGB, Weidner Center Presents, Inc. (WCP), which had played a very quiet role for the previous 13 years, stepped forward one year later to take over the programming reins.

"WCP was created to serve the interest of the community and ensure high quality programming and educational opportunities for the area," says WCP Executive Director Katie Green. While WCP directs the programming for the Weidner Center, Green explains another component of its mission is to generate community financial support: "The strong philanthropic support of the programming of this performing arts center is vital to escalating our area's quality of life, and significant community involvement is needed to guarantee that diverse entertainment and educational opportunities exist."

The WCP 2007–2008 Performing Arts Series promises to bring stellar performances that appeal to a broad spectrum of audiences back to the Weidner Center. The season kicks off with comedian Martin Short on Sept. 23, followed by dance troupes and musical shows such as the Georgian State Dance Ensemble, The 5 Browns, Irving Berlin's *I Love a Piano*, *A Christmas Carol*, Tomaseen Foley's *A Celtic Christmas*, The BoDeans – Home for the Holidays, San Jose Taiko Drummers, The Spencers – Theatre of Illusion, Frankie Valli and The Four Seasons, and an Organ Concert Series.

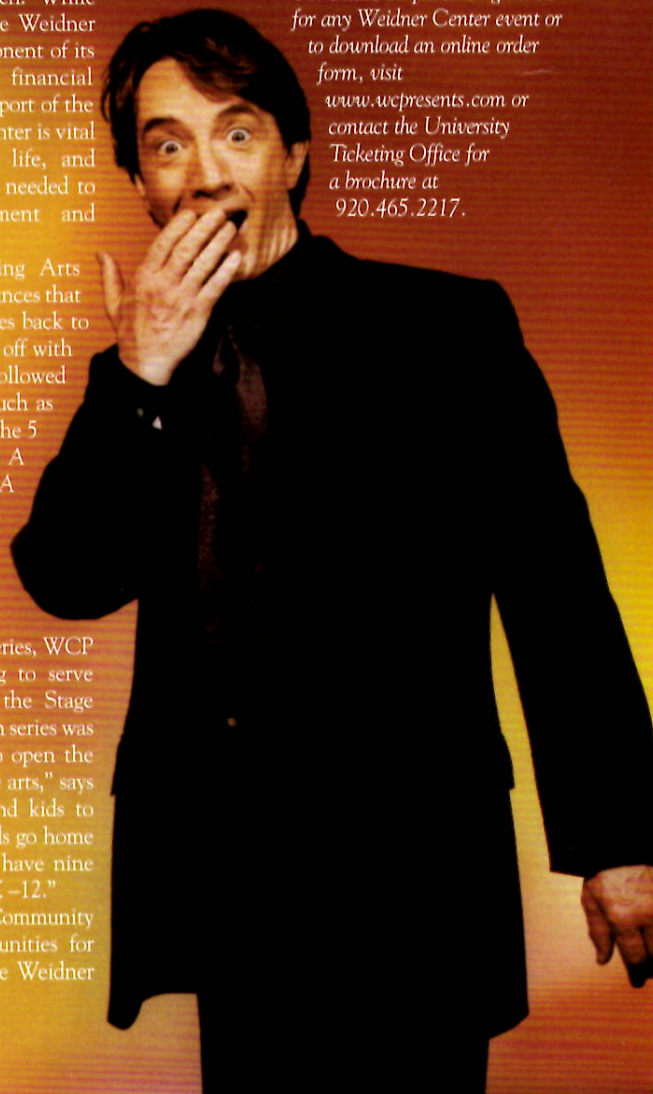
Along with the Performing Arts Series, WCP brings back educational programming to serve schools, students and teachers with the Stage Doors Education Series. "The education series was first created in mid-1990s as a way to open the doors for students to learn through the arts," says Green, "It's a chance for teachers and kids to enjoy more than a fun day out; the kids go home excited about the arts. This year, we have nine titles geared for students in grades PreK–12."

WCP also introduces its new Community Connection Series, providing opportunities for local talent to receive exposure in the Weidner

Center's Fort Howard Hall. Comedy shows such as the Masters of Moron, as well as musical performances by Bent Grass – a popular area bluegrass band, and storyteller/musician Randy Peterson, are among those in the 2007–2008 Community Connection Series lineup.

The Bellin Health LifeLines women's lecture series returns for its fourth year, offering uplifting speakers and exhibitors focusing on a variety of women's issues. Past speakers include Jane Pauley, Julie Andrews, Marlee Matlin, Joan Rivers, Madeline Albright and Maya Angelou. This year's schedule will be announced in September (visit [www.wcpresents.com/LifeLines.html](http://www.wcpresents.com/LifeLines.html) for details).

For details on purchasing tickets for any Weidner Center event or to download an online order form, visit [www.wcpresents.com](http://www.wcpresents.com) or contact the University Ticketing Office for a brochure at 920.465.2217.





## What is a "Green Home"?

Green home building addresses issues such as energy and water consumption, carbon dioxide production, indoor air pollutants, and environmental impact, by encouraging builders to create high performance homes. LEED's home rating system is based on scores received in six categories that measure the overall performance of the home: Sustainable Sites, Water Efficiency, Energy and Atmosphere, Materials and Resources, Indoor Environmental Quality, and Innovation and Design Process.

