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Sustainable Community Finalist: Crossroads College Preparatory School

St. Louis Business Journal - by [Frank Kras](#)
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Crossroads College Preparatory School recently completed a 10,000-square-foot addition, as well as renovating another 17,000 square feet. Both projects were built to meet LEED Platinum certification. Only five secondary schools nationwide have received that level of certification so far. Founded in 1974, the Central West End school has taught students from 7th to 12th grade at its current site since 1980. Billy Handmaker, head



Billy Handmaker

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of school at Crossroads, discussed the project.

Who were the construction partners?

McCormack Baron Salazar was the developer for the project. The architect was TR,i Architects, the sustainability consultant was Vertegy, and the general contractor was Lawlor Construction. **William Tao and Associates** served as the engineers.

How did the project come together?

When we returned from the Greenbuild conference in 2005, we realized that our building should reflect our educational values, who we are, and what we want to teach kids. The initial planning started about three years ago, and we moved in Aug. 17.

What were some of the challenges?

Once we decided to build this building, we had three non-negotiables — the program, the budget and LEED certification. Everybody was committed to it. The team functioned beautifully, and it was very much a collaborative effort. The fact that we came in on time, and on budget, was amazing.

How long did it take to complete?

We didn't break ground for the new building until after Thanksgiving 2008. We didn't begin the renovations until June, after the school year ended. All costs came to about \$7.6 million. We figure it cost about 5 percent more in construction costs to go for the LEED certification.

How did you fund the project?

Partially through New Markets Tax Credits from the federal and state governments, which are designed to support development in certain census tracts. We held a capital campaign, which has raised \$2.6 million and is still ongoing.

What is unique about the facility?

The building does not operate at peak efficiency before 7 a.m. and after 6 p.m. Many of the lights are calibrated to go down with more natural light; the lights near the windows of the science lab, for example, dim as more light comes through, and lights further away from the windows remain on.

How has the renovation helped the students?

I'm a firm believer in the Winston Churchill saying, "We shape our buildings, and thereafter they shape us." It's made them more aware of the need to pay attention to environmental sustainability. Second, it's also made them aware, when they look at colleges and workplaces, that they want to be in places committed to environmental sustainability. Third, the building itself is a tool that teaches students about environmental sustainability.

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