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# Fishtown: Owners Seek to Build Highest-Standard Green Buildings

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The buildings at 204-206 E. Girard Ave. aim to be LEED Platinum

In 1988 when Tracy Levesque moved to Philadelphia she would often drive past “vacant but architecturally beautiful” buildings.

“I wanted to renovate them all,” she explained.

A few weeks ago, Levesque and her partner Mia received building permits to begin renovation on 204-206 E. Girard Ave.—the buildings that will house their web development and design company, [YIKES Inc. \(http://www.yikesinc.com/\)](http://www.yikesinc.com/), another storefront and four apartments. They hope to transform these 120-year-old spaces into the first LEED Platinum renovations in all of Pennsylvania. LEED, which stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design is a certification program for design, construction and operation of environmentally sound buildings.

Tracy and Mia Levesque started YIKES Inc. in 1996 when the Internet was on the rise. The company started with the mission that everyone should have a presence on the web.

“Tracy and I met before the Internet was even graphical,” said Mia, “Our first line of revenue was hooking people up on the Internet and teaching them how to use e-mail.”

At their current location on Third and Brown streets in Northern Liberties YIKES Inc. maintains the sustainable business practices needed to be part of the Sustainable Business Network of Greater Philadelphia.

YIKES Inc. is also certified as a [B Corporation \(http://www.bcorporation.net/\)](http://www.bcorporation.net/), placing them among other corporations who “use the power of business to solve social and environmental problems.” The six other staff members at YIKES Inc. besides the Levesques wear the hats of web designers and programmers working alongside the mission to be socially responsible. After 14 years at the Northern Liberties location both owners felt an urgency to move into a sustainable building.

“We decided it was time for YIKES to not be renting anymore and for us to purchase a building YIKES could be a tenant of,” said Tracy. “We saw these buildings and just loved them. But the thing about these buildings is their vacant, neglected, water damaged, bighted.”

In order to meet the standards of LEED Platinum, a system set by the U.S. Green Building Council, the buildings must pass through a detailed point system that follows the process from design and construction to finding the right tenants.



To achieve certification, the Levesque project will need to receive a total of 100 points, which will depend on their water and energy use, what kinds of materials and resources are used and the quality of the indoor environment.

“You have to have a certain number of points to get different levels of certification,” said Mia.

“There’s certified, silver, gold and platinum,” added Tracy. “Platinum is the highest one that we’re shooting for. It’s not a done deal but it’s looking good.”

Attention to the smallest detail will ensure platinum status for the Levesque project, which is why they have called upon the knowledge and experience of two other Certified B-Corporations.



Framing for one of the apartments on the second floor.