

# HOW STRIVING FOR BOMA BEST IS MAKING THE REAL ESTATE INDUSTRY BETTER

Leaders of the real estate industry in Canada have been the driving force behind a wave of sustainability initiatives that are enhancing the environmental performance of commercial real estate across the country. As firms strive to achieve more, the Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA) is bringing stakeholders together to establish standards and share best practices that are inspiring owners, operators and managers to aim higher. Launched by [BOMA Canada](#) in 2005, the national BOMA BEST® green building certification program provides a realistic standard for sustainability and environmental performance of existing buildings. [BOMA BEST](#) certification is based on accurate, independently verified information.

With over 45.5 million square feet (as of March 30, 2020) of property certified as BOMA BEST, real estate investment manager [BentallGreenOak](#) (Canada) Limited Partnership (BGO) was recently recognized for having the largest portfolio to achieve this mark in all of Canada. To reflect on this achievement and the collective momentum of the industry, BGO spoke with [Victoria Papp](#), Manager of Environmental Standards at BOMA, and [Ailey Roberts](#), Senior Manager of Sustainable Investing at BGO.



**BGO:** Victoria, Ailey, we have to ask: Why does BOMA BEST certification matter?

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**Victoria Papp:** BOMA BEST focuses on helping building operators, managers and owners operate the technology they have to the best of its ability. You can have the most efficient HVAC unit, but if you aren't using it correctly, it isn't being operated sustainably.

**Ailey Roberts:** BOMA BEST helps verify our buildings' performance through a third-party certification program aligned to industry best practice. And it provides our property teams with a framework to critically assess key areas of performance and management.

BOMA BEST doesn't focus only on typical environmental factors, such as energy, water, waste and greenhouse gas emissions. It also incorporates other operational practices and provides a road map to drive continuous sustainability performance improvements.

**VP:** We provide that road map for sustainability, which can lead to performance improvements and reduced operating costs.

**AR:** And it supports a better return for investors: Green office buildings have the potential to deliver higher income and value than comparable noncertified buildings. It's more than a certification tool – it's a building management tool.

**BGO:** Speaking of sustainability, though, what tangible improvements does BOMA BEST support?

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**VP:** Compared to the average building, BOMA BEST-certified office buildings save enough energy to power over 4,000 homes for one year. BOMA BEST-certified buildings prevented the emissions of 54,000 tons of greenhouse gases in one year – equivalent to taking 17,000 cars off the road for a year or planting 1 million trees.

We also focus on improving the indoor environment and providing occupants with healthier places to work and live. BOMA BEST-certified buildings have a tenant satisfaction rate approximately 70% higher than buildings without the certification.

**AR:** Participation in BGO's ForeverGreen Tenant & Resident Engagement program is a fundamental part of achieving BOMA BEST certification for the properties we manage. This program creates a common platform for property managers to collaborate with tenants on monthly sustainability themes, such as energy, water and waste. The program showcases how tenants can implement BOMA BEST's "BEST practices" to reduce their own impact and, in turn, reduce operating costs.

**BGO:** What other steps have BGO managed buildings taken to receive BOMA BEST certification?

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**AR:** Properties leverage preapproved BGO BEST practices to reduce their environmental impact. In 2015, we developed the BGO BOMA BEST Portfolio Program to help streamline certification through those BEST practices and ultimately reduce the administrative workload for property teams.

**BGO:** Does BOMA BEST collaborate with companies like BGO to share those types of best practices with other organizations?

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**VP:** Sustainability doesn't stop with just one building. We're building sustainability across the nation.

**AR:** BGO is proud to have the largest BOMA BEST-certified portfolio in Canada. BOMA BEST helps us make certification accessible to all asset types, even at buildings with limited operational control. We work together to find solutions and grow the program, certifying new buildings every year.

**BGO:** What does the future look like for BOMA BEST and BOMA BEST-certified properties?

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**AR:** We will continue to leverage BOMA BEST certification to help achieve our sustainability objectives for investors and tenants. As for the future, health and wellness are at the forefront of the discussion: There has been a significant shift in focus to prioritize the health and well-being of tenants. Integrating BOMA BEST strategies can help support this effort. Carbon is another area of focus. As we move toward meeting the 2050 climate targets in Canada, BGO will look to BOMA BEST certification to help guide our approach.

**VP:** BOMA BEST is consistently updated to ensure that buildings meet a higher industry standard that reflects today's and tomorrow's sustainability goals. We use the latest research and innovation to drive the program forward.

To learn more about BOMA BEST, visit [www.bomabest.org](http://www.bomabest.org).

To learn about BentallGreenOak's approach to sustainable real estate investment, visit <https://bentallgreenoak.com/esg>.

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