AND THE SILVER GOES TO...

Academy Sports + Outdoors earns first LEED® certification, plans for more
We just achieved another first here at Gray. One of our projects, the new Academy Sports + Outdoors distribution center in Jeffersonville, Ga., has received LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Silver certification. We’ve been building LEED-certified buildings for quite awhile now, but this one was the first where the certification process was done completely in-house by Gray team members.

It was definitely a learning process – challenging but rewarding, as the best education usually is. But the knowledge we gained was invaluable, and we can’t wait to do it all over again.

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WE’D LIKE TO THANK
THE ACADEMY

Academy Sports + Outdoors of Katy, Texas, the successful family-owned sporting goods company with more than 110 retail stores throughout the south, had done several expansions of its main distribution center, but never a green-field (new building; new site) project. They were excited by the prospect, but cautious and money conscious just the same.
Perhaps Ken Attaway, Academy Sports + Outdoors’ executive vice president of operations, described their feelings best when he spoke up in one meeting with Gray and said, “You're building our baby.”

This was some big baby – a 1.2 million-square-foot highly mechanized facility – and the Gray team wanted to give them something to brag about.

LEADERSHIP IN ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN

Academy Sports + Outdoors’ original RFP (request for proposal) was strongly focused on engineering and cost, with no mention of green or environmentally friendly requirements. Once Gray won the bid, the team decided to ask the folks at Academy if they’d be willing to work toward a LEED certification, if costs were contained.

“LEED certification was not one of the original goals for the project,” said Gray Distribution Market Leader and Executive Vice President Steve Summers, “but we thought it would be a great opportunity to see just how many points we could get with minimum investment.”

That’s when Academy Sports + Outdoors showed their openness to new ideas and commitment to working as a team. They not only gave their permission, but as they became more familiar with the LEED program they eagerly participated in the process.

Commitment from the owner upfront is crucial to the success of a LEED project, says Richard Edwins, Gray’s senior project manager. “Because the decision to work toward certification was made at the beginning, green practices could be incorporated at each stage,” he explained.

For example, by working with local waste management companies to set up a recycling system on the job site at the start, 89% of the waste was recycled, which earned the job two LEED points.

THE SILVER LINING

At the outset, the Gray team set their sites on earning a basic LEED certification, which meant they would have to earn 26 out of a possible 69 points under the LEED version 2.2 system.

“We went for a humble goal originally because we had no budget,” said Edwins.

Plus, though Gray had worked on several LEED projects and six of the project team members are LEED Accredited Professionals, this marked the first time the company would create all the energy models and do the commissioning calculations without the help of outside consultants.

“The perception is that LEED certification is extremely expensive – 2 to 8% higher. But we achieved certification with no increase in costs to our customer.”

Richard Edwins, P.E., LEED-AP
Senior Project Manager, Gray Construction

ABOVE: Academy Sports + Outdoors distributes more than 54,000 items.
**LEED® PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS:**

- Largest LEED Silver certified building in Georgia.
- 89% of construction waste was diverted from landfills.
- 40.4% reduction in water use inside the building.
- 95.9% reduction in water use for irrigation.
- 43.6% of materials used to construct the building contained recycled content.
- 44.1% of building materials used to construct the distribution center were manufactured regionally.
- Energy-efficient strategies are anticipated to reduce the distribution center’s energy costs by 26%.
In a perfect world, businesses would not have to make choices based on bottom-line considerations. But the reality of the current economic situation is that bottom lines – and all the lines leading down to them – are being scrutinized like never before.

So, when Gray Construction first proposed that Academy Sports + Outdoors consider pursuing a LEED certification for their new Twiggs County, Ga., distribution center, the company’s executive management team knew LEED certification made sense from a brand perspective:

“Our customer base is very outdoors oriented so anything that’s good for the environment is something that our customers appreciate,” said Chuck Pogue, Academy Sports + Outdoors’ director of construction.

But they wanted to look more closely at what LEED certification would require and how the numbers played out both short and long term. As they became more familiar with the process, they discovered LEED parameters jibed easily with Academy Sports + Outdoors’ normal business practices.

“We’re very energy conscious and energy-management conscious,” Pogue said. “So, we build a lot of the things that qualify for LEED points into our buildings prototypically, without any thought toward LEED certification, just because it makes economic sense.”

Pogue was familiar with LEED from the beginning. Now that he has experienced the process from design through certification, he says he’s impressed with it.

“I think it’s a good process,” he said. “We are going further – investigating what we would have to do to our prototypical store building to make it a LEED-certified building. And

“I would recommend to any other owner who's looking to build a building to consider LEED early on. Sometimes to implement something like a LEED certification application halfway through the project, it becomes much more expensive and much more difficult. Because of Gray’s decision to go forward with seeking the LEED certification from the beginning it was a fairly painless and fairly simple process for us as the owners.”

