It Was 20 Years Ago Today.

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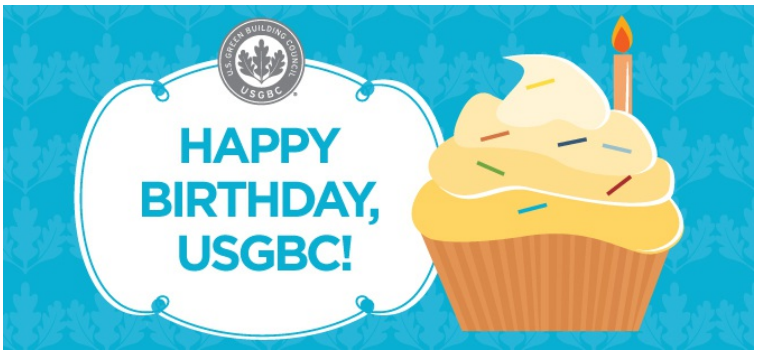

In a few minutes I'll board a plane for Rome, where I'll attend the board meeting of the World Green Building Council. WGBC is 94 councils strong today, each one modeled on USGBC, which was the first council. And it was birthed 20 years ago today.

20 years. It leaves me breathless to think of the enormous amount of work our community has done in that short time. When David Gottfried and Mike Italiano and I sat down to sketch out our idea for how we could jump start a fundamental change in how we design, construct, operate and maintain our buildings and communities, I don't think any of us could have even imagined where our movement would be standing today.

From our humble beginning we have grown to include nearly 13,000 member companies who have over 10 million employees across the globe. We have 77 local chapters around the U.S. that provide a front door to our organization, and whose volunteers help implement strategies on the ground that drive our mission to transform the built environment.

It became clear in the early days of USGBC that we needed more than just a network of individuals and organizations to achieve our mission. We needed a tool for market transformation that could provide a common definition of a green building that could be used by our diverse community of stakeholders. That led to our creation of LEED, which has grown into the foremost global green building rating system that drives better building performance.

When the LEED program was first created it was basically an idea and a curve — a way in which we could define, recognize and reward best practices that would help us shift the market forward to be a more sustainable one. And it started with only new construction. Today, we have more than 182,000 residential and commercial projects participating in our suite of rating systems, which now also includes commercial interiors as well as existing buildings, homes, schools and healthcare, and accounts for 10.5 billion square feet, 2.8 billion of which is already certified.

We are certifying about 1.5 million feet per day — and as the global economy continues to improve, we expect that will continue to increase. And with what we expect will be the successful passage of LEED v4 this summer, we are again raising the bar.

Part of the reason for this success is that USGBC is not just about a rating system, but also about green building education. We have more than 185,000 LEED professional credential holders who are helping us bring the benefits of green building both to practice, to policy and to the people who can benefit from it.

We have exceptional programs in place to support our advocacy efforts, green schools and green building and human health.

And none of it would have happened without the passion and dedication of our entire community. And I think that's something to celebrate.

Today marks day 1 of what will be a nearly a year's worth of activities that will seek to honor the work and achievements of our community. To help us do this properly, we're asking everyone to dust off their storage boxes and dig into their files and send us their favorite moments from the last 20 years — photos, videos, presentations, recollections and remembrances. Over the next few months we'll also be asking you to help us envision what the next 20 years of our movement should look like.

And make your plans to be with us in Philadelphia this November where we will convene the Greenbuild Nation for what will be a truly amazing tribute to our past and inspiration for the work we have left to do.

There is clearly a lot of work left to do... Scoundrels do not sleep! But just for today, let's all take a moment and reflect on what we've accomplished, and remember and honor the giants on whose shoulders we stand — Ray Anderson, Malcolm Lewis, Gail Lindsey, Greg Franta and others — whose spirits are present in everything we do.

What we have done together is quite literally changing the world. It's a staggering accomplishment. My friend Paul Hawken says USGBC may have had a greater impact than any other single organization in the world on materials saved, toxins eliminated, greenhouse gases avoided and human health enhanced.

By any reckoning, that's really something to celebrate. Happy 20 years, folks!

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

Member employees, USGBC staff, USGBC board

2 comments

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David Gibney 1 year 20 weeks ago
Technical Director for Sustainable Design, M+W U.S., Inc.

Congratulations Rick and the many good, kind people at USGBC. To whom should we send our "horror and glory" stories?

Zhengqian Cai 1 year 21 weeks ago
Consultant, Atkins

Congratulations! Do we get a bite of birthday cake?

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