

CORPORATE HEADQUARTERS

public good

The pioneering IEI Group partners with PECO on high-profile corporate projects that not only earn the LEED nod, but enhance the region as a whole

by Courtney Boyd Myers

In 2005, a partnership was formed to begin work on some comprehensive, \$15 million corporate sustainability initiatives. The two entities involved, IEI Group, an award-winning architectural and interior design firm out of Philadelphia, and PECO, a utility subsidiary of Exelon Corporation that has been an IEI client for more than 15 years, are working together on a number of new initiatives, which include LEED certification for PECO's service center buildings, installation of a new green roof on the corporate headquarters in Philadelphia, and an upgrade to a more energy-efficient Crown lighting system atop the headquarters.

To date, five of PECO's service center buildings have received LEED-EB Gold certifications, and another earned LEED-NC Silver. Together, PECO now operates six LEED-certified buildings, which represents nearly half of all LEED-EB certified buildings in Pennsylvania. The upgrades will reduce energy and water consumption by 40–50 percent at each site. IEI's team of professionals continues to work with PECO to secure additional LEED certifications for service buildings, as well as for the main headquarters.

BELOW: PECO's new green roof comprises 43,000 square feet of "extensive" (thin) vegetation and 2,000 square feet of "intensive" (thick) planting areas. Photo: Margaret Funderburg.



IEI specializes in such work but also offers a range of services that include facility planning and project management. Rosemary Español, the group's president, has been in the design business for more than 25 years. With 15 professionals on staff and nearly \$3 million in annual revenues, IEI specializes in corporate, education, health-care, and residential design and is a member of the US-GBC. It especially emphasizes a balanced design process along with a strong business sense. "We try to bring sustainability to every project," Español says. "Even if we're not designing a project to target LEED certification, we select sustainable materials, furnishings, and energy-efficient fixtures that will improve the space while also being environmentally responsible. Green design enhances the human performance in the workplace and improves the client's environmental profile."

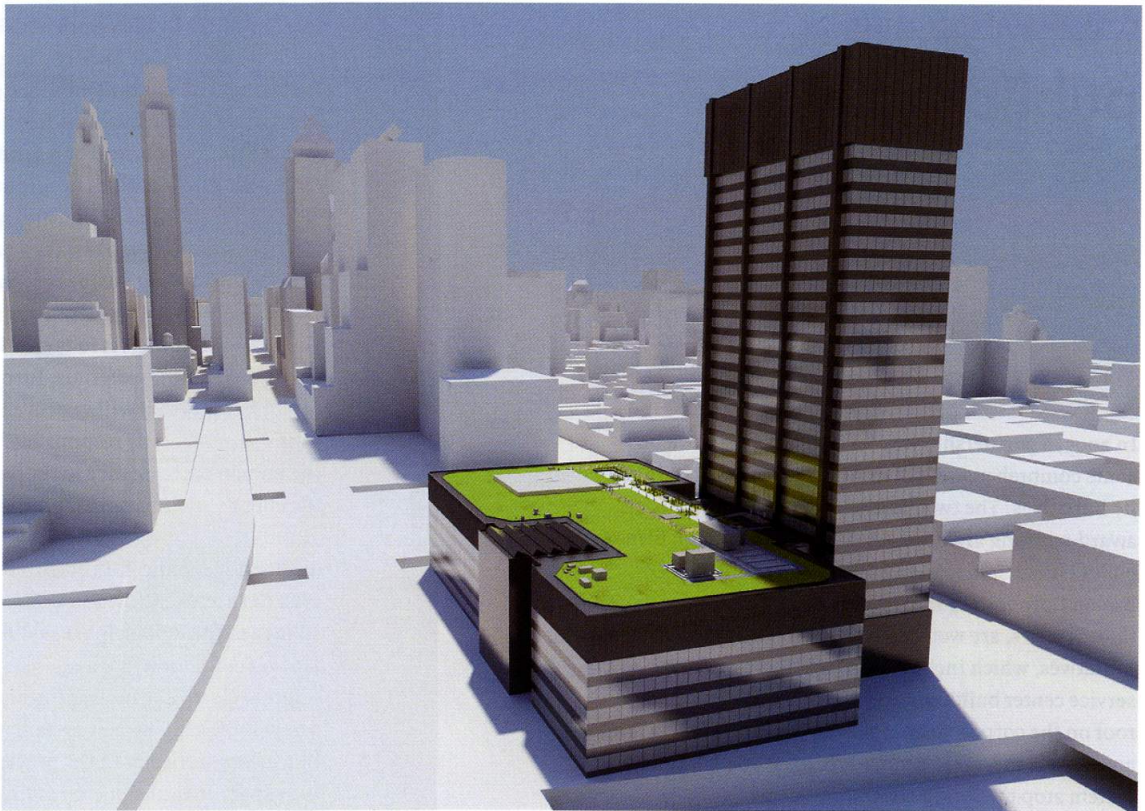
At times, it enhances an entire city. The replacement of PECO's iconic Crown lighting system is a landmark change to the Philadelphia skyline, which has been displaying community messages since July 4, 1976. The original electronic messaging board consisted of 2,600 screw-in bulbs. The new system utilizes more than 2 million energy-efficient LEDs, providing enhanced messaging capabilities and energy savings of approximately 40 percent. IEI provided project management on the project.

