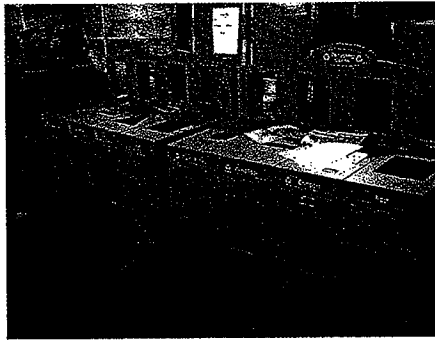
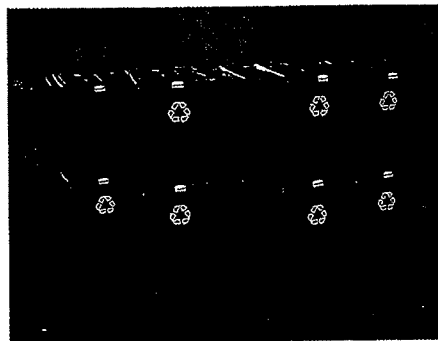
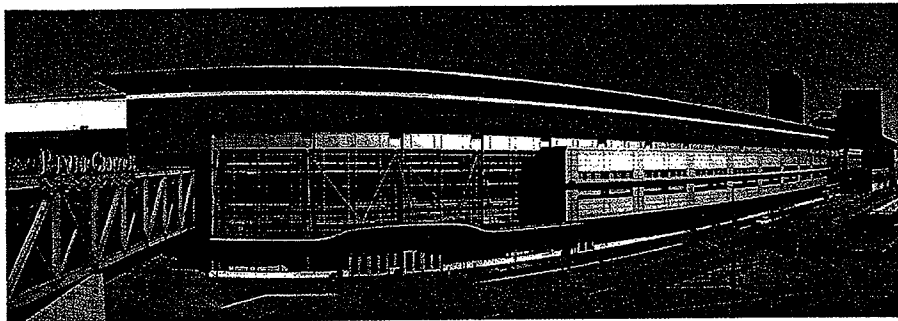


TWIN CITY GREEN

Xcel Energy and Target Centers put Midwest on path toward sustainability

by DAVE BROOKS



Greening efforts at the RiverCentre (above) in Saint Paul, Minn., include recycling and new concourse bins to cut waste in half.

When it comes to green initiatives, Minnesota's Twin City venues aren't exactly identical, but like twins, they share paternal qualities. This year both took big steps to create sustainable legacies in their communities.

Minneapolis has scored big headlines with its efforts to usher in sustainable design through its green roof initiative at the Target Center, while the Xcel Energy Center and RiverCentre in Saint Paul has also been mak-

ing its own strides with a popular program to reduce waste and increase recycling.

Dubbed the "50-50 in 2" program, Xcel Energy Center officials hope to reduce waste at the facility by 50 percent and increase recycling by 50 percent in less than two years. The center spent about \$150,000 to implement the program, which could help them save potentially much more money in the future. Waste is an expensive business in St. Paul and the two facilities were producing about 3.2 million pounds of waste each year.

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"It's staggering. We do generate an awful lot of trash."
— Mark Stoffel

lot of trash," said Mark Stoffel, senior director of Operations for Saint Paul Arena Company.

Between the County of Ramsey's rules and those set forth by the Minnesota State government, Xcel was paying a 70 percent tax on trash at the landfill. Cutting that bill in half could mean significant savings for the arena management team.

"But, we're not just doing this to save money; it's the right thing to do," said Bill Huepenbecker, director of Planning and Public Affairs for Saint Paul Arena Company. "Early in our discussions, we decided that we wanted to be a leader in sustainability and get there in bite-sized chunks."

The goal soon became to get waste down to a more manageable 1.2 million pounds a year and increase recycling from 15 percent.

Across the river at the Target Center in Minneapolis, building executives had a challenge of their own — to build a new roof for the arena using 100 percent recycled material from the old roof.

"It involved us reusing a lot of old materials, carefully storing old pieces of the roofing system, and really involving our waste and

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 engineering teams,” said Tom Reller, the director of Operations for the AEG-managed facility.

The result was a \$5.3-million roof upgrade that left zero waste behind and utilized green roof technology. The 115,000-sq.-

ft. garden roof includes 900 rolls of pre-grown vegetated mats of sedum and native plants laid out over 540 cubic yards of soil. Officially launched Sept. 29, the green roof atop the Target Center is designed to help control water runoff in the city, provide a habitat for wildlife species and help cool and heat the building.

