BEING GREEN IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY STATUS QUO

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"Green building" is no longer a fringe movement among environmentally conscious contractors. Nor can it be dismissed as a pie-in-the-sky aspiration.

It appears that green building is here, at long last, and likely to stay in vogue for the foreseeable future. There was ample evidence of this at the recent 2016 Greenbuild International Conference & Expo in Los Angeles. The same was expected at the gathering in Boston on November 8-10.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Green building — also known as green construction or sustainable building — refers to practices and procedures that are environmentally sensitive and make efficient use of resources. It encompasses the entire life cycle of a building, from design and construction through operation and maintenance to renovation and, if necessary, demolition.

This type of construction requires firms to find the proper balance between traditional considerations such as quality, functionality and affordability with sustainability. And green building isn't limited to just new construction, it can be applied to all buildings.

Among the technologies and materials you might use if you are constructing a green building are:

1. Natural paints, which are void of the volatile organic compounds typically found in their traditional counterparts, eliminate indoor pollution and decompose naturally without contaminating the earth.

2. Zero-energy designs that use solar cells and panels, wind turbines, and biofuels, among others, to provide electricity and HVAC needs.

3. Water recycling, which reuses treated wastewater for agricultural and landscape irrigation, industrial processes, toilet flushing, and replenishing a groundwater basin.

4. Low-emittance windows coated with metallic oxide to block the sun's harsh rays during summer and keep the heat inside in the winter. They significantly bring down HVAC costs.

Although the ground rules and technology continue to evolve, the main shared objective of green building remains protecting the environment. This may be accomplished through such elements as:

- More efficient use of energy, water and other resources,
- Improved productivity,
- Reduced waste, pollution and general deterioration of the environment, and
- Sustainability.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS TRENDS

Previously, green building relied primarily on anecdotal evidence or limited instances documented on a case-by-case basis. Now, with support from certification organizations (see box below), improvements in data collection and analysis are furthering green building initiatives.

Data collection is only now moving to the forefront of the construction process. This may transform how buildings are designed, constructed and operated.

Specifically, it's now possible to track data sets during the operations and maintenance stages, including:

- Air quality,
- Lighting,
- Utility and leading data,
- Thermal comfort, HVAC and weather,
- Waste recycling,
- Security, and
- Occupancy.

Gathering this information and then acting on it can have a profound impact, especially when technology is used, and it may result in greater energy efficiency and cost reduction.

A potential stumbling block is the complexity of varying software tracking methods. This is being overcome by advances in technology that make it easier to quantify and apply the data. With programs like GRESB, companies can track the continuing performance of their buildings and make improvements when necessary.

Furthermore, innovators using this approach are being recognized as leaders in their industries, generating greater interest from investors, while attracting and retaining top-notch talent. This happy

confluence of events creates even more momentum for the green building movement.

Investors and other interested parties have also sparked green building activity by trumpeting the need for reducing the world's carbon imprint. Naturally, the investors are interested in protecting their assets, but they are also addressing environmental concerns and promoting the type of sustainability that will benefit them in the long run. Finally, environmentalists in certain other fields (notably, the manufacturing sector) have rushed to join the cause.

OUTLOOK FOR MORE GREENING

Now that the steps of data collection and analysis are being implemented, proponents of green building hope to move forward through innovation and sensitivity to environmental issues. But certifications and adopting different approaches for utilizing data to improve building performance shouldn't be the final goal. It's important for green building to become integral to the construction process.

Expect technology to facilitate the next phase. Stakeholders in the industry, including construction firms of all shapes and sizes, should learn from others and then "pay it forward" by sharing information and new developments with peers.

Those who don't jump on the bandwagon now run the risk of being left in the dust. © 2016

SEVEN TOP SHELF PRODUCTS

At the 2016 Expo, BuildingGreen Inc., a green resource center based in Vermont, presented its annual selection of green products that have the potential to change construction processes and procedures.

They ranged from products that conserve electricity to those that reduce construction waste to replacements of traditional materials with healthier alternatives. Here are seven of them:

1. Accoya Acetylated Wood, which is stable, insect repellent and moisture resistant.

2. Securock ExoAir 430, a weather barrier that allows for faster installation and reduces jobsite waste.

3. Aquion Low Toxicity Battery, which uses non-hazardous sodium sulfate electrolyte instead of the common lithium ion or lead acid found in typical batteries.

4. Nextek Power Hub Driver, an all-in-one AC to DC power converter that uses solar energy, batteries, and other renewable energy sources to convert power currents.

5. HyperPure Water Piping, a flexible potable water pipe made from bi-modal polyethylene.

6. Designtex Textiles, a database that allows search through more than 8,000 certified sustainable textile materials based on criteria ranging from specific certifications, to chemicals, logistics and optimized chemistry.

7. The d-Rain Joint Rainwater Filter Drain that is a low-cost system to manage water runoff.

BEING CERTIFIED

Supporting the green construction movement are standards, certifications and rating systems aimed at mitigating the impact of buildings on the natural environment through sustainable design.

The Building Research Establishment's Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) is the first green building rating system in the U.K. It is the oldest rating system, created in 1990.

In 2000, the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) followed suit and developed and released criteria also aimed at improving the environmental performance of buildings through its Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating system for new construction. The U.S. Green Building Council developed it.

Various other efforts stimulating green building have been championed by the World Green Building Council and World Bank. Netherlands-based Global Real Estate Sustainability Benchmark (GRESB), a for-profit organization specializing in assessing real estate properties, has also been a valuable contributor. © 2016

ABOUT THOMAS B. BAILEY, IV

Tom is a Senior Tax Manager at CBM. He has over 25 years of experience in the public accounting field. Tom is the Chairman of CBM's Construction Committee and is also actively involved in CBM's Financial Services Group.

Tom's public accounting experience includes all areas of income taxation, planning and compliance, compilations, reviews, and business valuations. He also has substantial experience in the areas of tax planning for individuals and businesses as well as estate, gift and trust taxes. He mainly works with construction contractors, other for profit businesses and individuals.

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