



PHOTO PROVIDED

This looks like a building surrounded by grass and plants — and technically it is, just not at ground level. Tremco Inc. in Beachwood has designed this vegetative roof, and work is under way to retrofit the company's decades-old facility with a new, energy-efficient façade.

Beachwood firm takes green building to task

Tremco looks to set example by updating HQ using sustainable, less-costly approach

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Though it's a windy September day for a tour, the wind turbine near Tremco Inc. headquarters in Beachwood isn't generating electricity yet. The majority of the 14,000 plants have yet to take root on what's becoming the building's vegetative roof, and work is under way to retrofit the structure with a new, energy-efficient façade.

Tremco, a provider of building products and services, is based in a building constructed in 1969. To rebuild would have cost more than \$28 million, said Craig Nelson, vice president of construction operations for WTI, a Tremco subsidiary. So, the company went with a \$5.5 million alternative that is nearing completion.

Standing on the roof near the plants now growing there, Mr. Nelson calls the project a "paramount" case study of how decades-old buildings can be transformed into energy-efficient structures. It also is a showcase of sorts for sustainable building products proprietary to Tremco and other companies owned by its parent, RPM International Inc. of Medina.

For instance, the roof of Tremco's research and development center is covered in white, highly reflective material produced by Tremco and is the future home of a 100-kilowatt solar panel array. Likewise, Tremco offers vegetative roofing like the system it's installing at its headquarters.

The updates don't stop there. Double-pane windows have replaced single-pane glass. Two large cisterns are in the ground where they'll collect rainwater for irrigating the

ALREADY BUILT, BUT GOING GREEN

Seven existing buildings in Ohio have earned Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design certification, ranging from certified to platinum.

Certified

- 280 Plaza, Columbus
- KeyBank — Tiedeman, Brooklyn

■ The Christ Hospital, Cincinnati **Silver**

- Preterm, Cleveland
- Owens Corning world headquarters, Toledo
- Limited Brands, Reynoldsburg

Platinum

- Melink Corp. headquarters, Milford

property. The old, incorrectly sized heating, ventilation and air conditioning system has been replaced.

The project shows the company's commitment to reducing its own carbon footprint, Tremco officials said.

"It's hard to tell a customer about why they should replace their windows (and) look at sustainability, when your own building is a 1969 version of building construction," Mr. Nelson said.

Most green industry leaders make an effort to walk the talk, but work of this magnitude done all at once to an existing structure is noteworthy, particularly when the entire building isn't gutted, said Mike Opitz, vice president of LEED Resource Development for the U.S. Green Building Council. LEED is a green building certification program.

"I would call that an uncommonly ambitious energy project," Mr. Opitz said of Tremco's initiative.

Tremco intends for its headquarters to become a LEED Gold facility, the Green Building Council's second-highest rating. There currently are 56 LEED Gold buildings in Ohio, only seven of which were existing buildings when certified. Nationwide, there are 2,322 LEED Gold facilities.

Green projects sprout

Even as the new construction

sector has suffered, LEED certifications — particularly those for existing buildings — have continued to grow, Mr. Opitz said. Notably, growth in LEED certifications also occurred four or five years ago, another period when new construction starts nosedived, Mr. Opitz said.

Tough times in new construction, he noted, motivate building owners to refocus attention on improving assets they already have.

According to the U.S. Green Building Council, the number of LEED-certified properties in Ohio in 2007 was 13. In 2008 — the first full year of the recession — it grew to 28, and in 2009, to 55. So far this year, 53 certifications have been recorded. The figures include new construction and existing buildings.

Tremco executives note that the \$5.5 million figure they use for improvements to the building is an at-cost number, not a price tag, as the company is buying products and services from itself. They are confident the project, which began in May and should wrap up by late October, will pay off.

"Like many 40-year-old buildings, it was performing like a 40-year-old building," said Randall J. Korach, president of RPM Building Solutions Group. Tremco's upgrades should result in an energy consumption drop of more than 60%, Mr. Korach said. ■