

NEWS RELEASE



For Immediate Release

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Elmhurst College Receives \$116,000 Grant from DuPage County to Implement Innovative Strategies for Stormwater Management

Wight & Company heads \$23 million redevelopment and construction project that advances college's mission to become a model campus for sustainable design

New residence hall designed to be region's first to achieve LEED™ certification

Darien, IL (January 9, 2007) — Elmhurst College has been awarded a \$116,000 grant from the DuPage County Stormwater Management division to partially fund its innovative strategies for managing and monitoring water as part of a \$23 million campus redevelopment project. The entire project, which includes a new 170-bed residence hall, is now being implemented by Wight & Company, a design, construction and engineering firm at the forefront of sustainable design.

The residence hall and surrounding site will feature the latest Best Management Practices (BMPs) for water management, which are integral to Elmhurst College's plans to achieve LEED™ (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) status on this project. This would make the building the region's first college or university housing unit to earn LEED certification, the U.S. Green Building Council's widely accepted scoring method for measuring the sustainability of new construction and renovations.

Wight Elmhurst Release – Add 1

"Our mission is to develop our campus as a model of sustainable design that will be a hands-on educational resource for our students and the community," said Dr. Bryant Cureton, president of Elmhurst College. "We appreciate the county's contributions to this cause as well as the creativity and commitment of Wight. Its multi-faceted solution will enable us to comply with municipal stormwater management ordinances as well as advance the understanding of best practice in the field."

"We are pleased to lend support to this innovative project, which will help educate the community as well as students on the importance of managing water as a valuable and sustainable resource," said County Board member Jim Zay, the Chairman of the DuPage County Stormwater Management Planning Committee and an Elmhurst College graduate.

Water management is especially challenging for 135-year-old Elmhurst College. Although rising enrollment has necessitated construction of additional buildings, the land-locked campus has no available space for a water retention pond. Wight's holistic solution integrates water resource management into both the landscape and built components of the site, including the construction of a 100 percent permeable parking lot and the use of cisterns to capture and recycle rainwater.

"Instead of building conventional detention, we will incorporate a series of BMPs in and around the site to decentralize the rain that falls and return it into the ground where it eventually becomes a resource for Salt Creek," said Jay Womack, ASLA, LEED AP, Wight's director of sustainable design. "This will help protect ground water and reduce discharge rates of stormwater run-off. That in turn will alleviate soil erosion as well as the stress on the City of Elmhurst's already over-burdened stormwater system."

Wight also plans to re-establish native prairie and woodland ecosystems, which, in time, will help reduce maintenance costs and provide invaluable wildlife habitat in an urban setting. Unlike turf grass, the native plants will help improve the soil and extend the lifespan of numerous oak trees on the campus, which is a registered arboretum.

Other water management BMPs include the use of bioswales, rain gardens and several types of runnels to move overflow rainwater above ground. The effectiveness of

Wight Elmhurst Release – Add 2

these techniques – as well as water quality – will be monitored with the help of Elmhurst College’s science faculty and its chemistry and biology students.

From a cost standpoint, the BMPs are expected to deliver significant savings over the next several decades. For example, the paver material for the permeable parking lot is manufactured to a strength unmatched by asphalt paving. Unlike asphalt surfaces, the college’s new lot will not require major maintenance work (e.g., patching, seal coating, re-stripping or resurfacing), which is a costly expense over a 20- to 30-year period.

Throughout the entire project, the campus could serve as a living laboratory for students and the general public to experience and learn how sustainable design and stormwater management can positively impact the environment. For example, students can conduct studies using the monitoring ports that collect effluent water samples from the permeable parking to determine how effective this alternative parking surface is in returning quality water back to underground aquifers.

Elmhurst College intends to make the “green” aspects of this project an environmental showcase for visitors and the community. It plans to work with Wight and groups such as the non-profit organization The Conservation Foundation to develop site signage, displays and educational materials, including information for the development of community and homeowners associations.

This “green” philosophy is not new to Wight. In the last few years, it has had five projects in the Chicago area receive LEED certification, including its own 35,000 square-foot office building in Darien, IL. The firm is now at work on two Platinum-level LEED buildings (one under construction and one in design) and five others that are LEED registered.

"Wight has been our trusted partner for years, and its impressive experience on numerous sustainable design projects will serve us well as we implement these innovative rainwater management strategies," Dr. Cureton said.

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About Wight & Company

Wight Elmhurst Release – Add 3

Wight & Company is a leader in architecture, construction and engineering services. With a professional staff of more than 160 architects, engineers, and construction specialists, Wight is a full-service firm that has been providing clients with design-build and construction management services for more than a decade. The company also is committed to integrating sustainable design principles into all its projects and has 20 LEED-accredited professionals on its staff. It maintains offices in downtown Chicago, Darien, Ill., and South Bend, Ind. For more information, visit www.wightco.com.

About Elmhurst College

Elmhurst College is a private college established in 1871. It dedicates itself to the development of humane values, the skills of critical and creative inquiry, the capacity and desire to serve others, commitment to meaningful work, understanding of global interdependence, and responsible citizenship. For more information, visit <http://public.elmhurst.edu/>.