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**McCormick Place West
Chicago, Illinois**



EDITORIAL STAFF

Robert Cassidy
Editor-in-Chief
rcassidy@reedbusiness.com
630-288-8153

Dave Barista
Managing Editor
dbarista@reedbusiness.com
630-288-8082

Jay W. Schneider
Senior Editor
jay.schneider@reedbusiness.com
630-288-8088

Jeff Yoders
Associate Editor
jeffrey.yoders@reedbusiness.com
630-288-8021

Kristin Foster
Anne Hartman
Editorial Interns

Jim Haughey
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Randolph Tucker, P.E.
Senior Vice President, RJA Group

BUSINESS STAFF

Dean Horowitz
Publisher
dhorowitz@reedbusiness.com
630-288-8180

Michelle Vaccaro
Marketing/Project Management Specialist
michelle.vaccaro@reedbusiness.com
630-288-8081

Christopher Melody
Production Manager
christopher.melody@reedbusiness.com
630-288-8423

Felecia Stephens
Advertising Service Manager
felecia.stephens@reedbusiness.com
630-288-8086

Allison Ternes
Director, Audience Marketing
subsmail@reedbusiness.com

Bruce Ksiazek
Director of Finance
bksiazek@reedbusiness.com

BUSINESS OFFICE

2000 Clearwater Drive
Oak Brook, IL 60523

Subscription inquires:
subsmail@reedbusiness.com

Reprints: Reprint Management Services
(800) 290-5460x110; bbandc@reprintbuyer.com

Tad Smith
Chief Executive Officer, RBI

Jeff Greisch
President, RBI Chicago Division

What other cities can learn from 'Green Chicago'



In his time as mayor of Chicago (1955-1976), Richard J. Daley would answer his critics with a curt rhetorical question: "How many trees did you plant today?" It was a none too subtle reminder of who made The City That Works, work.

"Boss" Daley would be proud of his son, Richard M. Daley. As mayor since April 4, 1989, Daley has planted his share of trees—400,000 and counting. His passion for beautification sometimes borders on the maniacal. What other mayor would order city crews to demolish the runways of the city's lakefront airport in the dark of night so that it could be turned into a park?

Daley's passion for green started with his edict to crown City Hall with a vegetated roof, something his critics thought wasteful, if not ridiculous. Yet today, the city has millions of square feet of vegetated roofs covering buildings and parking garages. But that was just the opening volley in Daley's environmental crusade.

Four years ago, Daley brought in a 29-year-old environmentalist, Sadhu Johnston, as his green guru. By 2005, Johnston and his team in the city's Department of Environment had crafted a 150-page Environmental Action Agenda (available at www.cityofchicago.org/Environment), covering everything from solar grants to bike paths. It is the most sweeping plan of its kind for any major city in the U.S., and, with Daley's emerging role in climate change issues, has put Chicago on the map as a leader in environmental improvement worldwide.

This is not to say that everything in Chicago is hunky-dory. The city's air quality needs a lot of work. Its "blue bag" recycling program flopped; it has been replaced by a much better "blue cart" program.

Yet despite these missteps, important

lessons can be drawn from the Chicago green effort:

1. *A city's environmental plan must be comprehensive.* Too many cities (and states) are taking the easy route by mandating LEED certification for public buildings and leaving it at that. Chicago took LEED as a framework and built on it to create the Chicago Standard, its own interpretation of what green building should be, and put it in the context of a larger environmental agenda.

2. *Regulation is not always the best way to stir the blood of private real estate developers.* Regulation has its place; for example, Chicago requires major projects to divert at least 50% of construction waste from landfill, and starting next year, projects over 15,000 sf in scope will have to retain the first half-inch of rainfall.

But Chicago has proven that incentives also work—things like creating tax-increment financing districts that encourage developers to install green roofs, and, best of all, speeded-up building permits for green projects. Incentives like these have created a positive working relationship between green developers and city departments.

3. *The last lesson has to do with leadership.* Daley's environmental crusade has become the capstone of his career. Whether or not Chicago gets the 2016 Summer Olympics, future generations will benefit from the trees—and the innovative environmental policies—that "the green mayor" planted.



