



The New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center



The Challenge

As part of a \$570 million capital improvement project, the New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center (NOENMCC) was making interior renovations encompassing approximately 384,090 square feet of exhibit space, some of which was constructed as far back as the late 1990s. In addition to the sheer size of the project, NOENMCC had recently achieved LEED® Gold certification from the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), making it the largest LEED-certified project in Louisiana, the largest convention center project in the U.S. certified under LEED v4.1 Operations and Maintenance (O+M), and the first convention center in the world to be awarded initial certification under LEED v4.1 Operations and Maintenance (O+M).

NOENMCC's ongoing commitment to sustainability and maintaining these important LEED certifications made it critical for the renovation project to maximize opportunities to reduce waste, divert materials from landfills, optimize energy efficiency, and more. LEED certifications guidelines set NOENMCC's goals at a minimum of 50% construction waste being recycled. An additional challenge came from the need of the Convention Center – which consistently ranks in the top 10 U.S. facilities hosting the most conventions and trade shows annually – to regain use of this space as quickly as possible. The project was strategically undertaken during the slower summer months, starting on June 26, 2023, with a goal of having a substantial amount of the space ready for business by January 2024.

Case Study

Location: New Orleans, LA
Product: Armstrong Ceilings Recycling Program
Architect: NANO, LLC



The Solution

For the new installation, Armstrong supplied Cirrus® Second Look® and Ultima® ceiling panels – consisting of 71% and 87% of recycled content, respectively – and Suprafine® grid, consisting of 30% recycled content. In addition, Armstrong made the general contractor for the project, Hunt Broadmoor, aware of the Armstrong Ceilings Recycling Program, an elevated service provided by Armstrong to transport materials for recycling.

"I met the Convention Center's director of sustainability at an event celebrating their LEED achievements, and quickly learned how critical minimizing waste and maximizing resource circularity was to NOENMCC," said Catherine Nipper, Full Line Sales Representative, Armstrong World Industries. "The Armstrong Ceilings Recycling Program offered a perfect fit for helping them meet LEED materials recycling criteria. It was a win-win on the circularity front –

Armstrong brought sustainably sourced new panels in and diverted from landfills a significant percentage of the old ceiling going out, giving them new life in future Armstrong products."

Since 1999, the Armstrong Ceilings Recycling Program – the nation's first ceilings recycling program – has diverted more than 200 million square feet of ceiling materials from going to landfills – supporting customers with everything from registration to transportation of discarded ceiling panels.

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The Solution (continued)

With the Convention Center, architect (NANO, LLC), and general contractor on board, Armstrong worked with facility managers to determine what types of ceilings were being removed, and how much was recyclable. To further support the sustainability of the project in terms of transportation, Armstrong looked for the closest facilities to accept the old ceiling material. It was determined that one type of panel could be recycled at the Armstrong facility in Macon, Georgia, with the other type going to the recycling capabilities available at the Armstrong Marietta, Pennsylvania, facility. Next, the Armstrong team connected multiple times with the demolition team from Insul-Tech to educate them on requirements for recycling and transportation.

“On a huge project like this everything needs to run efficiently, so we focus on getting out in front of the process early with the demo teams, so they know beforehand what needs to be done and everyone feels comfortable with doing their part,” said Christopher J. Swentner, Circularity Coordinator, Armstrong World Industries. “The cooperation and collaboration we had from everyone really made the process flawless.”

As part of the recycling program, the Armstrong team coordinated all transportation schedules from NOENMCC to the two Armstrong warehouses. They were also able to

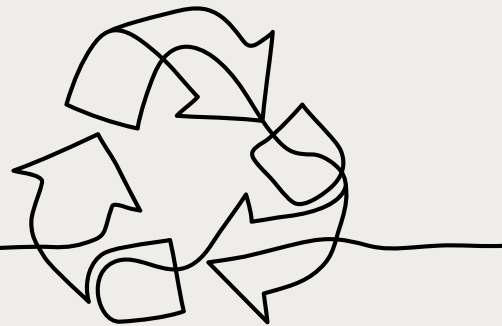
increase the process’ efficiency by leveraging resources the Convention Center already had, including readily available pallets and ample loading docks.

The NOENMCC ceiling recycling project was approached in two phases. During phase one, close to 100,000 square feet – or the equivalent of three tractor-trailer loads – of recyclable ceiling panels were diverted from landfills between the project’s start and October 1, 2023.

The team anticipates approximately 300,000 square feet of old ceilings will be processed through the recycling program for the second phase in 2024.

NOENMCC set a goal of diverting 50% of renovation materials – ceiling panels, as well as carpet, concrete, and more – from landfills. Thanks in part to the Armstrong Ceilings Recycling Program, the Convention Center exceeded that goal, achieving an estimated a 95% diversion rate by the end of phase one of the project.

“We were extremely happy with the Armstrong Ceilings Recycling Program and the high volume of materials that were diverted from landfills,” said Michael J. Sawaya, Convention Center President and CEO. “It’s so important to have credible programs like this that align so strongly with our sustainability commitments and LEED certifications.”



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