



Environmental Stewardship Awards

DesignGroup

In 2008, DesignGroup received a Governor's Award for Outstanding Achievement in Environmental Stewardship. The award recognizes Ohio companies and organizations committed to environmental compliance and reducing pollution.

DesignGroup, a 70-employee Columbus architectural firm, is widely recognized as a leader in sustainable design. The firm is experienced in designing buildings that take advantage of daylighting, building orientation, use of "green" materials, optimization of HVAC systems and sustainable site techniques.

DesignGroup as a firm is fully committed in its efforts to promote sustainability and has taken measures to demonstrate that, both internally and to its customers. More than 75 percent of the firm's technical staff has passed the LEED™ (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Accredited Professional (AP) examination, demonstrating knowledge of sustainable design principles.

LEED is a leading nationally accepted building performance rating system for energy efficient and environmentally friendly buildings.

DesignGroup, at the beginning of 2006 took the challenge of obtaining LEED accreditation for its entire technical staff. It now has 39 LEED AP architects and other professional staff to ensure the best quality of service for its clients. LEED core principles are incorporated into every project at DesignGroup, at little or no additional cost to the owner. These core principles include energy performance, site selection, water efficiency construction materials and indoor environmental quality.

An in-house "Green Team" meets regularly to review practices and methods and to keep the firm and clients abreast of current trends in sustainable design. The core principles of sustainable design are integrated into every project, including its own building, which was built before the LEED guidelines were instituted.

Sustainable Design Approach – DesignGroup Headquarters Building

In 1998, before the introduction of LEED, the DesignGroup team wanted to create an environmentally friendly, flexible 62,000 square foot loft space building, while still meeting the firm's cost parameters. The design strategy included optimizing the proportion and orientation of the building, daylighting and a well-insulated building envelop to reduce energy consumption. The project would also help rejuvenate a 150-year area of the city utilizing the existing infrastructure.

DesignGroup is recognized for:

- Integrating the core principles of sustainable design into every project, including its own headquarters building, which was built before the LEED guidelines were instituted.
- Designing buildings that take advantage of orientation, optimize daylighting, use "green" materials, optimize the performance of HVAC systems, and employ sustainable site techniques, while providing occupants with comfort and desired features.
- It's in-house "Green Team" that meets regularly to review practices and methods and to keep staff and clients abreast of current trends in sustainable design.

Environmental Stewardship Awards

DesignGroup

The highly successful outcome is a five-story building facility that provides pleasant office space while saving 25 percent in energy cost over a conventional structure. The building is strategically oriented to maximize daylighting into the entire space. Elevators, stairs and restrooms are located at east and west ends of the building, thus providing a large open flexible floor plan. The structure is flat slab concrete, which is exposed in most interior spaces of the building.

The firm desired to use materials honestly and minimally on the interior and exterior. The elevator shaft is exposed structural ground face block, and concrete columns and concrete deck are exposed in most areas of the building. Acoustic ceiling planes are hung over workstation areas to control noises as well as provide a reflector for indirect lighting in the space. The office space's east-west walls are transparent allowing visibility to the north and the south by occupants in any area.

Most conference rooms are on exterior walls with borrowed lights to the interior space and use of daylighting exclusively during daytime hours. Roof top mechanical units are exposed on the roof and are part of the composition of the building. Ducts are extended down the east and west facades, entering the building on each floor at the ceiling space, allowing a large, flexible, open floor plate. All restrooms have windows to reduce lighting demand and include waterless urinals and dual-flush toilets, saving an estimated 80,000 gallons of water every year.

The building serves as an example of what can be accomplished at the same cost of a typical market rate speculative office building. The building design has been featured in the media, presented at the 2002 AIA-Tri Convention and has been on the ASES Solar Tour. A green tour was set up and the building has been visited by county commissioners, mayors, state officials, high school groups, AIA groups, OSU Knowlton School of Architecture groups and international design students.

The Green Team

The DesignGroup Green Team is an eight person internal team that researches sustainability efforts ways to improve performance. They are also responsible for organizing various in-house educational presentations and coordinating staff attendance at local, regional and national conferences. Highlights of the Green Team's efforts include:

- *Environment at Noon* – a monthly lunch hour discussion forum open to all staff where ideas related to various sustainable issues ranging from “How to live Green” to “Public transportation in Columbus” are shared.
- *Sustainability Library* – including books, periodicals, articles & documentaries. Staff members are encouraged to borrow and share with family and friends for raising awareness and understanding about these issues.
- *DG University* – an educational program for staff members, which offers courses focusing on sustainability. These courses include more detailed research on design techniques, system integration, material research and other similar topics.
- *Climb-A-Thon* – a competition organized between the different practice groups within the firm to promote the use of stairs and reduce energy consumption by the elevators. During the competition the staff averaged 600 trips per week up and down the stairs.
- *Eliminate Bottled Water* – After the Green Team enlightened the firm's staff of the environmental impacts of producing bottled water, employees switched to filtered tap water.

For more information

DesignGroup, 515 E. Main Street, Columbus, Ohio 43215, Rob Hedge, (614) 255-0515, rhedge@dgcolumbus.com

If you would like additional information about Ohio EPA's environmental stewardship award program, contact the Office of Compliance Assistance and Pollution Prevention (OCAPP) at 800-329-7518, or visit OCAPP's website at <http://epa.ohio.gov/ocapp/ohioe3.aspx>.