



## INDEPENDENCE DEVELOPS CITY'S FIRST LEED PLATINUM BUILDING

What can you do with an old hospital site with two derelict structures in a highly visible location? Add into this equation a City Council that wants to see the site developed, and “can we make it green, to?” The challenge was made to implement a plan that could meet the City’s growing list of needs.

Three city departments – power and light, water and water pollution control, were all outgrowing their existing offices. These departments were each located along Truman Road. Harry Truman lived on this stretch of highway. In the 1800s, settlers traveling west stopped to do business along this highway. It is an east/west artery into Kansas City. The goal was to relocate the three city-owned utility offices to the same place, as

well as adding the service/call center so customers would have a centrally located place to pay bills.

The abandoned hospital building was in poor condition and needed clearing from its site. The adjoining professional doctors building was dated, but had a good foundation. The City agreed to purchase the site once the owner cleared the old hospital and stripped the professional building down to its concrete foundation. It was going to take a creative design and plan to restore the space to meet the needs of the City and the “green” requirement.

It is truly amazing what can happen when committees are formed, RFPs are issued, and engineers and architects are hired. Groundbreaking for the

project began on a blustery March 2016 morning. From that morning on, citizens watched in amazement as the building was transformed into what they could be proud to call the Independence Utilities Center.

Citizens saw the meticulous care taken with the construction of a building that, when completed, would be certified as a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) building. This became the first LEED certified building in Independence.

LEED buildings strive to have a minimal impact on the environment. Twenty percent of the materials used are recycled. Wood from an old barn in Kentucky was reclaimed and used for key design features throughout the building.



**Top: LEED buildings strive to have a minimal impact on the environment. Twenty percent of the materials used are recycled. Wood from an old barn in Kentucky was reclaimed and used for key design features throughout the building.**  
**Above: The Center was designed to bring in the natural light from outside, by allowing the light from the large perimeter windows and adding glass walls to office walls that would customarily have been drywalled.**

Low-e window film was used on the windows to make them more energy efficient. Insulation was added to the roof and walls and sealed to minimize infiltration into the building. Carpet and furniture have no or low-volatile organic compound (VOC) emissions, keeping the inside healthy for employees.

The new Independence Utilities Center also features electric vehicle charging stations for visitors and employees.

Proximity to other services plays a role in the LEED certification. Since the location is centrally located, employees and visitors are encouraged to walk or ride their bikes instead of driving. The Center is close enough to restaurants, stores and a bank that employees can use during lunch breaks.

Saving and managing the use of power is another important part of obtaining the LEED certification. Approximately 30 percent of the power needed to operate the Center is supplied by a photovoltaic (PV) array on the Center's rooftop. A small wind turbine was installed as an additional power source. An information center inside the Center gives real-time readings on the power being generated by the renewable sources.

The Center was designed to bring in the natural light from outside, by allowing the light from the large perimeter windows and adding glass walls to office walls that would customarily have been drywalled. All supplemental lighting is LED with dimmers and occupancy sensors. One special feature is the interior lights that dim when the ambient light from the outside is adequate.

Water conservation is another element to be considered. All water closets and sinks are a low-volume design and are operated using automatic sensors.

The HVAC system was designed to be very efficient and can be controlled by programmable thermostats throughout the building. One issue of concern to employees was the use of personal fans and space heaters. The Center's design was deliberate and purposeful, and included consideration to personal comfort by minimizing drafts and



infiltration of the cold and heat. The use of space heaters would negate the design and compromise the efficiency of the system, so the decision was made not to allow the use of personal fans and space heaters.

One of the biggest complaints in any office is sound travel. This is probably one of the most significant items addressed in the Center's design. Every internal wall between offices has been filled with batt insulation. The ceilings have been insulated above the tiles and return air-ducts were baffled to absorb sound and minimize office-to-office noise. It is amazing how quiet the building was with 100+ workers finishing the final details of the design.

Employees of the power and light, water and water pollution control were happy to move into the new Center. The citizens of Independence can be proud of the efforts made by the three departments in providing a showcase of efficiency and design in the new Independence Utilities Center. 🌱

*Herbert Webb is the community programs administrator for Independence Power & Light. Learn more at [www.ci.independence.mo.us/pl](http://www.ci.independence.mo.us/pl).*

**Photo from page 9, (l-r): Mark McDonald, Public Utility Advisory Board (PUAB); Randy Vest, PUAB; Garland Land, PUAB; Curt Dougherty, city council; Patty Schumaker, PUAB; Karen DeLuccie, city council; Scott Roberson, city council; Tom Van Camp, city council; Leon Daggett, Independence Power and Light (IPL); Mayor Eileen Weir; Dan Montgomery, director, Water; Lisa Phelps, deputy director, Water Pollution Control (WPC); Dayla Bishop Schwartz, city counselor; Dick Champion, WPC; Andrew Boatright, deputy director, IPL; Mark Randall, assistant city manager; Lauren Parker, assistant city manager; Joe Williams, Burns & McDonnell; Zach Walker, city manager; Larry Kaufman, assistant city manager.**

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