Chris Pyke's Green Building Information Gateway Offers Free Online Sustainability Research

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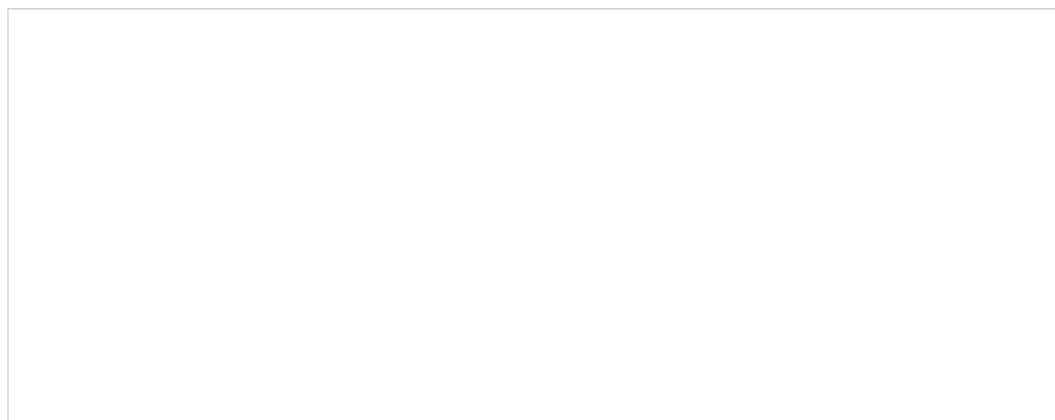Posted in **Industry**

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By Nadine M. Post

Research scientist Chris Pyke is a data zealot on a mission to help create environments that benefit people and the planet. For three years, he has focused his energy on his big-data brainchild: a search engine called the Green Building Information Gateway. GBIG provides design, performance and related sustainability data for thousands of green buildings.

The unique digital research tool, offered by the U.S. Green Building Council, went live in November. Initially based on data collected for USGBC's LEED green-building rating system, GBIG goes beyond LEED via participating industry and government partners.

"We are trying to foster transparency in building attributes and use that to promote performance," says Pyke, USGBC's vice president of research.

Access to gbig.org is free—a gift from the USGBC. The platform provides a framework for sharing, analyzing, comparing and using environmental data. Intended to accelerate the green-buildings movement, it has been welcomed as a valuable resource for researchers, designers, owners, builders and investors.

Joel Todd, a sustainability consultant and chairman of the LEED Steering Committee, is excited about how GBIG will help improve LEED by identifying credits that might be too easy or ones that need revision. "GBIG enables us to get closer to our goals," he says.

GBIG is also a response of sorts to criticism that there is currently no systematic way to compare a building's LEED rating with its energy consumption over time. GBIG time lines help with that. Creating infrastructure to offer transparent performance data was difficult because it involves engaging so many players to update the data over time, says Pyke.

The 38-year-old Pyke, who has a doctorate in geography, is called brilliant, humble, a great communicator and an amazing thinker. "Chris is always looking for people [to] think with him" to solve problems, says Heather Rosenberg, a principal at the Cadmus Group Inc., a sustainability consultant.

"GBIG reflects Chris' understanding of both research and his market-transformation perspective," adds Matthew J. Trowbridge, M.D., a professor at the University of Virginia School of Medicine, involved with environments and health.

To date, GBIG contains 70,000 activities in 5,828 places. An "activity" is a project, disclosure or event at a building. The data platform is growing. Every week, there is a GBIG news blast. And recently, Pyke's team added hundreds of green affordable-housing projects.

Over time, the platform will include information from firms, individuals and technologies. The goal is to understand cause and effect between people, products and services that promote performance.

"We're continuing to work with partners to provide deeper information about green buildings over time" and how design strategies are working, says Pyke.

With GBIG, "we believe we are helping move to a data-driven approach to performance, all made possible by the web and our fundamental belief in transparency," he adds. "It is our way of giving information back to the marketplace."

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