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Janet Morra and Christine Law - Practice What You Preach

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Margulies Perruzzi Architects (MPA) has designed many green and LEED certified projects over its 20-year history. For its own office renovation, MPA earned LEED Silver Certification under the LEED for Commercial Interiors rating system and gained valuable insight into the choices and decisions that clients need to make throughout their own projects. Here, the firm outlines, by environmental category, the various sustainable design strategies incorporated into the project.

Sustainable Sites

Selecting a site in an existing urban neighborhood with established infrastructure and public transportation has far less impact on the environment than locating a new building in a previously undeveloped area. For MPA's office relocation, building location was a pivotal part of the decision-making process. MPA selected space on the fourth floor of the newly renovated Boston Children's Museum Building overlooking the Fort Point Channel in Boston.

Materials & Resources

During construction of MPA's new offices, 80% of construction waste was recycled rather than sent to landfills. During the design process, MPA was able to specify that 25% of all materials had recycled content, and 79% of all materials were obtained within 500 miles. Half of the wood used in the construction process was produced in accordance with the Forest Stewardship Council's principles and criteria for responsible forest management and 70% of the furniture was reused from the firm's previous space.

Energy & Atmosphere

The U.S. Department of Energy reports that commercial buildings consume 37% of the energy and 68% of the electricity produced in the U.S. every year. To optimize energy performance, over 90% of the computers, kitchen appliances, and office equipment chosen for the office was Energy Star rated, reducing energy consumption significantly and resulting in less greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to global warming.

Indoor Environmental Quality

When selecting materials and furniture during the design process, special consideration was given to choosing products with a reduced quantity of indoor air contaminants. Low-emitting materials evaluated included carpets, paints, adhesives, sealants, and composite wood adhesives that have low or no VOCs, and furniture that is Green Guard certified. Over 90% of occupants were given task lighting to suit individual task needs and reduce overall required lighting, and a lighting control system was employed so that lights would be on only during business hours.

Innovation & Design

MPA earned innovation points for exemplary performance by going above and beyond the minimum standards in the categories of alternative transportation, regionally manufactured materials, and reuse of furniture systems and seating.

With an understanding of how green design can impact the environment and the bottom line, MPA approaches every project with the goal of incorporating some sustainable measures. After completing its own LEED Silver certified office project, MPA has acquired first-hand knowledge and experience to better serve its clients, whether the client is interested in pursuing LEED certification or simply making upgrades to an existing building.

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