Project Profile

BioBased® Insulation
Division of BioBased Technologies®

Evelyn Pease Tyner Interpretive Center

Designed by Wight & Company, Darien, IL

Set amidst 32.5 acres of pristine prairie, the Evelyn Pease Tyner Interpretive Center, which marked its formal debut on April 14, 2007, serves as both gateway and guide to the Air Station Prairie; and as an example of how man made structures can harmonize with the environment. The 3,000 square-foot Tyner Center educates visitors about the history and ecology of the local Illinois prairie ecosystem, while also serving as a showcase for the cutting edge of green building technology and techniques.

The first thing you may notice about the center as you walk up the front stairs is that many of the exhibits are on the outside of the building. This not only showcases the surrounding prairie, but also provides a smaller interior footprint to heat and cool. What you may not notice right away is the reason for the front stairs: the building is perched atop a set of stilts. This allows rainwater to flow beneath the building, which helps maintain the natural drainage patterns of the area.

But perhaps the most noticeable feature of the Tyner Center is what you might call the "ultimate" green roof. The natural prairie grasses that surround the building cover two-thirds of its roof as well. This intensive green roof and the over six inches of soil below it soak up rainwater and insulate the building's interior from the elements. Because of the green roof and the use of BioBased 501w® to seal and insulate the building envelope, on many hot summer days, the only cooling system needed is a few open windows. When additional heating and cooling are necessary, the Tyner Center utilizes a geothermal system that circulates water through 200 feet of pipes underground, where the temperature stays a constant 50 degrees year-round.

The other third of the roof contains 490 photovoltaic tiles which provide the building with up to 1800 kilowatt-hours of electricity every month.Taking into account the sensor-controlled high-efficiency lighting system, natural light from the large windows, and the geothermal temperature system, that's often more power than the building consumes.

In May 2007, it became the first new building in the Chicago area to achieve LEED® Platinum certification.