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RALEIGH CONVENTION CENTER BLASTS PAST GOAL, GRABS LEED SILVER
CERTIFICATION POINTS UP REGION'S LEADERSHIP IN SUSTAINABILITY

(RALEIGH, N.C.) -- Committed to helping customers 'green' their meetings, the Raleigh Convention Center exceeded its own goals, attaining the Silver Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Certification. While the award puts the RCC alongside six other U.S. centers that have achieved a degree of LEED certification*, the region's overall sustainability profile makes it a one-of-a-kind destination.

Says Laurie Okun, the center's director of marketing, "This is one of many reasons for planners and visitors to think of Raleigh when they think of smarter, greener meetings."

RCC had originally sought only LEED certification from the United States Green Building Council. LEED certification distinguishes building projects that have demonstrated a commitment to sustainability by meeting the highest performance standards. "LEED ratings were always part of the consideration," says Dan Pruitt, senior project manager with Barnhill Construction. "As we moved forward, we realized we had accumulated enough points to make Silver a reachable goal."

The LEED effort included promoting an energy-efficient design, recycling building materials, and designating the building as being cigarette smoke-free. The certification process outlines a number of available points awarded for promoting environmentally friendly building concepts. During the design phase, the design team, the construction management team, and City staff began identifying cost-effective measures that earned the project the requisite point totals.

"With good management, these measures offset a lot of costs," Pruitt says. "The LEED process requires expending some funds, but there are savings in the long term and it's a great accomplishment."

One such cost-saving effort included coordinating the design of the electrical, air conditioning, heating, and building envelope systems to make the center 30 percent more energy-efficient than a normal building would be. Other features included elements aimed at reducing water usage by 20 percent, locating the building in a prime location to maximize use of mass transit, committing the project to recycling at least 50 percent of the construction waste, and purchasing at least 20 percent of the building materials locally.

But RCC is about more than what happens within its very modern walls (www.raleighconvention.com). Sustainability initiatives on-going in the City of Raleigh include LED lighting, greening the City's vehicle fleet, renewable energy projects, rainwater harvesting and public-private collaboration, among others. Researchers at institutions such as NC State University and companies like CREE (the LED pioneer) seek out environmentally-friendly breakthroughs. And as the capital city, Raleigh is home to the state headquarters of groups such as the NC Sustainable Energy Association and the Sierra Club.

"Being one of the few LEED certified convention centers in the country certainly puts us at a competitive advantage when trying to attract conventions and meetings where sustainability is one of the key requirements in the RFP process for the convention center or city," says Dennis Edwards, CEO and president of the Greater Raleigh Convention and Visitors Bureau. "This certification adds to the number of positive reasons why Greater Raleigh is a major player in the convention market."

Adds Okun, "The certification is a new piece in a bigger picture that includes Research Triangle Park, state government and NC State's Centennial Campus. With the cutting-edge technology and energy solutions being developed there every day, this certification highlights our commitment to sustainability. We're in sync with the leading environmental and architectural studies programs at our local academic institutions.

And we're proud to be aligned with the City of Raleigh's leading sustainable initiatives that include required LEED certification for new and expansion projects."

** The country's other six LEED certified convention centers -- David L Lawrence Convention Center , Pittsburgh PA: Gold; Phoenix Convention Center, Phoenix AZ: Silver; Spokane Convention Center Expansion, Spokane WA : Silver; Portland, Oregon Convention Center Expansion - Oregon Convention Center, Silver; Monona Terrace Convention Center, Madison, WI: Silver; McCormick Place Convention Center West Expansion, Chicago IL : Certified.*