

# Going GREEN

By Barry Glenn

TWO OF CENTRAL FLORIDA'S BIGGEST VENUES ARE PROUDLY WEARING GREEN.

» The Orlando Events Center, being built downtown, will showcase environmentally friendly features, such as a dazzling iconic tower; while the Orange County Convention Center is nearing completion of a rooftop solar-power system that will be the largest in the Southeast.

The city and the Orlando Magic are aiming for the events center — set to open in the fall of 2010 — to become the first NBA arena in the country to achieve Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification. The LEED honor is bestowed by the U.S. Green Building Council to promote design and construction practices that reduce the negative environmental impacts of buildings, while improving the well-being of those who use them.

The to-do green list at the events center includes using light-colored roofing to reflect sunlight and reduce the amount of air conditioning needed; recycling construction waste and using many materials made from recycled products; and implementing high-tech cooling, heating and ventilation systems that are calibrated with one another for peak performance.

There's also a treat in store for those who drive hybrid or electric cars.

"In the parking garage being built south of the building, the hybrid or

electric vehicle spots would probably be on the first floor — easy in, easy out," said Brian Purlow, an architect for HOK Sport, designers of the center. "So there probably would be an advantage to driving a vehicle like that."

Although low-flow fixtures will be installed in restrooms and elsewhere to reduce water use, the center's landscaping won't be using any city water. Instead, it will be nourished with captured rainwater or condensation from the air conditioning units. Piping will carry the water to a ground-level cistern that's tied in to the irrigation loop.

Even the events center's dazzling signature object — a 120-foot lighted glass tower — will use an energy-efficient form of lighting.

The tower's beacon will be light-emitting diodes, "and LED is the most

energy-efficient lighting you can get," said Stephanie Graham, sustainability coordinator with HOK Sport. "The intent here is to use a very low energy source to provide a feature that will really make the events center an icon of the community."

The beacon's cool factor: It can change colors depending on the event taking place — for instance, blue for a Magic game or red for an Orlando Predators football game. Also lighting up the outside will be a 50-by-60-foot "media mesh" screen made up of LEDs to display still imagery and messages.

Inside there will be more technology to wow fans.

"It's going to be the most technologically advanced events center in North America," said Alex Martins, chief operating officer of the Orlando Magic.



When built, the new Orlando Events Center will be the first NBA arena to achieve LEED certification.

COURTESY HOK SPORT

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Green efforts at the Orange County Convention Center include the use of solar panels and an extensive recycling program.



The scoreboard will feature numerous high-definition and LED screens to play video and relay information, and there will be two message-carrying electronic “ribbon boards” stretching around the interior of the arena.

Fans have other treats in store. Brad Clark, HOK Sport’s senior project engineer for the center, envisions a “pedestrian front porch” in the way the center opens out onto Church Street, when part of that thoroughfare closes during events and becomes a seamless extension of the center.

Clark points out another fan-friendly

“I think it’s visionary” he said. “It’s the way we all need to be thinking.”

A few miles down Interstate 4, the Orange County Convention Center has been thinking like that for quite a while now. In May, it plans to start using a huge array of solar panels being installed on top of its North/South Building.

Officials hope that one day the photovoltaic system, the largest in the Southeast, can provide all the power to the massive 1.1-million-square-foot building. That could help the center trim its power bill, which is running \$7 million to \$9 million annually.

cardboard and 14 tons of office paper.

Four years ago, the center began a reusable donations program, asking event organizers to donate materials they might not ship back home or might otherwise throw away. Last year, Wilson said, local charities received \$1.8 million worth of these items, including cases of water, tools, even signs that art students could use in their classes by drawing on the back.

Call it going green with a heart. 

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— *Gwen Wilson, OCCC’s public relations manager.*

locale — the upper concourse, which will feature a Magic-themed play area for young children and a video game area for teens. It’s designed so that Mom and Dad can keep an eye on their youngsters but still have a view of the action on the floor.

Clark has kudos for the decision of local governments and the Magic to go green.

Meanwhile, the nation’s second-largest convention center is carrying on with its other green programs.

“We recycle everything, whether it’s bottles, cans, cardboard, paper, even down to the batteries,” said Gwen Wilson, the center’s public relations manager. And the numbers prove it — in 2007 the facility recycled 80 percent of all of its dry waste, including 1,200 tons of

## TECH ADVANCES IN CENTRAL FLORIDA

Rube Lab, a Lake County think tank specialized in advancing environmentally-friendly innovations and solutions, is building a solar-powered recharge station for electric cars and golf carts in downtown Eustis. When complete, the charging station, which is expected to be operational by the end of this month, will accommodate three slots for small electric cars and will also feature a pedestrian bench and shelter. Building Lake County’s clean tech industry is a key objective of the county’s recently adopted strategic economic development plan.