



## AFRICAN ELEPHANT CROSSING

CLEVELAND METROPARKS ZOO

# African Elephant Crossing LEED Certification and Sustainability

During the design phase of African Elephant Crossing, the George Gund Foundation contributed funding to “green” up the new exhibit. Cleveland Metroparks Zoo took up the challenge – and as a result is poised to receive the first LEED certification for a large, outdoor animal exhibit in the country.

The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification program is the nationally accepted construction industry standard for green buildings.

LEED certification is administered by the U.S. Green Building Council, a membership organization that gives construction companies and architects a quantifiable set of parameters for their projects that are recognized industry-wide as best practices in energy use, environmental impact, use of local resources, reduction of greenhouse gases and sustainability.

Points are assigned to various criteria, and are documented during the design phase, construction period and operation of the building.

The number of points awarded determines the certification level, from simply “certified” up to silver, gold and platinum. African Elephant Crossing cannot be certified officially until the exhibit has been up and running completely for a few months, but is on track for silver LEED certification.

Some of the key attributes of the exhibit contributing to the LEED certification are:

- More than 90 percent of the construction waste was recycled and diverted from a landfill.
- About a third of the materials used to build the exhibit came from recycled materials.
- The exhibit’s state-of-the-art water filtration system will cut water usage by 72 percent over the former exhibit, from 26.3 million gallons per year to 7.5 million.
- Innovative air systems reclaim over 75 percent of the heat from exhaust air.
- The Sydell L. Miller Elephant Care & Visitor Center will be a public education center informing visitors about conservation, sustainability practices and how decisions they make at home can make a difference.

Adapting some of the criteria during the design phase was challenging, considering the LEED requirements generally apply to schools, office buildings and homes, not facilities that care for the world’s largest land animal. But the Zoo is committed to reducing its impact on the planet and promoting sustainability. The result is an exhibit the Zoo and its design and construction partners can genuinely be proud of, knowing it was completed with future generations in mind.