

A CONVERSATION WITH OUR SUSTAINABILITY TEAM

JANUARY 9, 2016

Will All Virgin Hotels Be LEED Certified?

Yes! As a part of our efforts, we're setting a goal that requires all Virgin Hotels to achieve LEED Silver certification by the US Green Building Council.

What's The Key To Virgin Hotel's Sustainability Platform?

The key to our sustainability platform is based on three P's — People, Planet and Partners. Focusing on each challenges us to meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs. With that in mind, we've developed our sustainability program to include aspirational goals and move us toward total net zero — that's net zero carbon emissions and net zero waste.

How Will Virgin Hotels Track Progress?

We are participating in a carbon footprint measurement program through a joint venture with Green Hotels Global, a third-party environmental impact measurement tool that allows hotel managers, owners and customers to accurately measure the impact of their meeting or room-night. As the most accepted authority in the hospitality industry approved by WTTC, this tool helps track carbon emissions, water consumption, waste diversion rate, energy intensity, overall weather and occupancy-normalized carbon footprints. It also tracks over 100 current environmental management practices across different hotels.

Every hotel in this system receives an online environmental dashboard, which is visible to hotel staff, above-property managers and customers. This valuable information helps us track our progress and can also be used to complete environmental sustainability questions on RFPs for transient travel and group meetings and events, including the sustainability questions in the Global Business Travel Association's hotel RFP.

Do Virgin Hotels Use LED Lighting For Energy Savings?

Absolutely! Over 70% of all lighting at Virgin Hotels Chicago is LED. That means a longer shelf life, higher energy efficiency and far less waste.

What About Water Conservation?

Virgin Hotels use water-conserving fixtures that reduce consumption by over 20% when compared to current code baselines and standards.

How Important Are Locally Sourced And Recycled Materials?

This is one area that can often be overlooked but can also have a major impact on sustainability. At Virgin Hotels, 20% of materials are sourced locally — this reduces the emissions of transportation, stimulates the local region, and repurposes many materials without the need for new manufacturing or additional emissions.

How Do You Ensure Improved Indoor Air Quality?

To start, the property used low to zero emitting materials for all paint, caulk, sealants, flooring materials, and composite wood products during construction. This led us to better indoor air quality and improved longevity of materials. Additionally, our hotel maintenance and house keeping programs use only green seal approved cleaning materials with non-toxic, safe cleaning practices to refresh your rooms.

Does The Hotel Have A Recycling Program?

Yes, the building will recycle all possible materials. We've provided two waste bins in each room: one for recyclables and another for trash. This way our guests can help us divert waste from the landfill as reusable materials can go back into the supply chain to help create new recycled products.

What Are Some Interesting Ways Virgin Hotels Are Staying Green?

Quite a few ways, really! Some things to note are the ceiling at the coffee shop, Two Zero Three which features reclaimed wood for a beautiful look. There's also the Tie Wall at Miss Ricky's which re-used material to form a fun and functional reception area that welcomes diners. Then there's the custom artwork by Argentinean artist Alejandra Padilla in the Commons Club — using tightly rolled fashion magazine pages, she created a beautiful, large-scale series of abstract backdrops that adorn our walls.

The 3-dimensionally quality of her work is achieved through pages taken from fashion magazines that have been masterfully rolled into a beautiful collage, recycling the material and giving them new meaning. It brings the Virgin red into the space in a subtle way with a gentle nod to the fashion crowd that the brand attracts. Countless hours of prep work and intricate construction goes into each piece, yet with all their hard edges and printed colors there's a flow, somehow managing to look technical and organic at the same time. It's great for the environment and great for style.