

Opinion: Businesses should work to protect the earth

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Earth Day provides a great opportunity to celebrate our planet and step outside to do something positive for ourselves, our community and the environment.



Cobo Center. (Photo: Todd McInturf, The Detroit News)

At Cobo Center, every day for us is Earth Day. The issue of sustainability is at the core of our strategic plan. Cobo Center is one of the largest venues in the state of Michigan with an active sustainability program.

Each year, our executive green team sets goals and objectives in areas such as energy saving, recycling, composting and material reuse donations to local non-profit agencies. Included in our strategic plan this year, for example, were action steps for waste diversion during the North American International Auto Show (NAIAS). The result of this full team effort was the highest waste diversion during the month of January ever at 60 percent, representing 95 tons of material.

In 2015, Cobo Center was certified by the Event Industry Council (EIC) for Accepted Practices Exchange/American Society for Testing and Materials International (APEX/ASTM) Sustainable Meeting Standard for venues. The venues standard is one of the nine developed by the meetings, conventions, exhibitions and events industry to provide event planners and suppliers with specifications for producing events in a more sustainable manner.

Cobo Center is also in the process of attaining LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification with the U.S Green Buildings Council, a venue rating for design, construction, operation and maintenance of green buildings with environmental responsible practices that utilize resources efficiently.

Both certifications, the APEX/ASTM and LEED are important to us and to the region. Our commitment to sustainability is quickly becoming a model for other convention facilities and trade shows.

For example, Sustainable Brands® is an association of global brand leaders focused on delivering new business value through innovation for environmental and social purpose. They are returning to Detroit and to Cobo Center for their global flagship event, SB'19 Detroit, June 3-6, and bringing with them 3,000 global brand leaders, including the CEOs, CMOs and chief sustainability officers from many brands we use every day. They selected Cobo, because of our commitment to sustainability and our efforts in encouraging our suppliers to follow best practices. It remains our priority to find opportunities to attract major global events to bring in other industry leaders to highlight our region.

Just as Sustainable Brands is working to inspire, engage and equip today's business and brand leaders to prosper in a sustainable future, we hope our focus on sustainability will lead the way to a better future for the convention industry and for Detroit.

As we all begin to enjoy the warming weather and experience and explore Detroit outside, we encourage you to step back into Cobo and explore how we are not only protecting the environment, but how we are giving back to our planet. In the spirit of our world and in the Spirit of Detroit, we welcome you at Cobo Center and we invite you to join us for a discussion on how other local businesses and buildings can become more sustainable.

Claude Molinari is general manager of Cobo Center.