



USGBC News

Green Building is Global

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In the last few years, the trend towards sustainable design in the United States has proven that it is, in fact, much more than a trend. Green building is transforming the building market, and it is revolutionizing the way we think about, design, inhabit, and operate buildings. In order for green building to fulfill its promise of a healthy present and a sustainable future, however, the transformation must extend far beyond the U.S. borders: green building must be a global movement. In countries as diverse as Australia, China, and India, to name just a few examples, that movement is well underway. The U.S. Green Building Council is committed to fostering and furthering green building efforts worldwide-and to enabling our members to be a part of those efforts.

The LEED Green Building Rating System has quickly become the national standard for green building in the United States, but it is also recognized worldwide as an invaluable tool for the design and construction of high performance, sustainable buildings. LEED buildings can be found in every corner of the globe-in addition to the U.S., there are currently LEED certified and registered buildings in Australia, Canada, China, Guatemala, India, Japan, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Sri Lanka.

The international interest in the USGBC and LEED is in evidence each year at Greenbuild, the USGBC's International Conference and Expo. Greenbuild is an important forum for international leaders in green building to exchange ideas and information. More than 20 different countries were represented at both the Pittsburgh conference in 2003 and in Portland in 2004, and even greater participation is expected at Greenbuild 2005 in Atlanta, GA. In fact, this year the USGBC will be participating in the U.S. Department of Commerce's International Buyer Program (IBP), working with the DOC's overseas posts to market Greenbuild abroad and encourage the attendance of trade delegations.

Although many project teams are successfully using LEED as developed in the United States, the USGBC recognizes that certain criteria, processes or technologies may not be appropriate for other countries. The USGBC therefore permits other countries to license LEED, allowing them to adapt the rating system to their specific needs while maintaining the high standards that are the LEED hallmark. To date, two countries-Canada and India-have licensed LEED, and many other countries have expressed an interest in doing so. Likewise, the Council recognizes that successful methods for encouraging and practicing green building will vary from country to country, depending on local custom, practice, and language. The USGBC works internationally through the World Green Building Council (WorldGBC) to assist other countries with establishing their own Councils and effective buy-in to local industry and policy.

The WorldGBC, a federation of nine national green building councils devoted to transforming the global property industry to sustainability, was officially launched at Greenbuild 2002 in Austin, TX. Its mission is to support and promote individual Green Building Councils; to serve as a forum for

knowledge transfer between Green Building Councils; to encourage the development of market based environmental rating systems; and to recognize global green building leadership. As one of the founding members of the WorldGBC, the USGBC is firmly committed to this mission.

The international importance of green building was highlighted at Greenbuild 2004 in Portland, OR. Among the many international delegations was a high-level delegation from China that included the Vice Minister of the Ministry of Construction, Mr. Qiu Baoxing. Over the last decade, China has experienced explosive economic growth, and is on pace to become the largest economy in the world in just a few years. With that growth, however, has come severe environmental problems, including a looming energy crisis. China has made an impressive commitment to reversing these environmental trends, however, and Vice Minister Qiu chose Greenbuild as the forum to announce China's new energy efficiency strategy, of which green building is a primary component. Representatives of the Ministry of Construction and of the USGBC also signed a Memorandum of Understanding identifying avenues for collaboration in the promotion of environmentally responsible buildings in China and in the U.S.; and pledging their commitment to those collaborative efforts. In addition, Vice Minister Qiu issued an open invitation to USGBC's members to assist the nation in developing and implementing green building technologies, products, and processes.

The combination of China's booming construction industry and its critical need for green buildings makes it a very exciting international opportunity for the USGBC and its members. In response to the Vice Minister's invitation, the USGBC, in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Commerce, is leading a green building trade mission to China. Nine USGBC member companies-Advanced Building Performance, CALMAC, GBBN Architects, Honeywell, Interface Engineering, Parsons Brinckerhoff, Sebesta Blomberg & Associates, Trane, and York International Corporation-and several USGBC representatives, including Nigel Howard, Vice President for LEED, departed for China on March 26, 2005 and will return to the U.S. on April 3. The mission was scheduled to overlap with the International Intelligent and Green Building Technologies Conference & Expo in Beijing March 28-30, 2005. In addition to attending the conference, the USGBC trade delegation will meet with the U.S. Department of Commerce posts in Beijing and Shanghai, the Chinese Ministry of Construction, the China Real Estate Development Group, the Shanghai Green Building Council, and will participate in educational seminars on doing business in China. Attendees also have the opportunity to participate in an Olympic Village Planning Meeting in Beijing on March 26 with the U.S. Department of Energy and Chinese Ministry.

These exciting international developments represent only some of the ways the U.S. Green Building Council and its members are contributing to the international green building movement. And they represent only a few of the opportunities that will exist in the future. Despite the tremendous progress that has been made, there is still much work to be done to transform the built environment, both at home and abroad. But it is USGBC's members who will make that transformation occur.