



BackStory *By Tracy Dillon*

The North Face: Materials put a new face on the environmentally conscious store

THE NORTH FACE'S new 8,665-square-foot store, designed by Southfield, Mich.-based JGA, opened in November 2008 on the premier shopping corner in downtown Boise, Idaho. The store is housed on two floors of a three-story building that was constructed in the early 90s and was occupied by a department store for most of the century.

Like all of the outdoor apparel, equipment, and footwear brand's stores, the space includes standard elements of retail design, including large graphics, wood surfaces, and red accents. Each store also takes on character from its unique location and community. In the case of the Boise store, this meant preserving the original cast-iron beams and columns around the perimeter of the store, featuring the original brick exterior walls, and exposing the building's original massive ceiling structure.

PLANNING FOR SUSTAINABILITY

As Lindsay Rice, vice president of The North Face's Direct to Consumer Division, says, "This location marks our first effort to open a store with a commercial interior certified by the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED program. We are targeting a Gold Level Certification."

This meant a wide range of high-efficiency systems and conservation of energy, including lighting, HVAC, and a high-tech air filtering system. Reopening and restoring a bank of windows that had been closed since the 1950s brought daylighting and passive solar heating to the space.

The interior was reworked and large escalators removed in favor of an airy atrium staircase. In the process, says Mike Curtis, creative director of JGA, "Everything that came out of the space was pre-sorted and recycled—a project in its own right."

GREEN FIXTURES & MATERIALS

The Carlson Group, based in Portland, Ore., built the fixtures for the store, including

Sustainable Materials

- Porcelain floor tiles of recycled content, manufactured with reduced energy, can be recycled at the end of their life.
- Flooring secured with low-VOC adhesives.
- Carpet made with 90 percent recycled fiber content.
- Recycled, FSC-certified wood used in feature walls.
- Entry matting made from 100 percent recycled tires.
- Acrylic, low-odor and low-VOC paints.
- Fixtures of rapidly renewable bamboo.

floor fixtures, the perimeter wall system, cashwrap, and backwrap.

Thomas Chisari, IDSA, design director of the Carlson Group, says that his company is constantly researching materials and processes that are sustainable and eco-friendly.

All metal used in the fixtures is powdercoated, rather than plated. Wood used in the fixtures is Plyboo, a bamboo plywood that complies with the California Air Resource Board's (CARB) regulations for composite panels. In addition, bamboo is a rapidly renewable resource and Plyboo manufacturer Smith & Fong has received FSC certification for responsible forest management.

The cashwrap and backwrap are built from SkyBlend, a wood particleboard material manufactured by Roseburg that has no added formaldehyde. SkyBlend is also certified by both the Composite Panel Association (through its EPP program) and the Scientific Certification Systems (SCS) to be made of 100 percent pre-consumer recycled wood fiber.

As with the fixtures, materials selection was an important aspect of the store's



Photos: Lucio Regis Photography, Boise, Mich.

sustainability initiatives throughout the store's interior (see sidebar). As Stephanie Bourdon, JGA's color and materials manager notes, "Most of the materials fit nicely into the family palette of materials that supports the brand."

Says Curtis, "And contrary to most people's belief that these things are more expensive, they actually were very affordable—which is important in getting them incorporated into a project." 🌱

Tracy Dillon is editor of Retail Environments.