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Cowen earns 'Build Oklahoma' honors

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A new children's dental facility has landed accolades for Tulsa-based Cowen Construction, including the 2009 Build Oklahoma Award from the Associated General Contractors of America.

The award is for Cowen's role as design build contractor for Pediatric Dental Group, Tulsa's first LEED-certified health care facility, located at 602 S. Utica Ave. The building serves as the "east anchor" for the Sixth Street Development Plan, which is part of the overall revitalization of the Pearl District.

The AGC award is given to the contractor who completes a project considered "the best of the best" for the state.

The dental facility is owned by Dr. Charles R. Keithline. The building houses three related dentistry businesses — Pediatric Dental Group for children younger than 18 and disabled adults; OB Dental for women who are pregnant; and Utica Imaging, a digital imaging company using cone beam tomography.

And while some may believe it takes longer to build an LEED-certified facility, John S. Cowen, company president, said construction was not affected by the LEED process.

"Our design and construction team worked diligently on the front end to select building systems and materials that were readily available, proven in the marketplace and cost-effective," Cowen said in an e-mail interview.

This is not the first design-build of an LEED project by Cowen Construction in Oklahoma. Cowen said the company actually built the first LEED registered project in Oklahoma several years ago, but at the conclusion of the project the client elected to pursue actual certification.

"We have another major health care project that will pursue a LEED certification that is scheduled for completion in the next few months," Cowen added.

The site was originally a brownfield, which is an abandoned or underused industrial and commercial facility available for reuse. Keithline, Cowen said, chose to clean up a brownfield "where development was unlikely."

"The owners, Pediatric Dental Group, took a chance and built on the once-barren street corner," Cowen said. "The building truly breathes new life into Tulsa's Pearl District. This building is one of the first steps in an overall Sixth Street infill plan authorized by local residents."

Cowen said building a LEED-certified unit is not necessarily more expensive, other than the fees required for the LEED certification process.

"Certain building systems that are popular in LEED design can cost a little more than other available systems," he said. "However in most every case those additional costs come back to the end user in the form of long-term energy savings and other incentives."

"The marketplace is beginning to do a great job of developing material and equipment options that facilitate the LEED requirements and do so at a very competitive price."

As for his crew, Cowen said the entire design and construction teams on sustainable projects have all invested in LEED or Green Advantage training and certification.

"Most all of Cowen's project management team are currently certified," he said. "It is our goal to have each employee trained in sustainable building practices."

The project took about eight months to complete, with an average daily workforce of 20 craftsmen, he added.

This is the fifth consecutive Build Oklahoma Award that Cowen Construction has received.

"We thank the Associated General Contractors for honoring our team with this Build Oklahoma Award," Cowen said. "McFarland Davies Architects did a great job working with us on design, and we had a great team of subcontractors as well."

Cowen Construction was founded in 1896 and is operated by a fourth-generation Cowen family member. The corporate headquarters are in Tulsa with an additional office at Grand Lake.

Along with commercial projects, Cowen Residential offers new home and remodeling services. Construction services include pre-construction, construction management, program and project management, design/build and general contracting.

For more information visit tulsaworld.com/cowen or call 582-2220.

Pediatric Dental Group LEED features

Among the highlights of the facility are:

Remediated brownfield site.

Design allows rainwater to percolate on site to reduce the storm sewer load.

Building shape controls solar heat gain while allowing enough daylight in to reduce dependence on electric lighting.

The roof doubles the amount of indirect north light drawn in by the clerestory while reflecting solar heat away from the building.

Overhang on the south façade blocks sun in the summer but allows additional solar heat gain during the winter months.

Highly reflective roofing materials and metal panels keep building skin cool on summer days.

The 33-foot-tall entrance tower is naturally ventilated.

The 22 250-foot-deep thermal wells inserted beneath the parking lot for the geothermal system use the constant 50-degree earth as a heat sink for the system, dumping heat in the summer and drawing heat back out in the winter.

The air change rate and filtration media for the air handling system keeps the air very clean.

Landscaping is indigenous to the climate zone and will survive without irrigation. Tree species are resistant to damage.

All construction waste was sorted off site, and 82 percent was sent to recycling facilities instead of landfills.

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Associated Images:



Pediatric Dental Care, an LEED-certified health care facility owned by Dr. Charles R. Keithline, has been awarded the 2009 Build Oklahoma Award for the design build work of Cowen Construction. DARYL WILSON/Tulsa World

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