



HOW TO SELL GREEN BUILDING

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THE NEED for GREEN BUILDINGS

Most people are unaware of the effect our buildings have on the natural environment. Every day, more evidence is presented to make the case for "green buildings", or buildings that use our natural resources in an environmentally friendly way. Here are some facts about buildings:

Buildings of the world consume:

40% of the world's energy & materials
25% of the wood harvested
17% of our water

In the US, buildings account for:

36% of total electricity consumption
62% of electricity use
30% of greenhouse gas emissions
37% of ozone depletion potential.

Most of us spend 80% of our time indoors, yet we do not seem to care about the toxic materials we place into our buildings. Our buildings are in a position to have a profound effect on our natural resources.

Source: WORLDWATCH INSTITUTE

MOST COMMON ARGUMENTS

Here are some of the more frequent arguments people make against green buildings and the response you can provide:

1. "Green buildings always cost more than traditional buildings."

Not true. A good architect knows how to save their clients money. With a clear direction of budget, there is no reason you cannot build a green building for the same price or less than a traditional building.

2. "Green materials are more expensive than their traditional counterparts."

Although there are green materials that cost more than their traditional counterparts, there are also many more whose cost is far below the standard. Advances in recycling, new materials and better designs have allowed for a new generation of environmentally-friendly products that are less costly to produce. Of course, green materials also have a very important long term benefit of not destroying our planet's resources.

3. "Green buildings take longer to build."

This is completely false. Most green buildings simply substitute one material for another more sustainable one. These substitutions have no effect on the construction time. The type of construction determines the construction time. A straw bale house can be erected in a day or so while a traditional stick frame building would take much longer.

4. "Having a green building means it has to look like a mud hut or rice cake."

Most green buildings look like any other building. You have probably been in an environmentally friendly building and not known it. While there are some green buildings made out of mud or straw, they seem to get attention drawn to their appearance. The truth is, green buildings come in all shapes and forms.

5. "There is no economic advantage to green buildings."

The energy savings in green buildings could pay for green improvements several times over with a return on investment within 1-5 years.

6. "One building can't make a difference to our environment."

- Buildings consume at least 40% of the world's energy.
- Increasing materials recycling in the US to at least 60% could save the equivalent of 315 million barrels of oil per year.
- Student achievement scores and retail sales are enhanced by natural daylight.
- A 1% increase in labor productivity from green building features can pay for building energy costs.
- Building innovations alone could hold US carbon emissions to 1997 levels in the next decade.

7. "The general public does not care if a building is green or not."

New market studies are released each month showing a majority of people would be willing to pay slightly more for green buildings, even more for healthy green features.

ACTION STEPS

1. Add insulation, weather stripping, and storm windows to your house.
2. Use Seventh Generation products in your home & office: environmentally friendly non-toxic household cleaners, laundry & dish products; 100% recycled, non-chlorine bleached bathroom & facial tissues, paper towels & napkins; plus recycled plastic trash bags & full-spectrum light bulbs.
>> www.seventhgen.com
3. Wear a sweater instead of heating your entire house. Wear warmer clothing while you are lounging around the house.
4. Check your hot water heater. Hot water heaters account for about 20% of all the energy used in your home. Turn your water heater down to 120 degrees to save energy. Also, insulate your heater with a pre-fab 'blanket,' but be careful not to block off air vents on gas heaters. This can save you 7-8% of your energy usage. You can also drain 2 quarts (or 2 liters) of water from your hot water heater every 2 months from the valve at the bottom of the tank. This prevents accumulation of sediment and prolongs the life of your water heater.
5. Use Fluorescent Lighting. Lighting results in 1/5 of the electricity consumed by the U.S. Using a fluorescent light bulb is much more efficient than an incandescent bulb. They last longer and use 1/4 the amount of energy. Even though fluorescent lights are more expensive (around \$15) it will take 13 traditional bulbs to last for the same amount of time. While the fluorescent light will cost you \$10 in electricity during its lifetime, incandescents use up \$40 in the same time period. By installing a single fluorescent light bulb in 100 million households in America, you would save the energy equivalent of all of the energy that is generated by a nuclear power plant running full time, over the course of one year.

FOR MORE TIPS, go to:

<http://www.organicarchitect.com/downloads>

RESOURCES

U.S. Green Building Council's
LEED Green Building Rating System
<http://www.usgbc.org>

Architects/ Designers/ Planners for Social Responsibility
<http://www.adpsr-norcal.org>

Environmental News Network
<http://www.enn.com>

BuildingGreen
<http://www.BuildingGreen.com>

GreenClips
<http://www.greendesign.net/greenclips>

Worldwatch News
<http://www.worldwatch.org>

Greenhomebuilding.com
<http://www.greenhomebuilding.com>

The Green Building Resource Guide
<http://www.greenguide.com>

GreenSpec
<http://www.greenspec.com>

Oikos Database
<http://www.oikos.com>

DOWNLOADS

Free information to help you is available at: <http://www.organicarchitect.com/downloads>

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Architect & Designer Eric Corey Freed specializes in organic and environmental design. He serves as Chair of Architecture for The San Francisco Design Museum and is on the Board of Directors of Architects, Designers & Planners for Social Responsibility (NorCal ADPSR). Eric also serves on the AIA Committee on the Environment (COTE) and as Program Coordinator for the Environmental Committee of The Commonwealth Club of California.

In addition to designing, Eric is committed to education. He is co-founder of ecoTECTURE: The Online Journal of Ecological Design, a publication for people interested in the environment (www.ecotecture.com) and teaches and lectures extensively on green building.

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