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TURNER CONSTRUCTION WALKS THE GREEN BUILDING TALK

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By Cecilia Matta

When Turner Construction Company set out to renovate and expand its Northwest regional office in Seattle's SODO District, it established a high goal for green construction performance. With an avowed corporate commitment to increase the adoption of sustainable construction practices throughout the industry, Turner has set out to walk the talk with its Seattle office renovation.

Going for Gold

The Seattle tenant improvement, managed by Turner's special projects division, is targeting a LEED Gold rating, aiming to earn at least 37 LEED-CI (commercial interior) points. The original planning for the remodel of the space in the Mercantile Building, across from Seattle's Quest Field, called for a LEED Silver rating, said Turner's Seattle spokesman Chris Killian. However, "during a sustainability discussion with Gensler (Architects), they asked us why we weren't reaching a little higher and 'going for the gold', which really resonated with all of

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us, especially our general manager, Jackie Costigan. This changed our goals, and LEED Gold has become our mantra on this project,” Killian emphasized. Turner’s LEED-CI project checklist or “scorecard” lays out a detailed plan for accomplishing the LEED certification. Killian explained that Turner developed the scorecard through its standard LEED charrette process—“a brain dump for all the different green elements. This determines exactly what we buy from the subs, so they know what they’re responsible for, and what the action is. We make it a fully coordinated process, involving everybody at every step.” Turner’s project team reviews the components at each weekly construction meeting, noting progress and challenges on specific LEED points, to stay on track. On the Seattle office TI, Turner expects to achieve the bulk of its LEED Gold points in three categories: Energy and Atmosphere (10 points), Indoor Environmental Quality (10 points) and Materials and Resources (7 points). Among the green practices Turner will employ to maximize points are:

- Optimize Energy Performance—Via lighting power (removing some track light heads), appliance and equipment choices (removing eight printers and replacing four, for 90 percent efficiency.)
- Construction Waste Management—Working with local waste hauler Recovery 1 to divert more than 95 percent of the construction waste from the landfill.
- Low Emitting Materials—Using adhesives, sealants, paints and coatings, carpets, composite wood and sealants, systems furniture and seating that meet or exceed LEED standards.

A New Standard

Green buildings, also known as high efficiency buildings, have become the new standard for owners and developers. According to Killian, “Owners get it. The customer is demanding it (green building), so vendors and material manufacturers are making more and more options available. Even when the owner does not go for LEED, they still want sustainable practices.”

A national green building leader since the mid 1990s, Turner Construction has completed or has under contract more than 195 projects with green building

components. Turner, the largest general contractor in the United States with over \$8 billion in sales in 2006, is also a leader of the pack with LEED accredited professionals (AP). Nationally, Turner employs more than 260 APs, more than any other general contractor, and the Seattle office, with 18 LEED APs, ranks as the highest per capita in the Turner U.S. network.

The Subs Get Involved

Turner supports LEED training for its staff as well as its subcontractors through online LEED and sustainability training. On LEED projects, Turner has begun to require that subs take its online class, “Essentials of LEED Professional Accreditation.”

“Many of our mechanical/electrical/plumbing subs are already LEED accredited,” said Killian, and Turner “may require LEED accreditation for all larger subs in the future.”

In Seattle, other current Turner projects targeting LEED certification include the Goat Hill King County Office Building and parking garage (LEED-CS Gold for core and shell, LEED-CI Platinum for interiors) and the 909 Fifth Avenue multi-family housing project (LEED Silver).

“More and more owners are striving for LEED Platinum and beyond, like carbon neutral buildings,” Killian said. “It’s still challenging, but getting to be less challenging and expensive,” he said. As a general contractor and, on its Seattle office renovation as an owner, Turner is carrying out its leadership commitment to sustainable construction.

Cecilia Matta views designers and builders as unsung heroes who dramatically bring form and function together. She has recently written about safety, the new Seattle Art Museum, the remodeled Seattle Aquarium and Seattle’s new Light Rail project, for *RSI Magazine*, Northwest Construction, *STEPS Magazine* and other publications.

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