USGBC Members in Support of LEED

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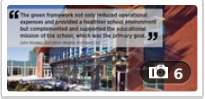

"LEED certification in buildings benefits the environment and the bottom line. LEED certified buildings in San Francisco and around the country are saving money and increasing their property value while reducing their overall environmental footprint," says Melanie Nutter, Director of the San Francisco Department of the Environment. "Since buildings contribute 53% of greenhouse gas emissions in San Francisco, it is essential that we address inefficiencies in the built environment. Our cutting edge green building policies requiring LEED ensure that we are growing our economy while decreasing our carbon emissions and helping to ward off the worst effects of climate change."
- *Melanie Nutter, San Francisco Department of the Environment*

"I lost the argument that architects, scientists and environmentalists should create a more comprehensive, high performance system--for good reason. The genius of the LEED system is that it was created by a diverse group of volunteers from all sectors of the industry and that it was adopted by consensus. The goal was not perfection but transformation of an industry that has historically been reluctant to change. Transformation is taking place precisely because it was created by consensus among diverse industry stakeholders/users and because it was designed to be achievable." (Read Bob's full statement)
- *Bob Berkebile, BNIM Architects*

"Fireman's Fund Insurance Company was the first property and casualty insurance company to offer green insurance to the U.S. commercial marketplace.

Fireman's Fund believes that LEED-certified commercial buildings present less of an insurance risk than traditional buildings, and this has been confirmed by our underwriting results. Green buildings enhance the bottom line of their owners, while reducing environmental impacts. These outcomes are consistent with Fireman's Fund values.

Fireman's Fund is also proud to have three LEED-certified offices, which are located in Dallas, Novato, California and St. Louis. We enjoy the environmental and financial benefits those buildings provide."
- *Fireman's Fund*

"The media in this country has a conflicting bias -- they want every American to have a job and make money, but they don't like it when corporations or their leaders make "too much" money. At least that's how I read it. If USGBC partner companies from the construction industry don't make the investments to produce a better/safer product, where's it going to come from? Gov't regulation? When has that been effective? The fact that LEED is such a success is because the private sector wants to get the rating ... no one is mandating they do it. Yes more can be done and products can be further improved, but isn't that the whole idea? Look at where things were 20 yrs ago vs today -- I didn't see an argument that buildings aren't healthier than they used to be. Because there isn't one!! It's good *USA Today* brings this to "light," because it gives you a bigger platform from which to make a stronger statement."
- *Jon Shaw, Carrier Transicold*

"USGBC and LEED certification and accreditation have driven the transformation to green building and sustainable land development practices in this country, assuring to some degree a healthy, sustainable and productive future for the next generations to come. No small task. Thanks to staff and volunteers behind the past 18 years evolution and please keep continuing to raise the bar and set the example."
- *Jane Baxter Lynn, JBL Strategies*

"The only thing worse than being talked about is not being talked about"...said

Oscar Wilde. Right now we have reached the 'main stream' where we are being talked about, critiqued, protested and generally being given a 'good shake', and really, that's OK. We've all know for some time that the data showing that buildings actually do reduce impacts has been missing from the equation...well, let's change that, just as we have been making changes to LEED over the last 10 years and more. We have to have a solution (LEED) that delivers and it's right there..it's called LEED EB!"
- *Barry Giles, BuildingWise, LLC*

"The University of Washington is recognized as one of the nation's greenest universities and is committed to sustainability. LEED certified projects is one way that the UW measures sustainability success in the built environment. Using best management practices as a baseline, LEED is an overlay that creates common language and approaches in planning and documenting a project's sustainability actions, and is a recognized standard of success by the State of Washington and U.S. higher education institutions."
- *Clara Simon, University of Washington*

"What the article never does is look at the whole picture: either for individual projects or the industry as a whole. Is it a problem that projects earn some low-benefit points if LEED also causes them to take more meaningful measures?" (Read Nadav's full article)
- *Nadav Malin, BuildingGreen, Inc.*

"One of my favorite quotes is by Albert Einstein: "Great spirits have always encountered violent opposition from mediocre minds."

Like Einstein, anyone in the green space is an inventor or an innovator. Everyone in this emerging space is breaking new ground every day. But when you break new ground it is a process of give and take to find the best solutions. Not saying there are not legitimate challenges in the *USA Today* article, but LEED standards were never intended to be a "one size fits all." The free market drives the demand. And the success of the USGBC's efforts is directly reflected by the growth of LEED Certified properties. Further it has created the path for new standards for green development, environmentally sound building practices, and energy performance standards that have resulted in significant energy and cost savings in the built environment worldwide. "What's in it for me" has always been the measure of success. Until it benefits "them", they don't see it. As advocates of energy independence and a healthier built environment for today and future generations, we must keep the vision but build the story with real time facts and data. We need to make the "what's in it for me" is crystal clear. The green math is still fuzzy and the industry knows it. Let's all work together to find clarity to support our collective vision."
- *Michael Skupic, Fidelity National Financial, Inc.*

"Many of the discussions in the *USA Today* article are based in fact but taken out of context. The benefits of LEED are clearly overlooked, while the criticisms take center stage. On the optimistic side, I believe it is important to understand the criticisms of this rating system immediately before LEED v4 is released, so that the USGBC can seize the opportunity for improvement."
- *Cortney Schiappa, USGBC Illinois Chapter*

