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Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Goes "Green"; Health Plan Unveils South Shore's First Silver Eligible LEED® Building

BOSTON

Soaring walls of light-streaming glass and angles that conspire to blend the indoors with the green outdoors serve as a stunningly silent introduction to all that makes 25 Technology Place the South Shore's first "green" building to be eligible for a silver LEED® (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification. Guests at the office building's August 7th Open House were not only privy to the strategic aesthetics of "green" architecture, but, also, the innovative technology that defines sustainable building design.

Located on the Rockland-Hingham line, 25 Technology Place is the anchor of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts' (BCBSMA) South Shore real estate strategy to move away from leased properties and toward the fiscal savings of property ownership. BCBSMA expects a projected 25 percent savings through the energy and operational efficiencies of sustainable design and through the advantages of ownership. The 333,000-square-foot building was designed and constructed using "green," or sustainable, practices because of the very infrastructure savings and productivity enhancements they provide.

"As an employer, the health and productivity of our employees is tremendously important to us," said Allen Maltz, Chief Financial Officer of BCBSMA. "As a health plan, we believe anything we can do to increase the productivity of our employees improves the quality and efficiency of the service our members receive - the most important business objective we have."

"The overall goal for any sustainable building, and what resonated most deeply with BCBSMA, is to create a work environment that is healthier and more beneficial to the productivity and well-being of its occupants, while minimizing detrimental impacts on the environment," said Dan Perruzzi of Margulies and Associates, the architects of the project.

"Equally attractive is that sustainable buildings use less energy to heat and cool, they cost less to maintain, and they employ renewable resource materials."

The green features of the building's healthy workplace design focus on air quality, access to and enhancement of natural light, and the integration of the building's natural surroundings. To cut down on common contributors to mold and air pollutants, the building's exterior wall was carefully designed to eliminate moisture transfer and to limit air infiltration. All of the materials used for the building's interior, such as carpeting, paints, and sealants, are low VOC (volatile organic compounds) so as to eliminate off-gassing, a phenomenon that contributes to poor air quality. To avoid dependence on artificial light and the institutional effects associated with it, the placement of workstations and related view angles were designed to maximize access to day light and views to the exterior for all occupants.

As economical as it is stunning, the building was designed with energy saving measures throughout. The building's high performing exterior wall and high performance glazing systems will greatly reduce heat loss in winter and heat gain in summer. Deep overhangs cast shadows on exterior windows to reduce heat gain and air conditioning loads. The building's white roof similarly cuts down on energy costs by reflecting heat. Sensors reduce the artificial light levels as incoming natural light increases. With exterior views at more than 95 percent of the building's seating locations, the extensive use of natural light further reduces energy costs.

If sustainability lends advancement to the building's design, its functionality is just as cutting-edge. Designated as the backup data center for all of BCBSMA's member and provider transactions, an entire wing of the building is self-sufficient for voice/data, desktop power and cooling. This means that claims to hospitals, physicians, pharmacists and other providers will continue in the event of a natural disaster or major power interruption.

"This building is about responsible stewardship," said Maltz of BCBSMA. "Stewardship of our accounts' business investments, our members' premiums, our employees' health, and the natural environment we all share."

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts (www.bluecrossma.com) was founded 69 years ago by a group of community-minded business leaders. Today, headquartered in Boston, BCBSMA provides coverage to 3 million members. BCBSMA believes in rewarding doctors and hospitals for delivering safe and effective care, and in empowering patients to take more responsibility, become educated health care consumers and become stronger partners with their doctors. Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association.

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