



Merchandise Mart Gets Certified Green

Chicago - The U.S.Green Building Council this month conferred Leadership in Energy Efficient Design (LEED) for Existing Buildings silver certification on the Merchandise Mart. At 4.2 million square feet, that makes the permanent showroom building the largest LEED certified building in the world, according to Merchandise Mart Properties Inc. (MMPI). In addition, several Mart tenants have achieved, or are seeking, LEED Commercial Interiors certification for their showrooms.

"Our investors want long-term results," said Christopher Kennedy, president of MMPI. "Our city demands corporate responsibility and the community wants environmental stewardship. The LEED program helped us find common ground and proved that growth and sustainability are great partners."

To date the Mart has reduced pollution by 264,018 pounds, saved more than 13,000 trees, and 5.5 million gallons of water, as well as recycling almost 11 million pounds of waste. This saves MMPI's resources as well as the planet's: "USGBC studies have show green building practices guarantee a 30 percent energy savings, 20-50 percent water savings, and 50-97 percent waste savings," according to Mark Bettin, national director of engineering, MMPI.

MMPI's efforts to reduce the Mart's environmental impact include using green cleaning products; recycling paper products, glass, light bulbs, batteries, aluminum and construction materials; using only low VOC cleaning products, paints and building materials; switching to energy efficient lighting and alternative workplace transportation options; using recycled paper; installing motion activated lighting in restrooms and lower wattage fixtures wherever possible; making an I-Go hybrid car available to tenants and employees 24 hours a day, retrofitting exit lights to require less energy; implementing an exterior and dock lighting schedule; developing sustainable standards for construction, cleaning and exterior maintenance.

Future goals include installing more water-efficient fixtures and lighting retrofits, supporting ozone protection protocols, encouraging renewable and alternative energy sources, purchasing materials with less environmental impact and eliminating sources of indoor air pollution.