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A green experience

The design concept, from design firm JGA, for The North Face, Boise, Idaho store was one of the winners of the inaugural Association for Retail Environments' (A.R.E) Sustainability Awards launched at GlobalShop 2009 to encourage excellence in sustainable retail design. The honours were awarded to projects that balanced comprehensive sustainability programs with good design. And sustainability and conservation form the core of The North Face pledge to advance the well-being of the planet, its citizens and those who enjoy exploring it.

The 7,758 sqft concept is the largest store The North Face, the world's premier supplier of authentic, innovative and technically advanced outdoor apparel, equipment and footwear, has done in terms of sustainability with materials chosen for optimum energy use and air quality rating.

The store is located on one of the busiest corners in downtown Boise, an extremely close knit, historic community with tremendous pride in its heritage, a value also shared by The North Face organization. The store is housed on two floors of a three-story building, constructed in the early 1890s and occupied by a department store for most of the century, that was in desperate need of revitalisation.

Because of the nature of the landmark building, the revitalisation effort to return some of its former glory was a highly anticipated and community supported event. In keeping with the commitment to sustainability, during demolition and restoration, every effort was made to recycle and reuse organic materials.

"The was to create a retail environment designed around performance technology, pride of heritage in The North Face brand and a sense of sustainability," explains Ken Nisch, Chairman of JGA. "We wanted to develop a store with a commercial interior certified by the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED program, targeting a Gold Level Certification."

The exterior received a much needed face lift, painting the entire façade a rustic version of The North Face Red to blend in with the surrounding buildings also featuring red brick and off-white trim. The former department store footprint had been converted into two separate retail spaces and needed to be reconfigured with the large escalators removed in favour of an airy atrium staircase.

"Each location incorporates the unique innate qualities of the space into the design, resulting in the distinct character of each location of The North Face," says Nisch. "Working closely with the landlord toward the goal of Gold Level LEED Certification, a wide range of high-efficiency and energy conservation systems were incorporated, including lighting, HVAC, and a high-tech air filtering system that fills the store with fresh, clean air."

The restoration of the second-floor windows, closed off since the 1950's, with high-efficiency glazing, brought light streaming into the space, contributing day lighting and passive solar heating to the space. The restoration process also unearthed an architectural 'hidden treasure', the original wood joist ceilings, whose sizeable presence and artisan-crafted nature contribute warmth to the space and help raise the low ceilings. The openness of the new atrium staircase elements also detracts from the low ceiling height.



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Other restored elements include the original brick walls, cast iron rivets, metal beams and the columns around the store's perimeter. With the majority of retail space located on the second floor, prominent visual elements were used to attract guests up, where they are greeted by a large graphic mural and the dramatic footwear wall.

A Community Area was created as a place for guests to share information on local events and activities, along with stories of their personal endeavors and explorations. To continue the sustainability effort, a specific area featuring custom-made bins was designed for the recycling of products by The North Face associates.

"One of the challenges was overcoming the common perception that 'Green' materials are not readily available and come with a premium price tag, when in reality the majority of sustainable materials have become quite accessible," says Nisch. "As with the fixtures, material selection was an important aspect of the store's sustainability initiative, a minimal amount of materials were used with all of them sustainable in nature."

The fixtures, and back-room storage shelving, are made of Plyboo, a bamboo plywood that complies with the California Air Resource Board's (CARB) regulations for composite panels. The wood used in the feature walls is recyclable, certified as grown and harvested using sustainable forestry guidelines, contributing to a healthy indoor climate. The cashwrap and backwrap are built from SkyBlend, a wood particleboard material manufactured without any added formaldehyde and 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.

The hardwood flooring was produced without the use of insecticides or laminating adhesives, using timber harvested from sustainable forestry. The flooring in the back areas was made with recycled vinyl content and installed using a low-VOC adhesive to provide a healthier indoor environment for employees.

The porcelain tiles, with a reduced energy consumption in the production process, are recyclable at the end of their use. The grout has 15% recycled content and low VOC's that contribute to LEED 4.1 and 4.2 credits. The setting material also has 19% recycled content.

Carpeting is a hybrid yarn system and renewable fiber like PLA from corn starch climate neutral-cool carpet with recycled content, featuring EPP and California



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Gold and Platinum certifications. Tac Tiles were used instead of the traditional glue installation, resulting in a 90% reduction to the environmental footprint.

The entry mat is eco- friendly, recyclable and made with 90% post-consumer waste from tires, which contributes to the LEED green building certification system. All paints used in the store were acrylic, low-odor and low-VOC.

"Some of the materials are new to this store, while others, like the bamboo plywood, were already being used in The North Face stores," says Nisch. "Most of the materials fit nicely into the family palette of materials supporting The North Face brand and will evolve going forward through additional use as The North Face opens additional retail stores." •



The entire facade was painted a rustic version of The North Face Red to blend in with the surrounding buildings

Store Owner

VF Outdoor, Inc.

Client Team

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Bernie Bishop, Director of Operations
Eric Green, Director of Visual Merchandising
Rich Marini, Director of Stores

Design Firm

JGA

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Lighting Consultant

Lighting Management

Lighting Manufacturer

Zumtobel

Carpet

Interface

Wood Wall Feature

Junkers Solid Hardwood Flooring

Entry Mat

Roppe

Fixtures

The Carlson Group Inc.

Fixture Wood

Smith & Fong Company

Paint

Benjamin Moore Paints

Porcelain Tile

Beaver Tile and Stone

Photography

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