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VT NEWS

MEETINGS

GWCC RECEIVES FEDERAL FUNDS FOR LIGHTING PROJECT

Georgia World Congress Center



Atlanta's Georgia World Congress Center (GWCC) has received a hand from the government in its effort to become greener.

The venue was recently awarded a \$2.3 million grant for a major lighting retrofit and controls system upgrade through Georgia's State Retrofit Program. The money will be used to replace approximately 1,500 lighting fixtures in the convention center's 12 exhibit halls, which encompass 1.4 million sq. ft. of exhibit space, with more energy efficient bulbs.

"The lights were due to be replaced, so we were thrilled to get this much funding," said Patrick Skaggs, GWCC's assistant general manager. "There were many other state agencies applying for the grant."

The funds were secured through the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA) and its State Energy Program, which received funding for the grant from

the U.S. Department of Energy as a result of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (AARA). The grant will be managed by the Georgia State Financing and Investment Commission (GSFIC).

The GWCC learned about the grant through GEFA back in February 2009 and was notified that it was chosen to receive the funds that spring.

"The government was looking for shovel-ready projects," said Josh Robison, GWCC's director of engineering. "We submitted our request online."

After being notified about the grant money, the GWCC began the task of determining which type of lighting system to implement.

"With all of the new technology available today, it was a challenge determining which system was the best fit for our application," Robison said.

As a result, GWCC hired an independent consultant to do an in-depth analysis, which included an impartial study of different light types.

"We compared energy consumption, light output, length of lamp life and other variables, then did a side-by-side analysis so we could compare the technologies," Robison said.

It was determined that the current 1,000-watt metal halide lighting fixtures will be replaced with 750-watt pulse start metal halide. Lighting controls will also be upgraded to models with software that will allow for greater ability to control the fixtures on an individual basis.

"This new system also will provide lighting schemes that we weren't capable of before," Robison said.

The goal of this project is to reduce energy consumption, as well as operation and maintenance costs, by using more energy efficient lamps and advanced lighting controls.

With an annual power bill of more than \$4 million, and more than 20,000 light fixtures throughout the convention center, the potential savings is estimated to be up to 25 percent.

"Because we will be getting considerably more life out of the new lighting, we anticipate less maintenance and a more consistent light level," Skaggs said. "We now can provide a more consistent, appealing look for customers, which is our focus."

The lighting system's software also will be able to provide more data on the project's return on investment.

"We also are working on the building's automated system that may tie into the lighting software, which would provide more insight into the ROI and usage," Robison said.

The new bulbs also will last 20 percent longer. The existing 1000-watt lamps have a 12,000-hour life compared with the new 750-watt lamps' 16,000-hour life.

"Using 25 percent less electricity is a huge improvement," Skaggs said. "We will not only be conserving energy, but our HVAC system will work less in the summertime due to reduced heat being produced from the new bulbs."

The lighting project will go out to bid in two to four weeks, and the install will take place in June or July.

"The state requires all projects with this grant to be completed by December 2011, which gives us plenty of time to install the new lighting system," Robison said.

GWCC recently hired sustainability coordinator Tim Trefzer to help further its green initiatives.

"We are hoping the lighting project comes in under budget so we can utilize the funds in other areas to increase energy conservation," Skaggs said.

The convention center hosted 331 events in 2010, with 1.1 million visitors in attendance. - Lisa White

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