LEED homes are rated based on total points in each category and ranked into divisions: certified, silver, gold, and platinum. This rating allows builders to differentiate their work as the best in the industry by indicating sustainable design and construction of high performance green homes.

The initial construction of an LEED certified home may cost more than a traditional home, but it will pay for itself in a few years because of lower energy, water, waste, and maintenance costs.

## Harnessing Renewable Energy

Energy conservation and the use of renewable energy sources is a huge concern for proponents of building green. Solar and geothermal energy systems are two methods of supplying a home with some or most of its energy needs.

Solar (also known as photovoltaic or PV) energy systems capture energy from the sun, converting it to electricity. Large solar panels or cells are mounted either on or near the home to collect energy. A 2003 Wisconsin Focus on Energy report states that a properly sized solar energy system could provide all the electricity necessary in an energy-efficient home. An efficient solar system can provide enough electricity to power water heaters and electric furnaces. Batteries can be integrated into solar systems to store electricity for use at night and on overcast days, potentially eliminating the need for a connection to the local power grid.

Geothermal energy systems utilize the earth's ability to store heat energy. Though air temperature fluctuates greatly throughout the year, the temperature six ft. under ground remains fairly constant: about 49-50 degrees in Northeast Wisconsin according to Joe VanKauwenberg, founder of Van's Refrigeration in Green Bay. Geothermal energy systems utilize water pipes that run from your home into a loop in the ground nearby. In the winter, warmer water is pumped into your home, transferring heat energy from the ground into your home. In the summer, the process is reversed and warmer water is pumped out of your home, transferring heat energy out and into the ground.

Van Kauwenberg says, "I've been doing this 27 years and I just can't get over the enthusiasm for what I do because it saves people a lot of money." He estimates geothermal systems to cost about 50 percent less than natural gas and 75 percent less than electric after the initial investment. His son-in-law, Mike Alf, explains that the large capital investment is quickly offset by savings over traditional heating and cooling systems: "Geothermal is a popular choice because it has the fastest pay back - four to five years."

Van Kauwenberg does caution buyers to ensure that their equipment and installers are certified by the International Ground Source Heat Pump Association (IGSHPA). With geothermal systems so newly popular, it can be difficult to find qualified service technicians. However, Van Kauwenberg's enthusiasm is contagious as he says, "I will work with any contractor that's wanting to get into geothermal. I firmly believe that, installed right, it works."

Another important factor in energy conservation is proper insulation and using energy-efficient appliances. If you're unable or unwilling to give nontraditional energy sources a try, it is important to maximize the efficiency of traditional technology. That's what the Wisconsin Energy Star Homes Program is all about. Lisa Arthur-Huben of Custom Kreations, Inc., in Green Bay, explains that there is a three-step process

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involved in becoming Energy Star certified. Custom Kreation's currently has three in-progress homes undergoing the testing process.

## Energy Star Certified

Wisconsin Energy Star Homes are twenty-five percent more efficient than the state code requires. Homes are tested for air flow, heat flow, moisture flow, and air quality. The three step inspection checks the framing prior to insulation being installed, after insulation but before drywall is installed, and finally, once the home is complete. Installers check for spaces, holes or gaps and misalignments with the vapor barrier, and the general tightness of the building.

Inspectors also check the efficiency of the lighting and appliances in the finished home. A home that has been certified as a Wisconsin Energy Star home can increase in value upon certification, and owners will benefit directly from reduced energy costs. Homeowners receive a report detailing the inspection results. Energy Star certification is a step in the green direction for your home.

## Green Built Homes

The Wisconsin Green Builders Association's Green Built Home certification program also gives points toward certification for the use of Energy Star certified appliances and efficient insulation and door seals. They also credit builders for insulating ductwork, building homes with a long side facing south, strategic placement of windows and skylights, and planting shade trees in locations that maximize shade midday during the hottest part of summer.

The Green Built Home program also rewards

points for the construction company's practices of recycling and/or reusing construction debris and the use of recycled, renewable, and regional materials in construction. Recycled building materials include salvaged lumber and brick. The use of regional materials is rewarded because it reduces the environmental impact of shipping products like stone, masonry, and lumber.

Joey Wilinski of Wilco Cabinet Makers, Inc., in Green Bay, suggests that builders looking to go



green can also use green building materials inside the home: "Bamboo is a wood that is harvested without killing the tree – it's a green product. Hardwoods that are harvested from a forest where trees are replanted for every one that is harvested – that is a green product." Wilinski continues, "Fibercore sheet stock used in building homes and cabinetry where the fiber is made from waste wood that would have gone to a landfill – that's a green

product. Corian – a solid surface counter top material, has just been certified green because it's a lifetime product and can be recycled instead of land-filled."

## Water Conservation – From the Bathroom to the Backyard

In addition to energy sources and use of renewable or recycled materials, another area that defines a green home is water conservation.

