

# FINANCE & COMMERCE

## How well does LEED work in certified buildings?

Posted: 3:18 pm Fri, May 11, 2012

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Tags: [EnergyPrint Inc.](#), [LEED](#), [U.S. Green Building Council](#)



The Wells Fargo Center, 90 S. Seventh St. in Minneapolis, is among the LEED-certified buildings participating in a study of energy usage. (File photo: Bill Klotz)

### Study will look at energy use in 150 structures

The Minnesota chapter of the [U.S. Green Building Council](#) and the energy management software provider [EnergyPrint Inc.](#) are collaborating on a new program to study energy-efficient buildings.

Dubbed the Performance Metrics Strategic Initiative, the effort will try to benchmark energy use in more than 150 of the state's 189 LEED-certified buildings.

The Green Building Council's LEED program — which stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design — certifies that a building is energy-efficient after subjecting it to a rigorous, point-based process.

Since announcing the project in late April, St. Paul-based EnergyPrint has attracted 24 building owners, said Mike Williams, the company's chief operating officer. Participants will include Target Field and Wells Fargo Center in Minneapolis and the St. Paul Fire Department's headquarters.

EnergyPrint offers the service to building owners for free for three months and then requires an annual subscription of \$1,000 per building, Williams said. While he expects that LEED buildings

will use less energy than other similar non-LEED structures, he is interested in finding out how big a difference exists.

While most research on LEED is national in nature, the EnergyPrint project will offer local building owners a chance to see how they are performing compared with others in the same climate, said Sheri Brezinka, executive director of the U.S. Green Building Council's Minnesota chapter.

It's also considered an affordable way for owners of one or two buildings to monitor energy.

"Small building owners feel they don't have the time or it's too complicated, but we feel the program will show them that that's not true — that (monitoring) is something they can do," she said.

As part of the package, EnergyPrint will set customers up with its energy management dashboard, which showcases how the different buildings in their portfolio compare based on performance metrics.

The company's software service analyzes energy bills to tease out data answering four basic questions: How is a building performing? Is energy use growing or declining? What opportunities exist for reducing energy use? How are prior energy-related projects actually working?

"The beauty of our approach is that it's non-intrusive," Williams said. "We get the bills directly from the utility, and there's no equipment that has to be installed."

Now in its fourth year of operation, EnergyPrint says it has clients with more than 115 million square feet of office space around the country. The software crunches utility data to pinpoint energy costs per square foot, energy consumption and carbon emissions, as well as water usage.

Williams points out that the software takes account of different variables, such as unusually warm winters, torch-hot summers and other anomalies. It can also detect billing errors, a boon to building staff members who may not have the time to plow through their energy charges on a monthly basis.

One criticism from building owners leveled against energy software developers is that the data are too rich — for example, they cannot begin to understand it all or make appropriate adjustments. Cognizant of the charge, Williams said EnergyPrint has made the dashboard relatively simple to comprehend.

"Some monitoring systems have so many charts and reports that data overload becomes a real problem — people have got all this data and they don't know what to do with it," he said.

Simply being able to view building data affects energy use, Williams said, citing a study by the government's Energy Star program. "Energy Star says there is a 15 percent benefit (in lower utility costs) just from understanding and measuring energy," he said.

The first phase of the study closes out May 15. A second stage, said Williams, will look at how to improve underperforming buildings based on the data gathered in the three-month trial period.

Metropoint, a 900,000-square-foot campus of four buildings in St. Louis Park, has been an EnergyPrint client for three years, said Kevin J. Kurpierz, vice president at Cushman & Wakefield/ NorthMarq Real Estate Services.

The campus had gone through the LEED process and seen one of its buildings, known as the 600, gain certification, Kurpierz said. The owner of the Metropoint campus, Philadelphia-based BPG Properties Ltd., likes the ability to “track all the utility costs and see it in one place at one time,” he said.

EnergyPrint is a good collaborator because it will design new tools to crunch data in different ways, developing tools to measure energy based on suggestions from clients, he said.

“They’re not just resting on what they created yesterday, they’re focused on what they want to create tomorrow,” Kurpierz said.

The results of the Metropoint project were so convincing that BPG Properties is rolling out EnergyPrint in every building its national portfolio. The company likes being able to compare buildings by city and region, he said.

So far, EnergyPrint is monitoring 60 buildings owned by BPG.

“EnergyPrint doesn’t operate our buildings, but it helps us keep an eye on where energy usage is,” Kurpierz noted.