

Business Leaders Tell Congress their Success is a Credit to Booming Green Building Industry

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USGBC's Congressional briefing panel on the Economic Benefits of Efficient, High-performing Buildings

“The business case for building green has already been proven,” said Jim Allen, the CEO of the Sloan Valve Company, at a Congressional briefing last week showcasing how businesses benefit from green building.

The briefing, sponsored by Congressman Cory Gardner (R-Co) and Congressman Peter Welch (D-Vt.), allowed business leaders like Allen and others to tell members of Congress and their staff about the economic benefits of efficient, high-performing buildings. The featured business speakers, who came from across the building spectrum of construction, design and product manufacturing, told stories about how green building is helping to improve their business wellbeing.



In addition to Allen, the panel included Kenny Stanfield of Sherman-Carter-Barnhart (SBC) Architects and Theresa Lehman of Miron Construction, and the event was moderated by USGBC's Roger Platt. Panelists discussed the positive direct impact the green building industry has had on their own growth.

Stanfield made the case for net-zero schools as clear as it could be. In the midst of budget shortfalls, Richardsville Elementary, which SBC designed, is actually making money: \$37,000 from solar-generated surplus funds to be exact. “I've brought the [energy bill](#),” said Kenny, “because people just don't believe me when I tell them.”

All the more impressive is that Richardsville was constructed at the same cost as traditional schools in Kentucky. The value of a building that doesn't have an energy bill but also provides funds for a school district to reinvest in education seems like something just about everyone can agree on.

Theresa Lehman of Miron Construction of Wisconsin echoed the assurance LEED provides to the green building industry, describing how LEED-specific projects continued to increase even as the construction market in past years faced devastating decline in demand. Miron Construction's LEED project work is up more than 1,400 percent from five years ago. As she put it, “the heart of LEED is minimizing waste, the effect is a triple bottom line.”

Allen walked the audience through the history of his 107-year-old family-run enterprise. Several generations ago, William Elvis Sloan began Sloan Valve Company (SVC) in 1906 selling just three valves in two years. SVC now employs more than 1,000 people and distributes its U.S.-made products in more than 75 countries. Selling mostly to new construction projects, SVC would have been more affected by the economic downturn if it hadn't been for the boom in green building. Allen said that green building, and LEED in particular, gave his company a “shot in the arm.” He said LEED and green building impact everything they do; it creates jobs and continues allow them to plan for the future.

The case for LEED-certified buildings continues to be proven, from schools in Kentucky to construction in Wisconsin, to manufacturing across the country. There is no doubt that our Congressional leaders like to hear positive stories like these, and USGBC intends to keep telling them. We won't let decision makers lose sight of the new industry that has developed around LEED-certified buildings.

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