

Greening the History Colorado Center

Colorado is a leader in the creation of green living and business spaces. Recently, the U.S. Green Building Council announced that, based on its analysis, Colorado ranks ninth nationally for the number of LEED-certified environmentally friendly commercial spaces in the state.

LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) is an internationally recognized green building certification system developed by the USGBC. Since 2000, LEED has provided building owners and operators with a framework for identifying and implementing practical and measurable green building design, construction, operations, and maintenance solutions.

In 2005, Governor Bill Owens signed an Executive Order that adopted LEED certification for existing buildings and incorporated a goal of obtaining LEED Gold certification, one of the highest levels of achievement, for all new state building construction. In 2006, then-Mayor John Hickenlooper, Colorado's current governor, announced a similar objective for Denver's city buildings.

Local firm Tryba Architects designed the History Colorado Center with the ultimate goal of reducing the impact of construction and operations on the environment.

"Museums often make for difficult LEED projects because they tend to have very demanding and precise requirements for temperature and humidity control, as well as extensive lighting requirements," said architect David Tryba, who has designed other LEED-certified public buildings, such as Denver's Wellington E. Webb Municipal Building. "The History Colorado Center manages to accomplish these needs and is still expected to receive LEED Gold certification."

The building's design promotes water and energy conservation by incorporating native landscaping, low- or zero-flow water systems, and fritted glass, and by taking advantage of natural light and heat



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provided by the Atrium. Recycled and regional materials are used extensively throughout the building. Wood products are certified as sustainably forested and even include beetle-kill pine.

Furthermore, the new building is intended to serve Coloradans for one hundred years or more. “From a philosophical perspective, historic preservation—a major focus of this organization—places great value on a building’s life cycle, with the ultimate ‘sustainable’ practice being the reuse of buildings already built,” said Ed Nichols, History Colorado President and CEO. “When that can’t happen, it’s imperative to design new buildings with much longer life cycles.” The hundred-year life cycle, Nichols noted, is perhaps the most important “sustainable” element of the History Colorado Center.

While major natural history and science museums have worked for years to incorporate green building technologies into their museums, Tryba Architects have



not found evidence that cultural history museums have followed suit. By embracing Colorado’s commitment to green building design, the History Colorado Center is set to become the first LEED-certified Gold state cultural history museum in the country.

