

FedExForum hoping to clean up in an environmental way

By David Williams
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FedExForum is going green.

In an early step of the environmental initiative, ServiceMaster Building Maintenance workers have swapped their chemicals for organic cleaning supplies.

How, you might ask, can we be assured they're really organic?

In a couple of words, *bottoms up*.

"One of the guys who does the training actually turns the bottle up and drinks it," said Chris McCall, president of SM Building Maintenance, the ServiceMaster franchisee contracted to clean the 2-year-old arena. "It's that environmentally friendly."

And so the Grizzlies, who operate the arena, begin a process that could ultimately result in official "green arena" status -- certification from the nonprofit U.S. Green Building Council and its Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating system.

The Grizzlies are seeking "LEED for Existing Buildings" status -- something no other arena has achieved. The program rates buildings in such areas as indoor air quality, energy and water efficiency, and recycling.

Steve Zito, Grizzlies vice president of arena operations, said the team already believes it has "the cleanest building out there," but wants to go further.

"This is just another standard that we want to set," he said. "It's been a work in progress for some time.

"Last year at the end of the season, we sat down and re-evaluated the whole way we do business. One of the simple things we did was, we started recycling cardboard.

"We box it and crate it and store it and over a period of time, it's taken away. That helps in a number of areas. It cuts down on the number of trash runs that we have. It's more environmentally friendly. And you can actually make a little bit of money selling it back."

He said other possible changes could include switching soap dispensers from liquid to foam.

Zito said this is all smart business -- think "green," in another sense: "This will, in our minds, save us money down the road."



Photos by Jim Weber/The Commercial Appeal

ServiceMaster employee Janice Holloway gives the FedExForum lobby a once-over with the new organic cleaning supplies.



In the first step of an environmentally friendly initiative, ServiceMaster Building Maintenance workers are using organic cleaning supplies to tidy up FedExForum.

That's the message of the Washington-based U.S. Green Building Council, which bills itself as "a community of more than 6,400 organizations from every sector of the building industry united by a common purpose: to transform the building marketplace to sustainability."

"It's really become a bottom-line issue," said Taryn Holowka, council communications manager. "I think the environmental part is the icing on the cake."

"People are seeing tangible results. They're saving money on their energy bills, saving money on their water bills."

She said exact total savings are difficult to measure, because they encompass such wide-ranging aspects as employee productivity. But she said the proof that it's smart business is in the businesses that are green-minded -- the likes of FedEx, Toyota, Honda and Target.

"They're companies that want to do what's right for the environment, but they also have a good business plan," Holowka said. "Yes, maybe it will cost 1, 2, 3 percent more when you're building or going through this (existing building) process. But you're going to recoup those costs in the first 1 to 2 years."

The council has certified 33 buildings as "green" in the existing building program, with FedExForum among 207 in the process of seeking certification.

What makes an arena "green"?

The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System is the benchmark. The Grizzlies will be seeking "LEED for Existing Buildings" certification at FedExForum, which entails:

Whole-building cleaning and maintenance issues including chemical use.

Ongoing indoor air quality.

Energy efficiency.

Water efficiency.

- Recycling programs and facilities.
- Exterior maintenance programs.
- Systems upgrades to meet green building energy, water, indoor air quality, and lighting performance standards.

For more info: usgbc.org