



## GREEN BUILDINGS TAKE ROOT IN CITIES, SCHOOLS

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*A growing number of cities, businesses and school districts are discovering the benefits of "green" buildings that are environmentally friendly and reduce energy waste.*

This month, council members passed a bill to make Washington, D.C., the first major city to require all developers to design certified energy efficient buildings. Mayor Anthony Williams is expected to sign the bill into law.

Elements of green design include water-free urinals, solar panels and recycled building materials that reduce waste and conserve water and energy.

Certified green buildings usually save between 20 percent and 50 percent on energy costs, an important draw at a time when high energy costs are a concern across the country.

The organization that certifies buildings, the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), uses Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) ratings to rank green buildings from platinum to bronze based on points earned from green features, efforts to preserve the surrounding environment and commitment to healthy conditions for residents.

### **A growing trend**

Other cities participating in the green building boom include Chicago, which has a unique program offering grants to cover roofs with grass and plants. These "green roofs" reduce polluted storm water runoff and insulate the building.

In New Orleans, the organization Global Green, with actor Brad Pitt as its spokesman, sponsored a green architecture competition over the summer to design housing units for the city's reconstruction. The goal was to save residents money while providing a healthy and uplifting home design.

At the end of 2006, there were 550 LEED certified buildings in the country and more than 3,500 registered projects in the works. About 220 of these projects are schools.

### **Schools going green**

Interest in green building among school districts has been so high that a set of LEED ratings is being developed specifically for schools and the needs of students.

Schools can get green points for taking steps to improve student health, like serving locally grown produce in their cafeterias and eliminating harsh cleaning chemicals and pesticides from facilities and fields. But for many schools, the draw is saving money.

Lindsay Baker, schools program coordinator for USGBC, said money is what initially attracts school districts' attention, because a large portion of a school's operating budget goes to electricity to heat and light classrooms. "In some cases that money is coming out of teacher salaries and text books," Baker said.

When Clackamas High School in Oregon began looking into planning an environmentally friendly new building, not everyone was in favor of it.

"People were skeptical because they thought it would cost more money to build and we would not see much money back," said Dave Church, special projects consultant for North Clackamas School District.

In the end, the contracting bid cost no more than an average school in the Portland area, and the finished product was a modern building that has saved the school 20 percent on its energy costs. The school owes the savings to solar panels, natural lighting and a high-tech ventilation system.

### **Creating environmental awareness**

Some schools have taken the term "green" school to heart by building environmental awareness into the school's curriculum and purpose.

At Conserve School in Wisconsin, the buildings on the school's 1,200 acre campus are all green certified and the school tries to build an environmental mindset for life.

"I've developed a more global perspective here," said Jocelynn Pearl, a senior and the captain of the school's Envirothon team, which competes in environmental problem solving. "I didn't know a lot about larger environmental issues, like how climate change is affecting ecosystems around the world."

At Clackamas High School, Rod Shroufe teaches an environmental science class and uses the school as a teaching tool. The school built wetlands to act as a filtration device for water runoff, so in one activity the class studies the wetlands to measure the school's impact on the environment.

"These kids recognize the potential," Shroufe said. "They are taking their parents out to Home Depot and retrofitting their homes."

-- *By Talea Miller, NewsHour Extra*

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