Indoors that means installing low-flow faucets or faucets with sensors and dual-flush toilets, using efficient dishwashers and washing machines, and only installing showers with one shower head. A large part of water conservation efforts focuses on individual responsibility, but the eco-concerned home builder can make responsibility easier by installing water efficient plumbing and appliances.

Outside the home itself, an important aspect of water conservation involves landscaping. Landscaping has evolved into the art of outdoor decorating. Once upon a time, the patio was a place for burgers on the grill, paper plates, and metal furniture. Today, people prepare and serve elegant meals in outdoor living areas fit for a formal dinner party. Dean Flagstad of Green Bay Nursery, Inc., suggests that as interest has grown in gazebos, pergolas, and pillars, so has concern for the environment. The term "sustainable

landscaping" refers to eco-thoughtful practices such as landscaping with native plants that have healthy long-term effects on the environment.

The United States Environmental Protection Agency agrees. According to EPA Specialists, native plants are naturally adapted to an area's climate, conditions, pests, etc. Using them in landscaping results in reduced use of pesticides and, subsequently, improvement in air and water quality. Native wildflowers and grasses can also

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Even hardware is going green these days. "As Green Building gains momentum in the industry, we have a number of hardware lines that offer eco-friendly manufacturing, earning LEED points for your project," says Jesse Belfry of LaForce, Inc., in Green Bay "Rocky Mountain is the newest hardware member to join the US Green Building Council and now offers their complete line of bronze hardware using recycled material."

Belfry adds that green themed design is gaining popularity: "Although your home will not earn green points for this hardware, a more whimsical approach to the 'Green Theme' is nature inspired hardware." LaForce offers many unique lines of hardware that bring the look of the outdoors into the home. Animals, leaves, plants and trees all serve as inspiration to many hardware designs. Pea pods, pumpkins, leaves, twigs, lizards and frogs are just a few of the door and cabinet hardware designs now available.

enhance the biodiversity of an area by attracting birds, butterflies, and animals to the newly developed habitat.

"Rain gardens are also on the rise," notes Flagstad. Rain gardens are gardens planted in a depression in the ground where water from rain or snow melt can collect. Rain gardens filter out pollutants, reduce run-off and erosion, and help to recharge the ground water. Flagstad adds, "Planting of water tolerant perennials and other plants are attractive and attract wildlife." Rainwater collection systems can also be installed on a home to store water specifically for irrigation or other outdoor use.

There also more high-tech ways to conserve outdoor water usage. Planting rain gardens and native species can significantly reduce irrigation, but so can high tech computerized irrigation systems. Irrigation systems are available that can monitor the climate and soil moisture and intelligently control water use accordingly.

Whether you're considering building a new home, remodeling or otherwise revamping your current home, or planning an addition or landscaping project, going green is the newest trend in building. By building green you will not only reduce your own negative impact on the environment, but your initial investment will pay for itself several times over in decreased utility costs.

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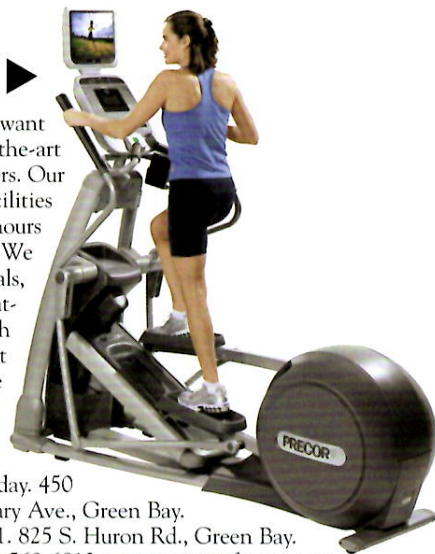
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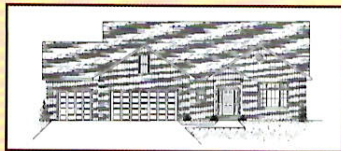
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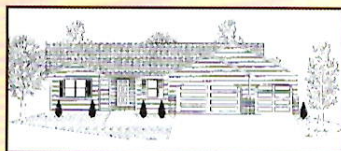
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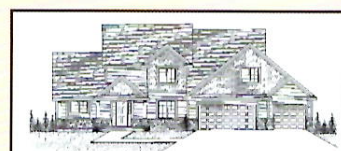
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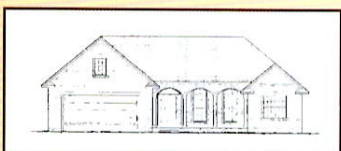
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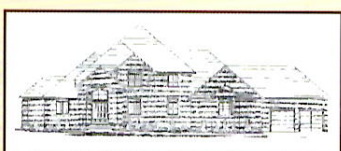
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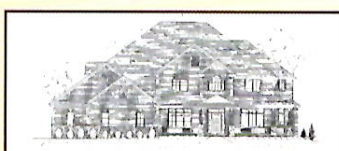
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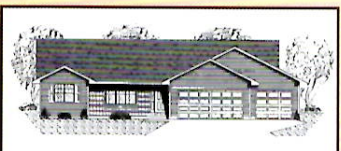
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