



## Case Study Updates: Maturity, Maintenance and Marketing

After much thoughtful planning and expense, the green museum or green exhibit opens. Then what? Some of the green museums featured on the initial launch of the greenexhibits.org Web site weigh in with the many ways they have chosen to drill deeper into green, sideline practices that cost too much or just don't work and get visitors to notice the sometimes subtle shades of green all around them.



Strickamp-Ballogg Photography

### GREEN UNSEEN Getting Your Green Status into the Spotlight

Dave Judy, Communications Manager  
Kohl Children's Museum of Greater Chicago

Like Kermit the Frog many decades ago in his popular little ditty about self-awareness. His point? When you're green, you're different, and people notice. Unfortunately for today's museums, the song still holds true, but with a different twist.

As Kohl Children's Museum of Greater Chicago discovered upon opening its new \$18.1 million facility in Glenview, Illinois, last October, it took many months of planning and some costly upgrades to pursue Silver LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification from the U.S. Green Building Council. But many of the museum's efforts are so subtle, invisible or integrated into the museum design that visitors may not even know they're in one of the "greenest," most environmentally-friendly children's museums in the country.

"We're very proud of being so environmentally friendly," says Sheridan Turner, President & CEO of the museum. "Right from the planning stages, we knew we wanted to be good stewards of the environment. Our children are our future, so if we're providing a place for them to play and learn, we want to make sure that we show them the importance of taking care of the environment. We had to lead by example."

One problem, she admits, is that while the museum did indeed reach its goal of being extremely environmentally friendly, many of the green features are unrecognizable. Clerestory windows along the roofline, for example, let in maximum amounts of natural sunlight, reducing the need for artificial light. Sensors throughout the building monitor carbon dioxide levels to determine the number of people in the building and adjust the HVAC systems accordingly. Even the building's orientation was carefully planned so that it receives the maximum amount of sunlight possible during the short winter days.

All this led to a very green building that unintentionally hid its greenness. "We had to do some immediate education," says Turner. "We had this wonderfully green facility, and if we didn't toot our own horn, nobody would know." Museum officials put together a plan to publicize their green status from many different angles.

#### SIGNAGE

Throughout the museum, green signs shaped like the universal recycling symbol were posted, highlighting tidbits about the museum that guests would otherwise not notice, such as carpet tiles in the entry that trap dirt and dust, or ozone bromine used rather than chlorine in the "Water Works" exhibit.

Surveys later revealed that visitors remembered more about the museum's greenness from these signs than any other factor. "We integrated these signs into the exhibits so they naturally flow as part of the museum experience," says Mary Trieschmann, Vice President of Programs at Kohl. "They complement the rest of the signage throughout the museum."

#### BROCHURES

With the assistance of donors such as the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation, the museum created a brochure that sits prominently in the admissions area next to membership, events and rental information. A handy guide to many of the most prominent features of the

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museum, "A Green Building" goes into more depth about not only how the museum pursued LEED certification, but why.

#### PROGRAMMING

"Everything in the museum is hands-on," says Turner, "so it only made sense for us to create interactive ways to learn about being green." The art studio frequently offers activities where children can make natural or recycled sculptures, and a forty-five-minute program on recycling was created for school field trips.

Holidays such as Earth Day, Arbor Day and World Environment Day provide easy reasons to set up activities like making newspaper hats, picture frames from cardboard and old magazines and even hosting environmental children's concerts. It's also an easy way to get press for the museum.

Programming is expected to increase when the museum opens a two-acre outdoor exhibit space, *Habitat Park*, in late May. This natural play environment, with its reclaimed prairieland, indigenous grass maze and living willow tunnel, is itself probably the most visible sign of the museum's dedication to the environment. Activities like nature scavenger hunts, insect explorations and planting butterfly pot gardens provide natural opportunities to educate the public about Kohl's green status.

#### A DEDICATED EXHIBIT

To really trumpet its green status, the museum included an entire display pointing out its environmentally friendly features in a temporary exhibit titled *It's Easy Being Green: Building the New Museum*. Informational signs direct visitors to touch and examine elements they'd otherwise not notice, such as glazed windows, wheatboard ceiling tiles, reflective metal roof panels and even vegetation to represent plantings in the parking lot and *Habitat Park* that reduce the heat-island effect.

"Being green is such an important part of who we are now," adds Turner. "It's incorporated into our entire way of doing business, from choosing cleaning materials, to a rigorous recycling plan, to making greenness part of the visitor experience. We hope that by seeing all the steps the museum has taken to protect the earth, even the youngest visitors will be inspired to make conscious choices to be green."

