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New Video Illuminates Green Building Upgrades for Historic Temple

Chicago, Ill. – The Chicago Temple Project, a joint triumph of historic preservation and green technology, is a paradigm of upgrading building systems while preserving a landmark structure. Now, the story and techniques of this recent heroic effort come to life in a new video presentation.

The Temple building is an architectural masterpiece, an 86-year anchor of the Chicago skyline and home to Chicago’s oldest church congregation. But the building’s mechanical systems were wasting energy, while still not meeting 21st-century needs.

Enter a top-to-bottom overhaul of all the Temple’s systems, including the lighting and the envelope, with a massive new rooftop air handling unit at the center of the green upgrades. Smart design and cutting-edge technologies from TEC – the Chicago area’s largest independent distributor of HVAC equipment – have given the Temple a quieter, more efficient HVAC system, equivalent to the capacity of 200 large homes, with no impact on the building’s beloved and memorable exterior.

The new video shows how solutions like this can be ideal for bringing a historic building into the future. “Professionals and enthusiasts will be educated and inspired by the video, said project spokesman Tim Brown. “Conservation and preservation do not have to be at odds.”

Retrofitting older constructions to incorporate modern efficiencies is a challenge even under the best of circumstances. But when a historic structure is involved, the challenges increase. “Full LEED standards can be so intrusive on a building’s character and appearance that a building’s historic value is compromised or lost,” explained Brown. “A customized, structure-specific upgrade, even if it does not follow LEED to the letter, provides environmental sustainability and also prolongs the useful life of historic buildings.”

Expert reconstruction within the constraints of an old structure – as demonstrated on this project – can bring together the best of the old and the new.

Time-lapse filming shows the delicate yet massive rooftop job of assembling the largest modular air handling unit ever – starting by day and working into the floodlit night. Experts discuss the unique challenges of this project, the logistics of massive trucking and lifting and the teamwork

among expert teams from TEC, Racan-Carrier, HPZS (architects and project managers), Hill Mechanical Services and dbHMS (energy efficiency solutions), that made the project possible.

Now the Chicago Temple's powerful new air handling system, designed by air handling specialist Racan-Carrier and built and installed by TEC, circulates 235,000 cubic feet of air per minute, and includes 20-foot-high equipment on the roof, yet the new system is nearly invisible from the outside. Working with a team of designers, architects and engineers, TEC and Racan-Carrier have camouflaged the system's exterior components so that even the necessary roof installation and a 16-square-foot air duct leave the building's historic appearance unmarred.

“Green efficiencies will give new life to the Chicago Temple building for decades to come,” said Brown. “These crucial steps are sustainable on every level, from financial to spiritual, keeping alive a Chicago landmark and a sanctuary in the middle of the city.”

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