

Sustainability Initiatives at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts

The Minneapolis Institute of Arts has long worked to reduce waste and energy consumption and in 2008 created its Green Team to formalize these efforts. From motion-sensing light switches to energy-efficient blower motors, we're reducing our carbon footprint in many ways.

Sustainable initiatives in the Museum's Registration department:

- LED gallery lights: in 2011 and 2012, the MIA replaced 2,908 halogen lamps in its third-floor galleries with LED lamps, which use about two-thirds less electricity. The new LED lamps are also better for lighting the art as they don't produce potentially damaging ultraviolet or infrared radiation. In 2013, the MIA completed a similar swap in its second and first floor galleries and expects to save an estimated 15 percent in electricity consumption throughout the museum.

- Reusable shipping crates: The MIA repurposes the custom-made interior padding in art shipping crates for art storage.

- Reusing display and crating materials: Whenever possible, the MIA reuses and recycles the building materials used to make gallery displays and shipping crates.

- Dark Mondays: On Mondays, when the museum is closed, the lights are generally turned off in the galleries, resulting in significantly less electricity consumption.

Sustainable initiatives in Facilities:

- Blower motors: The MIA has been replacing its 32 air-handling blower motors and 200-plus pumps with high-efficiency motors—Energy Star-certified whenever possible.

- LED Facilities lights: Wherever possible, Facilities has replaced older building and safety lighting with newer LED lamps or fixtures, saving money, reducing the load on the museum's emergency electrical system, and shrinking the museum's carbon footprint.

- Ionized water for cleaning: The MIA's janitorial staff has switched to ionized-water cleaning systems for many cleaning tasks, which greatly reduces the number and quantity of hazardous chemicals the janitors need to keep the museum clean.

- Motion-sensing lighting in public and staff spaces: We've installed motion-sensing lighting in storage spaces, library stacks, and restrooms to minimize the time the lights stay on when rooms are unoccupied.

Museum-wide recycling and consumption reduction:

- Single-stream recycling for staff and visitors: Single-stream, or commingled, recycling of plastic, glass, and metal has been shown to increase recycling participation.

- Publishing the annual report electronically: Since 2010, the MIA has published its annual report electronically to save printing costs, reduce waste, and reach a global audience.

- Art in Bloom composting: Since 2010, the MIA has made composting bags available to florists after Art in Bloom, the MIA's annual springtime event that brings hundreds of floral displays into the museum. In 2011, we sent 2,700 pounds of compost to our waste hauler's industrial-size compost pile.

- Technotrash: Because electronic waste is potentially much more damaging to the environment than conventional waste when burned or landfilled, the MIA offers bins for MIA staff and volunteers to recycle CDs, DVDs, tape media, old cell phones and small electronics, and more.

- Computer recycling: Computers, monitors, and printers at the MIA are recycled when they're replaced.

- Electronic communications for the Board of Trustees and staff: Thousands of pages paper are saved every year by electronically sending meeting notices and other communications instead of printing them.

- Filtered water instead of water coolers: The museum has installed five reverse-osmosis water filtration systems in common areas for staff drinking water, reducing the need for five-gallon water coolers throughout staff areas.

Rain gardens and stormwater remediation:

- In 2012, the MIA's Green Team received a grant from the Mississippi Watershed Management Organization to build a rain garden and purchase native prairie plants. The garden now mitigates stormwater from one MIA-owned and one neighbor-owned parking lot as well as the roof of an MIA-owned building; rainwater and melted snow from those lots filter through the roots of prairie plants on the way to the water table, instead of running unfiltered into the Mississippi River.

Green transportation incentives

- Bike tool kits and pumps: In 2011 the Green Team invested in a simple tool kit and two bicycle tire pumps for museum staff and visitors to use if they need a quick repair while they're at the MIA. One pump is bolted to the concrete near the bike racks in the parking ramp, so it's available all the time, and the other pump and the tool kit are available for checkout at the museum coat check.

- Discounted bus passes: The MIA offers discounted bus passes to employees to encourage alternative transportation.

- Bike parking: The MIA has more than 50 spaces for bike parking, including racks near all three museum entrances and covered parking in the museum's ramp.

Beehives at the museum

- In 2013, the MIA partnered with the University of Minnesota's Bee Squad to install four beehives on the roof of the museum. The bees have prospered, becoming essential pollinators for city gardens and trees.