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St. Vital Centre's energy savings help managers snag BOMA awards

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Carleen McDowell, an administrative assistant with 20 Vic Management Inc., stands under the new skylights and LED lighting in St. Vital Centre that helped the mall win a BOMA BEST Award of Excellence for energy-efficiency improvement. (WAYNE GLOWACKI / WINNIPEG FREE PRESS)

Photo Store

One of Winnipeg's sprawling regional shopping malls -- St. Vital Centre -- has become the first building in Manitoba to achieve the highest certification level under the popular BOMA Building Environmental Standards program.

St. Vital Centre earned a Level 4 certification last month after achieving a score of more than 90 per cent under the BOMA (Building Owners and Managers Association) Canada program, which assesses the environmental performance and management practices of commercial buildings in Canada.

BOMA Manitoba executive director Tom Thiessen said 60 buildings in the province have achieved certification since the BOMA BEST program was launched in 2005. But St. Vital Centre is the only one to earn enough points to achieve Level 4 certification.

That achievement was one of the key reasons why the shopping centre was also one of the big winners at this year's BOMA Manitoba Awards of Excellence luncheon, which was held last week in Winnipeg.

The centre and its manager -- 20 VIC Management Inc. -- received one of the two Outstanding Building of the Year Awards handed out this year and one of the four Earth Awards.

BOMA said the shopping centre scored high in all of the key assessment categories, including energy management, environmental sustainability and tenant relations.

Carleen McDowell, a local administrative assistant with 20 Vic Management, said improving the energy efficiency of the buildings it manages has been a priority for the company.

McDowell said 20 Vic Management has undertaken a number of major projects in the last few years to improve the shopping centre's energy efficiency and reduce its overall operating

OTHER 2013 AWARDS OF
EXCELLENCE WINNERS:

- Building Operator of the Year: Great-West Life Realty Advisors' Bart Golanski, who is the lead building operator at GWL's new data centre in the St. Boniface Industrial Park.
- Pinnacle Award for Customer Service: Bentall Kennedy (Canada) LP.
- Earth Award for a government building (less than 100,000 square feet): The Manitoba Public Insurance (MPI) building at 731 1st St. in Brandon.
- Earth Award for an office building (100,000 to 250,000 square feet): The two winners in this category were 363 Broadway and 330 St. Mary Ave. The latter is managed by Colliers International.

costs.

Some of the upgrades were done as part of an ongoing Manitoba Hydro Power Smart project. The others were part of an \$11-million renovation project that was launched last year and wraps up later this summer.

The Power Smart grades included boosting the roof insulation from an R7 level to an R27, adding new rooftop heating and cooling units, installing new energy-efficient condensing boilers, replacing conventional lights with LED lights and installing new low-flow fixtures in all of the mall's washrooms.

The renovation project, which was the mall's first major facelift in 14 years, involved extensive renovations to the centre's common areas. New wood-like ceramic flooring was installed, along with new ceilings and new wall coverings in some areas. Skylights were also installed in two wings of the mall to let in more natural light and reduce electrical consumption.

McDowell said the upgrades are expected to reduce the shopping centre's annual operating costs by at least 20 per cent once completed.

On the tenant-relations side, BOMA noted the shopping centre holds a number of regular events to benefit its tenants, including a biannual sidewalk shoe sale and an after-hours event in November to kick off the Christmas shopping season.

The Earth Award was for the centre achieving the highest assessment scores in its category (enclosed shopping centre).

The second Outstanding Building of the Year Award went to the office building at 444 St. Mary Ave. and its manager, Morguard Investments Ltd.

The 18-storey building was one of two office buildings managed by Morguard to win an award. The other was 363 Broadway, which received an Earth Award.

BOMA said 444 St. Mary also scored high in the energy management, environment sustainability and tenant relations categories.

"The property offers a variety of unique features, which include a new shower facility located on the main floor of the property," it said.

That makes it easier for people working in the building to bike to work, it said, "thus allowing for a greener choice of transportation to the workplace."

Know of any newsworthy or interesting trends or developments in the local office, retail, or industrial real estate sectors? Let real estate reporter Murray McNeill know at the email address below, or at 204-697-7254.

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