

# Virginia Beach Convention Center is nation's first to achieve LEED® Gold Certification for existing buildings

**T**HE VIRGINIA BEACH Convention Center is the first convention center in the country to achieve LEED® Gold Certification for Existing Buildings. The achievement also signifies the convention center as the state's largest building to achieve the LEED Gold Certified Project for Existing Buildings. A ceremony to accept the plaque from the U.S. Green Building Council took place May 3 at the convention center.

The LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Green Building Rating System is a nationally accepted benchmark for design, construction and operation of high performance green buildings. It was developed by the U.S. Green Building Council. There are several types of certifications, but two primary ones for commercial facilities – new construction (NC) and existing buildings (EB). Since the convention center was opened in 2007, its application was under the Existing Building category. The LEED for Existing Buildings Rating System helps building owners and operators of existing buildings measure operations, improvements and maintenance on a consistent scale, with the goal of maximizing operational efficiency while minimizing environmental impacts.

“The Virginia Beach Convention Center staff has set a great example for other buildings within the industry and the resort area by working as a

team to efficiently perform and operate to LEED standards,” said CVB Director James B. Ricketts. “We pride ourselves on being innovative and forward-thinking, and by protecting our environment, we can look ahead to a sustainable and clean future.”

The unique factors in obtaining the gold level were substantiated by

The facility was built on the location of the original Pavilion Convention Center, thereby reducing the cost of infrastructure improvements. Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, LLP (SOM), the building's architects, in conjunction with their local partner, Norfolk-based Clark Nexsen, had the foresight to recycle materials from the

former facility including steel, copper, aluminum, concrete and cinder blocks and reuse materials like asphalt in construction of the new facility. “We shared a commitment to excellence in all matters from design to operations. We would be gratified if this designation encourages the design community to continue working toward a better environment,” said Leigh Breslau, SOM design partner.

The convention center's

business manager, Lori Herrick, earned the LEED Accredited Professional (LEED-AP) designation, which enabled her to facilitate the rating of the convention center with the various LEED systems. The LEED-AP designation for Herrick is unique. Most LEED-accredited professionals have engineering and architecture backgrounds while Herrick holds a master's of business administration.

Typically, commercial facilities hire consultants to apply for the certification. However, under Herrick's leadership, 77 percent of the work was completed by city staff, including



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the additional points the convention center earned for areas including energy conservation, sustainable purchases and innovation credits. The building also received extra innovation points for developing ergonomics training for staff, an environmental communication program, which includes a compelling environmental awareness presentation on the 360-foot video wall, and an energy management outreach project. Sustainability initiatives include several core programs, including recycling, water efficiency, energy efficiency and more.



**The convention center became a LEED Gold Certified Project for Existing Buildings by earning additional points for areas including energy conservation, sustainable purchases and innovation credits.**



**Under the leadership of the convention center's business manager, Lori Herrick, 77 percent of the LEED certification work was completed by city staff.**

the Departments of Public Works and Planning. As the LEED program is predicated on third-party verification, the convention center worked with consultants on an as-needed basis for documentation of technical areas.

The convention center's LEED certification is in addition to several sustainability initiatives and programs that the CVB and its hospitality partners have embraced as part of the state's Virginia Green campaign to promote environmentally friendly practices in all aspects of the Virginia tourism and hospitality industry. Virginia Beach now has more than 100 Virginia Green certified hospitality businesses and is the state's first "Virginia Green Destination." Currently, the convention center is competing against 14 commercial buildings in the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's national competition to save energy and fight climate change. For more contest information, visit [www.energystar.gov/BuildingContest](http://www.energystar.gov/BuildingContest). 