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Project of the Month: Prellwitz Chilinski transforms industrial buildings into sustainable community, The Edge

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Recently opening its doors in the heart of Allston's Green District, The Edge is the latest addition to the growing neighborhood development by the Mount Vernon Company. At 79 units, the upscale residential building is the second of three new construction projects planned as part of CEO Bruce Percelay's vision to create Boston's first sustainably-minded community. Percelay engaged Cambridge-based architects Prellwitz Chilinski Associates (PCA) to transform a series of single-story industrial buildings into hip urban residences. As a member of the Green District, The Edge would continue to set the bar for environmentally responsible design.

PCA's solution is slated to earn Gold certification through the USGBC's LEED for Homes rating system. Utilizing a holistic approach, the design team incorporated various strategies above and beyond the scope of the program to meet Mount Vernon's goals.

The facade composition includes masonry, metal shingles and wood-like fiber cement panels. While serving to break down the large elevation to a contextual scale, this palette also provided a durable, low maintenance solution for the building envelope. Floor to ceiling operable windows as wide as 12' provide natural ventilation and light to each unit. Glazing is 'tuned' based on building orientation to efficiently minimize solar heat gain and solar shading on southern exposures, providing additional control where it is needed most.

With energy efficiency as one of the most critical issues for a sustainable building, The Edge employs many strategies. On the exterior it's a super-insulated envelope that includes a soy-based insulation and a photovoltaic array on its white roof. Inside, a high efficiency HVAC system, LED lighting with occupancy and photo sensors and Energystar appliances contribute to the effort.

Targeting a young professional market, the building features an array of amenities which promote a healthy lifestyle. PCA designed a fitness center with operable garage doors opening out to an adjoining landscaped courtyard. Residents can practice yoga on the patio's "lawn" or improve their handicap at the putting green, both made from materials with high recycled content. Thirst can be quenched at one of the many Hydration Stations scattered throughout the building, installed to discourage the use of plastic water bottles. To encourage bike ridership, The Edge provides plenty of covered bike parking and access to the Green District's own recently installed Hubway station. For those with electric cars, charging stations are provided within the garage.

As a long term owner, the Mount Vernon Co. understands that design and construction are only one small part of any building's lifecycle. In order to maintain the high standard set in the Green District, all residents are required to sign a "Green Declaration" requiring sustainable living practices like recycling, composting, and minimizing water and electricity use.

With all units leased before opening day, Percelay is clearly finding an audience that shares his vision. As he sums it up: "We are seeing a new era of tenants who see the value of well designed,

environmentally responsible buildings and healthy living. They feel right at home at The Edge."

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