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Contact: Sarah Mieras, 616.322.8197  
[smieras@operagr.com](mailto:smieras@operagr.com)  
[www.operagr.com](http://www.operagr.com)

## Opera Grand Rapids Goes Green – Building Project Will Be LEED Certified

GRAND RAPIDS – Opera Grand Rapids is rooting itself into a culture of green. The long awaited Betty Van Andel Opera Center will be a Silver LEED certified facility. The center, which will house a rehearsal hall, costume shop and offices, will be built on the West corner of Fulton and Carlton.

Currently a brown field, the parcel of land had been the home of Michigan Litho. After a fire in 2002 destroyed the printing company, the lot has set empty for years, an eyesore for a budding neighborhood on the edge of the City's downtown.

The Opera's future building is not the first to go green in Grand Rapids' growing skyline, recent projects by the Grand Rapids Art Museum and the Grand Rapids Ballet are also LEED certified. Planners from the Opera Grand Rapids facilities committee note that going green was always in the plan for the project. At question was the level of certification.

As a Silver level facility, the project will meet standards that include: sustainability, pollution prevention, water efficient landscaping, water efficient utilities, optimized energy performance, construction waste management and the use of regional materials to limit transportation pollution.

Fundraising efforts continue on the long awaited project, which was jump started by a \$1 Million grant from the Jay and Betty Van Andel Foundation more than seven years ago. Construction and material bids for The Betty Van Andel Opera Center have come in higher than initially expected, driving the estimated cost of the project up from \$1.95 Million to approximately \$2.3 Million. A groundbreaking ceremony, originally expected for this fall, will be held when 100% of the funds needed to complete the project have been raised. Currently the Company has raised approximately 80% of the new campaign goal. A public fundraising campaign will be launched later this month.

Once open, in 2009, the facility will consolidate the Company's resources in one location. Currently the Company stages its operas and fits costumes at a variety of donated spaces throughout Grand Rapids. This means for each of its three shows time, energy and money are spent to set up temporary rehearsal spaces. With the facility, the Company's costume shop, property and set storage as well as vocal warm up rooms and rehearsal room will all be located in one permanent facility.

The Company will begin rehearsals for the first show of its season, "Tosca" in mid-October. The show will take place Nov. 7 and 8 at 7:30pm at DeVos Hall. Tickets are currently on sale through Ticketmaster.

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**LEED:** The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design has set forth a "benchmark for the design, construction and operation of high performance green buildings" to ensure certification. Certification is labeled according to a point system that includes recycling materials and energy efficiency.