BALLPARK'S GRASS ISN'T THE ONLY THING THAT'LL BE "GREEN"

Construction crews sort materials into separate dumpsters. The materials are then hauled off-site and recycled.

by Andy Skoogman

Imagine using excess steam from the Hennepin Energy Recovery Center (HERC) to heat and cool the new ballpark. Or filtering debris from the ballpark's storm water runoff before it reaches our rivers and streams.

These are just two of the environmentally-friendly operation and design features of the new ballpark, and two innovative ideas that could earn the ballpark project the prestigious LEED certification.

LEED stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design. LEED Certification is a rating system that the U.S. Green Building Council developed in 1998 to promote design and construction practices that increase profitability while reducing the negative environmental impacts of buildings and improving occupant health and well being.

"Both the Minnesota Twins and the Minnesota Ballpark Authority (MBA) are committed to building and operating the ballpark in a sustainable - or 'green'- manner that will save both energy and money in the long run," said Dan Kenney, Executive Director of the Minnesota Ballpark Authority.

Kenney says the MBA and the team will invest approximately $2.5 million more to attempt to become one of the first ballparks or stadiums in the U.S. to obtain LEED certification. The MBA will contribute up to $1 million from its interest earnings on construction bonds and the Twins will contribute up to an additional $1.5 million to the effort.

The money will be spent on several sustainable design, construction and operational features. For example, HOK Sport Architect and Principal Bruce Miller says the design will include a storm-water run off filter, a heat recovery system to improve ventilation in the team clubhouses and a high efficiency chiller system for the entire ballpark.

"It's similar to selecting a high efficiency air conditioner for your home," Miller said. "But on a much, much larger scale."

Mortenson Construction, meanwhile,

Construction crews are employing several sustainable techniques as they build the ballpark. Here crews work on the third-base dugout.

is employing several sustainable construction strategies both big and small. For instance, crews are sorting and recycling construction waste. Some of the recycled concrete is actually being reused on site for erosion control measures. To date, nearly 70 % of the generated waste has been diverted from landfills.

Also, the majority of building materials are being manufactured within 500 miles of downtown Minneapolis, including the limestone that will wrap the ballpark's exterior. It's cut from Vetter Stone's quarry located near Mankato.

Dan Mehls, of Mortenson Construction, says crews have even replaced all Styrofoam coffee cups on site with porcelain mugs. Mehls says they're following the Minnesota Sustainable Building Guidelines in addition to the Green Building Council's LEED recommendations.

"Our state's guidelines are very similar to LEED guidelines," Mehls said. "But they are more specific in terms of the environment we deal with here in Minnesota."

The MBA, Twins, Mortenson Construction and HOK are still in the process of studying and determining what additional sustainable features will be part of the new ballpark. The additional resources will also go toward documenting the LEED certification process and enhanced commissioning of the facility.

Experts say the new ballpark already has a number of factors working in its favor toward earning LEED certification. They include: rehabilitating an underutilized site and choosing a location with such great access to public transit.

"The site is intrinsically sustainable," Miller said. "People will be able to get here by car, bike, bus, light rail or walking. Its location is unprecedented in Major League Baseball."

The U.S. Green Building Council awards LEED certification after a project is finished.

The Washington Nationals have achieved LEED Certification for their new ballpark and the University of Minnesota football stadium is seeking LEED status.