

## Sustainable Design

### The Design Community can Better the Entire Building Industry

At the recent AIA convention in Miami, Florida, it seemed that there was a plethora of green building products. Many manufacturers were showcasing their newest wares, and they all seemed to be pushing the “green” benefits of their products. Products were Energy Star rated, LEED qualified, or contained re-used material content. If you used this vendor’s product you got a nice tax break, or if you used that other vendor’s product you could get half of it paid for by your state government.

We have come a long way in recent years. There are quite a few options available when it comes to green building, but I believe that more needs to be done. Right now, buildings account for almost half of all the energy consumption in the United States. The design community has to take an active stance on sustainable building. Firms, large and small, need to act as a group, and communicate to clients, not only the short-term economic benefits of certain products, but also the long-term benefits of building practices that will have far-reaching global impacts.

“DOE’s Building Energy Data Book reveals that the building sector accounts for 39 percent of total U.S. energy consumption, more than both the transportation and industry sectors. The same study found that buildings are responsible for 71 percent of U.S. electricity consumption...,” stated Andrew L. Goldberg, assoc. AIA senior director, Federal Relations in a letter to the federal government, supporting building efficiency legislation last year. He continued, “Investing in green building retrofits not only improves our energy independence and protects the environment; it also creates jobs. According to the National Association of Industrial Office Properties, every \$1 million spent on design and construction creates 28.5 full-time jobs.”

Often times architects are the creators of a building's first design concept, and many times architects are responsible for redesigning existing buildings, whether it be a large-scale redevelopment project, or a smaller residential remodel. Because of this, architects, as a whole, need to use innovative design principals, and set lofty goals for reducing energy consumption. Design considerations have to be made for not only how a building is constructed, but also how a building will be used over its entire lifetime, and what impact that will have on the environment.

Sustainable design has to be considered when looking at a buildings lifecycle. Cutting back on the use of non-renewable resources, reducing waste and emissions, and minimizing environmental impact have to become the normal practice. Design professionals need to promote sustainable design practices to local, state, and national governments, so that these practices may be adopted on a larger scale.

If the entire design community can alter their actions, they can encourage, not only their clients, but also the entire building industry to change its course, so that it can benefit the environment and future generations.

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