

Redefining Retail Sustainability Through LEED Strategies

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

■ Project Overview

Emerald Built Environments, A Crete United Company, was brought in by Dorsky + Yue International (DYI) and Tanger Outlets to provide LEED certification strategy and sustainability consulting for the new Tanger Nashville retail center. Tanger has a mission to deliver the best value, experience, and opportunity for communities, stakeholders, and partners, along with a commitment to sustainability and the reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Tanger and DYI had prior working relationships, as did Emerald and DYI.

Located within the 300-acre Century Farms development, the 300,000-square-foot project aimed to become a new flagship retail destination—while integrating forward-thinking sustainability strategies. Tanger had previously earned LEED certification for 19 centers; however the majority of these were certified under the LEED Operations & Maintenance rating system, which focuses on how their existing shopping centers perform. The Tanger, Emerald, and DYI teams worked collaboratively to create a successful path to LEED Building Design & Construction certification for this flagship location, which focuses on sustainable design elements for the site and building, and sustainable construction practices.

Tanger Nashville was designed to support a high-performance built environment with features such as on-site solar generation, water efficiency, EV charging, lighting controls, walkability, and public art. Emerald's role was to lead the LEED BD+C exploration, helping the team assess certification feasibility and guide credit prioritization and implementation planning.



This case study highlights how early collaboration, targeted analysis, and smart planning helped a large-scale retail development achieve LEED BD+C Silver certification. Emerald Built Environments led the effort to identify cost-effective strategies that reduced water and energy use, minimized construction waste, and enhanced indoor environmental quality—demonstrating that ambitious sustainability goals are possible even in high-traffic, cost-sensitive commercial spaces.

CHALLENGES

■ Key Challenges

Though Tanger had previous success certifying properties under LEED for Existing Buildings: Operations & Maintenance (O+M), pursuing LEEDv4 BD+C certification was a new direction for Nashville. The challenge was to evaluate whether higher performance standards could be achieved within budget and without adding undue complexity. The project also needed to demonstrate that sustainable strategies could be compatible with tenant needs, visitor experience, and the financial expectations of a high-profile commercial center.

■ Client's Goals

Tanger aimed to use this project to push its sustainability efforts further by pursuing LEED Silver under the Core & Shell BD+C rating system. The goal was not only to meet certification but to do so in a way that introduced scalable, innovative strategies—approaches that could inform future developments across the portfolio. From the start, the client emphasized practical, high-impact solutions aligned with brand values, operational goals, and long-term sustainability goals. Solar PV panels were evaluated for cost-effectiveness, LEED impact, and suitability for future projects.



STRATEGIES RECOMMENDED

Emerald led a LEED charrette early in the design phase to evaluate opportunities and prioritize impactful, cost-effective strategies. From this session, 17 credits were identified as clearly achievable, with 47 additional credits flagged for further analysis.

Using a credit prioritization matrix, the team focused on high-value strategies such as installing on-site solar PV, implementing rainwater management systems, selecting high-efficiency plumbing fixtures, and specifying low-emitting materials. These recommendations balanced performance goals with budget realities and positioned the project for successful certification.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

The project delivers lasting value beyond resource efficiency. With enhanced walkability, EV charging, green space, community programming, and a public mural arts program, the center fosters engagement, accessibility, and wellness. Its location within the larger Century Farms development further integrates it into a growing, mixed-use community anchored by housing, hospitality, and the Nashville SC training complex.

CONCLUSION

This project underscores how early planning, stakeholder alignment, and a structured LEED strategy can enable even complex retail projects to achieve high levels of sustainability certification. Emerald’s leadership in developing the LEED BD+C roadmap for Tanger Nashville helped make a compelling case for sustainable innovation in retail—balancing performance, practicality, and long-term community value.

As both facilitator and technical advisor, Emerald Built Environments provided strategic clarity and coordination—ensuring that sustainability goals were not only defined early but achieved efficiently and effectively.

OUTCOMES

■ Results Achieved

Through close collaboration and clear planning, the project achieved LEED BD+C Silver certification. This marked a major milestone for Tanger Outlets—and set a precedent for its future sustainable retail development.

Performance Outcomes Included:

36% of energy is generated from on-site, roof-top solar panels, resulting in

50% **Energy Cost Savings**
as compared to code baseline

The solar panels and efficient HVAC system resulted in

18.8 **metric tons CO₂e avoided annually**
as compared to a code baseline—the same as:

1,846 or **1.5**
gallons of diesel fuel million smartphones charged

64% **Reduction in Water Use**
as compared to a baseline model.

45 This annual water savings is equivalent to the water in average-sized swimming pools

76% **Construction Waste**
diverted from landfill

99% **Use of Low-Emitting Products**
across installed materials

With this certification, Tanger Nashville became the 20th shopping center in Tanger’s portfolio to achieve LEED certification, and the first to achieve LEEDv4 BD+C certification, recognizing its efforts to address carbon impacts during design and construction.