

# GOING GREEN

## Think Green When it Comes to Commercial Flooring

By **Scott Richter**  
Guest Columnist

Green – not the color, but the philosophy – is becoming the hottest trend in Rio Grande Valley commercial construction, as building owners, tenants, architects and interior designers seek ways to create environmentally conscious buildings.

“There was a time when green buildings were seen by the industry as trendy, risky and unnecessarily expensive,” says LEED-accredited Timothy J. Norton, AIA, with Carter & Burgess in a recent industry column. “But those days are gone.”

Commercial construction requirements that factor in sustainable design components are increasingly commonplace as Texas municipalities struggle with managing energy use and the environmental impact of rapid population growth. In fact, McGraw-Hill predicts that, in just three years, the green building market will account for as much as 10 percent of commercial construction starts. Savvy contractors who are up to speed on green products and installation can help building owners reduce construction and maintenance costs, while contributing critical points needed to secure LEED certification.

### What is LEED?

Developed by the U.S. Green Building Council, the LEED or Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design program certifies commercial green building projects. Certification is offered in several categories, the most popular of which is LEED for New Construction and Major Renovations (LEED-NC). Another popular category is LEED for Commercial Interiors (LEED-CI) for tenant improvement projects. To achieve LEED platinum, gold, silver or certified levels, projects must achieve a requisite number of points in various categories.

### How Flooring Can Contribute to LEED

While only buildings (not floors) can be LEED certified, flooring can contribute points towards earning LEED credits in

three of the six LEED categories, and in a number of credit areas. The newest requirements of LEED-NC include major changes that affect flooring product choices, including recycled content, regional materials, and low-emitting materials-carpet systems.

To help earn LEED points, Intertech Flooring recommends:

- Specifying green label or green label products, such as carpet and carpet backing made primarily from recycled content.
- Using regional materials produced within 500 miles of the project.
- Specifying natural products, like linoleum, which is a natural wood-based product.
- Incorporating wood products certified by the Forest Stewardship Council.
- Using green-friendly installation techniques, such as green label adhesives that emit low VOCs. Laminate and engineered wood products that are installed without urea-formaldehyde also can earn points.
- Incorporating rapidly renewing products such as bamboo and cork, with harvesting cycles of 10 years or less.
- Recommending energy efficient solutions like raised access flooring and underfloor HVAC systems, which reduce energy consumption.

### More Green Choices Demand Green Experience

When it comes to commercial flooring, materials and installation processes today are drastically different from just a few years ago, and offer an array of green options ideally suited for LEED construction. Today's green buildings may incorporate a variety of hard surface products, recycled-content carpet tile, access flooring, installations with glueless backing and underfloor air and modular power systems.

These complex and ever-changing technologies require flooring contractors with a diverse product knowledge and extensive green building experience. In just the past five years, Intertech Flooring has managed more than two million-square-feet of LEED certified or pending projects.

“Architects are starting to look at man-

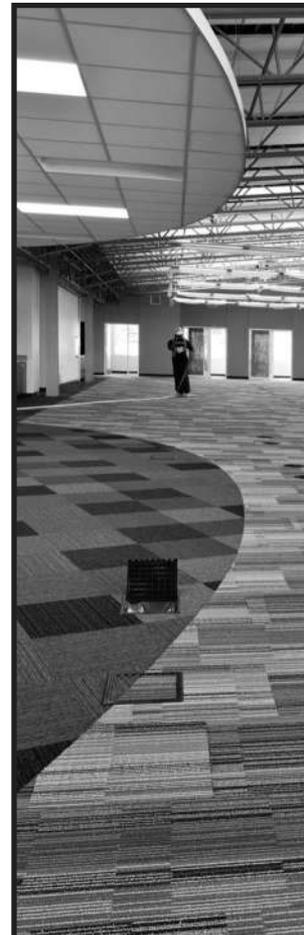
ufacturers and contractors who know green, and those that don't get on the bandwagon will be left behind,” notes Claire Balfour of InterfaceFlor, which manufactures modular carpet produced on recycled backing and installed without glues.

Understanding the standards within these programs takes education and experience. The benefit to working with accredited professionals is their ability help you understand the documentation and certification process, and assist you with design and construction phase submittals. Intertech is the only flooring contractor in Central/South Texas with a LEED Accredited Professional on staff.

	Flooring & Installation materials Can Contribute Points Towards LEED Credits?	Credits Impacted by Flooring & Installation Materials Choice
Indoor Environmental Quality	Yes	4.1, 4.4
Materials & Resources	Yes	1.3, 2.1, 2.2, 4.1, 4.2, 5.1, 5.2, 6, 7
Sustainable Sites	No	not applicable
Water Efficiency	No	not applicable
Energy & Atmosphere	No	not applicable
(Bonus) Innovation & Design Process	Yes	Innovation Credits

We also are the only commercial flooring contractor in the Valley, and one of the very few in the nation, that recycles all carpet we remove when installing new flooring – at no charge to the customer.

For more information on green flooring, please visit [www.intertechflooring.com](http://www.intertechflooring.com) or call (956) 584-3592.



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