

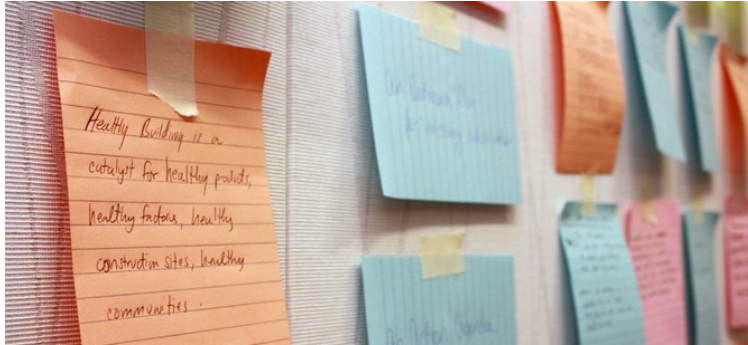


# Healthy Places are a Human Right

Published on 1 Feb 2013

Written by Rick Fedrizzi

Posted in [Industry](#)



On Wednesday, I walked into our boardroom at USGBC for our Green Building & Human Health Summit and I got goose bumps. Of the hundred or so folks in the room, many have been with us forever, long-time leaders in the green building movement and I'm always humbled when I'm in their company.



But what got me so excited was the number of people in the room that I didn't know, people who were part of the public health community, from big universities, and from organizations we've rarely engaged with. And every person gave us two days of intense focus on a subject that's rapidly becoming a big focus in our work - green building and human health.

Protecting and enhancing human health and well-being have been a big part of [LEED](#) from the beginning. It's been embedded into LEED in different credits, but it's not been in the front seat of this vehicle we are driving. And it needs to be in the front seat in a big way.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of USGBC. We convened this group as one of our first big initiatives of this milestone anniversary year, not because we didn't care about this critical subject earlier, but because at this moment in time we are ready for this discussion. We are a grown-up organization now. We have a voice in the market. We have some money in the bank. We are a successful NGO by a whole host of metrics. People take us seriously because of what they have seen us accomplish with LEED. And they know that one of our best roles is to provide a big tent for making big change happen.

Another milestone this year will be launching [LEEDv4](#), pending a successful ballot. In some significant ways it kicks up our ability to impact this subject. But it's just one more step in the right direction, not the final one. We're working to find ways we can add health-centric metrics to commercial buildings and spaces so we have real data to act on, and make that information widely available. We'll also focus on residential buildings. We need to get to a point where people want to green their home not just to do something positive for the planet, but because they know the choices they make in their home can enhance their family's health. That will be the biggest driver in the green building space in the next 20 years. We are looking forward to some very exciting things.

But we are far from the only ones out there doing important work in this arena. And part of our agenda for our summit was to bring together folks who could benefit from knowing new colleagues. That can spawn new partnerships that will generate even more forward motion by developing new programs, aggregating and sharing what we know, figuring out what we still need to know, and getting it done.

In fact one of our audacious goals is to have human health concerns attract entire new audiences to our green building movement, and thereby expand the power of this amazing movement to advance this simple idea: that green, health and well-being are part of the same paradigm, and green, healthy places are a human right.

And that's something all of us can sign on for.



**Rick Fedrizzi**  
CEO & Founding Chairman  
U.S. Green Building Council



Member employees, USGBC staff, USGBC board

**Sandra Leibowitz**

Managing Principal, Sustainable Design Consulting, LLC

2 years 1 week ago

Would LOVE to see follow-up notes from this Summit -- sounds like it was spot on!

**Iorraine Doo**

Partner, DooConsulting, Doo Consulting LLC

2 years 2 weeks ago

It is a great honour to be part of the new Healthy Buildings initiative and help carve out the new trail (though it has been started by the brilliant efforts of outstanding leaders). It is a wonderful personal convergence of my own public health background combined with current roles with the USGBC chapter, public policy work in health care, and ongoing development of partnerships with industry groups for various collaboration efforts. I agree with Elizabeth - We will always be asking "who is missing?" And those people and groups may soon find us. Also agree that we will move forward when we define a few clear goals. That at a minimum will be part of the formula for success. And at least we've begun.

**Beth Heider**

Chief Sustainability Officer, Skanska

2 years 4 weeks ago

Thanks, Rick for your leadership and inspiration, to the Summit organizing team for their wisdom and perspiration and to the attendees for the gift of their insight and willingness to come together under a very big and diverse tent. The event ended by asking who else should be under the tent. It was apparent that we have only begun to engage the full constellation of brilliance that will allow us to achieve the full potential of this initiative.

You have them or you were that kid in the back seat asking "Are we there yet?" We haven't even articulated the exact destination, but as LEED has taught us, transformation tools require clarity of purpose, commitment, transparency, and broad participation. It requires that we have sufficient patience to lead transformation without losing the very world we hope to transform. And it requires that we are impatient enough to make forward progress even if the windshield is so fogged up that we can only see through that little clear spot north of the windshield wipers. I await with great expectation the next step in this journey and look forward to being a very small glimmer in the constellation of brilliance that lights the way.

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