



# St. Paul venues slash their trash

BY JOHN VOMHOF JR.  
STAFF WRITER

Xcel Energy Center, the neighboring St. Paul RiverCentre and Roy Wilkins Auditorium are significantly ahead of schedule in their efforts to produce more cash and less trash.

In July 2009, the trio of venues — all owned by the city of St. Paul and managed by a subsidiary of Minnesota Sports & Entertainment — launched a sustainability initiative aimed at reducing their collective waste by half and increasing recycling rates to 50 percent of all waste over the following two years. That's no small feat, considering the millions of people who attend hockey games, concerts and conventions there every year. The building owners hired Progressive Associates Inc., a St. Paul consulting firm run by husband-and-wife team Patrick and Christina Reeves, to lead the efforts.

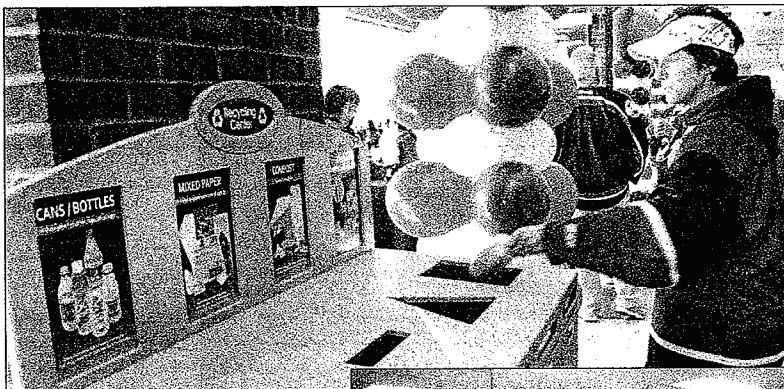
The results from the first year of the so-called "50-50 in 2" program have exceeded expectations, cutting the amount of trash produced by 48 percent, or roughly 1.3 million pounds, while increasing the recycling rate to 41 percent. The rates consistently have surpassed the 50 percent goal in recent months.

"Eventually a Wild game will generate zero waste," Patrick Reeves said. "That's the goal, and it's not that far away."

The facilities installed more than 500 recycle bins and implemented a composting program, collecting 122 tons of compost in the first year. Much of the compost comes from the campus' kitchens, but there also are compost bins through RiverCentre and on the suite level at Xcel Energy Center. There are compost bins for paper towels in the rest rooms, and plastic cups and utensils were replaced with biodegradable products.

Officials hope the St. Paul venues will become a role model for other businesses, but the effort also makes financial sense, helping the facilities save money and attract new business.

In the first year, trash-handling costs declined by nearly 7 percent to \$154,115, despite upfront costs, such as purchasing recycling and compost bins. That's primarily because it costs just \$72 per ton for handling recycling,



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Xcel Energy Center and surrounding sites have stepped up recycling efforts, at left. Below: Erika Acevedo, an Xcel Center prep cook, empties food into a composting container.

## XCEL ENERGY CENTER

Location: 199 W. Kellogg Blvd., St. Paul

Owner: City of St. Paul

Operator: St. Paul Arena Co., a subsidiary of Minnesota Sports & Entertainment

About: The 18,064-seat arena is home to the Minnesota Wild and Minnesota Swarm and hosts numerous concerts and other events each year. It hosted the Republican National Convention in 2008 and the NHL All-Star Game in 2004.

## ST. PAUL RIVERCENTRE

Location: 175 W. Kellogg Blvd., St. Paul

Owner: City of St. Paul

Operator: Managed and operated by Visit St. Paul, which contracts facility-management services from St. Paul Arena Co.

About: Convention center with more than 250,000 square feet of event space. It hosts hundreds of galas, trade shows, conventions and other events each year.

compared to \$193 per ton for handling trash, largely due to Ramsey County's 70 percent tax on trash collection. The facilities also sell the cardboard, plastic wrap and kitchen grease they recycle.

"Diverting trash away from the landfills — and the taxes associated with landfills — means more dollars directly to our bottom line," RiverCentre General Manager Jim Ibister said. "We don't receive a tremendous amount of tax subsidy here,



## ROY WILKINS AUDITORIUM

Location: 175 W. Kellogg Blvd., St. Paul

Owner: City of St. Paul

Operator: Managed and operated by Visit St. Paul, which contracts facility-management services from St. Paul Arena Co.

About: The 5,500-seat multipurpose arena hosts hundreds of concerts and other events each year.

so we need every dollar we can get."

The venues also are promoting their efforts when bidding for concerts and conventions — something that can give them a leg up on competition, said Sheila Crowley, executive director of the Association for Convention Marketing Executives in Washington, D.C.

"I think more and more meeting planners are looking at that," she said.

With the trash and recycling programs off to a strong start, officials

will look to reduce the facilities' energy use. That program — called "80-20 in 3" — aims to reduce the buildings' collective carbon footprint by 80 percent and make them 20 percent more efficient than industry average within three years.

After one year, the total carbon footprint was reduced by 19 percent. RiverCentre now is nearly 18 percent more efficient than the industry average and Xcel Energy Center is 17.3 percent more efficient. The buildings aren't going for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification yet, but officials hope that some day Xcel Energy Center can achieve that status.

The U.S. Green Building Council has separate certification standards for existing facilities than it has for new construction, but they're still not easy to attain, Christina Reeves said.

"It's easier to build a Prius than it is to turn your Camaro into one."

jvomhof@bizjournals.com | (612) 288-2101