

GREYLOCK GLEN

Four Seasons of Outdoor Recreation in Adams, Massachusetts

An Interview with Greylock Glen Outdoor Center Architect [Beth Eisenhower](#)



What is the overall vision for this building?

Our goal for the building is to provide a resource for the region - it will connect visitors with education about the region and the natural resources of the area. We want this to be a model of sustainable design, hoping that the people interested in what makes this region so special are also interested to learn about how to preserve it.

What makes it a sustainable building?

The most important aspect is the building envelope - having a tight building envelope through the level of insulation and reducing infiltration - even tighter than passive house standards. We'll be taping all the joints, and testing along the way during construction to ensure that all the window openings are well sealed, and all the air and vapor barriers are continuous. We also use more efficient mechanical and electrical equipment, and all of this adds up to increased sustainability. Then, in the materials, we also make choices for the embodied energy of the building, using wood frame construction and locally and regionally made products as much as possible. The energy usage of the café equipment has been taken into account. All of this leads to a net zero "ready" project, and solar panels planned for the rooftop will help to offset any energy usage.

How do you make choices about which mechanical systems to install?

It has been a collaborative effort, and in this case, it has been really client-driven, the Town of Adams has pushed for the most efficient options as we select each component. It's something they sought out when they hired us, and everyone has the same goals. This project is really set apart by the fact that it is being built by the town, compared to similar projects that are led by environmentally or educationally-minded nonprofits. The fact that this is publicly funded really makes it special. It's a real demonstration of leadership.

What sustainable features will be readily apparent to visitors of the building?

The solar panels will be visible as you approach the building, and once you enter, the overall glulam* wood structure and the prevalence of wood is going to be obvious in terms of paneling and ceilings. The structure will be striking, and elements like the efficient windows will interest visitors. The building will also feel more comfortable, especially in the winter. Being so tight, the thermal comfort will be good, and it will not feel drafty. In the summer, it will feel cool even when the air conditioning is not on.

How does the cost compare to building a “typical” building of this type?

There’s a common perception that sustainable design costs a lot more, but that has become less and less true. Certainly, when you factor in the lifecycle costs, it evens out quickly.

Do you anticipate experiencing a lot of supply chain issues during construction?

To some extent, we have already, but to mitigate those issues, we’ve ordered a lot of things really early. You wouldn’t ordinarily be thinking about flooring material early on, but we got in the queue much earlier than normal. As a result, a lot of the long-lead items have already been ordered.

If you were giving a tour once the building is complete, what are the top few things you’d want to point out?

I think it would be fun to talk about the materials and the structure of the main building. I also think I would take them through the main room to look straight out the window because the view of Mount Greylock is going to be right there. Actually, when you approach the building from the outside, the roof has three peaks that align with the three peaks of Mount Greylock. I think that will be a really nice feature, and I think the terrace will be a very pleasant place to be - the whole building will function well with a nice layout. We have some multipurpose rooms on the northeast side that will have movable partitions, and I think one important feature of a sustainable building is that it’s going to last a long time, and there’s enough flexibility in the design that it will last and continue to be functional and evolve.

**read more about glued laminated timber, or glulam, here:*

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glued_laminated_timber