

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JANUARY 17, 2008

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER *J*

SUBJECT: METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENT'S REPORT ON "GREENING THE WASHINGTON METROPOLITAN REGION'S BUILT ENVIRONMENT"

**ISSUE:** The Metropolitan Washington Council of Government's (COG) Report on "Greening the Washington Metropolitan Region's Built Environment" (Attachment 1).

**RECOMMENDATION:** That City Council concur with the recommendations in the COG report and evaluate them for potential incorporation into the City's Environmental Action Plan.

**DISCUSSION:** The COG Intergovernmental Green Building Group (IGBG), is a standing committee of COG that includes local government staff and interested non-governmental participants who work together on the development of a green building/sustainable development strategy for the metropolitan region. The IGBG has prepared a report that reviews best practices and standards, includes recommendations for local governments, and discusses benefits, costs and related opportunities. On December 12, 2007 the COG Board unanimously approved the report (Attachment 2).

As you know, the City has been a leader in building green government facilities. The City's General Services adopted in 2004, a "Program for Incorporating Green Building Measures into City Facility Design, Construction, Renovation, and Operations." This has led to many outstanding green building projects in the City including the installation of green roofs at the Alexandria Health Department and the Duncan Library. Under this policy, the City has a goal of "Silver Certification" under the U. S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification program. The Alexandria Public Schools built the new T.C. Williams High School to "silver certification" standard which has been awarded a Green Innovation Award in the Best Institutional Project category by the Virginia Sustainable Building Network. The Cora Kelly Elementary School was recently recognized for its use of green technology. Currently, three buildings are scheduled for construction with the goal to achieve that standard or higher including the Charles Houston Recreation Center (Silver), the DASH Bus Maintenance Facility (Silver), the Potomac Yard Fire Station (Certified) and the Alexandria Police Headquarters Building (Silver or Gold).

The Planning and Zoning Department also has made significant progress in moving forward the goal of getting elements of Green Building programs into private development projects in the City. The department has developed checklists to evaluate projects for green building elements. This check list for private development is used as part of the development review process, and the applicant must identify the green building components that they will incorporate into their projects. As a result, many of the new private development projects include green building components.

The Intergovernmental Green Building Group summary report is provided as an attachment. COG's goal is to make the National Capital Region a leader in green building programs. City staff from General Services and T&ES and Councilman Krupicka participated in the COG process developing the report.

The Summary Report includes five recommendations:

**1) Preferred Green-building Rating Standard**

Establish LEED as the region's preferred green building rating system for new commercial construction and high-rise residential projects.

**2) Green Building Standard for Local Government Public Projects**

Establish LEED Silver certification as the goal for all local government facilities constructed in the Washington Metropolitan Region.

**3) COG Regional Green Standard for Private Development**

Establish the COG Regional LEED Certified standard for private commercial and high-rise residential development.

**4) Education**

Collaborate and partner with the private development community, non-profit organizations, federal programs, educational institutions, financial institutions, interested and other interested parties to ensure green building goals are achieved to maximize opportunities for innovation in the region, and to optimize outreach and educational opportunities.

**5) Actions to Ensure the Success of the Regional Green Building Policy**

Ensure local governments use the IGBG Summary Report and Technical Report as a reference guide in developing and implementing Green Building initiatives.

In January 2008, the City's Environmental Coordination Group (ECG) established work groups to specifically focus on and address the green building component of the City's Eco-City Project. The City's Environmental Coordination Group (ECG) was created in October 2002 to exchange information and better coordinate among City Departments concerning City projects, policies and procedures and community outreach efforts that may have a direct or indirect impact on the environment and water quality. Additionally ECG also facilitates improved communication and coordination with the City's Environmental Policy Commission. The group is comprised of representatives from the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities, Code

Enforcement, Transportation and Environmental Services, General Services, Health, and Planning and Zoning.

The Green Building Work Group will review and evaluate current City programs and will also evaluate recommendations from the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments' Green Building Report. This group will also work with the Planning and Zoning Department to conduct outreach with the private development community and seek input that will be incorporated in their final recommendations on the future steps for the City's green building program. The challenge for this group is to develop programs and coordinate a green building program that are coordinated across all City departments and are executed as a unified program, and are accepted by the private development community.

