LEED™ guidelines recognize that many sustainability choices are shaped by an individual’s environment. Every building and the larger web of city systems and services impacts the building occupant’s experience. Thus, LEED recognizes two aspects of site selection: it shapes not only a building’s inherent energy efficiency but also occupant lifestyle choices which determine a building’s ability to promote sustainability over the long term. Alternative transportation is an important aspect of the building site selection.

Location: Old Town

The Old Town of Portland is rich in history and vibrant in local culture. It was this neighborhood where Portland began. Old Town includes the nationally recognized Skidmore Historic District as well as the Historic Japantown / New Chinatown District. More recent landmarks are the pride of the city: the Portland Chinese Classical Garden, the Japanese American Historical Plaza and Portland Saturday Market. Old Town seems to be reshaping itself as another vibrant and unique Portland district, one with a distinct historical riverfront character.

This location is also important in regards to LEED certification. The amenities listed above help the building achieve Sustainable Sites “Development Density & Community Connectivity” (SSc2) credit, a category of LEED points that relate to increasing development density and community connectivity. In order to obtain this credit, at least ten amenities must be reachable within a half mile’s walking distance. The White Stag Block’s location lends itself to flexible space usage by closely linking the building and its occupants to historic locales, local restaurants, shops, medical services, public transportation, and more.

Public Transportation Access

The White Stag Block is ideally located within the matrix of Portland’s celebrated public transportation system. Directly west of the main entrance to the Skidmore building, building users have access to the MAX light rail, and several bus stops are within four blocks. The MAX is one of the most acclaimed public transportation systems in the US. The White Stag Block project gained Sustainable Sites “Alternative Transportation, Public Transportation Access” (SSc4.1) credit through its location within half a mile of public transportation.

Development near public transportation increases the use of that public transportation. Already, 70% of MAX users are considered ‘choice riders’ who have the option of driving, but choose instead to utilize alternative transportation because of its ease of use, embodied vision, and contribution to sustainability. The concept of public transportation being a municipal ‘social service only for those that have no other means of transportation’ has been revised. Now, public transportation is understood to be the ‘interstitial glue’ that binds a city together. For instance, MAX riders in Fairless Square, which includes most of downtown Portland, ride for free. Annually, 36 million riders enjoy the benefits of MAX, and an additional 63 million make use of the established Portland bus system. Twenty-six percent of downtown users utilize alternative transportation, which translates into the equivalent of the white stag block
of a 1.2 lane reduction. The White Stag Block joins this legacy while leading the rebirth of Portland’s oldest district.

**Bicycle Storage & Changing Rooms**

The basement of the Skidmore building contains both bicycle storage and changing rooms for bicycle commuters. The White Stag Block renovation achieved Sustainable Sites “Alternative Transportation, Bicycle Storage and Changing Rooms” (SSc4.2) credits via the provision of bicycle racks for 5% of the buildings anticipated total occupants and by providing showering facilities for occupants working more than 20 hours a week. The White Stag Block basement can store 80 bicycles, 2/3 of those bikes in horizontal racks and the remaining 1/3 in vertical racks. Bicyclists will enter the building through the service door, next to the White Stag loading dock under the Burnside Bridge. These commuters will then transport their bicycles by the freight elevator to the basement level, where the bike storage room is located nearby.

Shower facilities are divided into male and female locker-rooms and locked storage will be available. Shower facilities encourages commuting by bike because it allows the biker to shower and change clothes once at work, or before riding home. In addition, showers encourage worker productivity because they provide a more flexible working environment for active recreation. Side trips to soccer games, mid-day runs, or freshening up are all possible when showering facilities are available. However, the shared availability of the showers also requires additional planning, especially with regards to non-tenant use. University officials have been working on security that balances accessibility with privacy.

**Low Emitting & Fuel Efficient Vehicles**

Commuting can require the use of 30% more energy than used by a building itself. For the average building that is built to code, transportation costs account for twice that of the building energy operation cost. But since passenger vehicles still represent a convenient transportation choice for many building occupants, occupants can use day-lots located just north of the White Stag Block following LEED guidelines that encourage shared building parking. The White Stag Block has a small parking area under the Burnside Bridge, with 5% of this preferred parking for carpools and vanpools, resulting in Sustainable Sites “Alternative Transportation, Parking Capacity” (SSc4.4) credit.

Spaces will also be reserved for Zipcars, earning the Sustainable Sites “Alternative Transportation, Low Emitting & Fuel Efficient Vehicles” (SSc4.3) credit. Zipcar is an innovative system of shared vehicles whereby people can reserve use of vehicle for an hour or more. The Zipcar system is becoming popular in cities throughout the country. Providing Zipcar spaces not only encourages the use of this system by the students, but also reduces the need for onsite personal vehicles. Studies have shown that each car-share vehicle can replace up to 15 privately owned cars.

In summary, by encouraging the use of public transportation, biking and shared cars, the White Stag Block will reduce fossil fuel use, road congestion, and parking competition. At the same, time it promotes cleaner air and increases occupant health.

~ Cody Evers

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