



## Green Building News

July 2008

Letter from the Editor:

Building professionals often ask me how they can improve energy efficiency and lessen the environmental impact of their project. They may not be ready to pursue LEED certification but still desire to implement best green building practices. I am delighted to share what I've discovered about Whole Building commercial design and High Performance Buildings. Whole Building design integrates all building components during the design phase, ensuring subsystems work together. The result is High Performance Buildings that are better for the environment, save money and create healthier places for users to live and work. Using the Whole Building design approach to construct a High Performance building is an excellent way to reduce environmental impact without necessarily pursuing LEED certification. Read on for more useful information on this topic.

Lori Eichel  
President  
Accent Construction

### Why consider High Performance Buildings and Whole Building design?

Simply put, High Performance Buildings make good business sense. Statistics indicate that commercial buildings consume 17 to 18% of the total energy used in the United States. By using Whole Building design to construct High Performance commercial buildings, energy demands are reduced and the environmental impact of the building is controlled. The most significant benefit is potential reduced energy use of 50% or more. High Performance Buildings also have reduced overall maintenance costs while providing increased occupant comfort and productivity. Additionally, studies show that a comfortable indoor environment helps attract tenants, increasing revenues for building owners. To learn more about the business benefits of building green, download the full report from the U.S. Green Building Council [here](#).

### What guidelines exist for High Performance Buildings and

## Whole Building design?

Depending on building type, purpose and design objectives, there are many guidelines to keep in mind when considering Whole Building design. The following all play a part in a holistic planning approach:

- Accessibility
- Aesthetics
- Cost-Effectiveness
- Functionality
- Historic Preservation
- Productivity
- Security/Safety
- Sustainability

A comprehensive report on Whole Building guidelines prepared for PG&E is available. Owners can use this document as a guide to develop Requests for Proposals (RFP) or Requests for Qualifications (RFQ) which reflect their interest in integrated energy design, and design professionals can use it similarly as a guide to respond to requests from owners. Download the report [here](#).

## Are net zero-energy buildings on the horizon?

The US Department of Energy's National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) recently released the report Assessment of the Technical Potential for Achieving Net Zero-Energy Buildings in the Commercial Sector. Based on the NREL's projections of future performance from currently known technologies and practices, a potential 62% of buildings could achieve net zero by the year 2025. If projected future technology and photovoltaic systems are implemented in buildings in a manner that directs excess electricity production back to the grid, new buildings in the commercial sector could, on average, consume 86% less energy than existing buildings. The most frequent reason buildings failed to reach zero was that they had too little roof area to accommodate the photovoltaic panels that would supply the remaining required energy to the building. The [full report](#) is available from the NREL web site.

## What's the latest from the National Institute of Building Sciences on High-Performance Buildings?

The National Institute of Building Sciences (NIBS) was one of 17 sponsors of the briefing to the new High Performance Building Congressional Caucus on Wednesday June 18, 2008. Several key recommendations of the report include: establishing and verifying metrics that measure the true sustainability impact of High Performance Buildings and establishing metrics to measure occupant productivity, accessibility and safety. Additionally, the report recommends the formation of two independent expert panels to provide guidance on future policies regarding High Performance Buildings. To read the entire report, download it [here](#).

Green Building News is brought to you by Accent Construction, a full service commercial general contractor focused on providing environmentally-friendly tenant finish for office buildings and medical facilities. Their expertise in reuse/recycle efforts affords clients cost effective and innovative solutions.

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