

Progress Report Executive Summary

This Progress Report on Sustainability follows our 2003 “White Paper on Sustainability” with analysis of new developments in the green-building movement; detailed reviews of sustainability in hospitals, schools, and homes; and suggested guidelines for state and local green-building laws and regulations.

The Progress Report concludes with an “Action Plan” for stakeholders in the green-building movement to consider.

1. Sign a Memorandum of Understanding at the senior Federal staff level promoting “best practices” in green building for Federal departments and agencies. The MOU would encourage departments and agencies to consider (but would not mandate) best practices in sustainable design and construction for Federal projects. The MOU would provide a common set of green-building performance objectives throughout the government.

2. Place “green building” on the President’s Management Agenda for Federal property management. “Federal property management” has recently been added to the list of government-wide initiatives against which the Office of Management and Budget grades the performance of Federal departments and agencies. The coming year offers an opportunity for sustainability criteria to be included in this initiative.

3. Issue an Executive Order promoting sustainable design and green building. Current Federal policy related to green building is scattered among numerous executive orders, departmental policy statements, and Federal laws. An Executive Order of the President would crystallize the government’s role in green building.

4. Convene a White House Conference on Green Building. Such a conference would bring together those who have embraced the sustainability movement with those who thus far have shied away from full participation — real estate brokers, property insurers, appraisers, REITs, speculative developers, and the mainstream construction industry.

5. Develop model guidelines for green-building legislative, regulatory, and incentive programs at the state and local level. The editors continue to stress the need for a high-level, sophisticated review of existing green-building laws and regulations to lay out what’s working and what needs fixing; from that review, model guidelines could

be developed to give states, counties, and cities a wide variety of options to meet their specific needs.

6. Eliminate code restrictions and other regulations that unduly limit sustainable design, especially for healthcare facilities. States and local jurisdictions should review their codes and regulations to determine where they are hampering green building efforts. In healthcare, national, state, and local healthcare regulators should review current accreditation and regulatory standards and consider how to revise them to accommodate innovative green hospital design and construction.

7. Fund and execute studies of human health and performance in green buildings and high-performance schools. We continue to support research that compares the health and human performance benefits of green buildings against those of conventional buildings. Further, because schools are so important to our society, we recommend approval of a National Research Council “advisory study” to determine if there are probable linkages between high-performance schools and improved student health and scholastic performance.

8. Promote a national program to reduce construction and demolition waste by 50% in five years. The construction industry should develop a nationwide program to cut in half the amount of C&D waste going into landfills by 2010.

9. For the green-homes sector, both the National Association of Home Builders and the USGBC need to put the needs of the customer first. Homebuyers would prefer to have energy efficiency and good environmental design, but not if it jacks up the price beyond an affordable level. NAHB members need to recognize that the green-building movement is here to stay, and that they would be wise to more fully embrace it before they get regulated into doing so. The USGBC has to be aware that the residential market is extremely competitive, price-conscious, and variable around the country. Any national green-homes program will have to straddle the line between environmental sustainability and affordability.

10. Reopen the trade association membership issue to permit trade associations to join as provisional members, progressing to full membership in a stated period of time. Provisional membership has worked in the past for the USGBC, and it can work in this case.

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