Chuck Pogue
Director of Construction
Academy Sports + Outdoors
we’re finding out we’re fairly close anyway to being able to apply for LEED certification on stores.”

The Academy Sports + Outdoors team has also been impressed with their new distribution center – now the largest silver LEED-certified building in Georgia.

“The building itself has turned out great,” said Pogue. “Gray construction and the design team did a superb job in putting that building together. I’ve heard nothing but compliments from our executive management staff and our operations people. Everybody is just extremely pleased with the job that we got and the quality and efficiencies of the building.”

Sure that their customers will also be pleased with their eco-efforts, the company is in the process of planning an advertising campaign that promotes the LEED certification.

Pogue thinks the real benefits of the building are yet to be seen.

“We know it’s going to be popular with our customers, we just don’t know how popular,” he said. “So, that’s something we’re looking forward to.”

GRAY MATTER


It’s not every day you get to work with a company like Academy Sports + Outdoors… one that is not only open to change but embraces and implements it. History shows that most people don’t like change… at all… and will go to great lengths to avoid it. That’s too bad. Because the kind of business-savy nimbleness that Academy Sports + Outdoors demonstrated during planning and building their distribution center is exactly the kind of skill we all need in business… especially in this challenging economy.

Change is inevitable and essential. The world of commerce today is wildly different than it was a year ago, and it will be different tomorrow and the next day and the next… None of us will emerge from this period unchanged.

Different, though, does not necessarily mean worse.

We believe our collective business ingenuity will prevail. So, instead of wringing our hands over the economy, we prefer to get ahead of it, to embrace change, and to act… with speed, creativity, and agility.

And when news on the economy is looking particularly grim, we will call on the optimistic opening of “The Six Million Dollar Man,” putting our own spin on it:

We can rebuild it -  
We have the technology -  
Better than it was before -  
Better. Stronger. Faster …

After all, we are in the building business! Press on!
The Next Version of LEED Is Here

The United States Green Building Council (USGBC) recently launched the new Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating system, LEED Version 3.

3 Major Enhancements to LEED:

- **Harmonization** – Credits and Prerequisites for all commercial and institutional rating systems (LEED New Construction, LEED Core and Shell, LEED for Schools) have been consolidated into LEED 2009 for New Construction and Major Renovations.

- **Credit Weightings** – Credits are now weighted in order to have more of an impact on environmental and human issues, specifically energy usage and CO₂ emissions.

- **Regionalization** – Regional councils are now able to identify particular environmental issues based on location.

The Green Building Certification Institute (GBCI) will now be evaluating LEED submittals. This new certification body has been created in an effort to streamline the certification process and eliminate project backlogs.

Previously, the LEED rating system was based on a 69-point scale. All LEED rating systems under version 3 will be based on a 100-point scale:

- **40-49 = Certified**
- **50-59 = Silver**
- **60-79 = Gold**
- **80+ = Platinum**

The Evolution of LEED in the West

Since 2000, the LEED rating system has seen prolific growth across the country. The western region of the United States is a significant contributor to that rising interest, boasting nearly 850 LEED-certified commercial buildings. The 10 states that represent the West account for almost a third of all LEED-certified projects around the world. The West has been well represented in LEED-certified buildings for years - Adobe Systems headquarters in San Jose, Calif., was LEED platinum certified in 2005 and 2006, and Starbucks' headquarters in Seattle, Wash., was certified in 2005, just to name a few. As of September 2008, at least 26 cities in California have enacted mandatory green building ordinances, all of which differ in one respect or another. For instance, in April 2008, the city of Los Angeles passed an ordinance that any new project larger than 50,000 square feet must comply with LEED standards, while in Pasadena (less than 10 miles from downtown Los Angeles), similar projects must achieve at least LEED Silver certification.

One of Gray-ICEB's target customers, Stirling Capital Investments, just completed a LEED Gold-certified 300,000-square-foot industrial building in the Southern California Logistics Centre in Victorville. This is the first LEED project in the High Desert area of California. A three-story, 109,000-square-foot office building was recently completed and LEED Gold certified in the Liberty Station area of San Diego, where Gray-ICEB completed a Courtyard by Marriott and a Hilton Homewood Suites for Huntington Hospitality Group last year.

The western region faces many unique challenges ranging from terrain and weather to a recent hard-hit economy. These challenges have made the region ripe for innovation in environmental progress and technology. The West has been and will continue to be looked at as a leader in the sustainability movement.