Greening the Windy City: A sample of Chicago's sustainable buildings and developments in the works



Green Armitage boasts several sustainable features

Green Armitage is a new market-rate residential project with first floor commercial space and eight, 1,200- to 1,300-sf residential units. Project developer The Sanders Company is stressing energy efficiency in the five-story building, which is designed to exceed the 2006 International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) requirements by 80%. The building's prefabricated steel-studded wall system (from ELFI Wall System, Burr Ridge, Ill.) features steel studs covered with expanded polystyrene foam, and will provide much of the building's energy savings. Other eco-friendly measures include a high-efficiency furnace, instantaneous water heaters, and heat-recovery ventilators. Swiss Design Group will provide architectural services for the building, which is expected to obtain a LEED Silver certification.

Development will transform Chicago public housing into luxury condos

Located on Chicago's Near West Side, the new Roosevelt Square development will offer affordable housing and market-rate and luxury units in a neighborhood setting. Encompassing more than 100 acres, the community is a redevelopment of the Chicago Housing Authority's ABLA homes, one of the city's largest public housing complexes. McShane Construction, Rosemont, Ill., and architect Macondo Corp., Chicago, will team up for the second phase of the project, which includes the construction of two 45-unit, 70,000-sf condominium buildings, scheduled for completion in October 2008. Also in store for the development: a green roof with an array of plants and foliage.

Healthy living, Chicago-style

Canyon Ranch Living-Chicago, a planned 67-story high rise in Chicago's Gold Coast, will bring healthy living to a neighborhood known more for excess. The tower will be operated by the same-named Arizona-based company known for its chain of health resorts, and will feature a wellness center staffed by a team of doctors, nurses, behaviorists, and nutritionists, along with a healthy gourmet restaurant. Designed by De Stefano + Partners, Chicago, Canyon Ranch Living-Chicago will have 256 condos and 128 hotel-condos. The \$650 million project is being developed by Related Midwest is expected to be completed in late 2011.



Green Building, Chicago-Style

Starting with the first green roof he built on City Hall, Mayor Richard M. Daley has implemented plans and policies to make Chicago the greenest big city in America.

Police and fire stations, libraries, and other public buildings have been built to LEED standards. City Hall has developed an impressive 150-page “Environmental Action Agenda” to guide physical improvements and policies in water standards, energy conservation, air quality, and climate change.

No major American city has a more ambitious or more comprehensive program for environmental improvement than Chicago.

This public initiative has spilled over into the private sector. Through tax-increment financing incentives, a speeded-up building permit system for green buildings, and other progressive policies, city government has encouraged Chicago’s private development sector to become one of the most active in the nation in green building.

With this special issue, we welcome those attending the Greenbuild International Conference and Exposition at McCormick Place West, the city’s newest (and the nation’s biggest) LEED-rated building. —*The Editors*

An installation of Aerotecture wind turbines provides supplemental power for a Mercy Lakefront Supportive Housing development in Chicago.

PHOTO: J.B. SPECTOR, THE MUSEUM OF SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

Condos Not Dead Yet— Provided **They're Green**

The talk in real estate circles is that condos are dead, but don't tell that to three developers who are building green condo high-rises in Chicago: Related Midwest, which recently completed a LEED Silver candidate overlooking Grant Park; Ireland's Chieftain Group, developer of a green condo high-rise near McCormick Place convention center; and Dynaprop Development Corp., a green developer aiming for LEED Gold for its "eco-building." Let's hear why these developers chose to go condo—and green—in Chicago.

Related Midwest: 340 on the Park

"The whole green movement was just starting," recalls Kerry Dickson, SVP of Related Midwest, harking back to 2002, when he and colleagues were contemplating plans for a site at 340 East Randolph Street, just east of the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Illinois building.

The property, part of the 28-acre, \$2.5 billion Lakeshore East complex being developed by Jim Loewenberg and Joel Carlins, would have views of Grant and Millennium Parks, the Frank Gehry-designed Pritzker Pavilion, Lake Michigan, the Loop, and the Magnificent Mile—"a fabulous site," says Dickson.

The premium value of the location prompted Dickson to demand an "appropriate response" from the design team, headed by Martin Wolf of local architect Solomon Cordwell Buenz. Dickson says that translated into three goals: 1) "push the aesthetics, inside and out"; 2) create a "special amenities space" that would be the "heart" of the building; and 3) be "sustainable, progressive, and forward-thinking."

