



Green Building to be a Priority at Rio+20

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Climate policy wonks are used to reading leaked draft text in advance of international negotiations. However, the [19 page draft text](#) for the upcoming United Nations Convention on Sustainable Development Rio+20 Conference is unique for being leaked so far in advance of the June meeting. Climate policy nerds like me are pretty excited over this fortuitous accident.

The draft text, subject to substantive changes before it is officially presented in June, outlines policy prescriptions for nations to support sustainable development. The text is divided by the seven critical themes of the conference—jobs, energy, cities, food, water, oceans, and disasters. The programmatic recommendations under each theme speak to the two overall objectives of the meeting—a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication; and the institutional framework for sustainable development.

After an initial look at the text I am pleased with this initial draft, though I look forward to more forceful language regarding country commitments and fulfillment requirements in later iterations. I was thrilled to see green buildings included in language promoting sustainable cities. Yes, buildings are one piece of a larger puzzle contributing to a city's sustainability; however, they are the keystone of the puzzle. On average, the on-going use and performance of buildings will contribute to a city's environmental footprint for over half a century! Buildings are also one of the largest end-users of energy and, thus, should be a priority in any sustainability plan.

In October 2011, the U.S. Green Building Council and the Green Building Council of Brasil submitted a joint position paper to the Convention on Sustainable Development for consideration at the Rio+20 Conference. The submission, [Building the Green Economy from the Ground Up: Sustainable Cities and the Built Environment](#), recommends four strategies to support the green economy and poverty eradication through green building programs: Foster Green Communities and Neighborhoods; Achieve Sustainable and Affordable Housing; Build Green Schools; and Pursue Resiliency as part of the Sustainable Built Environment. In the sustainable development context, buildings have the potential of addressing multiple birds with one stone. Acknowledging the role of green buildings in sustainable development is a positive first step; however, we look to the next iteration of the draft text to make green buildings the new global norm.

Please note that since this blog was written on January 10, the Convention of Sustainable Development has posted the leaked document as a zero draft on its official [Rio+20 website](#).



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