

# LEED CI—Creating Sustainable Commercial Interiors



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**By Ted Heisler**

A day doesn't go by without a reference in the media to the importance of sustainability. Let's face it, LEED™ (Leadership in Energy & Environment Design) is hot! Commercial real estate professionals are wise to study up on the ins and outs of the LEED program and particularly how it relates to commercial interior space. Whether you represent a landlord or a tenant, having a solid understanding of the LEED certification process will benefit your business.

LEED-CI (Commercial Interiors) is unique in that it can include multiple tenant improvement projects within a single building. This is in contrast to both LEED-NC (New Construction), which includes a one-time design and construction effort whose LEED eligibility ends when the building is built, and LEED-EB (Existing Building), which is measured on an operational basis of building maintenance and upgrades to meet "green"

standards. Since an individual tenant typically has no voice in the operations of the building in which they lease space, LEED-CI focuses on sustainable choices within a space that are within the realm of the design team and the tenants.

The USGBC (U.S. Green Building Council), founded in 1994, has an established rating system to verify the level of green building performance within different commercial projects. The Certification Levels for LEED-CI (Revised June 2005) are:

Certified:	21-26 points
Silver:	27-31 points
Gold:	32-41 points
Platinum:	42-57 points

These point thresholds for commercial interiors are measured using the same five LEED Performance Areas that are used for commercial buildings, including:

- 1) Sustainable Sites
- 2) Water Efficiency

- 3) Energy & Atmosphere
- 4) Materials & Resources
- 5) Indoor Environmental Quality

The following are practical questions and factors to consider when seeking points within the LEED-CI Green Building Rating System.

**Sustainable Sites – Tenant Space Location:**

- Access to public transportation
- Amount of parking available to tenant
- Bicycle storage and changing rooms

**Water Efficiency – Tenant Space, Restrooms, and other Facilities used by Tenant:**

- Use high-efficiency infrared plumbing fixture sensors (i.e., automatic faucets, etc.)
- Install sub-meters to monitor consumption
- Reduce quantity of water needed via low-flow faucets
- Reduce municipal water supply and treatment burden, including use of recycled water for toilets and waterless urinals

**Energy & Atmosphere**

- CFC reduction in HVAC & R equipment
- Automatic sensors for lighting power and controls
- Energy-efficient equipment & appliances

**Materials & Resources – Utilization for Interior Building Systems and Furnishings:**

- Maintain as much of the existing construction as possible when planning to renovate
- Divert construction waste from landfills
- Use recycled, rapidly renewable, and regional products and materials—without the use of toxic substances
- Inform occupants on building recycling procedures
- Negotiate longer leases or ownership for reduced space turnover—resulting in less demolition and construction

**Indoor Environmental Quality – Increasing Occupant Health:**

- Use of natural ventilation systems
- Use of natural daylight
- Use and specify furniture that is “Greenguard” certified or registered.
- Environmental tobacco smoke control

While LEED-CI spaces are economical in the long term (decreased operating costs, increased employee satisfaction, productivity, and retention), the initial investment costs of documentation and commissioning can be more than a tenant or developer is willing to spend. However, there are still strategies available to incorporate a sustainable design approach into interior space.

It is increasingly important for a tenant’s space to reflect its corporate culture. This often involves an environmentally responsible mission as well as core values. If achieving LEED certification isn’t the particular path a tenant wants to take, however, here are some projects showing ways that sustainable design elements can be incorporated into an interior space.

**Toyota Regional Training Facility – San Ramon, California**

Toyota is nationally recognized as a leader in promoting sustainability and green design and has completed several certified projects. To prepare for Toyota Motor Sales USA, Inc.’s project which included a 14,000-square-foot expansion of an existing Service Technical Training facility (classrooms, service stalls, and necessary support spaces) and a Regional Office (office, conference, training, and sales space) of approximately 35,000 square feet, the design team met with the client and the consultants to discuss the client’s sustainable design objectives.

Toyota wanted to ensure that their “green” goals could be accomplished with little or no stress to either time or budget. Based on previous experience, the project team was able to include numerous sustainable design elements, such as:

- Reserved parking for energy efficient automobiles;
- Water-efficient irrigation and landscaping;
- Optimized lighting power and controls,
- Optimized power using Energy Star equipment and appliances;
- Storage and collection of recyclables;
- Increased ventilation;
- Low VOC- emitting materials, adhesives and sealants, paints and coatings, carpet systems, composite wood and laminated adhesives;

- Systems furniture and seating, which is green guarded; and
- Increased use of natural daylight and views.

While not LEED-certified, Toyota’s interior spaces were designed to save energy and conserve natural resources, thus meeting Toyota’s sustainability objectives for the project!

## Hensel Phelps District Office – Irvine, California



*Training Room in Hensel Phelps*



*Lobby of Hensel Phelps*

Ware Malcomb provided architectural and full service interior design services for the two-story, 25,000-square-foot District Office building for the Hensel Phelps Construction Company. The project incorporated sustainable design elements including using natural light and ventilation, installing sunshades on the exterior of the building, and incorporating light shelves inside each office to maximize natural light throughout the interior of the space.

Here are some Green Interior Tips:

- For tenant improvement projects—examine the existing conditions and evaluate what items may be available for reuse. Maintaining at least 50 percent of the existing non-shell items is an excellent “green” goal.



*Lobby of Hensel Phelps*

- Sustainable carpeting—use post-industrial, recycled fibers or other items that have a post-consumer high recycle content.
- Specify natural products wherever possible, including adhesives.
- Select products where natural wood elements are used versus synthetic fillers.
- Choose air-conditioning systems with automatic shutoffs at non-peak hours.

Your clients look to you to assist them in achieving their real estate goals, which increasingly include a nod to the environment and “green design.” There are many ways to help them incorporate sustainable design into their space, without necessarily having to seek LEED certification.

### About Ware Malcomb

Ware Malcomb is committed to be the best commercial real estate focused architectural firm in the United States. Established since 1972, Ware Malcomb is a leading national design firm offering architecture, planning, interior design, site development, and graphic design services to commercial development and corporate clients throughout the United States and Mexico. Specialized experience includes the design of commercial office, industrial, technology, healthcare, and retail facilities, as well as auto dealerships. The firm has six offices in California—Irvine (corporate headquarters), Los Angeles, San Diego, the Inland Empire, Northern California, and Sacramento as well as offices in Phoenix, Denver, Chicago, and New Jersey.

Ware Malcomb is both a member and a sponsor of several SIOR chapters throughout the United States. For more information regarding Ware Malcomb, please visit [www.waremalcomb.com](http://www.waremalcomb.com).