

**USGBC West Michigan Chapter Newsletter
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Attributes of Sustainable Carpet

LEED continues to be our best guide for designing, constructing and evaluating green buildings. It is also a worthy tool to measure the environmental merits of specific products. When it comes to flooring specifically, most products all contribute to some degree toward points in Flooring Systems, Recycled Content, Building Reuse, Construction Waste Management, and Adhesives and Sealants. But let's look a little more closely.

Take EcoWorx, for example. EcoWorx is a thermoplastic backing that is a lighter alternative to PVC-backed tiles. EcoWorx was introduced in 1999 and now, over 1 billion square feet of EcoWorx has been installed around the world. Since the introduction of EcoWorx backing, Shaw Industries has saved more than 594,000 barrels of oil, more than 224 million pounds of CO₂ emissions, and 3.5 trillion BTUs of energy by using EcoWorx over an alternative material.

In addition to LEED contribution and a product's proven performance, consider what is going to happen to it at its end of life. Are there reclamation programs in place providing hassle-free service for end users? For example, Shaw guarantees that it will collect and recycle all EcoWorx products at no charge. Will the product be recycled back into itself or will it be down-cycled to make a product of lesser value? EcoWorx is recyclable into more EcoWorx, reducing the volume of raw materials needed to make more carpet tile. Performance, reclamation and recyclability are important factors to consider when evaluating a product's environmental characteristics and LEED contribution.

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