A ‘green’ town

The same is true at the new Kiowa County Memorial Hospital in Greensburg, Kan., where officials are waiting to hear from the U.S. Green Building Council if they will become the nation’s first LEED-platinum critical-access hospital. Though the designation will make it unique among the nation’s rural hospitals, in Greensburg, it will be just one among many LEED-certified buildings.

The Greensburg city hall, a John Deere dealership and a townhouse development have received LEED platinum status, and the U.S. Energy Department says, when the town’s development plan is complete, it will have the highest per capita concentration of LEED platinum- and gold-certified buildings in the nation. So, suddenly, Greensburg is now a must-see location for the world’s eco-tourists.

“We have so many tourists coming through town now,” says Mary Sweet, the hospital administrator. “We like to show off the hospital, but sometimes we have three tours a day.”

The previous 24-bed facility was destroyed on May 4, 2007, when a tornado swept through Greensburg, killing 13 people and essentially wiping out the town—leaving only “one block on the west and one block on the east,” Sweet says. Of the hospital’s 95 full- and part-time employees, 68 lost their homes.

The new $24 million, 15-bed hospital was built on the former site of a John Deere dealership and opened March 12. It has fewer beds because it does not include the old facility’s geriatric-psychiatric unit. The 50,000-square-foot building features an extensive rainwater collection system that provides water for landscape irrigation and toilet flushing.

According to an energy-modeling analysis, its design will help make the hospital 32% more energy efficient than other buildings of the same size and shape. One of the hospital’s most noticeable features, an onsite 50-kilowatt wind turbine, provides about 18% of the facility’s electrical needs. All told, it’s been calculated that a similar sized and shaped building’s annual energy costs would run about $367,500. But Kiowa County Memorial’s annual energy tab is expected to be about $248,750.

Sweet says the hospital was not able to capture any LEED points for the building’s use of natural light because of the layout of interior offices and diagnostic imaging facilities, but she adds that the influx of sunlight into patient rooms, corridors and other common areas has made a significant difference.

“I’m disappointed that we didn’t get the points,” Sweet says. “But it’s very light and very sunny. I think it’s more conducive to work. It’s a more conducive healing environment.”

New construction projects can earn a maximum of 110 points in scoring for LEED certification

Criteria Maximum points

- Energy and atmosphere 35
- Sustainable sites 26
- Indoor environmental quality 15
- Materials and resources 14
- Water efficiency 10

Extra credit:

- Innovation in design 6
- Regional priority 4

Designations earned:

- Certified (40+ points)
- Silver (50+ points)
- Gold (60+ points)
- Platinum (80+ points)

Source: U.S. Green Building Council

Here comes the sun

One of the nation’s largest renewable energy efforts initiated by one of the nation’s largest healthcare systems was launched in March when Oakland, Calif.-based Kaiser Permanente announced it was partnering with San Francisco-based Recurrent Energy (which was bought last month by the Sharp Corp. for $305 million in cash) to install 16 solar power systems at 15 Kaiser facilities that will generate a total of 15 megawatts of power when fully implemented.

At the Healthcare Facilities Symposium two years ago, Jeffrey Keyak, senior energy consultant for Kaiser Permanente, and others on a panel announced that the system would be...