Wolf rose to the first challenge with a multifaceted, 62-story structure: rectilinear on the south side facing Grant Park, curved on the north looking toward Michigan Avenue, and prow-shaped on the east looking toward the lake.

The "special" space may be unique in Chicago architecture. Wolf turned the entire 25th floor into what he calls a "village green" and packed it with amenities: a 25-yard lap pool, a fitness room, a sauna, a clubroom, and, best of all, a two-story landscaped interior "winter garden" with a common outdoor terrace. Dickson calls this feature "a great proportioned space,



PHOTO: RELATED MIDWEST

Condo owners at Related Midwest's 340 on the Park (at center in photo) have southerly views of Millennium Park's Jay Pritzker Pavilion and BP Bridge, both designed by Frank Gehry. The 67-story high-rise, designed by Martin Wolf of Solomon Cordwell Buenz, also features a "winter garden" and an expanded 25th-floor "village green."



PHOTO: RELATED MIDWEST

View from the terrace at 340 on the Park, looking toward the Sears Tower, Millennium Park, and the Art Institute of Chicago (at left).

very contemporary but still warm and residential.” As for sustainable design, Related Midwest’s strategic partner, New York-based Related Companies, was already well-versed in the subject, having built Tribeca Green in Battery Park City, one of the first green residential buildings in the U.S. Related Midwest had also completed an Energy Star-rated affordable housing project for the Chicago Housing Authority. Dickson, a University of Illinois-trained architect, made it a point to earn LEED accreditation, as did others in his office. “I didn’t want any LEED consultants blowing smoke at us,” he says.

At \$170 million, 340 on the Park—currently, the tallest all-residential tower in Chicago—is replete with green features: bamboo flooring; variable-speed exhaust fans in the kitchens, toilets, and laundry rooms; a reflective cool roof on top and a vegetated green roof at the second-floor level; an 11,000-gallon stormwater collection tank; and a bicycle room that can hold 344 bikes. There’s even a low-emission I-GO car residents can rent by the hour.

The contractor, Bovis Lend Lease, diverted 82% of construction waste from landfill—2,800 tons, enough to fill 300 city garbage trucks. With its low-e glass curtain wall and building management systems, the building uses 10% less energy than one designed just to meet code. LEED consultant Sieben Energy Associates, Chicago, sourced 27% of the building products locally.

Sales prices start at \$325,000 for a one-bedroom unit, up to \$2 million for a three-bedroom condo and \$2-4 million for a penthouse. The first owners started moving in this past July, and Dickson says they’re on track to close on all 344 units by next February.

Dickson says it’s unlikely that many buyers are plunking down that kind of money because of 340’s greenness. “Very few of our buyers came in asking for it,” he admits. Selling sustainability is “complicated,” even “esoteric.” “It’s things you can’t see or prove,” says Dickson. “You want to say, ‘Your indoor living environment is going to be better,’ but the client says, ‘How do I know that?’”

So why bother with LEED certification? “It’s one of a host of things that make the building special,” says Dickson. “It’s delivering a quality product, all the things that make a building operate the right way. They’re going to add value.”

Nationally, Related Companies has \$6 billion in green residential projects in the works, in Boston, New York, Los Angeles, Santa Monica, and Snowmass Village, Colo. (where it is building an 80-acre LEED for Neighborhood Development mixed-use project), as well as Chicago, where Related Midwest is also building the 67-story Canyon Ranch Living “lifestyle” mixed-use and The Peshtigo condo (57 stories), both of which will be LEED certified.

Chieftain Group: Lexington Park

Ger O’Rourke, CEO and managing director of Ireland’s Chieftain Group, is based more than 3,600 miles from Chicago, in Limerick, but he likes his chances in the Midwest condo market. “We looked at New York, Boston, and Miami, and felt they had peaked from their price points,” says O’Rourke. “If you look at the Midwest, it was the one place that didn’t get hit as bad on turnover on condos, maybe a 1% drop instead of 10%.”

So, when O’Rourke decided to establish a beachhead in the U.S., he landed his troops in Chicago, just north of the Mc-



RENDERING: VOA ASSOCIATES

Lexington Park, shown here in a rendering, is out of the ground on land just north of McCormick Place. The 37-story condo building is being developed by Chieftain Group. Managing director Ger O’Rourke chose Chicago’s South Loop as the site for the Irish firm’s U.S. launch.