

LEED CI – Creating Sustainable Commercial Interiors

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A day doesn't go by without a reference to the importance of sustainability in the media. 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 with both LEED-NC (New Construction), which includes a one-time design and construction effort whose LEED eligibility ends when the building is built, as well as 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 design team and tenants' realm of control.

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 July 2002) are as follows:

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 5 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 suggestions to consider when one should look to obtain points within the LEED-CI Green Building Rating System.

Sustainable Sites – Tenant Space Location:

- Is there access to Public Transportation?
- Amount of Parking available to tenant
- Bicycle Storage and Changing Rooms

Water Efficiency – Tenant Space & Restrooms/Facilities used by Tenant:

- Use high-efficiency infrared plumbing fixture sensors (i.e. automatic faucets, etc.)
- Install submeters 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 looking to renovate
- Divert construction waste from landfills
- Use recycled, rapidly renewable & 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 Daylighting
- Use/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 their corporate culture – which often involves an environmentally responsible mission or values. If achieving LEED certification isn’t the particular path a tenant wants to take, however, here are some project examples of ways 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 got together 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. Building on previous experience the project team included numerous

sustainable design elements. A few examples include reserved parking for energy efficient automobiles, water efficient irrigation and landscaping, optimizing lighting power and controls, optimizing power with equipment and appliances (Energy Star), 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

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 utilizing natural light and ventilation, installation of sun shades on the exterior of the building and incorporation of light shelves inside each office to maximize natural light throughout the interior of the space.

Here are some Green Interiors Tips:

- For tenant improvement projects - examine the existing conditions and evaluate what items may be available for reuse. Maintaining at least 50% of the existing non-shell items is an excellent 'green' goal.
- 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 includes 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 the Author

Ted Heisler is Principal, Interior Architecture & Design for Ware Malcomb. Joining the firm in 1994, he has helped significantly grow this division of the firm, which currently represents over 25% of Ware Malcomb's business. Mr. Heisler is on the Board of Directors for Corenet Global, Southern California chapter, and is a Certified Interior Designer. He is active in SIOR, NAIOP and Corenet Global.

About Ware Malcomb

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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 10 offices in Irvine (corporate headquarters), Los Angeles, San Diego, the Inland Empire, Northern California, Sacramento, Phoenix, Denver, Chicago and New Jersey.

Ware Malcomb is both a member and sponsor of several SIOR chapters through-out the United States. For more information regarding Ware Malcomb, please go to www.waremalcomb.com.