

January 26, 2011

REAL ESTATE WEEKLY

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 26, 2011 A3

Related taking the LEED in sustainable building

BY LIANA GREY

Each time guests leave their sleek, pod-like rooms at the Yotel, a luxury hotel slated to open in Midtown West this spring, the lights will automatically switch off and air-conditioning will be reduced from full blast.

That's just one sustainable feature at 450 West 42nd Street, a soon-to-be-completed 60-story tower containing 151 condominiums, 500 rental units, a Frank Gehry-designed off-Broadway theater (which will open for performances next year), ground floor retail space, and the

Yotel, the New York flagship of a London-based hotel chain.

"We're not aware of anyone else who's done this," said Charlotte Matthews, vice president of sustainability at Related Companies, which is developing the 1.2 million s/f complex.

Though the building is committed to obtaining a LEED Silver rating — and is possibly on track for Gold certification — it's being used as a testing ground for energy-saving techniques that go above and beyond existing standards.

"A lot of what we did was look at green code proposals and show they were achievable," said Matthews, who along with colleagues has worked with city officials to devise new guidelines. (Related president Jeff Brodsky was recently appointed chair of the board of the New York chapter of the U.S. Green Building Council.)

LED lights, for instance, were installed during the construction phase — an undertaking that doesn't earn LEED credit but nonetheless reduces energy costs. "Because the lights last longer, we save money on replacement," said Matthews. "LEED doesn't look at construction practices in great detail."

Where the building did gather LEED points was through the use of recycled building materials, and the installation of a hybrid heat pump system. When condo residents turn up their thermostats next winter, they won't see a sudden rise in their Con Edison bills.

"Heat pumps are efficient on the air-conditioning side but use a portion of electricity for the heating side," said Matthews. "By using a hybrid, it combines the best of both worlds. Tenants won't use electricity." The hybrid pump proved successful at an earlier Related project: the 274-unit TriBeCa Green on North End Avenue, which was built



The 42nd Street mixed-use building is being used as a testing ground for energy-saving techniques.

in 2004. Several years after sales began at the condominium tower, Related pledged to earn LEED ratings for all of its projects.

About 10 of the company's buildings have been certified so far, under every imaginable set of LEED guidelines: new construction, homes, core and shell, and neighborhood development. They range from condo towers like Superior Ink, the Brodsky, and the Harrison — which are cleaned with environmentally friendly products and offer recycling bins for clothes and batteries — to the Gateway Center, a retail complex

in the Bronx.

And their sustainable components are equally varied. A project being developed in Hudson Yards will have a cogeneration plant, and TriBeCa Green has solar panels. 450 42nd Street will have neither of these technologies. There — as with the majority of LEED projects — reducing energy waste seemed a wiser choice than generating power onsite.

"We do stuff that makes sense and is justifiable," said Matthews. "We don't want to do anything just for green flash."