

HOUSTON, HOW GREEN ARE YOU?

By: Robert A. Thomas, P.E., LEED AP, Chair, Green Committee



Robert Thomas

With our current state of environment and economy, it seems the topic of discussion today is "Green". So what does this mean? It means many things to many people. For some it means riding your bicycle to work, a strict diet of only certain foods and a lifestyle that is very environmentally conscience. For others it is saving

gas and energy and purchasing products that are made of recycled materials. No matter what it means to you, we all have an opportunity to contribute on a daily basis.

Studies have shown that buildings use a large part of energy, water, gas and raw materials in our country. This is a true because buildings are where people work and play every day. If you think of the large number of office spaces and retail spaces where business is done every day, you will understand why buildings are large energy users. More than likely, everyone reading this article works inside a building most of the week if not all of it. We all want to conserve energy; however, not any one of us would want to turn off the building air conditioning in August here in Houston! So the answer is to be conservative and environmentally conscious while you carry out the day to day operations of a building.

So what can we do? We have done much so far. BOMA International just received the Energy Star Partner of the

year award for 2008. This is the second straight year they have received this award, and BOMA International has been an Energy Star Partner since 2005. CB Richard Ellis also received the 2008 Energy Star Partner of the year award and has pledged to become carbon neutral in their operations by 2010. Transwestern recently received the 2008 Energy Star Sustained Excellence Award and won the same award in 2006 and 2007. Transwestern also received the Energy Star Partner of the year award in 2004 and 2005. These are just a few examples of how BOMA and its members are contributing to energy conservation and sustainable practices. Many other BOMA members have achieved Energy Star labeling and recognition. A large majority of building management companies currently practice aggressive energy conservation operations and are leaders in our community in this area. Continuation of these practices and further development of new ideas and practices will lead to continued success.

With this in mind, Houston BOMA has committed to the 7 Point Challenge. The 7 Points of the Challenge are as follows:

1. Work towards a goal to decrease energy consumption by 30 percent across your portfolios by 2012 (compared to a building label score of 50).
2. At least once a year, benchmark your energy performance and water usage via Energy Star.
3. Provide education to your managers, engineers and other building staff.

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4. Perform an energy audit and/or retro-commissioning of your building and implement low-risk, low cost effective strategies to improve energy efficiency.
5. Extend equipment life by improving operation and maintenance of building systems.
6. Through leadership, positively impact your community and your planet by helping reduce your industry's role in global warming.
7. Position yourself and the industry leaders and solution providers to owners and tenants seeking environmental and operational excellence.

Houston BOMA challenges you to adopt and apply this challenge to your company portfolio today! For more information on the challenge or assistance with Energy Star Benchmarking, please contact the BOMA Green Committee, or access our many resources at www.houstonboma.org. ■

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