As important as energy savings and sustainable design is IEI's culture, Español says. "Selecting the right staff and promoting team participation in the design process enhances the end result," she notes. "This is what makes projects successful, as well as a company successful." She looks not only for seasoned designers but also for new designers entering the profession. "I obviously look for talent in a designer but also for their ability to understand different types of projects and their creative ability to solve problems."

An impressive example of this talent and creative problem solving is the massive green roof at PECO's main headquarters. Completed in December 2008, PECO's roof became the largest urban green roof—measuring 45,000 square feet—in the state of Pennsylvania. The project was a successful transformation of a lifeless, unattractive roof into a fantastic environmental and aesthetic amenity for the city.

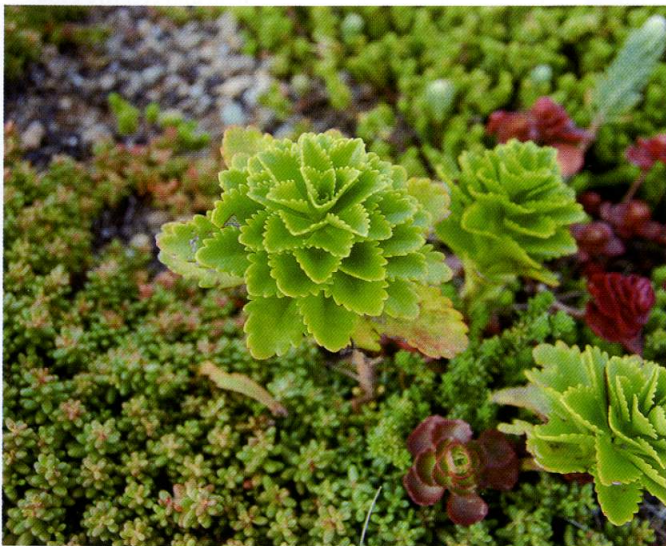
The new roof includes a thin vegetation of sedum species; 2,000 square feet of intensive planting areas, filled with native perennials and grasses; and an ADA-accessible outdoor terrace with built-in seating areas that can be used for a variety of events, from business gatherings to field trips. PECO's green roof absorbs 60 to 70 percent of the approximate 1.5 million gallons of annual rainfall. Other benefits include cooler and cleaner air, habitat for birds and insects, increased longevity of the

RIGHT: A rendering of PECO's 45,000-square-foot green roof, the largest ever installed on an existing urban building in Pennsylvania. BELOW: Sedum like this shown helps absorb 60–70% of the area's approximately 1.5 million gallons of annual rainfall. Photo: Helen Chung.



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—Rosemary Español, President



roof system, reduced energy use, enhanced property value, and increased comfort indoors.

According to Mike Williams, director of real estate and facilities at PECO, “IEI’s overall support and leadership has been very beneficial in guiding us through all the details of the LEED certification process. They have been instrumental in helping us figure out how to operate efficiently—not only today but also for the future.”

Other IEI sustainable design projects include a renovation of Aramark Corporation’s existing headquarters—earning it LEED-CI certification—and new construction for a green home in Love Ladies, New Jersey, one of the first new homes in the town to apply for LEED Gold certification.

IEI Group is a certified WBE and ranks regularly in the top 200 national design firms, as recognized by *Interior Design Magazine*. Not only does IEI believe in sustainable design, it goes one step further on its commitment to the environment as a certified Silver member of the Greater Philadelphia Green Business Program, making a public promise to reduce impacts on the environment at the local level. **gb&d**