The final recommendations and the program developed by this group will be incorporated as a chapter of the City's Environmental Action Plan.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Attachment 1. "Greening the Washington Metropolitan Region's Built Environment" (Summary Report)

Attachment 2. December 18, 2007, Letter to Mayor William D. Euille and COG Resolution

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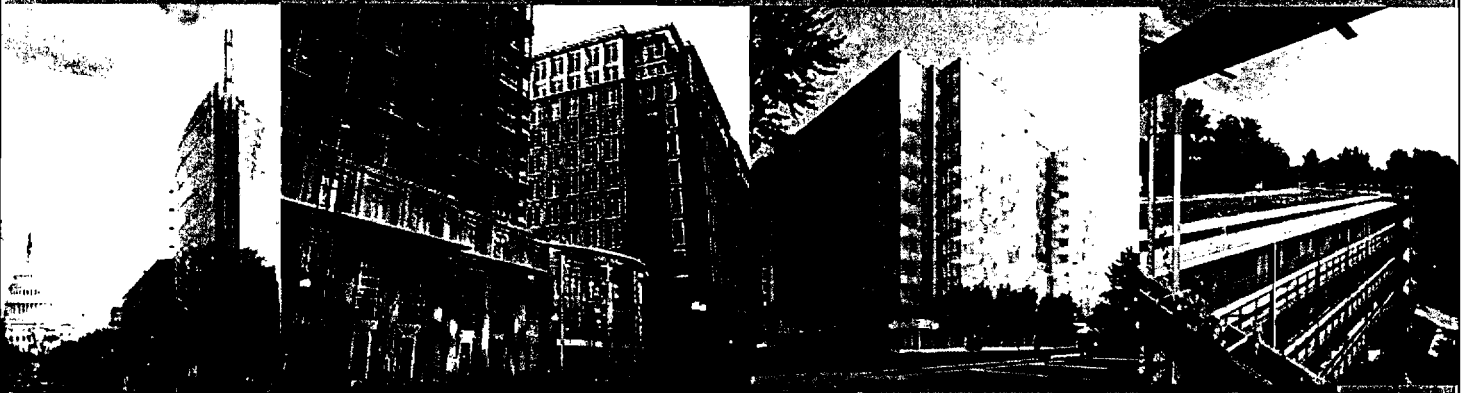
Lalit Sharma, P.E., Program Supervisor, Environmental Quality, Transportation and Environmental Services

**FINAL**  
**DECEMBER 12, 2007**

# **Greening the Metropolitan Washington Region's Built Environment**

**A Report to the Metropolitan Washington  
Council of Governments  
Board of Directors**

**Summary Report**



By

**COG Intergovernmental Green Building Group**

**December 2007**

# **Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments**

*COG is a regional association comprised of 21 local governments surrounding our nation's capital, plus members of the Maryland and Virginia legislatures, the U.S. Senate, and the U.S. House of Representatives. COG provides a focus for action and develops sound regional responses to such issues as the environment, affordable housing, economic development, health and family concerns, human services, population growth, public safety, and transportation.*

[www.mwcog.org](http://www.mwcog.org)

## **COG Mission**

*Enhance the quality of life and competitive advantages of the metropolitan Washington region in the global economy by providing a forum for consensus building and policy-making; implementing intergovernmental policies, plans, and programs; and supporting the region as an expert information resource.*

## **Intergovernmental Green Building Group**

*"Promoting cooperation on green building in the metropolitan Washington region"*

The IGBG, a standing technical committee of COG, is a cross-jurisdictional group of local government staff and interested nongovernmental participants who are committed to green building as a sustainable development strategy for the metropolitan Washington region.

Joan Kelsch, IGBG Chair

Stuart Freudberg, Director, Department of Environmental Programs

George Nichols, Principal Environmental Planner and Energy Program Manager

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## **Acknowledgements**

This report was prepared by the Intergovernmental Green Building Work Group. Special recognition is also acknowledged from several private and nonprofit organizations, particularly American Institute of Architects Committee on the Environment, Amicus Green Building Center, and District of Columbia Building Industry Association, GreenHOME, GBO Construction, and USGBC National Capital Area Chapter.

## **Vision**

The National Capital Region is a national leader in green building. The region's local governments lead in innovation and stewardship of the environment through green building design and construction, and support for innovation in the private sector.

## Executive Summary

Metropolitan Washington is expanding at a rapid pace. Current forecasts show the region will grow by 1.6 million people and 1.2 million jobs between 2005 and 2030.

This economic prosperity will not come without its challenges. As the region grows, so will the strain on infrastructure and the demand for new buildings and renovations. How the region builds will to a great extent determine quality of life for residents, the capacity of municipal governments to meet needs and the health of the environment.

To help the region prepare, COG's Intergovernmental Green Building Group (IGBG) decided to examine issues related to environmentally friendly development practices known as "green building" and to exchange knowledge about best practices in the region. In this report, the group reviews best practices and standards, offers recommendations for local governments and considers benefits, costs, and related opportunities. This summary provides an overall look at green building as a tool for protecting natural resources while improving performance of the region's building stock. A full technical support document provides greater details of the issues addressed by IGBG and recommendations given.

