

## Going Green – Protecting the environment and your budget!

We've heard a lot over the past few years about "green" construction. So, just what does it mean?

Green – or sustainable – construction uses features that:

- Decrease the use of natural resources: energy, water and raw materials;
- Lessen environmental damage
- Create livable, comfortable, safe and productive environments
- Lowers the life cycle cost of owning a building.

We all know that constructing sustainable buildings is the socially responsible thing to do. What many don't realize is that green construction is also good for your budget. Sustainable construction, when properly managed, has a return on investment that can pay for itself in a relative short time – often within five to seven years.

Sustainable construction covers five major areas:

- **Site Selection**
- **Water Efficiency**
- **Energy Use**
- **Recyclable Materials**
- **Indoor Air Quality**

Each category offers numerous opportunities not only for social responsibility, but also for significantly decreased monthly utility consumption.

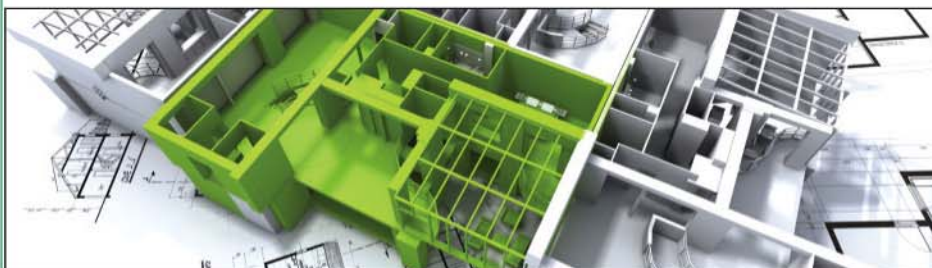
### Your Building's Energy Consumption

The U.S. Green Building Council reports that U.S. buildings consume more than 72 percent of the nation's



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electricity and 13 percent of potable water. They produce 39 percent of the country's harmful carbon monoxide/CO<sub>2</sub>. With buildings consuming our resources and affecting our air quality,



it is critical that we explore new and better ways to minimize the strain on our environment.

### Your Contribution to Local Infrastructure

Another benefit of sustainable construction is that it reduces the strain on local infrastructures with the reduction of water used for landscaping, less paving and more aesthetically pleasing buildings. Overall, sustainable construction is better for the environment, healthier for your employees and will pay for itself in the long term, with higher resale value, higher tenant rents and lower utility bills.

### The Cost of Going Green

The cost of using sustainable

construction can vary greatly from project to project. If the decision to go green is made early in the design process, the cost can be managed. The earlier the decision is made, the more economical the construction.

The Green Solution for Architects has estimated that the average additional construction cost ranges from 1-10 percent. However, don't make the

mistake of only considering upfront cost. Decreased utility usage in green buildings results in monthly utility savings that add up over time. Green buildings can reduce energy cost by as much as 30 percent and water consumption by 30-50 percent.

Green buildings can also enhance employee performance by improving interior air quality, reducing illness causing pollutants and creating more aesthetically appealing surroundings with landscaping and other features.

### Government Incentives for Going Green

Another way to offset the cost of sustainable construction is to take advantage of the many federal, state and local government incentives that

are available for building green. These include tax deductions, tax credits, grants, accelerated depreciation, low interest loans, and others. Watch for more information about how to apply for incentives in next month's column.

To receive these incentives you need to partner with an experienced construction team that is familiar with submission requirements for certifying that your building meets green building standards. Only construction that meets the rigorous USGBC Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design standards can receive LEED certification and qualify for tax breaks and other incentives. Your construction company should have LEED AP professionals to insure the best result for your project.

### Check Out Going Green

If you are considering a building project, now may be the time to talk about green solutions with an experienced green builder. You can increase your bottom line and your contribution to the environment for years to come with sustainable energy construction. ■

*Joe Bontrager is a LEED Accredited Professional for J&S Construction Company Inc. in Cookeville, Tenn. J&S is a locally owned, full-service construction company with more than 50 years experience building projects, relationships and trust. J&S has completed over 80,000 square feet of LEED Certified projects. It has completed more than 5,000 unique projects and has more than 70 percent repeat customers. J&S employs 100 of the finest craftsmen and trade professionals, including a number of nationally recognized and award winning architects and engineers.*