



Green Building: A Smarter Shopping Experience

Commercial buildings account up to 40 per cent of the world's energy consumption and emit about 35 million tonnes of greenhouse gases every year.

The retail sector is the most ecologically intensive segment of the commercial building sector, spending \$170 million on electricity each year and contributing to urban gridlock and consumer waste.

But the Green Building Council of Australia has developed the Green Star environmental rating system to help support retail centre owners as they 'go green'.

The Green Building Council of Australia launched the Green Star environmental rating system for buildings in 2003. Green Star, which is recognised as Australia's national environmental rating system, evaluates the green initiatives of building projects based on a number of criteria, including energy and water efficiency, indoor environment quality and resource conservation.

According to Chief Executive Officer, Romilly Madew, green buildings are not only kinder to the environment, but can also help the hip pockets of retail centre owners.

"Green buildings can reduce a centre's operating costs by minimising those energy, water and waste management expenses that can rapidly erode tight retail profit margins," Ms Madew says. "Reduced operating costs also provide a competitive edge to attract tenants.

"Green building can also provide powerful competitive advantage in a market where customers, retailers and investors are all attracted to sustainability initiatives.

"The paybacks on green design can be rapid. A review of 33 green buildings in the United States found that green design saved between \$50 and \$75 per square foot over the life of the building – a huge reimbursement for the \$3 to \$5 per square foot (or 2 per cent) spent up front on green building features."

The recently released Green Star – Retail Centre v1 rating tool evaluates the environmental merits of a base building and its services on the basis of design potential (tenancy fitouts are not included). The tool can also be used to rate the environmental merits of a retail centre at the post-construction phase (known as 'As Built').

Projects are awarded a Green Star rating based on accumulating credit points in eight categories. Specific 'sector credits' are also included in the Retail Centre tool, including trip reduction strategies, sub-metering for tenancies, waste and recycling management and car park ventilation.

"The Orion Springfield Town Centre in Queensland is an excellent example of how environmental features can be incorporated into a retail development by applying good engineering, construction procedures and design," Ms Madew says.

"Water saving fixtures and fittings were incorporated into all public and staff amenities, and rainwater tanks capture and preserve precious water resources. Water meters and sub-metering facilities have been installed in all tenancies so that individual tenants can monitor and minimise their own energy and water consumption.

The centre's owner, Mirvac, has said that the shopping centre is already saving money in operational costs when compared with other centres in its portfolio, and that it is 'future proofed' to meet the demand for sustainable buildings over the coming decade.

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