"I wonder about the motivation of such an attack on LEED/USGBC at the current time; right before an election, right before the biggest green building event on the planet ever (Greenbuild), and right before LEED v4 ratchets-up standards for US and the world. Instead of attacking LEED, USA Today should have focused instead on looking in the mirror. Gannett Media (owners of USA Today) have an Environmental Policy Statement that claims a goal of "Operation of our facilities in an environmentally sound manner." I say, 'prove it.' Want a rating system or benchmarking standard in order to show your performance? LEED's got one (called EBOM). Want to track performance over time with third party review? Try Energy Star or LEED's Building Performance Partnership. Want to share you successes and failures with the world? Try the Green Building Information Gateway. These tools are cost effective, innovative, and distinguish the LEED system from unsubstantiated lofty corporate claims of grandeur. And Gannett also has a commitment to being "Energy Smart." In fact, Gannett has apparently achieved some success here in terms of energy and waste minimization. Great! Good on'ya. But again: prove it. Where's the Corporate Sustainability Report? Where's the data, the backup? Instead of attacking yesterday's LEED system shortcomings (bike racks) and faulty incentive policies in NV, how about showing some journalistic and corporate leadership. Oh, that's right - newspapers need to find a way to sell ads these days (not facts), and hype gets higher profits than truth."
- *Wes Sullens, StopWaste.Org of Alameda County*

"In my 36 years as an environmentalist and industrialist, I have never been so proud, and yet humbled, by my work with the U.S. Green Building Council. The mission of the Council is crystal clear and it aligns with my own, to try to have a positive impact on the world around us. The people in this organization are exceptionally bright, committed and spend endless volunteer hours to further the Mission. Moving forward, I am confident that together our members, from all levels of knowledge and expertise, shall continue to strive to attain higher goals for a better world with greater, greener buildings."
- *Mark MacCracken, CALMAC*

"In the last few days, *USA Today* has run a series of articles (‘Green’ code under construction; In the U.S. building industry, is it too easy being green?; and ‘Green’ growth fuels an entire industry) criticising the U. S. Green Building Council (USGBC) and the LEED® rating system. No system or NGO can be

perfect, and yes, some criticism is needed to keep strengthening what has already proven itself to be the world's most impactful green building program. However, there is a big difference between constructive criticism in an effort to expand the green building movement's pursuit of true sustainability and a targeted disparaging, and at times grossly incorrect critique.

Those of us who care about the environment, our communities, and public health should deeply appreciate USGBC's role in reducing the building industry's negative impacts and giving this critical industry the tools it needs to be a force of positive change. For more than a decade, USGBC and the LEED Rating Systems have provided a structure within which the green building movement has affected mainstream building practices: thanks to LEED, the core principles of green building (advanced energy efficiency, water conservation, nontoxic building materials, reduction in waste streams, and more) began to take hold at a time when "green building" was widely considered to a be a relic from the 'sixties and 'seventies. LEED pushed sustainable design from the margins to the mainstream." (Read the full statement)
- Jason McLennan, CEO, International Living Future Institute; Ralph DiNola, Chair, International Living Future Institute; ML Vidas, Chair, Cascadia Green Building Council; Richard Graves, Executive Director, International Living Future Institute; Mona Lemoine, Executive Director, Cascadia Green Building Council

3 comments

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Scott Bowman 1 year 47 weeks ago
Retired Principal, Sustainability Advisor, KJWW Engineering Consultants PC
Pro Reviewer

LEED is an evolving and improving system to measure your building against a credible and verified sustainability matrix that has changed the conversation and standard practice for the built environment. The ability to go beyond code and improve not just energy, but all aspects of a building. LEED is an important tool for designers and contractors, but also for owners when they try to articulate and voice their support of the environment and employees. As a long time engineer, I have seen LEED take owners and teams to places they would not have gone before, and support good decisions that may sometimes cost more up front. In my opinion, LEED Certified buildings are just better buildings!

Wes Sullens 1 year 50 weeks ago
Manager, Green Building Policy & Advocacy, StopWaste

StopWaste.Org is a local government agency of Alameda County, California. Since 2001, Alameda County has been applying LEED to local government green buildings. Our own office in downtown Oakland is a LEED-Platinum renovation; the fist in the US (2007). We did it with great design, strong organizational leadership, and less than 2% increased cost. Clearly, in the last eleven years, local governments have seen the cost of building green and commissioning go down so that it's now standard practice in our area. Today, every city and the county of Alameda have LEED ordinances in place for their own civic buildings. I do not see this as 'selling out,' or a failure. This is a success story. California's green building code is a testament of this success; thanks to LEED and public & private sector leadership, the floor has been raised for all construction in California. Yet green codes do not promote the wholesale change and ongoing savings that LEED and its existing building rating systems provide. In Alameda County (and the State of California, which now requires LEED for its own buildings thanks to a 2012 Governor's Executive Order), we believe LEED represents responsible building design and construction, as well as effective tracking and accounting of ongoing energy, water and waste management. We believe the LEED rating system is a cost effective way to ensure fiscal and environmental management of public assets... even if we do have a bike rack and shower!

Mary Ann Lazarus 1 year 50 weeks ago
Firmwide Director of Sustainable Design, HOK

I too am disappointed in the USA Today articles' need to sensationalize these issues. What happened to unbiased journalism in these critical times? For my more complete thoughts check out the blog here:
http://www.hoklife.com/2012/10/26/guest-post-why-i-support-leed/

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