



## Case Study: Behringer Harvard



In the pursuit of energy efficiency, best practices such as building retrofits, recycling, and usage modification are key. Since office buildings are one of the largest sources for energy usage, property managers have the opportunity to positively impact the city's green efforts by leading the market to higher standards of environmental responsibility. While much of what property managers accomplish is dictated by funding opportunities for upgrades, the design of the properties, and working with tenants on eco-friendly practices, their efforts often lead to an impressive environmental impact, as evidenced by the efforts of Behringer Harvard.

### Company Sustainability Initiatives

Behringer Harvard creates and manages global alternative investment programs, including commercial real estate. The company takes great pride in its dedication to environmental stewardship. As a commercial real estate owner and manager, Behringer Harvard recognizes the need for a long-term vision on sustainability. Behringer strives for operational excellence through realistic, environmentally sensitive strategies. In Houston alone, five of its eight commercial properties have earned the prestigious LEED Gold certification, while seven of the eight have received ENERGY STAR® certification. Joyce Harberson and Janice Walker, two of Behringer Harvard's Houston senior property managers, have a passion that serves as a microcosm for the greater goals of the company. "Behringer Harvard is a driving force in sustainable processes. We feel it is extremely important and makes good business sense," Harberson expressed.

### Building Retrofits

LEED certification is earned through multiple criteria unique to each building, but the esteem it carries remains consistent. Walker noted, "Nowadays, to be a leader in this industry, being LEED certified is necessary." Behringer Harvard views certification as a goal for all of their Houston properties, ranging in location from Downtown to Westchase. Aside from the recognition received within the industry, the motivation to upgrade buildings lies in the effort to lower energy costs. "The team at One City Centre was charged with lowering operating expenses and providing great service. But at the same time we were able to drive many sustainable programs. This was quite an accomplishment," said Harberson.

The drive to lower operating expenses has led to retrofits on all eight properties, which they described as an ongoing procedure. This continuous process is motivated by an annual goal of reducing energy consumption by seven percent, which the property managers have succeeded in doing. In practical dollars, that percentage totals savings for One City Centre of more than \$187,000 (from 2010 to 2011). Extrapolating those dollars across all Houston assets and over several years, it's easy to see why Behringer Harvard's efforts have led to impressive results.



Behringer Harvard's property at Loop 610 West



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### Waste

Recycling efforts are also paramount for the properties, so establishing an easy to follow recycling program for paper, cardboard, glass, newspaper, plastic, aluminum, batteries, light bulbs and electronics was key. Behringer Harvard has been successful in diverting 55 percent of the waste in each of their eight buildings in Houston. At Eldridge Place alone, this equates to saving 2,228 trees and 547 cubic yards of landfill space.

One BriarLake Plaza was, and is, considered a pioneer in sustainability initiatives. In 2005, the management staff implemented its green cleaning program, which included utilizing green cleaning products as well as green cleaning procedures and equipment. Their program was enhanced in 2010 to include HEPA filters on vacuums to minimize dust, and paper products are now all made from recycled paper.

### Tenant Education

Harberson and Walker explained that tenant education on energy conservation is key so that everyone in the building can share in best practices and successes. **Sub-metering**, which keeps the tenants accountable for their own energy usage, is implemented in all Behringer Harvard properties. "It also helps when comparing overall expenses from building to building," Walker said. "Certain tenants will use far more than others, and sub-metering helps to document that."

While tenant education doesn't happen overnight, most are motivated to save money and resources, the latter of which aids in the greater efforts to achieve a greener Houston. And just as impressive are the efforts of property managers, such as those at Behringer Harvard, whose natural business inclination to save costs ultimately aligns with the sustainable practice of energy conservation.



One BriarLake Plaza, a pioneer in sustainability initiatives.



Behringer Harvard's properties, Eldridge I, II & III