A Year of Chapter Advocacy Efforts: Part One

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Despite the long list of challenges that governments face today – the down-economy, which drives budget constraints, which drives partisan politics, which drives gridlock, which fails to deliver basic government services, which can impact the economy... – our green building conversation continues to resonate with diverse audiences. In August, USGBC released a report detailing some of the conversations that took place in 2011 and how these conversations translated into real world policy impact. And while not every policy advancement can be traced directly back to USGBC advocacy efforts, many can.

The collective success of our green building community in a year as challenging as 2011 goes to show that engaged, motivated, prepared, and organized green building advocates can execute successful advocacy campaigns in almost any environment. Through the organized leadership of the USGBC Chapter network, committed volunteers and advocates have resources which enable them to put in the time, effort, and hard work necessary to make so many of these home-grown advocacy campaigns so successful. I want to thank all USGBC Chapters, volunteers, and the green building community for continuing the push year after year in advancing green building issues.

As this year ends, I want to reflect on the local and state-wide initiatives, propelled by USGBC chapters, that pushed green building efforts further and scored big successes for our common goal. As we all head in to 2012 advocacy planning, these excellent campaigns from 2011 can serve as inspiration.

2011 Highlights in Chapter advocacy activity (a far-from-comprehensive snapshot):

- All **Texas** chapters organized their 2011 State Advocacy Day in Austin on Feb. 22. The event brought 40 advocates together to speak with more than 90 state legislators and staff.
- The **Colorado** Chapter produced a Colorado Green MLS training and informational video and supported the Green Lending Task Force by traveling through Western Colorado, working with local realtor groups and consumers to promote green homes.
- The **Illinois** Chapter established the Green School Task Force as a way of supporting the chapter's Advocacy Day with the Illinois General Assembly and releasing the Task Force's most recent report.
- The USGBC-**Northern California** Chapter (USGBC-NCC) continues to build on the Chapter's strong foundation of robust local efforts around green schools, healthcare, neighborhoods, and residential advocacy in 2011. Efforts included: Appointing seven regional experts to chair/co-chair the committees, recruiting and engaging 60 application advocates, and creating internal Operating Guidelines.
- The **California** Advocacy Committee, representing all eight California chapters, kicked off its first year of statewide collaboration around green building policy and advocacy with a new, community-developed model for decision-making and engagement. See here for a list of their wins.
- All seven Florida chapters collaborated to execute an advocacy day in Tallahassee on March 29. The event engaged nearly 30 advocates and reached more than 90 state legislative offices.
- All three **Tennessee** chapters hosted a green schools bus tour for state legislators that took USGBC advocates and state legislators to two LEED-certified schools in the Nashville area on Apr. 11 and 12, and are planning similar upcoming outings.
- The **Idaho**, **Montana**, and **Wyoming** chapters worked together to create outreach and education programs on "Greening the Multiple Listing Service" in each of the three states. These programs are targeting real estate and neighborhood associations in rural areas of Idaho and Montana, and establishing a presence in Wyoming for the first time.
- All three **Pennsylvania chapters** (Central Pennsylvania, Green Building Alliance and Delaware Valley Green Building Council) have invested a lot of preparation into launching a collaborative state advocacy day in Harrisburg in January of next year. The primary focus of the advocacy efforts will be to compel legislators to support policies that promote leadership by example in state facilities, green schools, and innovative financing for green buildings.
- The **Missouri** Gateway Chapter's Technical Committee has been working with code officials and other experts on codes and standards this year on how to advance greener building codes, and also promoting the State of Missouri's energy code workshops. In response to the needs highlighted in the many conversations with this community, the chapter is currently developing a presentation that code officials can use to inform their colleagues, inspectors, other city staff, elected officials and the general public.
- All three **North Carolina** chapters worked hard with their peers across the state to promote the adoption of the North Carolina 2012 Energy Conservation Code. This code – effective Jan. 1 of next year – unlocks significant energy savings beyond the current state building code. This effort was a primary focus for the chapters' North Carolina Legislative Day in February 2011.

- The **Kentucky** Chapter has developed a first-of-its-kind resource for USGBC's chapter community on how to run an effective advocacy day at the state legislature.

I apologize if I missed any campaigns or programs run by your local green building community and USGBC Chapter in 2012. But we here at USGBC National really want to make sure to highlight local and state advocacy campaigns in 2012. We want to recognize great work but also many of the homegrown advocacy efforts can serve as inspiration for other campaigns in other areas. So please, email mpearce@usgbc.org with the cool advocacy activities taking place in your area and I'll make sure they are highlighted here on the blog.

Looking to join the green building movement? Join a USGBC Chapter and help make a difference next year! Join your local chapter to get started.

Tomorrow, we'll post part two in our wrap-up of regional advocacy efforts: A highlight of green schools initiatives.

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