

An Interview:

Designing a LEED Gold office with support from NYSERDA

In 2018, United Technologies Corporation (UTC) opened a new office in Brooklyn's DUMBO neighborhood to house a Digital Accelerator. NYSERDA met with Korinti Recalde, Senior Director of Sustainability at UTC, and Lauren Brust Moss, Program Director at NORESKO, to hear about the LEED® Gold space and their experience. NORESKO recommended projects to UTC to expand energy modeling during the design phase. Together, UTC and NORESKO built out “an open, collaborative, and light-filled space that promotes and fosters creativity and teamwork for employees.”

Why is energy efficiency important to your company?

At United Technologies, sustainability is defined as improving quality of life for our customers, employees, communities, and shareowners. Profitable, responsible operations should not compromise the environmental or economic health of future generations. Long-term sustainability for UTC means a healthy planet, an engaged workforce, vibrant communities, happy customers, and satisfied shareowners.

UTC's investment in the United Technologies Digital Accelerator is the next step in the company's digital transformation and underscores UTC's commitment to leading in the digital era and unleashing the size and scale of UTC's businesses on the digital world of big data and the Internet of Things. When developing this project, sustainability was at the forefront, which is why the space was built to meet LEED® Gold specifications under the LEED® green building program.

What were your main drivers for participating with NYSERDA?

Creating a work space where employees could achieve more and consume less was the main goal. With NYSERDA's support, expanding the scope of energy modeling work to include more scenarios in our evaluation and analysis was the main goal. The deeper evaluation and analysis led to improved findings that were then incorporated into a better design and construction of an even more efficient space.

What types of measures did you investigate and/or install?

The following energy efficiency measures were modeled, analyzed, recommended, and ultimately selected:

- Installation of heat pumps, in lieu of chillers with a scroll compressor and electric reheat
- Installation of demand control ventilation (DCV) in all ventilated spaces (rather than only required spaces)
- Reduction of outdoor air electric pre-heat temperature to 40°F from 50°F
- Installation of high efficiency light fixtures to reduce lighting power use
- Installation of low-flow fixtures to reduce domestic hot water use and associated energy consumption

What do you think are the most beneficial results of the project?

The most beneficial result was a better design and the construction of an even more compelling and efficient work space than originally envisioned for the United Technologies Digital Accelerator.

Many commercial tenants have experienced an increase in workplace satisfaction or productivity due to more a healthy/comfortable work environment. Have you or your staff noticed any such changes?

The United Technologies Digital Accelerator is a group of data scientists, designers, engineers, and product and project professionals that share an entrepreneurial spirit. A large part of the ability to tap into that spirit is providing an open, collaborative, and light-filled space that promotes and fosters creativity and teamwork for employees. The space is a direct reflection of the company’s shift toward accelerating a digital mindset, which includes supporting an agile working environment. Employees have the freedom and flexibility to work how they feel most comfortable – enabling idea generation, collaboration, and the ability to deliver value more efficiently.

How was your property manager/building owner involved in the process? Were they onboard and interested in working with you for the project?

The property manager was involved throughout the design process to help the design team understand the building’s limitations and ensure the team had support during the decision process. requiring minimum effort from the owner/manager.

Does your company have any corporate sustainability goals? Has this project helped work toward achieving those goals?

Yes. Every five years, UTC sets aggressive new sustainability goals for health, safety, and environmental performance. First set in 1992, these goals and progress are reviewed by the UTC Board of Directors and CEO, and they have been an invaluable tool for operational improvement. The 2020 goals drive the company every day to continue to build on a legacy of healthy and safe workplaces for employees and environmental operational performance..

Would you recommend working with NYSERDA to other companies/commercial tenants? What were the benefits?

Yes. NYSERDA encourages design and construction teams to learn more about available programs and opportunities for energy efficiency and provides a path for supporting the implementation of better systems and building controls. Design and construction teams can become more informed about atypical design options that increases efficiency, healthier spaces, and increased control.

Energy Efficiency for Commercial Tenants

NYSERDA supports tenants, landlords, and industry consultants in improving energy efficiency of leased spaces through thoughtful design, proactive maintenance and operations, and actionable plans to reduce energy consumption over the life of a lease. NYSERDA helps cover the cost of identifying energy saving opportunities and developing a plan to implement energy efficiency measures in leased spaces.

Discover what programs are available through NYSERDA to best suit your needs for reducing costs and energy use in your commercial space.

Visit nyserdera.ny.gov/cre for more information.

