

Archbold Biological Station Achieves LEED Platinum Certification, highest possible green building rating

## **ARCHBOLD BIOLOGICAL STATION, VENUS, FLORIDA**

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Photo Courtesy of Archbold Biological Station: Mike Mazzeo

The Frances Archbold Hufty Learning Center, right, and the Adrian Archbold Lodge, have been certified as LEED Platinum, the highest possible rating for a green building.

Archbold Biological Station, Florida's renowned center for ecological research, conservation, and education, announced today that it has been awarded LEED® Platinum certification for its new Frances Archbold Hufty Learning Center and Adrian Archbold Lodge. LEED, established by the U.S.Green Building Council USGBC, is the nation's preeminent program for the design, construction, and operation of high performance green buildings, as verified by the Green Building Certification Institute (GBCI). LEED Platinum certification is the highest standard achievable.

Dr. Mary Hufty, Chairman of the Board of Archbold Expeditions, expressed her "great appreciation for the design and construction team who stayed focused throughout, meeting the goal of LEED Platinum, and providing an exceptional campus for future generations." Sebastian de Atucha, Treasurer, added that "the Board is thrilled to have met the vision of providing a world showcase for green construction."

“This is a fantastic achievement not only for Archbold, but for our entire community” said Highlands County Commissioner, Barbara Stewart. “Many people contributed in small but meaningful ways to this project. As a rural county we are especially proud to have Florida’s 12<sup>th</sup> LEED platinum commercial building located here, out of only 569 nationwide.”

Hilary Swain, Executive Director of Archbold reflected, “we are absolutely delighted to have achieved this LEED distinction. Many of our green building ideas were inspired by the adaptations we study in nature for the economical use of energy and water.” Rob Engel, site engineer from Stantec (Wilson Miller), said “even though Archbold is large, 8,841-acres in size, the challenge we met was to design within a small 3.3-acre building site that was cleared many years ago. We avoided impacts to the surrounding Florida scrub habitat, one of the most threatened ecosystems in North America.”

“Buildings are a prime example of how human systems integrate with natural systems,” said Rick Fedrizzi, President, CEO & Founding Chair, U.S. Green Building Council. Hilary Swain agrees, and hopes that “these Archbold buildings will serve as a prototype of what can be achieved with green construction across rural America; an enduring symbiosis of form, function, and natural beauty.”

The Fort Myers firm, Parker, Mudgett, Smith, Inc., was responsible for the architectural design. Jeff Mudgett, lead architect, said that he “drew inspiration from the natural setting and from Archbold’s tradition of science and natural history.” Mollie Doctrow, Curator of the nearby Museum of Florida Arts and Culture in Highlands County, commenting on the stunning design, said, “it makes you feel different physically in a space like this, like a different person, connecting you from the outdoors to the indoors”.

TLC Engineering was responsible for the design of energy and water conservation systems. Jim Keohane, lead engineer, said they were “particularly proud that the project was awarded all 10 LEED points for energy optimization, and 1 point for on-site renewable energy, by including a solar thermal water heating system. LEED Platinum

was achieved entirely by reducing energy consumption, rather than generating power using photovoltaic panels.” Water conservation features include a rainwater harvesting system with a cistern that holds 5,500 gallons, providing more than 80% of the water needed annually to flush toilets for both buildings.

Owen-Ames-Kimball OAK managed the construction. Dave Dale, President, said, “We are very proud to be part of the team that achieved the Platinum designation. As a company it’s our third such building but, it’s our first in Florida. This project required a lot of learning on the part of many sub-contractors, with great attention to detail. All of us are delighted that the hard work paid off handsomely with LEED Platinum certification.”

A grant from the Kresge Foundation allowed Archbold to retain the green building consulting team from the Rocky Mountain Institute in Colorado, who made important contributions to energy and daylight modeling. Victor Olgyay, architect directing RMI’s building practices, said that “the collaboration with Archbold scientists contributed in unique ways to the project.” He explained how ecological knowledge of carbon cycling in Archbold’s ecosystem was an important case study for RMI’s GreenFootstep®, a tool for demonstrating the reduction of carbon footprints in the built environment.

University of Florida professor, Charles Kibert, and staff from the company Cross Creek Initiative, provided the independent expert assessment of Archbold’s green buildings. He said, “The new building is an exemplar for high-performance green buildings and we will be using it often as a case study in courses we teach on sustainable construction here at the University of Florida”. The Learning Center will also host Archbold’s extensive K-12 programs, introducing thousands of schoolchildren to the science, technology, engineering, and math principles evident in the buildings and surrounding scrub ecosystem. Exciting new signs, exhibits, and programs are being installed to explain green construction to the visiting public, and serve as a gateway to the intriguing natural ecosystem outside.

Design and construction of the buildings cost \$4.17 million, with funding largely from private gifts; Archbold is still actively seeking donations to recover expenses. The project provided many needed jobs during 2010-2011, a time when the construction industry underwent a severe contraction. LEED Platinum was achieved with very reasonable construction costs of \$214 per square foot. This compares with about \$150 per square foot for typical new commercial construction. Jeff Mudgett, architect, noting that one of Archbold's goals was to illustrate a feasible cost for a Platinum building said, "Combining traditional approaches to saving energy – porches, large eaves, fans, breezeways, harnessing natural daylight - with new technologies like highly efficient air conditioning, means the extra costs for green construction and high quality materials should be recovered within 10-15 years".

A ceremony to celebrate the LEED Platinum certification will be held at Archbold Biological Station in late March or early April.

Hilary Swain, Executive Director, Archbold Biological Station  
863 465 2571 x 251      hswain@archbold-station.org  
(Assistant Debbie Upp) execassistant@archbold-station.org  
863 465 2571 x 251

More information about Archbold Biological Station: [www.archbold-station.org](http://www.archbold-station.org)