

Sustainable windows & doors NOT just for LEED

Green features can have serious appeal in mainstream market



A Formanek door shows its painted steel outdoor cladding, and its stained wood veneer on the indoor side. The insulated core and glass panels are both ENERGY STAR rated.

If you ever visit the nation's heartland in June, you'll quickly appreciate how those magnificent "golden waves of grain" are such a vital part of America the Beautiful. And thanks to a Seneca, Kansas, cabinet and door maker, that beauty continues well after the wheat is harvested. "We're building our doors with a wheatboard core rather than a wood core, and there aren't many other companies doing that," says Betsy Macke, Marketing Manager for Koch & Co. "That's something we like to talk about, because here in Kansas there are lots of wheat farmers, and we like to help our neighbors."

But what end-users care about is how the door looks, feels, and holds up to regular use. Fire-rated wheatboard is slightly lighter weight than particle board, but has greater dimensional stability and greater moisture resistance. The company's Seneca Lag Door models get additional strength from metal lag bolts that firmly join the stiles and rails.

The fire-rated wheatboard core is created much like other particleboards, but it uses a non-urea formaldehyde resin as its binder. The doors are manufactured using low-VOC adhesives, and the finished product contains 85 percent rapidly renewable raw materials by volume. As a result, the wheatboard core doors are eligible for LEED credits in at least 5 different categories.

Standard veneers include alder, cherry, fir, hickory, knotty pine, mahogany, maple, pine, and red oak. "We're expanding all the time, and we've been able to fill requests for some more exotic looking woods such as African mahogany and poplar," said Macke. "The results look pretty good," she added. "We're able to build a door that looks quite traditional but is very green."

According to Macke, Koch Doors have been used in several LEED certified projects. "The most notable is the Cherokee Green Home in North Carolina, which was built using both our doors and our cabinets," said Macke. "And they also use our Formanek exterior doors."

Koch's Formanek doors feature steel cladding on the outdoor side, an insulating core, and a true wood veneer for the indoor side that can be stained and finished to match the customer's design needs. "I call it the best of both worlds," Macke chuckled. "A guy gets the good, solid, durable exterior, and the ladies get something that looks nice on the inside, too." The interior veneer is available in a variety of wood species, and resists the warping or cracking risks common to solid wood doors in some climates.

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