

Building for Peace

It's a building renovation project grounded in the Quaker values of peace, simplicity and equality. Leaders of the Quaker Center in Philadelphia, PA are pursuing LEED Platinum certification for the renovation of the center's 34-year-old office building, and are using LEED Platinum standards as they renovate its 1856 Meeting House. According to Director of Development Pat McBee, the Quaker tradition of testimony motivated the decision to build green: "The wars of the 20th century now are based in environmental issues, especially competition over resources. Our consumption in the U.S. exacerbates the causes of war." McBee noted that the project is informed by the thinking of Quaker forefather John Wollman "He said if we're serious about our peace testimony, we have to remove the seeds of war from our lives. That means reducing our consumption."

The renovations include deep standing column geothermal wells, solar panels, and a green roof. Though the technology is expensive, leaders realized that over 20 years, the energy savings would more than recoup the costs of borrowing the money. In addition, building green proved to be an important factor in fundraising. They raised four million dollars from individual donors—twice the amount they had projected possible. The success was due to people's deep desire to be part of the solution to global warming, according to McBee. "People said, 'finally I can be part of something bigger, something that's more than changing light bulbs,'" she said. The project also received several large state grants designated to promote innovative green design.

Now McBee is sharing their story with others, including churches, architects, municipal organizations like the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, and even multinational corporations like Ikea. She always makes mention of the ways in which the building expresses

Quaker values. “Our buildings stand for justice, equality and peace,” she said. “As we make it a model for others, we can be the leaven in the lump to help others see how to build in ways that promote peace and justice.”