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The marriage of fiscal and environmental responsibility

Increasingly fiscal and environmental responsibilities are coinciding as business owners, community officials and the general public demand energy efficiency and seek to involve all business sectors in preserving, protecting and respecting our natural resources.

In the real estate community, this marriage is a natural progression as building owners, developers and users look for ways in which they can provide greater levels of fiscal management while operating properties – both established and newly developed – with an eye toward the environment and the greater community.

Earlier this year, NewMark Merrill committed Fort Collins Marketplace, an 80,286-square-foot retail center that is 93 percent leased, to become the first open-air shopping center to join the city of Fort Collins' ClimateWise program. This program has gained national recognition for engaging the local business community to implement smart environmental practices, reinforcing Fort Collins' continued listing as one of the best cities to live in



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There is much that is appealing about a program like ClimateWise. While the "green" or sustainable building movement has garnered so much attention, it is most commonly associated with new buildings. ClimateWise, however, seeks to incorporate existing buildings, recognizing that any property can contribute to the well-being of the environment.

We embrace this sentiment, believing that our center, as is the case with most centers, occupies a large footprint in the community and can have considerable influence when we work closely with our tenants.

ClimateWise focuses on reducing greenhouse gas emissions by promoting waste reduction, alternative transportation, energy savings and

water conservation. The program is helping Fort Collins achieve aggressive greenhouse gas reduction goals. Thus far, through the support of participating businesses, greenhouse gas emissions have been reduced by more than 70,000 tons of CO₂e (carbon dioxide equivalent) per year – more than 40 percent of Fort Collins' overall reduction.

The Fort Collins Marketplace went through a comprehensive assessment program designed to benchmark our position and identify a host of changes and recommendations to become ClimateWise. Some recommendations may be procedural, while others are more in-depth, requiring sophisticated solutions and monitoring.

At first blush, from a purely return-on-investment perspective, it isn't easy to embrace a program that requires a real commitment of time to assess the program, evaluate the recommendations and implement the ideas and money to make them happen.

However, NewMark Merrill's investment decisions aren't made solely by looking at yields on invested capital.

Instead, financial risks and nonmonetary rewards are carefully weighed in arriving at a final decision.

From a property and tenant perspective, ClimateWise is a great program. After the comprehensive evaluation, we have made decisions about improvements and changes at the Fort Collins Marketplace that will reduce common-area expenses for the center and its tenants during a difficult economic period. These reduced operating expenses will improve tenant profit margins, giving our tenants and properties a competitive cost advantage. And we are educating and informing tenants about what they can do to have a positive impact on energy and natural resource usage.

Of equal importance, changes made at Fort Collins Marketplace through the ClimateWise program will create a better environment for those living in and visiting Fort Collins. Water will be saved, energy will be conserved and greenhouse gas emissions will be reduced.▲