

Green building practices no longer just trendy



For property managers and building owners, the concept of "green" building practices has turned from trend to necessity.

Saving money continues to top the list of priorities for building owners, but so does incorporating more environmentally sound practices into property management, including recycling, and environmentally friendly landscaping and maintenance.

Fifth Street Management Company LLC, a Midtown property management firm, specializes in instituting sustainable and environmentally favorable programs in the buildings it manages. The company's programs aim to refine energy management and usage as well as reduce both operating costs and carbon footprints of commercial buildings across metro Atlanta.

Maintenance: An engineer makes a 'load' adjustment to Riverwood 100's centrifugal chiller — a hands-on approach to managing unnecessary energy consumption.

"Considering the current state of the economy and the real estate industry, reducing building operating expenses is more important than ever," said Harry Conley, president of Fifth Street.

"Our tenants are looking for ways to reduce their operating costs, and we are a part of that solution. Our efforts to incorporate green building operating practices in our buildings over the last three years have not only improved our environmental impact but have also resulted in significant expense reductions. We are finding more demand for this expertise from our clients and prospects. Increasingly, we are being sought out for property management assignments because of our reputation for environmentally sound operations and total cost reduction," he said.

Fifth Street implemented an aggressive recycling program in two of the buildings at the Centery building and Riverwood 100 at the start of 2008. Before the recycling program took effect, Centery recycled approximately 8 percent of building waste. After running the program for a year, Centery recycled 120 tons of the total waste stream. Riverwood recycled 87.4 tons of mixed recyclable material.

Fifth Street also designed and installed a water recovery system that collects HVAC condensate that would normally be flushed into the sewer system, and recycles more than 200,000 gallons of water per year back into the condenser system.

The company's "xeriscape" landscape program minimizes irrigation water use by 90 percent and requires minimal maintenance because it utilizes plants native to Georgia that are adaptable to the changing environment. The "xeriscape" plantings also prevent soil erosion, and the landscape refuse is fully recycled and reused as mulch. This program reduces landscape maintenance costs by about 30 percent.

Fifth Street Management specializes in class A commercial, residential and corporate real estate properties.

ICS Contract Services LLC, an Atlanta-based customer care, janitorial and contract services company, has also seen an uptick in demand for its services.

The company provides professional custodial services to medical, commercial and educational facilities across Atlanta. The company has grown from a \$25 million company to a \$40 million company in less than five years and now has more than 1,000 employees, according to figures provided by the company.

"Property managers and building owners are beginning to realize that the 'green movement' is not a passing phase," said Ron Willis, CEO and president of ICS Contract Services.

The Centery building in Midtown Atlanta was the first to employ ICS' day-cleaning program aimed at reducing energy and security costs as well as the building's carbon footprint. In 2008, this day-cleaning program saved the Centery building approximately \$100,000 per year and cut lighting costs by approximately 15 percent.

ICS' day-cleaning program is an environmentally friendly alternative to traditional night cleaning, and the company currently provides these services for more than 1.5 million square feet of multi-tenant office buildings. This program has reduced energy costs by approximately 15 percent for those customers participating.

The company's "green cleaning" program maintains a high level of cleanliness while introducing a healthier environment through subtle changes in chemicals and procedures. The program uses equipment and chemicals that meet or exceed EPA published guidelines. This program received Green Seal certification in early 2009, the first in the Southeast.

ICS provides cleaning, maintenance and customer care services for Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport and cleaning services for Emory clinics.

"As LEED-certification becomes a must for building owners, our accredited green cleaning services not only reduce buildings' environmental footprint, but also improve its long-term market value,"

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