

Peet's transforms new coffee plant into green factory

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When Peet's Coffee & Tea planned to build a new roasting facility in Alameda, company leaders decided they not only wanted it to be green, they also wanted it to be golden.

The Emeryville-based company opened the 138,000-square-foot plant last year and recently received LEED gold certification. While it's common for office and retail buildings to earn Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design certification, it is unusual for a manufacturing facility to gain the recognition.

"We wanted to build a sustainable building," said Jim Grimes, Peet's vice president of operations. "LEED was something we weren't familiar with, but we put it into the discussion from the beginning."

The U.S. Green Building Council offers four levels of LEED certification — basic, silver, gold and platinum. The levels are determined by a point system that factors in water and energy consumption, proximity to transit and other factors.

Peet's worked with its developer on the site, Oakland-based SRM Associates, to assemble a team that included Peet's engineers, architects from San Francisco-based FME Architecture and Design, landscape designers from Sausalito-based April Phillips Design Works Inc., and Oakland-based consultants from KEMA Services Inc. The team met weekly for about a year to design the building.

Joseph Ernst, a partner with SRM, said green building techniques such as adding skylights, motion sensors for lights, using



"We wanted to build a sustainable building," says Grimes, left, with Ernst.

non-chemical-emitting paints and carpet and sourcing materials from less than 500 miles away added about 3 percent in costs to the building, which came out to \$30 million.

"LEED doesn't have to be expensive," Ernst said. "If it's well-thought-out from the beginning, you can get the added costs down to about 3 to 5 percent. But we weren't focused on that. In the end, Peet's built the building they wanted for their roasting and for their employees."

The plant looks more like an office building than a manufacturing facility. Its brick exterior is broken up by large windows that are designed to let in natural light and provide workers with views of

the San Francisco Bay and, on a clear day, the downtown San Francisco skyline. The building's floors and foundation contain recycled concrete and steel byproducts.

The multi-colored tiled sidewalks that surround the building reflect Peet's marketing palette and also make it easier for water to seep into the ground instead of running into storm sewers. The plants, grasses and trees used in the landscaping help retain water in the soil and can resist drought.

Mulch used on the plants contains coffee bean chaff that normally would end up in the dumpster. An outdoor seating area for employees doubles as a garden that collects and reuses rainwater.

The building uses 40 percent to 50 percent less natural gas to run its roasters than Peet's previous facility in Emeryville.

"You have to look at life-cycle costs," Ernst said. "You have to evaluate what is the cost to build the real estate and what is the cost to operate it."

Besides structural elements, LEED also rewards companies for adding features that make it easier for the plant's 110 employees to go green, such as bike racks, special parking spaces for hybrid and carpool vehicles and proximity to public transportation.

"This building reflects the authenticity of our brand and the quality and care we put into our products," Grimes said. "Using sustainable business practices is the way we express ourselves."

Another East Bay building, a nine-story office tower at 2100 Franklin St. in Oakland built by Brandywine Realty Trust, has also achieved gold status. Brandywine began developing the tower, which comprises 215,000 square feet, in 2005 without any tenants lined up. It recently sold the building to CIM Group Inc.

"Sustainability hadn't become the important issue to us back then that it is now," said Dan Cushing, Oakland-based senior vice president and managing director for Brandywine. "Now we see that green building creates more value as the project matures. ... It's really become an imperative. If it were to start another building tomorrow, I don't see any reason why we wouldn't go for gold certification."

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