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Farmington Hills city hall is officially LEED gold

What are the elements of gold? You won't find them on any periodic table, but rather in the walls, under the ground and even on the roof of Farmington Hills .

The city was presented Monday with a plaque recognizing the Gold LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification by the U.S. Green Building Council for the renovations at the building that has become an example of sustainable building practices.

The USGBC's LEED certification is considered the foremost program for the design, , and operation of green buildings. Attaining a gold level is quite a feat, said Paul Goldsmith, who is a founding member of the Detroit Regional Chapter of the USGBC.

"What an achievement it is," he said. "This is one heck of an accomplishment." He said the project represents the "triple bottom line" of environmental stewardship; social awareness and economic viability. Its green roof areas, rain gardens, solar panels, low-flow water fixtures, natural light, porous pavers, use of recycled materials, geexchange heating and cooling, solar hot water and efficient use of space have contributed to the gold certification — and much more. Total energy costs are down by about 70

percent. The building uses no natural gas; and has produced so much solar power, the city is receiving Solar Currents from DTE Energy for power that's going into the grid.

Nate Geinzer, Farmington Hills management assistant, said energy costs in the old building — which had numerous heating and [cooling systems](#) — averaged \$5,000 to \$6,000 per month, compared to the most recent bills that have been under \$1,900 per month. The electric bill is actually negative \$190, he said.

"The building has already started to pay off," said Farmington Hills Mayor Jerry Ellis. He said most people said they were "crazy" to build during the recession. The city had set aside money for the building for many years, and didn't have to borrow for the project.

But, Ellis notes that city leaders didn't stop there. They decided to make it a project that would be an example of environmentally friendly design and sustainable building practices.

"The city council decided to go for the gold," he said. "I'd like to congratulate the

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city council and the city for their foresight. Farmington Hills now has a beautiful city hall that is functional and will serve us for at least 50 years.”

The project’s architect, Lindhout Associates of Brighton, and contractor, Contracting Resources of Brighton, were praised for the project.

“A job well done to the entire team involved in the construction,” said Goldsmith.

The project was done for \$160 per square foot, “substantially lower than most LEED gold level projects,” according to architect Dave Richardson, in an earlier statement. Barry Brickner, Farmington Hills city councilman who also serves on the Commission for Energy and Environmental Sustainability, said the revitalized city hall building serves as an example.

“This is the place you should go to, to see what you should be doing in the future,” he said. “I’m very proud of this building. And, the best part about it is, it saves our citizens money.”

Oakland County Commissioner Jim Nash, of Farmington Hills, has advocated for green building practices for several years. He was on hand Monday to see the official LEED gold plaque installed in the lobby of city hall.

“It’s a proud day,” he said. “I think it’s terrific.”

Geinzer, who started working on the project with City Manager Steve Brock in 2008, said it’s a good project for the taxpayers, and one that he’s proud of. The concrete floors, he noted, tell the history of the building and make a statement for reusing materials. The concrete floors on the west end of the

building are original from the 1960s.

“That’s the pinnacle of re-use,” he said.

“We could’ve taken the easy way out and knocked everything down and started over, but that’s not being green.”

Goldsmith said the city hall building is a fine example for all.

“Keep the green legacy you’ve started. Let all of the future generations know the impact that this accomplishment holds,” said Goldsmith.

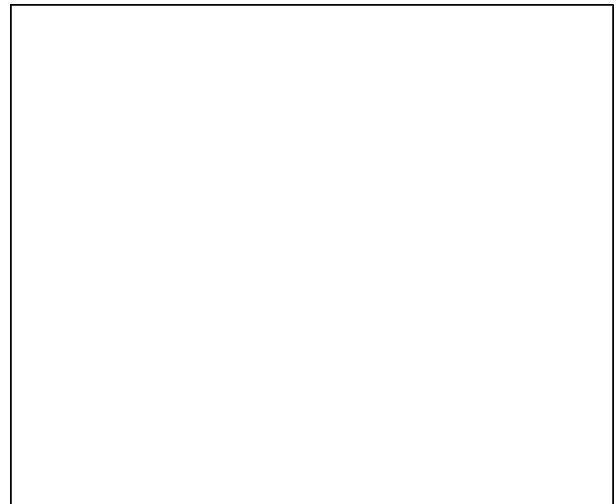
Later in the evening on Monday, Farmington Hills was presented an award from the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments for its sustainability efforts.

“Your community is walking the talk on green infrastructure,” said Karen Wieber, legislative planning analyst with SEMCOG.

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Paul Goldsmith, from the Detroit Regional Chapter of the U.S. Green Building Council, presented Farmington Hills Mayor Jerry Ellis with the LEED gold plaque on Monday.

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