

Platinum Plant

Greeting card maker is going after highest LEED certification



STORY BY BETSY LEE

Posty Cards is a simply named company with a complicated agenda. In addition to providing the country with high-quality, environmentally friendly corporate greeting cards, the Kansas City-based business is trying to build the first manufacturing center to ever achieve platinum-level Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification from the U.S. Green Building Council.

“Posty Cards has always been interested in doing things in an efficient way as far as energy is concerned,” says Lance Jessee, CEO and chairman of the board. “We’re personally invested in the environment.”

The majority of Posty Cards’ products employ soy inks and recycled papers. And the company has focused on recycling at its facility, both among the employees and in the factory. Janet Coats, Posty Cards’ director of marketing, says an average of 200 tons of paper is recycled off the factory floor each year.

The company started looking at expansion two years ago: “We looked at the project and realized it was a once-in-a-generation opportunity for us not only to produce products that are sustainable but [also to] have a facility that was sustainable,” Erick Jessee, president of Posty Cards, says.

He says it was a matter of corporate and personal responsibility. “Regardless of where you stand in the climate-change debate, the numbers tell you that we really have to do something,” Erick says. “We believe that if you have an opportunity, if you are doing an expansion project or renovating a building, you need to make the right decisions.”

When the company began considering the \$6.4 million project, the goal was gold-level LEED certification. But when an architect pointed out that the project likely would be just a few points from LEED platinum status, Erick says company officials decided to go for it. The company will receive its official LEED certification in spring 2011.

some places, but on high in others. Erick estimates that the system will reduce energy usage by up to 45 percent.

“It’s approaching the energy efficiency of geothermal,” he says.

Posty Cards also has installed 198 solar panels that will provide up to 11 percent of the building’s energy. The equipment

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The new building, located at 1600 Olive St., Kansas City, is set on a 2.2-acre property with an underground basin for collecting all the rainwater that hits the grounds. The rainwater is used to irrigate the native landscaping and to flush the low-flow toilets.

Erick says the company also initially planned on using geothermal heating. “But we drilled down 85 feet and never hit bedrock,” he says. “We found, instead, alluvial fans, which are indicative of an ancient dry river bed.”

So the company instead became the first in the Kansas City area to use a variable refrigerant volume HVAC system. The unique system uses information from each room in the building, adjusting the temperatures individually. So the system might be off in

represents the largest solar panel installation in the metropolitan area. The other energy consumed by the building is completely offset with green investments, such as renewable wind power.

“And that’s quite a bit because we have a lot of machinery and it uses a lot of energy,” Erick says. “So we’re quite proud of that.”

The 45,000-square-foot building is completely furnished with recycled or reused furniture, according to Coats. It’s just one more thing the company did to contribute to a healthy environment.

“We turned over every rock and looked at the entire process to determine ways that we can make everything even more efficient,” Erick says. “We’re looking at the future.” **KCB**