

The GREENEST building in Utah

THE SWANER NATURE CENTER PUTS ITS PRINCIPLES INTO PRACTICE.

You can find just about anything in Park city, but one thing it lacks, increasingly, is open space. Which is why it's always surprising, among the condos and shopping centers that crowd the town, to see the Swaner EcoCenter (formerly the Swaner Nature Preserve): 1,200 acres of yellow fields, clear streams and dirt trails.

Now, it's more than open fields. This September, the nonprofit land trust opens its new headquarters—a building where visitors can learn about the unique ecosystems around them, spot wildlife from a four-story viewing tower, and get to know more about how their mountain valley used to look.

But this isn't a mere visitors' center—the organization aims to attain “platinum” certification from LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) for the EcoCenter, becoming the only such building in Utah and an embodiment of the EcoCenter's commitment to conservation.

Here are a few of the features you'll find at the “greenest building in Utah.”

—ERIN BEAN

The metal roof is light-colored, to reflect the sun's heat.

You'll find recycled and re-used materials throughout the building: timbers salvaged from the Great Salt Lake, insulation recycled from scrap denim, carpet made with recycled fibers.

The four-story observation tower naturally draws air upward from the rest of the building, creating natural ventilation.

The building uses energy from the sun in two ways: first, for electricity (with solar panels) and second, to heat its water.

Windows are high-tech, double-layered and filled with argon gas, to minimize heat loss in the winter.

Inside, you'll find interactive exhibits, like a climbing wall, as well as space for events like organic wine tastings.



ILLUSTRATION BY GISA