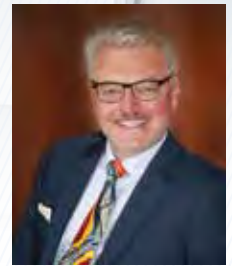


# Architectural sustainability in dental office design: Varying shades of ‘green’



*Steve Klessig, Vice President of Architecture and Engineering at Keller, Inc.*

**W**hat makes a design, and later a building, sustainable? It’s a question asked by every architect. In the pure definition of the word, we would have to say something is sustainable if it will last/stand the test of time.

In architecture, we have expanded the definition to include energy efficiency. Take a dental practice as an example. The practice’s building envelope can be designed with energy efficiency in mind. The equipment that serves the building can also have varying degrees of efficiency.

The most popular green building certification program, which was created by the U.S. Green Building Council, is LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design). This program examines 100+ areas of a building and awards points based on compliance with the LEED Standard. Dentists interested in a LEED Certified Building for their practice will want to select a LEED-accredited professional, as they have passed a professional exam in LEED concepts.

There are several other certifying organizations, including Green Globes, an online green building rating and certification tool offered through the Green Building Initiative and used primarily in the U.S. and Canada. Both LEED and Green Globes are committed to building sustainability. To have a certified “green” building, both programs require that the building be designed with an efficient building site, building material, and building operating equipment that meet the standards for the level of certification the owner is trying to achieve. As an example, a dental practice owner would receive points for sourcing building materials within a 100-mile radius.

Keep in mind that it costs money to be green certified, both for energy-efficient materials and equipment and the certification itself. Some of the offsetting cost benefits are:

- Reduced operating expenses;
- Qualifying for tax incentives and utility rebates; and
- Increasing your property’s marketability.

While many business owners consider green certification a plus, you can also be sustainable by doing some or all of the practices of a certified building in a non-certified building.



The waiting room at Dreier Family Dental in Janesville is designed to maximize natural light and save energy. (Image provided by Keller)

The benefits of using the right materials, insulating well, and buying high efficiency equipment can all be achieved without certification. It all comes down to the business owner’s perspective on the environment. Some want to go above and beyond the Energy Code, and some don’t.

Our company works with dentists and dental practices regularly, and sustainability is often part of the discussion. After discovering what our clients want, including how sustainable they would like to be, the Keller, Inc. architect will describe the “green” options and the cost implications. It is then up to the client to decide. Sustainability is a personal choice for a dental practice and any other business; everyone seems to see different shades of “green.”

Keller, Inc. is an award winning, single-source, design/build general contractor headquartered in Kaukauna, with additional offices in Madison, Milwaukee and Wausau. As 100% employee-owned, they are leaders in the construction industry specializing in new construction, remodel, retrofit, and reroof projects in a variety of categories, including dental. They have the staff and expertise to take projects from the early phases of design through the construction process to ensure that the project is completed on time and within budget. To explore opportunities for your dental practice, call 800-236-2534.