

Greenbuild packs 'em in

BY ROBERT P. MADER Of CONTRACTOR's staff

CHICAGO – The U.S. Green Building Council's Greenbuild conference and exposition opened with huge crowds to see and hear former President Bill Clinton give the keynote address. Total attendance topped 22,000, with the aisles of the exposition packed the first day.

In his address, Clinton announced that his foundation's offshoot, the Clinton Climate Initiative, will partner with the City of Chicago to enable a green overhaul of privately owned housing around the city, as well as two major landmarks, the Sears Tower and the Merchandise Mart – the country's tallest and largest buildings, respectively. CCI will also partner with GE Real Estate to identify and implement building retrofit projects across GE Real Estate's global portfolio.

In addition, along with the USGBC and the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment, CCI will create a Green Schools Program to retrofit schools and universities across America.

"The tools we need to dramatically reduce our carbon emissions exist today," said President Clinton. "When it comes to climate change, the hurdles we face aren't technological, they're organizational, which is why my foundation is partnering with cities, businesses, nonprofits and schools alike to design systems and programs that reduce energy consumption."

President Clinton and Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley announced three joint projects between the City of Chicago and CCI's Energy Efficiency Building Retrofit Program, an effort launched in May 2007 that enables cities to implement cost-effective, green retrofits of existing buildings.

CCI and the City of Chicago will work with the Merchandise Mart, the world's largest commercial building and largest wholesale design center, and the Sears Tower, the tallest building in America, to complete audits and subsequent overhauls to increase their energy efficiency and reduce their carbon footprints. In addition, CCI is developing a targeted program for energy retrofits of privately-owned, multi-tenant housing in Chicago. Under the auspices of the City's Department of Housing, building owners will jointly contract for energy performance contracts and use future energy savings to finance the project implementation.

CCI and USGBC also will work with K-12 schools throughout the nation to establish a Green Schools Program to reduce the energy consumption of school buildings.

USGBC also used the occasion of Greenbuild to announce several major initiatives.

The Council introduced its LEED for homes ratings system for both single and multi-family housing. The LEED for Homes program is designed to provide industry best practices greening any new home from affordable to custom to production housing, USGBC said. LEED for homes addresses and rewards the inherent resource efficiency of smaller, affordable homes, especially those that are built in urban settings. A special working group of 45 national affordable housing experts was formed to review the early pilot version of LEED for homes to assess how well it addressed the needs of affordable housing. Several of the first LEED homes to be certified were affordable homes. LEED also recognizes the unique needs of production home builders and there are many production builders participating in the program.

The net cost of owning a LEED home is the same as a conventional home, according to USGBC. A home certified at the basic "certified" level can be built for no additional costs. If there are additional upfront costs they are between 1%-5%, depending on the green features the home incorporates.

USGBC announced the launch of an educational Website, www.Greenbuild365.org, with the support of a \$1 million donation from United Technologies Corp. The intent of the Website is to "transform green building education through global, online access," the Council said.

Greenbuild365.org will feature both free and fee-based courses on green building technologies and innovations, along with practical training to prepare professionals to successfully apply LEED certification to building design, construction and operation.

USGBC also announced a new research agenda, for which it announced last spring that it would commit \$1 million. The council is soliciting research toward achieving stable, sustainable energy supplies and climate conditions and clean, renewable and sufficient water resources.

USGBC also re-launched its Website during Greenbuild, www.usgbc.org.