“The plants that are up there are designed to be highly drought tolerant, although they already have irrigation equipment in place that, in the event of a water shortage, the plants can maintain vibrancy and vigor,” R said.

To assist with the Xcel Energy Center efforts, Huepenbecker hired the Progressive Associates to conduct a full facility assessment on energy use, waste and recycling.

“They could have bought a lot of recycling bins and plastered them all around the campus, but what they wanted to do was make sure that the infrastructure behind the scene was getting the material where it wanted to go and they were achieving their goals,” Patrick Reeves, who runs Progressive Associates with his wife Christina.

Progressive helped the Xcel Energy Center staff identify new ways to handle the waste stream. Composting would be required to make a significant offset in the waste surplus, so a new compactor was added along with a row of house bins to encourage patrons to separate compostable items from recyclables trash. The compost is then hauled to a compost site in Rosemont, Ill.

“We had to work a lot with our kitchen staff to teach them how to separate the items,” Stoffel said.

The building also changed the way it recycled cardboard, Huepenbecker said. It used to bale it, which took 40 hours per week. Now it’s mixing paper and cardboard in a compactor, which is much more efficient.

That freed up the baler to be used for recycled shrink wrap. “There’s actually a market and that’s a revenue generating opportunity,” along with used cooking oil, Huepenbecker said.

The goal was to make the process as efficient as possible for Xcel and RiverCentre employees as possible. Color-coded bags designate trash flow, while information during client tours help make sense of RiverCentre’s four bin waste system: trash, recyclables, paper and compost.

“I told my operations managers that the

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 something that falls back on us now," said Stoffel. "Before, the compactors were a free for all and our concession contractors would give their employees access to that. We've locked those off, and I don't want an exhibitor from a trade show going down there and dumping into our container."

Instead, only facility employees are allowed to operate the compactor system and separate waste for the concessionaires, teams and visitors. Stoffel said the move helped save the building a significant amount of money and avoided contamination of any one waste stream.

"At the end of the day, it's the custodian or kitchen cleanup person who has to get things to the right place," said Christina Reeves of Progressive Associates. "If they're not properly trained, or willing and able to make the right

"At the end of the day, it's the custodian or kitchen cleanup person who has to get things to the right place." — Christina Reeves

decisions, we won't reach the goals. This has to get to all levels of the organization."

As for front of house, the team is also concocting ways to keep convention center visitors abreast of the changes.

"By adding the amount of barrels on the concourse, we allow the people who really want to recycle to do so," Stoffel said. "I never had a recycling container at an exit that could be used by someone if they wanted to pitch a game program or newspaper as they were leaving. We've got those right now and I know that material is getting into my cardboard and

paper compacter and not into my waste stream."

Next on the list for the Xcel Energy Center and the RiverCentre will be examining energy consumption, moving lights toward compact fluorescents and climate control software.

"We plan to do some lighting retrofits and replace our dock lighting system," Huepenbecker said. "And we're also purchasing software that measures heating, cooling and energy use so we can avoid spikes on the demand charge, which is a huge increase on our bill. Our ultimate goal would be to achieve LEED-certification."

Energy costs run as much as \$2.5 million annually, mostly for lighting, heating and cooling during peak energy times when prices are highest, said Stoffel. "This software gives us the ability to see when we're approaching a peak load and we can utilize the engineers or electricians to cycle some of the fans down or not turn on everything at once."

And while the long-term goal is to save money and energy, Patrick Reeves said the investment has to be made up front for long-term success.

"On a strategic level, it's just like any other project. There are budgets behind them, there are investments to be made and the benefits come out at the other end," he said.

"We don't have it modeled out for exactly how long the payback is going to be, but we know that it will pay back partly over time," added Christina Reeves. "That time frame partly depends on how quickly we reach our goal." ●

Interviewed for this story: **Bill Huepenbecker**, (651) 265-4858; **Mark Stoffel**, (651) 265-4807; **Christina and Patrick Reeves**, (651) 330-1294; **Tom Reller**, (612) 673-1380

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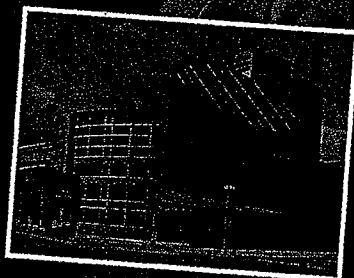


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