



New exterior amenities have been added at an office building at 639 Isbell Road, where the owners also are seeking LEED designation for environmentally sensitive operation of the property.

# LEED designation sought for existing office building

BY JOHN SEELMEYER

Most folks think of LEED designation, the rating system for green building, as something that applies exclusively to new construction.

The owners of a Reno office building, however, are working to win certification an existing building that was constructed in 1997 through a lesser-known program developed by Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design.

And it's more than a public relations exercise. The owners of the building at 639 Isbell Road think they can reduce operating costs at the same time that they make the building more attractive to the growing number of tenants who pay close attention to environmental concerns.

Tilio Lagatta, president of property owner Blackfire Inc., says the work to achieve LEED designation has proven to be fairly simple.

"It's an accumulation of small things," he says.

The landlord, for instance, provided a bike rack to encourage employees of tenant companies to peddle to work. Lagatta says Blackfire is trying to figure out a way to install a shower and locker room in the building that could be used by cyclists before work.

The building also gets LEED points because it's located within walking distance of bus stops along nearby Moana Lane.

The building's tenants stepped up their recycling efforts, and Blackfire Inc. arranged for Sierra Pacific Power to look at lighting efficiency in the building. After that study, the landlord installed motion-sensors to reduce lighting of rooms left vacant.

"We really think we're going to drop the operating expense of the building," says Lagatta. The owners think the building in central Reno would be the first existing office project in the region to earn LEED designation.

More steps remain to be taken, says

Brittany Diehl, who works with the building as an assistant property manager at Nevada Commercial Services in Reno.

The custodians who work in the building, for instance, can move to the use of environmentally sensitive cleaning products.

And tenants, she says, can be encouraged to increase their use of recycled office products.

Like Lagatta, Diehl thinks the steps to pursue LEED designation for the building will quickly pay off through lower operating costs. Plus, she thinks Blackfire Inc. will be positioned on the leading edge of the commercial real estate market.

"This is the direction that society is going," she says. "It's best to be ahead of the game."

Annemarie Huisman of CB Richard Ellis, which is marketing the building, says LEED designation is becoming a good sales tool for owners of office, commercial and industrial properties.

"It provides a substantial boost," she says. "Corporate America is really understand the value of the LEED designation, and it's trickling down to markets throughout the country."

In fact, David Wood of CB Richard Ellis notes that the efforts to improve the environmental performance of Blackfire's building got a boost from one of its key tenants, Tetra Tech.

That engineering and consulting company based at Pasadena, Calif., recently undertook a study of the energy and environmental efficiency of each of its 275 branch offices worldwide.

Blackfire Inc. purchased the three-story, 39,000-square-foot office building last autumn from Huckabay Properties.

Along with the work toward LEED designation, the new owners also have added architectural details developed by HMC Architects and new paint to upgrade the building.

The building is 70 percent leased.