



## The Green Architect

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### Green Finishes, Guidelines and Leases

A spec retail center developer recently called and asked for help in obtaining LEED Silver certification for the Pilot Retail rating system. The building would be sited just blocks away from a college campus where intelligent, environmentally sensitive shoppers were sure to notice. Tenants and customers alike will certainly be asking for more information about the “green” qualities of retail spaces, so it’s good to take a closer look at both sides of this topic.

Unlike a LEED New Construction (NC) project where the builder is responsible for and has complete control over the materials used on exterior and the interior of the building, the LEED Retail rating system, like the LEED Core & Shell (CS) rating system provides certification for the skeleton and skin of the building only. Points are available for building characteristics and operations that provide tenants with the ability to obtain LEED certification for their individual spaces.

In order to maintain the healthier conditions green design and construction provides, tenants should be educated about the

special nature of the building, the building owner should provide prospective tenants with “green tenant finish” palettes, “green tenant guidelines” and/or “green leases”.

Requiring tenants to take earth-friendly steps can actually save the building owner money. In addition, when the space is turned over, the effort of the first tenant to maintain healthy air quality should make the space more attractive and possibly result in higher rent income per square foot.

**Green tenant finishes** are similar to standard building finishes. They provide suggestions for more sustainable choices in carpet, resilient flooring, base, paint and countertops. Without ignoring aesthetics, these guidelines give consideration to the harvesting, manufacturing, shipping and installation process of each material chosen is considered.

A set of palettes I developed for a Mid-Wilshire high- rise building included many products manufactured in southern California like Bentley Prince Street carpets (made in Los Angeles) and Frazee paints (made in San Diego). If I were to assemble a palette for a building in northern California or another state, finishes would be very different. Using locally harvested and manufactured items of reduces the project’s total carbon emissions impact.

In order to obtain a LEED credit for **Green Tenant Design & Construction Guidelines** they must be must include:

1. A description of the green features of the existing building
2. The building owner’s sustainability goals and objectives for tenant spaces
3. A narrative and illustrated guide of components that save water, energy, improve indoor air quality, increase individual control of lighting and thermal comfort, etc.
4. Recommendations and examples of sustainable design strategies, products, materials and service suggestions

**Green leases** on the other hand are a bit more complicated. Green requirements and practices should be incorporated into the

lease, not simply added as an Exhibit. Depending upon the points the building owner pursues, many green issues could be an added benefit to tenants such as showers and bicycle racks for bike commuters, preferential parking for carpoolers, etc. Others like recycling mixed waste from paper, plastic and corrugated cardboard may require additional effort on the tenant's part but could save the building owner 35%-40% of the monthly refuse fees.

Since the building owner wanted to reach the silver level I provided an exhaustive list (25 items) for review and consideration by his attorney. As I suspected, he wanted to be green but didn't have a clear understanding of what that meant. After previewing the list he called quite surprised. Why would I instruct tenants to install low flow faucets, low VOC finishes and recycle waste?

I thought his purpose for building a green building was the same as other developers: setting the building apart, saving operations and maintenance costs and being recognized as an environmental steward. Weren't clientele of these future businesses most likely to be students? Aren't students better educated, thus more aware and interested in their own impact on the environment? He clearly didn't understand what the sustainable movement was about.

Of my 25 suggestions, some were quite extreme (even I'll admit that requiring tenants provide filtered tap water or water fountain service rather than bottles of water like San Francisco government buildings has recently mandated is extreme) but others were things that make good sense/cents for the building owner. Six items that I thought and think should be considered for leases whether in green or traditional constructed buildings are:

**1. Protect future Indoor Air Quality during construction by:**

- a. Protect stored on-site mechanical ductwork and equipment from dust accumulation by covering it until installed
- b. Provide a 12' walk off mat/carpet at all entrances of the construction area. Vacuum walk-off mat/ carpet daily.

- c. Sweep floors and remove trash on a daily basis.
- d. Protect stored on-site or installed absorptive materials from moisture damage.
- e. If permanently installed air handlers are used during construction, filtration media with a Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value (MERV) of 8 or comparable media shall be used at each return air grille. Replace all filtration media immediately prior to occupancy.

**2. Purchase and install supplemental air-conditioning systems that utilize non-ozone depleting refrigerants.** (No chlorofluorocarbons and hydrofluorocarbons).

**3. Install energy efficient light fixtures and lamps wherever possible.** (This was especially important in this case because the building owner wanted to install solar panels across the entire roof and get the quickest return on the investment.)

**4. Implement a recycling program.** The majority of waste leaving office buildings is highly recyclable white paper. The Retail green rating system requires a waste stream audit be performed once the stores are open and that the top three recyclable wastes be separated and diverted from landfills.

**5. Prohibit customer and staff smoking within twenty-five feet of entries, outdoor air intakes and operable windows.**

**6. Provide the Lessor with 48 hours notice of any pest control activities scheduled to occur within the Lessee's space.** This allows the building manager to notify other tenants of the chemical application.

When teamed together, the green tenant finishes, green tenant guidelines and green leases are a powerful tool in maintaining a green building. Even as individual components they can provide a healthier environment. A healthier building provides advantages to the building owner, retail customers, tenants and the planet.

As I told my client, before dismissing all my suggestions, at least mention them to your prospective tenants. See what their reactions are. You might be surprised.

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