

Across a Portfolio, Vornado Takes LEED to a New Level

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1101 17th St. NW, part of Vornado Realty Trust's Washington, D.C., portfolio.



1101 17th St. NW, part of Vornado Realty Trust's Washington, D.C., portfolio. Photo credit: Vornado

[Vornado Realty Trust](#), one of the largest owners and managers of commercial real estate in the United States, recently achieved LEED certification at 30 properties in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan region. Through USGBC's [LEED Volume Program](#) and the [LEED for Existing Buildings](#) rating system, Vornado's Washington division showcased tremendous leadership, strengthening its existing sustainability programs and developing new companywide initiatives that move the needle for an entire commercial real estate portfolio.

USGBC's LEED Volume Program is geared specifically toward organizations that have broad sustainability goals and plan to certify an entire portfolio of building projects. Through the LEED Volume Program, Vornado has shown its green practices across wide-ranging aspects of its business, from capital expense decisions to the selection of vendors to tenant relationships.

"Sustainability is inherently multidisciplinary, and thinking about sustainability on a portfolio level requires broad commitment from all levels and divisions in an organization," said Jonathan Gritz, who is managing the sustainability programs for Vornado's Washington division. Vornado owns and operates more than 30 million square feet of LEED certified buildings — more than any other owner in the Washington or New York markets.

At Greenbuild 2012, USGBC CEO Rick Fedrizzi presented a plaque to the president of Vornado's Washington division, Mitchell Schear, and his team, in recognition of their recent certification of 30 properties. How did they do it? Gritz offered some insight into how the company incorporated portfolio-wide sustainability practices into its business, and how the LEED Volume approach has created a powerful, magnified effect for the company.

Decision-Making on a Portfolio Level

From sustainable cooling-tower water management to green cleaning to electric vehicle charging, a central decision-making team consistently implements Vornado's green programs. For example, battery recycling now takes place using the same, easily recognizable recycling containers across properties. "Centralized decisions means less work for the property teams, less capital to implement the programs and consistent quality across the portfolio," Gritz said.

The results of these portfolio-wide green programs can be dramatic: Vornado's recent e-waste drive diverted more than 17,000 pounds of electronics from the landfill.

Vornado's Tenant Service Center (TSC) controls the operations and energy systems for its entire Washington division through one central command center that provides 24/7 equipment and energy monitoring. This state-of-the-art center allows Vornado to leverage its scale to manage energy more efficiently than operating buildings independently.

"Having everybody in the same room allows a very fluid transfer of knowledge," said Brian Boyle, manager of the TSC. "The TSC allows us to manage energy use on a very granular level and also on a portfolio-wide basis. This is the future of managing buildings."

Mechanical systems across the portfolio are adjusted in real time, based on weather and energy consumption data, resulting in significant savings. Additionally, Vornado participates in a demand-response program, allowing its properties to reduce energy use during high-demand periods, reducing strain on the grid, increasing efficiency and minimizing Vornado's environmental impact. This summer, Boyle and his team at the TSC were able to reduce energy load across more than 30 buildings during a period of peak demand.

In short, Gritz said, the [LEED Volume Program](#) has been a "great opportunity to further strengthen our sustainability programs and continue greening our portfolio."

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