



The New GOLD Standard in Las Vegas

By Neal J. Root, P.E.

If you have driven on U.S. 95 near the I-15 interchange in the last year you probably noticed one of the newest changes to the Las Vegas skyline. Located at the north end of what is now being called “Union Park” is the new Molasky Corporate Center. The project was developed by the Molasky Group of Las Vegas and provides 265,000 sq. ft. of Class A office space to the downtown Las Vegas market. However, providing new office space is not what makes this building so special.

The developers are aiming for Gold certification under the U.S. Green Building Council’s LEED green building rating system. It will join the rapidly growing number of LEED certified projects in Nevada and across the county.

Through the use of innovative strategies for site development, sustainable building materials, efficient water and energy systems, smart building controls and a myriad of other cost-effective services and amenities, the design and construction team were able to achieve a very high performance building. The project was designed by HFTA/KKE of Nevada, Inc.

Some noted features are: recycled glass countertops in the bathrooms, post-consumer recycled denim (old shredded blue jeans) being used as insulation in the walls and extensive use of bamboo in the flooring and wall finishes. In addition, 95% of the structural steel used in the building framing was recycled along with 90% recycled reinforcing steel used in the concrete. Construction waste materials were recycled at 80% or more, including paper, wood, plastics, metals, concrete and wire. As designed and constructed, the Molasky Corporate Center will be about 35% more efficient in the use of energy and water over a similar, conventional building.

When the Southern Nevada Water Authority, the building’s largest tenant, requested that the building be built in accordance with LEED standards, Molasky Group Chairman, Irwin Molasky insisted that his development team become educated in green building practices. As a result, his team was able to help educate the contractors and worked closely with the building officials regarding the requirements of the LEED program. When asked what he felt was a key aspect of his experience with developing a LEED certified building, Mr. Molasky said, “Everybody involved in the project has to be educated about the process and completely onboard and integrated with the outcome.”

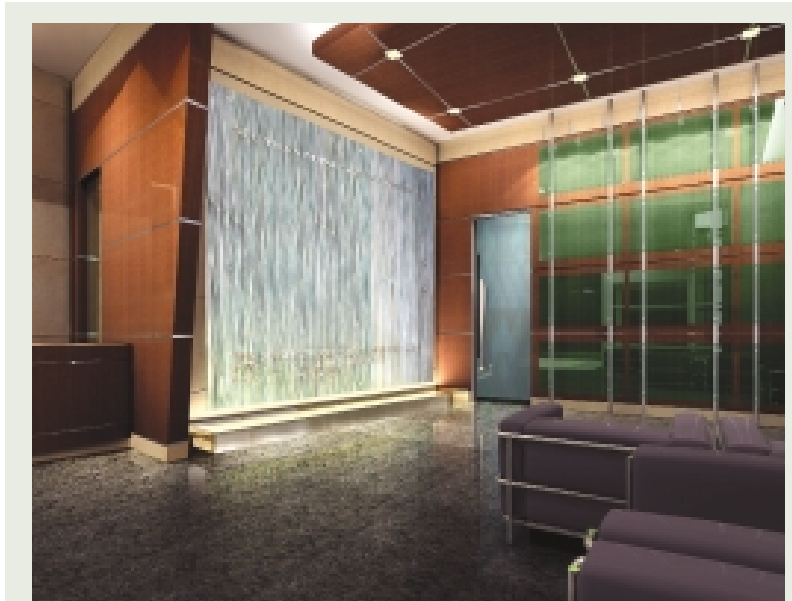


Photo courtesy of the Molasky Group.

Today, the Molasky Group is a recognized leader in green building development.

Studies have shown that the initial cost for green buildings can vary substantially. In mature markets, there may be little or no added “green” premium. Conversely, in areas where green building is relatively new, such as Nevada, lack of experience can add cost to a project. As contractors, sub-contractors and material suppliers become more familiar with LEED standards, costs typically come down.

Since the Molasky Corporate Center is one of the first major projects of its kind in Southern Nevada, the learning curve brought with it some associated costs. Mr. Molasky still feels that this was the right thing to do and that it was a positive step forward to decreasing this country’s dependency on foreign oil.

Going green doesn’t mean sacrificing a buildings’ aesthetic appeal - just look at the finishes for the lobby of the Southern Nevada Water Authority. The level of sophistication and clarity in the design is remarkable. Knowing that this is accomplished using sustainable building materials in a building with extraordinary water and energy efficiency makes it all the better.

The Molasky Corporate Center stands as an excellent example of how the LEED Green Building Rating System can help us achieve beauty, functionality, better health and higher performance in our buildings. <<

LEED for Homes is Greening the Housing Market



Rendering of The Enchantment Way, a LEED for Homes pilot project. Image courtesy of Tate Snyder Kimsey.

By David M. Cohen

Green construction has recently fallen into the shadows of marketers that have jumped onto the global warming bandwagon with “green” fashion, “green” dining, “green” literature and other “green” platforms. However, getting back to basics, one of the primary concerns of the green initiative has been the impact of development and construction on the environment.

The U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) estimates that buildings account for 39% of total energy used and 70% of all electricity consumption in the United States. In addition, buildings emit 30% of all greenhouse gases, use up 30% of all raw materials and output an average of 136 million tons of waste annually.

In theory, a green building uses much less energy or generates its own, uses less water or harvests its own, it uses fewer virgin and non-renewable resources, it uses as many local materials as possible to prevent unnecessary transportation, it protects or improves the surrounding natural environment, and enhances occupant and community health, well being and productivity.

Without a consistent standard, it is difficult to know what has been done to a particular building or home that embodies those characteristics. There are over 70 programs across the country that attempt to define green construction, with varying degrees of success.

The USGBC has created a certification process called LEED that has become the premier green building rating system in the nation. LEED can be applied to a growing number of project types, including

commercial buildings and interiors, homes, schools, retail and even entire neighborhoods.

The importance of LEED is that it quantifies green building, reducing subjectivity to an absolute minimum. When a home or other building is awarded LEED certification, the buyer can be sure the structure has met stringent, meaningful and consistent standards.

While the real benefits are for the end user, there are some caveats. Green homes are typically better-built and higher-performing, which may result in cost premiums. However, the number one reason for higher costs in green construction is that the commitment to a well-defined green strategy is not implemented early enough. Home-builders may acknowledge that it is the “right thing to do,” but failure to take the right steps early in a project can lead to lost opportunities that translate into unnecessary costs.

Well-planned projects and experienced teams can minimize these impacts. In any case, the long term operational, maintenance and health benefits make the extra investment well worth it.

Operating cost savings and utility conservation are huge motivators for buyers. In a market that has slowed down considerably, builders are looking for new ways to differentiate themselves from the competition. LEED for Homes is sure to become a recognized symbol of quality and performance.

LEED for Homes is currently in the pilot phase and several projects in Nevada are registered for it. Membership in the U.S. Green Building Council provides an opportunity for builders, and all members, to contribute to the program’s development through an open, consensus-based process. <<

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