

Case Study

West Michigan Environmental Action Council

West Michigan Environmental Action Council (WMEAC) is a non-profit environmental advocacy and education organization committed to citizen empowerment. Since 1968, WMEAC has focused on West Michigan land use, transportation, water quality, sustainable business, environmental health, ecology & spirituality, and green and open space.



West Michigan Environmental Action Council

Location Grand Rapids, Michigan

Number of People Served 11 staff, nearly 1,000 members and legions of volunteers

Designer Contact Information Gayle DeBruyn / Lake Affect Design Studio / 616.459.5764

Architect Contact Information Guy Bazzini / Bazzini Associates / 616.774.2002

The need

The WMEAC office in Grand Rapids' thriving Eastown district was a community landmark. However, poorly organized space, limited lighting and low air circulation offset its cool urban charm. As a result, WMEAC staffers were thrilled with a move to the newly created, high-profile East Hills Center (of the Universe). Bazzani Associates converted the former gas station site into a showpiece building of sustainable design - complete with a rain-garden roof - earning the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Core and Shell Gold rating in 2004. To furnish the WMEAC offices in a way that would live up to its ultra-green standards, Lake Affect Design Studio's Gayle DeBruyn contacted izzydesign and other furniture makers to contribute products specifically designed for disassembly, and made of recycled and recyclable materials.

The izzy+ solution

Being twice as green wins the Double Gold! Thanks to the sustainable properties of the furniture, seating, flooring, lighting and other interior elements, the U.S. Green Building Council awarded a second Gold LEED rating for the Commercial Interior of WMEAC's offices in 2006. To our knowledge, it's the first Double Gold LEED certified U.S. property. (More at RapidGrowthGR)

izzy's sustainable solution is the cool, affordable WMEAC library - a retreat that researchers relish, complete with Clara Team 44 tables and HÅG by izzy HO5 Communication side chairs. Clara Team 44 tables include 100% post-industrial recycled content that makes up particleboard; FSC certified, reconstituted maple veneer (100 % post-industrial recycled content) using wood from a certified managed forest; water-based veneer finishing process (no VOCs emitted); cast steel mounting plates (30% recycled content, 100% recyclable); and extruded aluminum (100% recyclable) adjustable height legs which are easily disassembled. GREENGUARD Certified for healthy indoor air quality, the HÅG by izzy HO5 Communication side chairs are easily disassembled after use, and feature polypropylene inner structure (100 % post-consumer recycled content from Volvo car bumpers), cast aluminum legs (recycled content and 100% recyclable), VOC-free powder coat paint on base and a recycled 100% polyester textile called Enviro c010 Spring.

Lisa Locke - former Associate Director, WMEAC

"Collaboration is the most important part of this story - a story about partnerships from the very beginning. Neighbors and businesses worked together to clean up and preserve this site with the cooperation of Shell Oil, until they could find a project that would contribute to the quality of the neighborhood. Now it's a model for sustainable development. For WMEAC, it demonstrates a unique partnership between the environmental and business communities. Competitive furniture makers came together to showcase their best in environmental design. Everyone has benefited. The practical manifestation is a healthy environment that is economical and beautiful. Between the natural light, the air quality and the ambience created by the quality of the furnishings and the interiors, it is such a pleasure just to be here. I have no doubt that it contributes to increased productivity by our staff, and it lends credibility to the sustainability story it represents. The energy conservation is amazing; we use only 53% of what a comparable office would need. We've had a tremendous response, with many requests for tours, even international visitors. It's making a difference."

Gayle DeBruyn - Partner, Lake Affect Design Studio

"What I think is special about this space is that the West Michigan office furniture manufacturing community was able to put aside competitive perspectives, and work in a collaborative fashion to let WMEAC showcase West Michigan's best practices for design. I don't think many communities have the opportunity to say that. To support those who believe in sustainable design, we contacted members of the West Michigan Sustainable Business Forum - both manufacturers and product designers. The result at WMEAC is a wonderful balance, weaving together best design practices of both companies and individuals, large and small."