

From the My Green Montgomery.Org blog:

<https://montgomerycountymd.mygreenmontgomery.org/2014/11/everybody-wins-energy-savings-lee-development-group/>

Everyone Wins: Energy Savings at Lee Development Group

Landlords and companies that lease space are always concerned with rising utility costs, to which the natural response is to explore opportunities in energy efficiency. Arranging who does what to save energy can get very challenging, if not downright confusing. Lee Development Group provides insight into their successes with tenant engagement and energy efficiency.

Lee Development Group's 1987 flagship office building stands tall in downtown Silver Spring. They also stand tall when it comes to harnessing the win-win that tenants and building owners can achieve by working together.

Behind the Scenes: Equipment Upgrades



Photo of Lee Plaza, courtesy of Lee Development Group.

About ten years ago, property managers at Lee Plaza began planning for the replacement of major building systems that were approaching the end of their lifespan. They put together an aggressive plan to overhaul their technology and reap energy savings as they went. First on the list was a significant project, replacing the cooling tower. Next, with a rebate from Pepco's Existing Buildings Program and with a payback of less than three years, LDG replaced all the T-

12 fluorescent tubes with T-8's and changed to fluorescent bulbs wherever possible. They recently upgraded again to LED bulbs in recessed fixtures.

Four years later, in 2010, they began an extensive retrofit of the air conditioning units on each floor, including the installation of variable speed drives and an energy management system. They also conducted a replacement of all of the elevators with a new system that actively reduces waste and also produces energy.

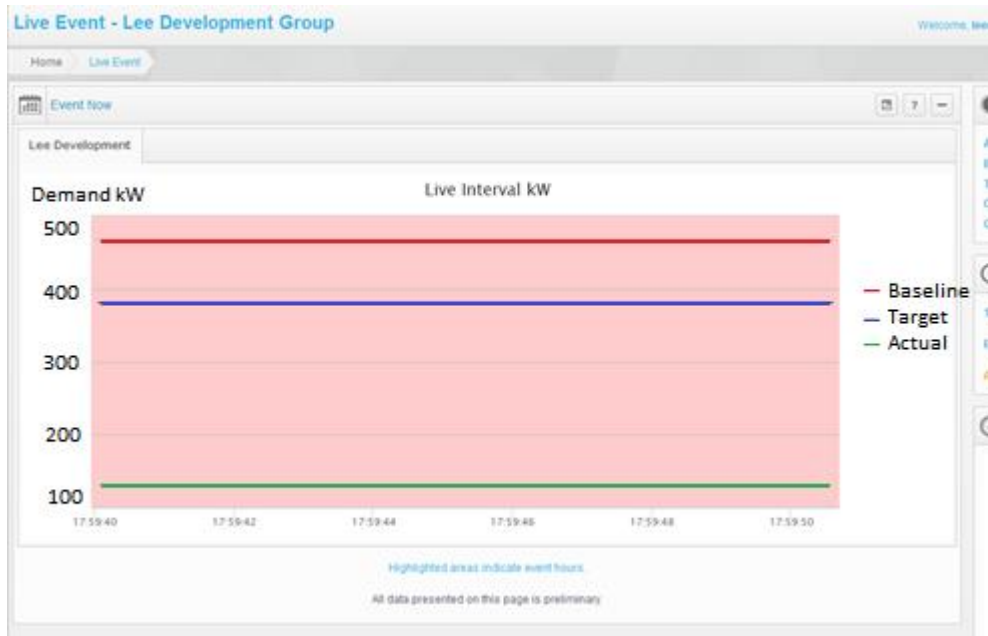
Setting the Stage: Tenant Engagement

“I can't say our tenant's employees were necessarily initially interested in these projects from strictly an energy savings standpoint, but experiencing the upgrades in equipment technology was the first thing they noticed,” says Lisa Oestereich, Property Manager with LDG. “For them, the energy savings is an added bonus.”

Tenants engaged with the energy efficiency upgrades, but not how you might imagine. Tenants enjoyed the experience of a smoother and faster elevator ride. They are more comfortable because the HVAC units can respond to issues with temperature imbalances and the outdoor temperature. Property managers can tout lower energy costs, and tenants experience an enhanced building experience: “Everybody wins,” Lisa describes.

The Whiz-Bang: Demand Response to a New Level

The upgrades that LDG embarked upon were significant, but there were more savings to uncover. Lisa began engaging with tenants and enrolled the building in Pepco's Energy Curtailment Systems' Demand Response program. Demand Response reduces energy consumption at peak times and protects the electric grid from overload.



This screen shot shows how successful LDG was in reducing energy consumption during their energy curtailment drill.

Certain times of the year the occupants of Lee Plaza are asked to participate in sort of a practice emergency curtailment event where they're asked to reduce their normal energy usage to a level (kW) that property managers and the utility have predetermined and at which they feel they can adequately maintain the operation of the building.

“Our regular load is 466 KW, and we set our target to 381 KW for a projected curtailment of 85KW,” explains Lisa. Buildings receive rebates based directly on the amount of KW saved, up to the target.

After the curtailment, Lisa sends an update out to the tenants, including a screen shot of our curtailment dashboard that shows how they did. In their last event, Lee Plaza exceeded its target by 175% to a KW of 130 – (a reduction of 291% from the normal KW) a feat that even amazed them!

For the Win-Win

When asked how they've achieved such great reductions, Lisa notes, “With the help of your tenants, of course! Building owners can accomplish a high degree of energy savings on their own, but you really can't go all the way without the support and involvement of your tenants.”

To show their tenants how grateful they are for their “above and beyond” participation, Lee Plaza used some of the rebate funds to throw a happy tenant hour on October 30, with food, drinks and drawings for prizes. Everybody wins again!

Guest blog by Michelle Vigen, Senior Energy Planner, DEP

Lee Development Group is a family owned business specializing for over 80 years in real estate development and management. They own, manage and develop their own portfolio which encompasses a variety of properties, including commercial office, retail, flex, warehouse, industrial lots, self-storage facilities and undeveloped farmland. Their properties are located in Silver Spring, Aspen Hill, Kensington, Mount Airy, and Howard County, with headquarters in downtown Silver Spring. This blog was written in collaboration with Lee Development Group.



A panoramic view of downtown Silver Spring from the top of Lee Plaza.