The newly constructed Aurora Medical Center in Grafton has been recognized for its attention to environmentally sensitive building practices.

THE AURORA MEDICAL CENTER in Grafton has earned Silver LEED certification for the environmentally sensitive practices used in constructing the 520,000-square-foot hospital. The designation is the first for any hospital in Wisconsin.
Press file photo

The 520,000-square-foot medical center is the first hospital in Wisconsin to earn Silver LEED certification through the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design program.

“One of our primary goals during this hospital’s construction was to create an environmentally friendly, sustainable green healing center. We wanted a building that would benefit our patients, caregivers and the Grafton community,” said Nick Turkal, president and CEO of Aurora Health Care.

The certification recognizes attention given to achieve energy savings, water efficiencies, carbon-dioxide emission reductions and improved indoor environmental quality.

According to LEED officials, the Silver award is regarded as the benchmark in green buildings, established by the U.S. Green Building Council.

Hospital officials say the medical center uses 35% less energy than the average hospital and save more than 2,500 tons of carbon dioxide per year and enough electricity to power more than 200 Wisconsin homes a year.

Officials touted that almost 99% of the construction waste from the project was recycled.

Some of the green practices incorporated into the hospital design to gain the Silver LEED certification are:

Heat given off by medical equipment and computers is transferred into the heating system to

reduce the amount of natural gas burned in the high-efficiency boilers;

Daylight sensors turn off lights when adequate daylight is available, and occupancy sensors reduce heating and cooling, and turn off lights when spaces are not occupied;

Low-flow plumbing fixtures use less cold and hot water. Less energy is used in the heating of hot water and more than 1 million gallons of water are saved per year;

Carbon dioxide sensors in conference spaces reduce the amount of outside air that is heated and cooled when these rooms are not fully occupied;

Air handling units and air distribution is sized and integrated with the building layout to minimize fan horsepower and energy use;

Extensive campus landscaping with native plantings;

Installation of a white (instead of black) rubber membrane on the roof that reflects the sunlight, lowering the overall heat of the facility and reducing the need for air conditioning requests;

Bike racks around the campus encourage alternative modes of transportation, with showers provided for employees who bike to work; and

Public toilets are dual-flush: half-flush (liquids) and full-flush (solids) technology can reduce water usage by up to 67 percent compared with traditional toilets that typically use 2.9 gallons in a single flush.

At the time the hospital was being constructed, hospital officials talked about how the environmental mission dovetailed with their goal of promoting healthy lifestyles.

“We (hospitals) probably have the biggest carbon footprint of any institution,” said Peter Balistrieri, strategic communications manager for Aurora Health Care.

“You have to do something. Hospitals run 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.”

The 107-bed Aurora Medical Center on Port Washington Road opened last November.