

FRESH FACE





Opposite page The North Face chose a site in the center of downtown Boise, Idaho, for its first LEED-certified store. The historic building, which housed the former Mode Department Store (left) from 1909 to the 1980s, also gave the outdoor adventure retailer a sentimental connection to the market.



LASZLO REGOS PHOTOGRAPHY, BERKLEY, MICH.

The North Face hopes to make its own green history with a new store in a century-old building in Boise.

By Steve Kaufman, Editor at Large

The North Face image is one of fresh-faced, high-performing adventurers climbing up one side of a mountain, skiing down the other, and camping under the starlight at the bottom. In its 40 years in business, the San Francisco-based company has carefully crafted that image with the look and quality of its merchandise and its commitment to the environment.

So it makes sense that the company, now a subsidiary of VF Corp. (Greensboro, N.C.), has decided to shoot for gold status with its first LEED-certified store. It chose as the site a 100-year-old former department store building in downtown Boise, Idaho. Company research showed Boise to be one of the fastest-growing outdoor-activities markets in the country, a hub of skiing, hiking and climbing.

The North Face took over two floors and about 8600 square feet in the historic Mode Department Store building, a flagship from 1909 until it closed in the 1980s. "It's a building with great recognition among the locals and a sentimental connection to the market," says Lindsay Rice, The North Face's vp, direct to consumer.

Though the building is in the center of town – "the corner of Main and Main," as Rice charac-



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– LINDSAY RICE, THE NORTH FACE

terizes it – it’s also just a couple of miles from the campus of Boise State University, home of 20,000 young and energetic consumers of the type that have traditionally supported The North Face. And it’s not much farther to a ski slope. So it combines the density of consumer activity with a broad patch of Big Sky country.

Additionally, The North Face felt the location was tailor-made for its LEED endeavor. “We had been incorporating environmentally friendly components in our stores for a few years,” says Rice, “using renewable woods, cold rolled steel and low-VOC paints. But this was the first time we were going for the gold.”

The inherent bones of the building – such as the original wood joist ceilings, brick walls, cast iron rivets and metal beams and perimeter columns – gave the designers both interesting architectural elements and the opportunity for adaptive reuse.

There were some pleasant surprises, too. “Over the years, the upstairs windows had been boarded over,” says Ken Nisch, chairman of JGA Inc. (Southfield, Mich.), which designed the store. “When we uncovered them and restored them with high-efficiency glazing, we had a tremendous opportunity for both daylighting and passive solar heating.”

Elsewhere, JGA and The North Face crossed all of LEED’s t’s. The building exterior is painted (with low-VOC and low-odor paint) a rustic version of The North Face red to blend in with the surrounding

Above and right The shoe wall focal point, visible through the clear glass railing, beckons shoppers to the second floor where designers installed recycled-content carpeting using a TacTile glue-free floor installation system. The connectors generate less waste and have an environmental footprint that’s 90 percent lower than that of traditional glue methods.





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Above A dramatic mural in the stairwell illustrates the retailer's commitment to the great outdoors. In the ceiling, the exposed wood joists exemplify the character of the 100-year-old wood timber uncovered during the building renovation.

buildings. Powdercoated fixtures (as well as backroom shelving) are made of the renewable bamboo plywood called Plyboo. Feature walls use wood manufactured under sustainable forestry guidelines. The cashwrap and backwrap are built from SkyBlend, a wood particleboard made of 100 percent recycled wood fiber without added formaldehyde. Hardwood flooring is produced from sustainable forestry without insecticides or laminated adhesives. Vinyl flooring is made with recycled content and installed with low-VOC adhesive. And the carpeting is a hybrid yarn that uses renewable fiber from corn starch, installed using a glue-free installation system.

"We're not one of those retailers that opens 50 stores a year," Rice says. "We now have just 26 stores, built over 40 years. We choose our locations carefully and each one has to represent the values of the brand. And we feel this Boise store – with its reuse of an old building and our first attempt at LEED certification – tells exactly The North Face story that we try to tell every time out." ▀

PROJECT SUPPLIERS

CLIENT
VF Outdoor Inc., San Leandro, Calif.

DESIGN
JGA, Southfield, Mich.

WOOD WALL FEATURE
Junkers Solid Hardwood Flooring, New York

FIXTURES
The Carlson Group Inc., Portland, Ore.
Smith & Fong Co., Neptune, N.J.

LIGHTING
Zumtobel, Highland, N.Y.

SIGNAGE
Brite Lite Neon Corp., No. Hollywood, Calif.

MILLWORK
The Carlson Group Inc., Portland, Ore.

ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS
Alpolic, Chesapeake, Va.
USG Durock Cement Board, Chicago

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