

LEED-ing the Way to a Healthy Environment

By: Michelle Friedrichs

One Oak Park: The First LEED-Certified Gold Building in Westchase District

No trees were harmed in the making of this building. While planning the construction of One Oak Park, the building's architects and developers knew that the many oak trees that stood on the Rogerdale Road property would have to be cleared.

The trees could have simply been cut down to avoid the high cost of replanting them – but not in this case. Instead, the trees were relocated, and the developers of One Oak Park won recognition from various local groups, including Trees for Houston and The Park People, for the effort spent on saving the oaks.

“We knew we could save them – relocating those trees was the right thing to do, rather than just cutting them down,” says Peyton Collins, managing director at Means Knaus Partners.

And the trees aren't the only ones enjoying the environmentally friendly design of One Oak Park.

Developed by Means Knaus Partners and designed by world-renowned Gensler Architects, One Oak Park is the first multi-tenant, LEED-certified Gold building in the District. Every aspect of the structure has been built to provide optimum benefits not just for occupants, but also for the environment.

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“The most unique green elements of the building are the mechanical systems that run more efficiently than traditional systems,” says Collins. “We also used reflective glass in all the windows, which rejects infrared light and keeps the building cool.”



▲ Peyton Collins, managing director for Means Knaus Partners, demonstrates the building's LEED design using the interactive screen located in the main lobby.

From the water-efficient landscaping system to recycled building materials, from the use of environmentally friendly cleaning products, to the ethically responsible artwork on the walls, One Oak Park reflects meticulous attention to environmental concerns.

There are plenty of benefits for tenants, including a fitness center, complete with locker room and showers, allowing employees to get in a quick workout during the day. Bicycle racks and parking spaces designed specifically for carpools encourage an environmentally friendly morning commute.

Chip Colvill, president at Colvill Office Properties, manages

leasing at One Oak Park. The LEED certification, he says, is an attractive aspect for prospective tenants.

“Part of the design is new light fixtures for low-voltage lighting. That makes operating expenses at One Oak Park very competitive, since tenants will save on utilities,” says Colvill.

And the benefits of One Oak Park's amenities are being embraced wholeheartedly by tenants. An interactive touch-screen TV in the lobby of the building outlines all of the green aspects of One Oak Park – part of an ongoing education program about the LEED aspects of the building. The TV also displays real-time traffic and a map of Westchase District's restaurants and points of interest.

“We've had very positive tenant response about the building – they love it,” says Erin Suhr, property manager at One Oak Park. “The fitness center is being utilized every day, and one of our new tenants is already taking advantage of our parking spaces specifically reserved for low-emission vehicles.” **WT**

