



## **Desert Living Center Overview**

The Desert Living Center (DLC) comprises five buildings featuring 43 exhibits, classroom and meeting space, and gardens that explore sustainable solutions to current and future environmental issues. The DLC is registered with the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) for Platinum certification, the highest LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) level. The structures that comprise the DLC have been designed, constructed and are operated to achieve or exceed the standards set forth by the LEED program. Exploration of environmentally sound features and practices are the focus of the DLC exhibits and buildings themselves.

The DLC begins at the Welcome Gallery, south of the Springs Amphitheater. The Welcome Gallery provides a multimedia introduction to the sustainable mission of the DLC via the Inside Out program, an exhibit that runs throughout the buildings, highlighting green structural building features, such as straw bale, rammed earth, and cooling towers.

Directly across from the Welcome Gallery is the Nature Exchange. The Nature Exchange is a nationwide educational program that offers a free choice learning environment for young collectors to “trade” their natural found items and learn more about them.

Further south and on the upper level is the Patio Gallery, which is reserved for rental and traveling exhibits. Down the stairs on the lower level you will find the Sustainability Gallery. Its focus is to highlight the country's current resource usage and offer sustainable alternatives, showing visitors how making big or small changes can greatly affect the environment for the future. As the group enters into the gallery, they will be walking across a walk-off mat which is designed to reduce the amount of pollution being brought into the building.

Once inside of the building, on the left side is a drinking fountain facing a white, glass wall that reads, "When the well's dry, we know the worth of water," a quote from Ben Franklin. As a person goes to drink water from the fountain, the wall he or she is facing becomes transparent, revealing an elaborate water system on the other side of the wall. This is to signify the fact that people are part of the water cycle because they consume it; this is also explained on signs around that area.

As the group walks past the wall and into the gallery, they can view the water system on the other side of that wall. This is a simulated model of Lake Mead, Hoover Dam, the Las Vegas Strip, and neighborhoods to visually explain the journey water travels to get to Las Vegas residences and businesses. Opposite that model along the right wall is a Tower of Trash. This pile of garbage represents the amount of trash an average family household can accumulate in one month. Adjacent to this tower are recycling bins to

represent the alternative to trashing objects. Each of the bins contains the appropriate items (plastic, paper, glass, etc.) and contains graphics that explain how each type of item is recycled and used.

The Nothing Disappears exhibits begin just beyond the water model and Tower of Trash. Three trashcans placed close together begin the exhibit while text explains what happens if we do and do not separate our garbage. A large billboard on the right flashes three separate images of a dandelion as it is slowly picked up by the wind and dispersed into the air.

Nothing Disappears leads the group directly to the Garbage Truck Theatre, a life-size garbage truck completely made of recycled materials inside and out. On the inside of the garbage truck is a theatre where visitors sit on trash can chairs to view a film that shows where their garbage goes after it is picked up from the curb and types of products can be made from recycled material. Throughout the movie, as recyclable items are named, lights turn on to point out these items as part of everyday garbage.

As the group exits the Garbage Truck Theatre, they will encounter the Compost Crawl. This is a large tunnel designed to look like compost and at the exit of the tunnel are signs explaining what compost is and what its benefits are. As the group walks out of the Compost Crawl they encounter a large bamboo and metal sculpture of a tree containing the pledges of visitors to lead more sustainable lives and make a difference.

Just beyond this tree is an area with plastic balls colored orange where children pretend to be transporting oranges. There is signage that explains how far an average dinner travels before it is eaten by a family, pointing out that when food is purchased from further away, it requires more energy and is less eco-friendly than buying locally. Adjacent to the exhibit with the oranges is a large metal sunflower that has solar panels upon it. This flower can be rotated by students to see which direction it should face to capture the most light. There are screens upon the leaves that say how much energy can be created from the amount of light it is capturing. In the area between this exhibit and the opposite wall sits the Toyota Prius Hybrid car with a transparent hood and signs explaining how this car works and how it is more sustainable.

Beyond the car along the wall is an exhibit displaying how to be more sustainable with the choices one can make for their lawn or yard. There are different choices for soil and grass as well as explanations for the proper ways to water. Walking across an opening brings students to an area where there is a trivia game that is played by pointing a "hose" at the correct answer and "spraying" it. The content in this game consists of water conservation based questions.

The trivia game is located on the outside of a large Airstream trailer that is an exhibit itself. Students can enter the trailer where graphic panels line the interior containing information on alternative energy and the current Las Vegas pollution index. Along the wall opposite the trailer are several exhibits

pertaining to energy, including the amount of energy different light bulbs use and also wind energy.

Across from the other side of the trailer, there are several arcade games that range from trivia about water to maze games, all pertaining to sustainability. In the opening beyond these games you will find yourself entering the Sustainable Home, this home is a representation of how one can build their home to be sustainable while still being functional and attractive. All aspects of the home demonstrate more eco-friendly choices within each room of the home. Examples of eco-friendly carpets, light bulbs, counter tops, appliances, insulation, etc. are found within the kitchen. The sustainable bathroom focuses mostly upon water conservation, while the living room contains sustainable furniture and flooring, as well as a pledge station where students can make a pledge to be more sustainable and print it out to be placed on the Pledge Tree by an employee in the Sustainability Gallery.

When the group exits the gallery, further south and still on the lower level is the Activity Center which includes a wet lab and instruction area to teach scheduled classes for youth and adults alike throughout the year, especially on the weekends.

Just outside of the south side of the Activity Center is the Gardens Amphitheater. The Gardens Amphitheater is a semi-circular outdoor venue accommodating approximately 250 people for classes and lecture.

The Gardens Amphitheater is the end of the Desert Living Center, but there is so much more to explore at the Springs Preserve, including the Origen Museum, the gardens, and the trails all located on this historic site.