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The Daily Texan

New UT buildings will fit higher energy standards

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UT will fulfill its promise to make sustainable building a priority by designating 12 new campus buildings for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design certification.

LEED specifications require builders to use local materials, limit the use of fossil fuels and maintain a sustainable, energy-efficient design.

No campus buildings currently are LEED certified, but several completed buildings, including the AT&T conference center, are pursuing certification, and all new construction will pursue LEED Silver standards, the third level of certification.

According to the U.S. Green Buildings Council, LEED specifications tend to add about 3 percent to the initial cost of a construction project but can save up to 20 percent of the project cost through resource-use reduction over the building's lifetime.

David Rea, director of campus planning, said the new building initiatives will not reduce UT's overall energy consumption.

"Since the focus of our LEED efforts to date have primarily been new construction projects, many of which are science buildings, it's important for you to realize meeting the campus need for new state-of-the-art university science buildings can actually add to the campus energy load," Rea said. "The Experimental Science [Building] was demolished and in its place will be a slightly larger Norman Hackerman Building, which will have a higher-per-square-foot energy use to meet the need of today's advanced academic research."

Rea said that constructing these buildings without pursuing LEED would increase energy consumption by 30 to 40 percent.

This summer's planned renovation of the William Randolph Hearst Building — formerly the CMC — will be the University's first LEED-certified renovation.

According to LEED projections, the University will save approximately \$460,000 over the building's lifetime by meeting certification standards.

The UT System Board of Regents allocated \$1.7 million for the project at their February meeting, and the Hearst Foundation has pledged an additional \$600,000. The renovation will pursue LEED Gold standards, the second-highest rating.

Plans call for the installation of a heating and air conditioning unit in the space formerly occupied by the storage room near the printing press, updating bathrooms to comply with disability standards, reducing water use and the implementation of energy-saving technologies like thermal-comfort zones.

"We're able to do the glazing so that we reduce the heat gain on the south side of the building," said senior project manager Bethany Ramey Trombley. "The new mechanical system is balanced so that the temperature of the building stays down."

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Trombley said students would notice more energy-efficient lighting, water-saving dual-flush toilets and a heavy reliance on materials from within 500 miles of Austin. She said almost 90 percent of the renovation materials would be recycled.

After the renovation is complete, the University expects to see a 30 percent reduction in the building's energy use, Trombley said.

William Throop, UT's director of project management and construction services, said the higher cost of environmental practices would not be affected by UT's contracting budget and the general economic slowdown.

"It actually might make it cheaper — we expect a good bidding climate and hopefully less expensive construction costs," Throop said. "It might drive it down 10 to 15 percent."

Throop said that because of cost restrictions, UT will not pursue certification for the renovation of the data center at the Central Receiving Building, a \$32 million project that Regent James Huffines called "one of the most expensive projects in the System."

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