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Phipps Center for Sustainable Landscapes Earns Net Zero Energy Certification

Pittsburgh public garden aims to meet the Living Building Challenge with landmark green construction.

Pittsburgh, Pa. — [Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens](#) announced today that it has been awarded Net Zero Energy Building Certification under the Living Building Challenge™ (a program of the [International Living Future Institute™](#)) for the [Center for Sustainable Landscapes](#) (CSL), one of the greenest buildings on Earth. Designed and built by Pittsburghers and Pennsylvanians, this landmark facility is expected to be the first in the world to achieve Living Building Certification in tandem with LEED® Platinum and Four-Stars Sustainable Sites Initiative™ (SITES™) certification for landscapes, both of which were earned in 2013.

In order to operate at net-zero energy capacity, the CSL employs a large 125 kW onsite array of photovoltaic solar panels; a series of 14 geothermal wells buried 500 feet below ground; the first vertical axis wind turbine to be commissioned in the City of Pittsburgh; strategically placed operable windows, light shelves and reflective ceiling material that allow for natural daylighting; and high performance insulation and low-e windows that help regulate indoor temperatures in all seasons.

In addition to these energy-efficient highlights, the CSL, a home-base for environmental education and research programs, as well as a space for visitors to explore, is also a place of beauty and inspiration. Built on a former brownfield, the structure — incorporating biophilic art; recycled, salvaged and non-toxic materials; and other elements that celebrate connections to nature and promote wellness — is surrounded by a restorative landscape showcasing native plants and a green rooftop. Other site features added to achieve net-zero water aims include a lagoon, rain gardens and constructed wetlands.

“The CSL was created to serve as a model for how we can work with nature to make our communities healthier, safer and more supportive of life,” says Phipps Executive Director Richard V. Piacentini. “With our Net Zero Energy Building Certification, we are excited to move closer to our goal of becoming a certified Living Building in 2014, showing the world just how inspiring and practical green can be.”

A leader in green building and operations, Phipps has also constructed the first LEED-certified visitor center in a public garden, the first-ever LEED-certified production greenhouses and a tropical forest conservatory that was celebrated as the most energy efficient structure of its kind anywhere in the world when it opened in 2006. To learn more about the CSL, visit phipps.conservatory.org. The International Living Future Institute’s case study on Phipps’ newest construction can also be found [here](#).

About Phipps: Founded in 1893, Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens in Pittsburgh, Pa. is a green leader among public gardens with a mission to inspire and educate all with the beauty and importance of plants; to advance sustainability and promote human and environmental well-being through action and research; and to celebrate its historic glasshouse. Learn more: phipps.conservatory.org.

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