

The oldest LEED-certified building in the world

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Sede Centrale, LEED-EBOM. Photo by: Università Ca' Foscari Venezia (<http://www.unive.it>)

Earning LEED certification is a major achievement. Earning LEED certification for a Venetian Gothic palazzo built in 1453 and overlooking the Grand Canal is... wow.

Cities like Venice are a window to the past. You know this if you've ever cracked a history textbook or travel guide, caught Rick Steves or Anthony Bourdain gallivanting the canals on cable, or been lucky enough to visit and see its magnificence for yourself.

Sede Centrale, headquarters for Ca' Foscari University of Venice, is now the oldest LEED-certified building on the planet (556 years old, exceeding the previous record holder, Fay House at Harvard University, by more than 350 years) — evidence that the past really is prologue.

It's evidence that bulldozing our existing buildings to replace them with ultra green structures isn't necessary. It's bonafide proof that we can work to green AND preserve the utmost integrity of the historical structures we've got - in every corner of the world - with a little ingenuity, effort, and out-of-the-box thinking. It reassures us that just because something hasn't been done before doesn't mean we can't do it - and do a bang-up job of it.

Our built environment is full of meaningful, historic buildings desperately in need of upgrades. Accessing that opportunity would save countless tons of carbon emissions each year. If a building more than a half millennium old can achieve LEED, it looks like our work is cut out for us. That 50-year-old high-rise down the block certainly seems a lot less daunting to retrofit, that's for sure.

We salute Habitech, GBC Italia, and the number of team members who had the vision and bravery to make this project a reality and set an absolutely unparalleled global example that LEED works — no matter the size, shape, and certainly not the age of a project.

And that's something we can all take a lesson from. Congratulazioni!

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