

Green Building Elements

LEED-EB Silver for World's Largest Commercial Building

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The Merchandise Mart in Chicago is the largest commercial building and second only to the Pentagon as the largest building. So getting such a large building into the LEED program was a great step for promoting green buildings. In November, the Merchandise Mart received its certification as a LEED-EB Silver building. That's a whole lot of square footage (4.2 million square feet) to be part of the LEED-EB program.

LEED-EB is less well known than some of the other components of the LEED series of building ratings. Rather than focusing on the construction of efficient and environmentally responsive buildings, LEED-EB addresses the operation and workings of existing buildings. Some building improvements and upgrades to systems are often incorporated into LEED-EB certification, but measures such as the

"The LEED for Existing Buildings Rating System helps building owners and operators measure operations, improvements and maintenance on a consistent scale, with the goal of maximizing operational efficiency while minimizing environmental impacts. LEED for Existing Buildings addresses whole-building cleaning and maintenance issues (including chemical use), recycling programs, exterior maintenance programs, and systems upgrades. It can be applied both to existing buildings seeking LEED certification for the first time and to projects previously certified under LEED for New Construction or Core & Shell."

The Merchandise Mart has been operating the world's largest off-peak cooling system since 1986, which can manufacture as much as two million pounds of ice per night to help cool not only the Mart itself but also dozens of neighboring buildings as well. The building also utilizes only low VOC paints and cleaning products in order to provide a healthier building environment. A building-wide recycling program, reduced wattage light fixtures, low flow water facilities, and recycled paper usage are some of the other steps undertaken as part of thi program.

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