



## **Sustainable design efforts growing with big-box retailers and developers**

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As more and more projects are designed and built with sustainable design measures, the trickle-down effect into markets and building types that were not seemingly compatible with LEED initiatives is growing.

Indeed, the goal of such sustainable design rating systems was to transform the marketplace in order to make sustainable design the norm, rather than the exception. In the last few short years, the retail industry is a prime example of this type of market transformation.

Big-box retailers and developers are slowly but assuredly incorporating more and more sustainable design elements into their buildings. The reason for this transformation is a combination of public awareness for sustainable design (and associated benefits of marketing the development), real added value for the development (both in terms of the initial property value and long term operating efficiencies), and increased ease for incorporating sustainable design elements. The latter of these items is a "snowball effect" of increased sustainable development, leading to increased sustainable product availability, leading to more sustainable development, and so on.

While some of these projects strive for formal U.S. Green Building Council certification under the LEED rating system, others are incorporating practical sustainable design elements into their projects while forgoing the formal certification process. But, the important occurrence is happening and sustainable design elements are now part of the consciousness of retail strip center and big-box retail developers and retailers alike.

As a leader in designing retail environments, GreenbergFarrow is seeing a noticeable increase in the number of LEED and sustainable design efforts. With their deep and diverse client and project list, green design solutions for clients include not only big-box retailers but also large-scale, mixed-use environments.

Oftentimes, during the early stages of a project, simple and practical sustainable design elements present themselves and can be seamlessly integrated into the project by assessing the project's site and program.

For City Point in Brooklyn, New York, Acadia Realty Trust's 1.6 million s/f mixed-use center, all the stores, located at the base of the building, will face outward so that natural sunlight can reduce the energy needed to light the spaces. Plans also call for incorporating reusable materials, energy-efficient mechanical systems and a green roof element. This green roof will not only be useful for mitigating the "heat island effect," but will also provide open space for the residents of the residential component within the dense urban environment that surrounds the project.

Other solutions run the spectrum including high energy efficiency initiatives with both the mechanical systems employed and the thermal envelope of the building, combined water efficiency and stormwater measures including stormwater harvesting and reuse, construction waste management

practices that will target a 75% reduction in waste that is sent to landfill, use of recycled materials, and many other innovative, yet simple, measures.

For major big-box retailers, who tend to have a very keen eye on the premium costs for such added scope, typical solutions include the use of refrigerants (such as R410a) that are relatively benign to the ozone layer and reduce the impact of global warming, the use of water saving fixtures such as waterless urinals, use of FSC certified wood (wood that is grown in a sustainable manner), use of regional materials (which saves on the effects of transportation), use of low-emitting materials which reduce air quality, and of course, extensive energy modeling in order to reduce energy usage. All of these measures can typically be handled for minimum additional cost, or even cost savings.

There are typically additional design costs in order to fully research and implement the needed measures (and, in the case of LEED certification, to document the efforts that were realized), however, in the end, the project is left with a more valuable development, that is more marketable and that operates more efficiently.

More and more developers are realizing that the relatively small added costs for incorporating sustainable design into their projects are well worth the expense.

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