

The Benefits of Going Green

BY VALERIE LAFFERTY

What is LEED?

Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design:

- Rating system developed by U.S. Green Building Council
- Deals specifically with buildings
- Creating a national standard
- Recognizes environmental leadership
- Stimulates green competition
- Offers tax deductions through 2014 in some states



Valerie Lafferty, SR/WA

A State Certified Appraiser and CCIM, Valerie provides real property related services to public/private clients through Market Street Land Services and legal services (property/probate) to a statewide nonprofit, Elder Law of Michigan. She represented Michigan State University Federal Credit Union in the first new LEED certified office building in Mid-Michigan. Email: marketstreetlandsvcs@gmail.com.

There is so much “green” information out there right now. Clearly, it’s the current politically correct frame of reference. Can those of us not in engineering or architecture get by on a “need to know” basis only? Technology continues to advance whether we are ready or not. Can we really afford to ignore this trend?

Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) deals specifically with buildings. Buildings produce more carbon dioxide than either transportation or industry. In fact, buildings use 40% of energy supplies, about 75% of all electrical consumption, produce roughly 40% of the carbon dioxide emissions, contribute 65% of waste output and use 14% of the world’s drinkable water (12% in the U.S.).

It’s actually surprising that buildings weren’t targeted long ago. Further, given that the average person spends roughly 90% of their time indoors, indoor air quality and lighting are crucial, and improving can lead to the increased productivity (or just the happiness/mental quotient) of a healthy environment.

LEED is a rating system developed by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC). In developing its standard, the USGBC draws from a wide range of disciplines, including government, product manufacturers, building code officials, property managers, landscapers besides architects, builders and engineers. The focus is an integrated, whole-building design concept – more of a process really than list of code “do’s and don’ts.”

LEED is important because it is creating a national standard, and that standard not only creates a method of measurement, but it recognizes environmental leadership in the building industry, stimulates green competition, raises the public’s awareness of benefits and really is transforming the

building market. This translates into earnings, choices, better land planning and healthier environments.

This green transformation is happening in the commercial sector, corporate America and in our institutions. So even if it’s not directly impacting our own building, it may be affecting our client’s building or way of doing business, the companies we invest in, the direction of our business schools, the leadership provided by our government and cultural institutions and is basically indicative of our future growth in North America.

A look at some headlines published earlier in the year can be very telling. For example, *The Appraisal Institute Adds New 40 Hours Class to Appraise LEED*, *Herman Miller Earns 13th LEED Certification*, and *London, Ontario Has Built Second LEED Facility to Take Canadian Waste*.

On the government front, the 2007 U.S. Energy Independence and Security Act set off LEED requirements for federal buildings, and the State of Michigan likewise has mandated change through executive directives and an extension of a tax deduction for commercial buildings through 2014 to name a few initiatives. Nationally, over half of the states are mandating or encouraging LEED for their buildings and some of our own cities have done the same.

Estimates of reducing energy use in the U.S. by 25-50%, CO² emissions by 33-40%, water use by 40% and solid waste by 70% would result in huge environmental and financial gains for all of us. If the computer revolution caused big jumps in productivity resulting in growth in the market, it seems like conserving and building smart can cause growth as well through lower expenses and the increased productivity from a better working environment.