New Canaan Sentinel®

ECRWSS
PRSRT STD
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit #2475
Providence, RI
Postal Customer

The Sentinel | Local News THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2026 NewCanaanSentinel.com

Grace Farms is One of Seven U.S. Green Building Council Leadership Award Honorees Internationally

"This 80-acre campus and visionary River Building cultural center is recognized for bringing to life the mission of strengthening communities through sustainable design."

The U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), the organization behind LEED, the world's most widely used green building rating system, has honored Grace Farms with its 2026 Malcolm Lewis IMPACT! Award. Grace Farms is the only recipient of the award this year and one of seven honorees in USGBC's 2026 Leadership Awards, joining global organizations including Tishman Speyer, Saint-Gobain, and Vasakronan. For more than two decades, USGBC has presented these awards to recognize work that has been influential in expanding sustainable, higher- performing buildings. Sharon Prince, CEO and Founder of Grace Farms, and Adam Thatcher, Founding Director of Operations and Sustainability, who led the LEED certification efforts for Grace Farms, accepted the award on October 21 at the USGBC Leadership Awards Celebration during Greenbuild in New York City. Greenbuild, the largest annual event for green building professionals worldwide, brings together USGBC's thousands of members and the wider sustainability community for this annual meeting.

In its citation, USGBC noted, "This 80-acre campus and visionary River Building cultural center is recognized for bringing to life the mission of strengthening communities through sustainable design. Grace Farms demonstrates how the built environment can actively regenerate ecosystems through dual LEED certifications, extensive geothermal infrastructure and transformative habitat restoration that has tripled local bird species—all while deeply engaging the public and serving as a model for regenerative design."

"A building is only truly sustainable if the materials used to make it are ethically and humanely sourced," said Sharon Prince, CEO and Founder of Grace Farms. "That conviction has guided our work, Design for Freedom, to eliminate forced and child labor from the building materials supply chain globally. Seeing Design for Freedom principles integrated into LEED v5 is a profound step forward, because it means the world's most widely used green building rating system now recognizes that sustainability must include the people behind our materials. We're honored to receive this significant recognition from USGBC."



Grace Farms was recognized for how it was built and how it operates (photo by Melani Lust)



Sharon Prince and Adam Thatcher accepted the award on behalf of Grace Farms (photo by Melani Lust)

"As we know, commitment to sustainability in construction doesn't end after a project is completed," said Adam Thatcher, former Director of Operations and Sustainability, Grace Farms. "LEED certification has helped provide a roadmap for our sustainability journey — through construction and ongoing operations. That's why we pursued both BD+C and O+M certification."

Grace Farms' commitment to sustainability began with its architecture. The River building, designed by Pritzker Prize – winning firm SANAA, sits lightly on the land and draws visitors out into the landscape. Beneath the ground of Grace Farms, 55 geothermal wells heat and cool the building using the steady

temperature of the earth. That approach extends across Grace Farms' 80 acres, which have been restored as ten distinct habitats supporting native plants, pollinators, birds, and wildlife. Ongoing stewardship rooted in native species and regenerative practices keeps these ecosystems healthy over the long term. Together, these efforts made Grace Farms the first site in Connecticut to achieve both LEED Building Design and Construction (BD+C) and LEED Operations and Maintenance (O+M) certification.