

ULI San Francisco District Council Sustainability Committee:  
 Best Practice Case Study

# The Transamerica Pyramid



<b>Location</b>	Clay & Montgomery, San Francisco, CA.
<b>Size</b>	530,000 sq ft.
<b>Building Height</b>	48 stories
<b>Date constructed</b>	1972. Remodeled between 2009 and 2011
<b>Uses</b>	Office

The Transamerica Pyramid at Transamerica Center is the tallest San Francisco skyscraper and one of the most recognized buildings in the world. The Pyramid is home to more than 50 high profile businesses and offers tenants a first class business experience, from concierge services, to private parking, to 360-degree views of San Francisco Bay. The Transamerica Pyramid is comprised of 48 floors of Class A office and conference space, with an occupancy rate of more than 90 percent. The building was constructed in 1972 and remodeled in 2009. It is 853 feet high with 530,000 square feet of space.

The Transamerica Pyramid was awarded LEED Existing Building Platinum status from the U.S. Green Building Council in October, 2011. The Transamerica Pyramid features comprehensive life safety and state-of-the-art security systems, 15 high speed passenger elevators and three freight elevators, dramatic views from San Francisco's tallest skyscraper, four levels of underground valet parking, computerized, multi-zone HVAC system with automated energy management, an on-site electrical power generating facility producing enough electricity to fully operate the building independent from city services, and direct access to privately-owned Redwood Park, a half-acre redwood grove.

## Drivers for sustainability achievement

The Transamerica Pyramid has been owned by Aegon Insurance since 1998. Aegon Insurance is based in Holland and is very committed to sustainability initiatives for its real estate portfolio. Sustainability is part of the company culture. Aegon renovated the Transamerica Pyramid with the intent of enhancing the building's sustainable features to be comparable with its other properties.

San Francisco has taken a leadership role on green buildings. As a result of San Francisco's Green Building Ordinance as well as market drivers, most newly-constructed buildings meet either LEED or some other efficiency certification standard. The Transamerica Pyramid must also comply with San Francisco's Existing Commercial Buildings Energy Performance Ordinance, which passed in 2011. The ordinance requires annual reporting of commercial buildings' energy performance to the City and to the buildings' tenants. Their goals in sustainability were reliability, energy efficiency and tenant satisfaction. The Transamerica Pyramid was originally certified LEED-Gold in 2009. With the 2011 renovation, the building achieved LEED Platinum certification. Because the building is now so energy efficient, new energy savings systems are not as much a driver since additional energy measures would require a longer payback and would not be as high a return on investment and have a longer payback.

## Economic successes

The Transamerica Pyramid is at 90% occupancy and is achieving 100% leasing rates for the whole building. Because the building is 90% occupied, the use of energy is more efficient. Aegon was able to utilize rebate programs from PG&E and SF Energy Watch, received on completion of the remodel work. They also receive ongoing rebates for use with re-commissioning every 2-3 years.

The on-site co-generation plant produces an average 70% of the building's electricity and 100% of heating and hot water needs, saving the Pyramid an average of \$670,000 annually in energy costs. The Transamerica Pyramid renovation has also resulted in the reduction of building and tenant-incurred expenses for gas, electricity and water by over \$2.5 million in the past four years.

## Financing details

The remodel needed to pay for itself through high levels of occupancy. Aegon believes that the quality of the remodel, energy improvements and ongoing tenant programs have been critical factors in the achievement of 90% occupancy.

## Innovative energy features

The Transamerica Pyramid on-site co-generation plant produces an average of 70% of the building's electricity and 100% of heating and domestic hot water needs. One energy retrofit of particular note was to replace one big fan (that was old and unreliable) with 30 centralized supply fans that move the same air using 25% less horsepower. The building has also achieved a 70% waste diversion rate due to a successful recycling and compost program



### **Innovative materials features**

The Transamerica Pyramid's unique shape and its white precast quartz aggregate exterior provide the same benefits as a cool roof by reducing the need to cool the building and by diminishing the heat island effect caused by a concentration of dark-colored surfaces.

### **Access / mobility**

Only 13% of their tenants drive to work on their own. The remainder use alternative transportation methods such as carpooling, walking, public transportation, and cycling.

### **Measured performance data**

The Transamerica Pyramid was the very first building to comply with San Francisco's Ordinance requiring annual energy performance reporting by commercial buildings.

### **Environmental Certification**

The Transamerica Pyramid was awarded LEED-EB Gold status in 2009 and LEED-EB Platinum status in 2011. The Energy Star rating of the building rose from a score of 77 in 2009 to 98 in 2011. These improvements place the building in the top 2% of energy efficient buildings in the nation. Finally, tenant education programs include an annual Health and Sustainability Fair, a Carbon Footprint contest and free Electronic Recycling events.

**More Info:** [www.TransamericaPyramidCenter.com](http://www.TransamericaPyramidCenter.com)