



# GEIS COMPANIES GREEN LEASE CASE STUDY

## LEADERS IN SUSTAINABLE CONSTRUCTION AND GREEN LEASING

### INVESTING IN THE FUTURE

As a vertically-integrated company, Geis has the advantage of being able to invest in measures that will pay off over the entire length of construction or even the entire life of their buildings. This unique capability allows the company to put a special focus on sustainability. For Geis, this includes establishing sustainable practices for new construction, retrofits, and rental space, and encouraging energy efficiency packages to clients of all shapes, sizes, and budgets.



As a result of their unique position in the real estate market, Geis also developed its own sustainability program—Geis Green. The Geis Green program provides clients with options to simply pursue energy and water-saving measures throughout the design, construction, and operation of their space. Clients can choose to install cost-effective features to improve the efficiency of their space, or to push their spaces to the cutting-edge of performance.

### Geis Companies

For over 40 years, the Geis Companies have been constructing and operating buildings in the Greater Cleveland area. As one of North America’s premier design & build companies, Geis is committed to providing cost-effective strategies to build, design, and occupy high-performance buildings.

While the movement towards green buildings has only picked up within the past 10 years, Geis has been working towards creating sustainable spaces for nearly two decades. Alongside the Council of Smaller Enterprises (COSE), the company brings high-quality, efficient spaces to the Cleveland market.

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**IN 1997, CO-OWNER FRED GEIS ATTENDED A SEMINAR** THAT DISCUSSED THE BURGEONING LEADERSHIP IN ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN (LEED) PROGRAM, WHICH HAD JUST BEEN DEVELOPED BY THE U.S. GREEN BUILDING COUNCIL.  
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**BY THE END OF THE YEAR, GEIS ORGANIZED A FULL-DAY, COMPANY-WIDE TRAINING** TO GET UP TO SPEED ON ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND SUSTAINABLE CONSTRUCTION.  
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## CLIENT INTEREST

For many businesses and consumers, a top priority is choosing the best space that works within their price point. However, much to the pleasure of Fred Geis, prospective clients increasingly show interest in building and occupying sustainable spaces.

In the late 90's, when Geis began to focus on energy performance, the company had to explain the concept of green building to most of their potential clients. Today, LEED and energy efficiency are usually brought up by clients within the first few conversations before developing a site, demonstrating a market shift towards greater desire for sustainability.

Geis's integrated approach to building, leasing, and managing a space allows the company to take a longer-term approach to building operation.



## SUSTAINABLE STORIES

The cost of obtaining a green certification can be prohibitive for some companies. For Geis, earning a green certification is less important than the actual performance of their buildings. The company recognizes the many benefits of green buildings, and encourages clients to push the boundaries when considering sustainable features that improve savings and comfort.

In addition to desiring improved performance, Geis knows that today's leading companies and professionals want to be able to tell their own story about what they've done to improve the world. Through the Geis Sustainable Stories program, clients are able to easily showcase the changes they've made to their space that will reduce the impact they have on the environment, and improve the health, happiness, and productivity of their employees and customers.



## ZERO WASTE

Geis has developed robust standards to drive their buildings towards zero waste production. Through their Zero Waste Program, composting, e-waste, and non-standard recyclables can be integrated into standard operations at any Geis-managed building.

This effort was developed in collaboration with Cuyahoga County, and supported Sustainable Cleveland's Year of Zero Waste. Through flyers, guidebooks, and other forms of tenant education, Geis is gradually bringing tenants along the path to creating workspaces that minimize waste.

# SUSTAINABILITY IN ACTION

## TENANT HIGHLIGHT Cuyahoga County

Cuyahoga County recently began extensively incorporating energy efficiency measures into its building leases, both as a landlord and tenant. A large driver for this movement was internal, as the county aimed to take a more active role in reducing energy use during the construction and operation of its buildings.

The Cuyahoga County Administrative Headquarters building in particular has shown that properties with multiple stakeholders can be built and operated sustainably. The building itself is owned by the Port of Cleveland, is managed by Geis Properties, and was built by Geis Construction. Additionally, the building was designed by a group of architects and designers, including GLSD Architects (among others), which is a division of Geis Companies. The sustainability measures added to the lease changed the way these cross-disciplinary teams designed and constructed the building, and improved the way it's operated today.

Adding sustainability in the mix also fostered greater collaboration on multiple levels and helped create a blueprint for the many organizations involved to achieve an overarching regional goal of energy responsibility.

In the beginning, the goal for Cuyahoga County's Headquarters was to become LEED Silver Certified. However, after the completion of the build-out of the structure, they were able to achieve LEED Gold Certification, beating their own expectations.

The design and construction of the building incorporated a number of innovative, sustainable features. For example, the building has a rooftop garden filled with plants that require no irrigation, but absorb rainwater and reduce surface runoff. The garden is just one piece of the building's water-efficient design, which reduces water use 42 percent compared to code.

The building utilizes motion sensors, solar-powered lavatory faucets, and an evaporative condensing system to provide highly-efficient HVAC service within the building. Reducing the building's energy and water use significantly lowers the costs of operation. By reducing operating costs, the net operating income of the building is increased, which then raises its value. In summation, the highly-efficient features of the Cuyahoga County Administrative Headquarters not only save money on a monthly basis through the building's utility bills, but they also increase the value of the County's asset.

Beyond its headquarters, a large part of the sustainability efforts made by the county have focused on behavioral and cultural changes for the employees that work in their buildings. Measures taken



by the county to achieve sustainability included installing destination elevators, using a smart lighting system, and coordinating waste disposal within the office spaces. These practices, incorporated into the leases of the nearly 30 buildings used by the county as either landlord or tenant, strive to increase the efficiency and comfort of their work environments.

Although the drive for these sustainable practices largely came from the county's sustainability team, the Public Works Department also had a hand in the efforts. In fact, the Public Works department initiated the inclusion of green language into the various leases of the county. In addition, the county has also created its own Sustainability Department, which will push even further beyond the green efforts already accomplished.

### CUYAHOGA COUNTY'S HEADQUARTERS:

