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The Mart goes green

[Maureen Wilkey](#) Staff Writer

By recycling more than 11 million pounds of water and reducing VOC pollution by 264,018 pounds last year, The Merchandise Mart and 350 West Mart Center were well on their way to their goal of becoming USGBC LEED certified buildings. That goal should be realized this November, says Myron Maurer, senior vice president of Merchandise Mart Properties Inc.

The Mart has been using environmentally friendly cleaning products since the early 1990s and decided to start pursuing certification in 2005, Maurer says.

But there were a lot of obstacles to overcome because of the size of the building.

“We still have a lot of hurdles to cross, but we can see what we have to do now,” Maurer says.

In order to get certification, the Mart is changing its recycling program to include batteries, light bulbs and construction waste; adopting green purchasing and cleaning policies, starting a green site maintenance plan and indoor air quality management plan. Management might also install a green roof and solar panels.

One of the biggest challenges of getting the site certified would be documentation, Maurer says. While many tenants of the building are already conscious about recycling and conserving energy, the company needs to make sure they keep track of what methods they’re using and how much energy and waste they are saving.

“The design industry is already very conscious of the green movement, so many of the tenants were very receptive and encouraging of us getting certified,” Maurer says. “We just have to make sure everyone is recycling and turning off their lights at the end of the day.”

Maurer says it is especially important for a building like the Mart to get certified because the community that uses the building is so aware of what LEED-certification means. Green design has become especially important within the furniture community in the last year, he says.


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