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Green Prairie Living and Learning Community to open in Fall 2010

Summary: Planning is underway to build a new residential life facility at the University of Minnesota, Morris. Designed for sustainable living, the Green Prairie Community will provide contemporary undergraduate student housing for 80 students in suite-style dwellings.

(November 29, 2007)-Planning is underway to build a new residential life facility at the University of Minnesota, Morris (UMM). Designed for sustainable living, the Green Prairie Community will provide contemporary undergraduate student housing for 80 students in suite-style dwellings at the nationally recognized public liberal arts college. The facility, which expands UMM's leadership in a host of green campus initiatives from local foods to energy, will open in Fall 2010.

Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Sandy Olson-Loy stated, "Construction of the new Green Prairie Community will enhance student life and learning at UMM. We want our whole learning environment to prepare Morris graduates as active global citizens and effective stewards of the environment."

The first new residential life construction since the early 1970s, the new living community will replace student housing currently provided in Blakely Hall. Residents will experience an eco-friendly model design for sustainable living and community building. Planners are incorporating education, research and demonstration components into the building plans in areas from green building design, resource conservation and real-time energy monitoring systems to local foods and community. They envision an environment filled with art, light and a living connection to the outdoors.

Julie Phelps, associate director of residential life, noted: "As a department we feel the building of a new residence hall, especially one that meets the University's commitment to green and sustainable initiatives, helps us reach our goal of providing an environment for our students that is conducive to academic success. It meets the needs of our students and provides that out-of classroom learning component that is crucial in their collegiate development.

"We are very excited about this new residence hall and the educational component it will bring, not only for our students, but also for staff, faculty, and guests to our community," added Phelps. "The benefit that comes from living and learning with a core group of students is immeasurable."

The University has selected LHB (Minneapolis) to provide design services for the Green Prairie Community. In their design work LHB's interdisciplinary team focuses on ensuring life-cycle cost reductions, ecological responsibility, and an overall improved quality of life for occupants. "LHB is known for sustainable architecture and is an early founder of Minnesota's green building movement," stated Richard Strong, adjunct professor and research fellow in the Center for Sustainable Building Research in the University of Minnesota College of Design.

Strong, who is assisting the planning team, continued, "LHB infuses sustainable building principles into all their work. Their design team truly understands building green from a very deep and integrated approach. They are perfect to partner with the University of Minnesota, Morris in its excellent work of campus sustainability and climate neutrality. I

am excited about Morris becoming the very first campus to sustainably attain carbon free living and showing Minnesota the abundance that comes with that decision.”

In summer months the Green Prairie Community will house and provide learning spaces for researchers, visiting scholars, undergraduate and graduate students and engaged citizens--for research, workshops and programs linked to the community based renewable energy platforms and green initiatives in Morris. In addition, high school students and adults participating in UMM’s expanding summer programs in the arts, sciences, humanities and education will reside in the facility, gaining exposure to a sustainable living environment. The facility’s private bedrooms and air-conditioning will hold particular appeal for summer program participants.

The University of Minnesota, Morris is on track to be energy self-sufficient through on-site renewable generation by 2010. A 1.65 MW wind turbine, a planned second turbine, biomass gasification plant under construction and energy conservation programs are expected to meet all of the campus electrical, heating and cooling needs within the next three years. In addition to supplying campus energy needs, the systems provide a research and demonstration platform for sustainable community-based energy solutions, advancing the University of Minnesota’s research and public outreach mission. The Green Prairie Alliance, a partnership with the University of Minnesota West Central Research and Outreach Center, the federal USDA Agricultural Research Service-North Central Soil Conservation Research Lab in Morris and a number of private and public community partners lead this work.

UMM is a founding partner in the Pride of the Prairie local foods initiative, established in 2001, as Minnesota’s first sustainable “farm to college” foods program. The campus has been cited for its environmental leadership by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Energy. UMM is a member of the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability (AASHE), the American Council on Renewable Energy (ACORE) and the Presidents Climate Commitment Leadership Circle.

The new Green Prairie Community will be fully accessible and complete the University of Minnesota’s work upgrading fire and life safety systems to include sprinklers for all residential space on UM campuses. Planning and construction (\$6M) will be funded through University of Minnesota bonding and Residential Life reserves. Blakely Hall, in the campus historic district and constructed in 1920, will be rehabilitated to support UMM’s academic programs.

For more information:

Green Prairie Community - [Green Prairie Community](#)

Green Campus initiatives - [Green Campus](#)

Blakely Hall photo by Jeremy Lindorff-Trnka ‘08, Media Services

Through personal and academic discovery, the University of Minnesota, Morris provides opportunities for students to grow intellectually, engage in community, experience environmental stewardship and celebrate diversity. A renewable and sustainable educational experience, Morris prepares graduates for careers, for advanced degrees, for lifelong learning, for work world flexibility in the future, and for global citizenship. Learn more about Morris at morris.umn.edu or call 888-866-3382.