Adoption of green building throughout metropolitan Washington can support the growth of a green economy and job opportunities in multiple sectors. Public sector green building practices and support of green business innovation, which is now occurring, will support long-term goals for a sustainable and healthy region.

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### Introduction and Background

Metropolitan Washington faces both opportunities and challenges as it continues to grow and prosper. Demand for commercial properties and residential renovations continues to be strong even during a housing market slowdown. Local governments continue to build schools, expand facilities, and upgrade municipal buildings.

As development progresses, COG member governments have embarked on an effort to improve performance of the region's buildings and encourage environmentally responsible practices. In November 2006, following months of preparation, COG's Board of Directors created the Intergovernmental Green Building Group as a technical committee and charged it with preparing a guide for implementing green building practices throughout the region.

In this report, the committee has assessed the environmental impacts of all development while focusing recommendations on municipal buildings and new commercial projects that stand to have a strong impact. In the future, the committee will also consider green building options for existing and historic buildings,

small-scale residential projects, schools, and affordable housing projects. General policy guidelines are currently provided for these project types in the report, with recommendations for future action.

### What is Green Building?

Green building is an approach to design, construction, and management that reduces the negative impact of buildings on the environment while increasing building performance and occupant health. Relying on natural sunlight during peak hours, using recycled construction materials and designing green roofs covered with vegetation are all examples of green building practices. According to the US Green Building Council (USGBC), green buildings use less energy, consume less potable water, generate fewer air pollutants, produce less solid waste, and provide healthier indoor environments.

### Buildings and the Region's Environment

As developers build homes on land once covered by forests and farmland, maintaining the quality of the region's water and air is an increasing challenge. Building activity—from site development and construction to operations

and waste disposal—impacts the region’s environment in significant ways. Increased storm-water runoff, for instance, has polluted waterways in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. The amount of impervious surfaces such as pavement and roofs have increased by 40 percent since 1986, air pollution has suffered from ozone producing chemicals and particle emissions, greenhouse gases are increasing and tree coverage has been substantially reduced. There is an ongoing need to clean the region’s air of pollutants and to meet federal requirements for particulates as well as ozone, the harmful gas formed when sun heats polluted air, and mitigate global warming.

Green building practices can help to lessen such impacts by using environmentally-friendly construction methods and reducing wasteful materials. Green buildings are compatible with smart growth, Low Impact Development (LID), and community planning techniques that preserve natural resources and promote quality of life. Potential benefits include:

- Reduced reliance on fossil fuels and opportunities for renewable energy;
- Improved air quality and fewer greenhouse gas emissions;
- Less pollution in the Chesapeake Bay and reduced demand for potable water from the region’s waterways and reservoirs; and
- Less strain on the region’s ecosystems.

## Analysis of Trends and Findings

### Human Health

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates that up to 30 percent of new and remodeled buildings have acute indoor air quality problems, an especially difficult situation for one third of the region’s children and seniors who have some type of respiratory disease. Green building practices can contribute to the health of residents by improving ventilation in workplaces, homes and schools, and by reducing exposure to toxins and asthma triggers. Increased natural light, fresh air and greater comfort improve overall wellbeing.

### Impact on Municipal Systems

Local governments shoulder many of the “externalized” impacts of regional development. Energy demands may contribute to future brownouts, necessitate siting new power gen-

eration facilities and transmission lines, and increase public investment in infrastructure and repairs.

The human costs of poor building decisions also impact municipal systems. Students and employees in poorly designed buildings do not perform to the best of their abilities. Treatment of chronic diseases such as asthma puts a strain on the region’s medical infrastructure. Jurisdictions are also affected by expensive heating and cooling due to substandard insulation in low-income housing that puts an economic strain on residents. Green building practices can help the region’s governments reduce costs by:

- Reducing demand on local infrastructures that deliver water and energy and treat wastewater, stormwater, and construction waste;
- Reducing stress on local emergency services and public medical facilities;
- Improving productivity in schools and at work because of healthier environments;
- Increasing resilience to weather emergencies such as storms and heat waves.

### Future Trends

Three trends will amplify the impact of buildings on the region’s environment and on its future quality of life:

1. The metropolitan Washington region is expected to grow by **1.6 million people and 1.2 million jobs** by 2030.
2. **By 2035, 75 percent** of all U.S. **buildings will be new or renovated**, according to national forecasts. Real estate activity in metropolitan Washington exceeds national averages.
3. **Climate change** is expected to have regional impacts, making the region’s ecosystems and infrastructure more vulnerable, particularly to storm and heat events.

Population and job growth will continue to push demand for housing, workplaces, and schools. Without regional efforts to improve common building practices, the negative environmental impacts can be expected to increase.

### Standards and Codes for Green Building



The environmental performance of buildings is generally managed at the local government level through building codes, zoning, comprehensive plans, and other site design and development requirements. A number of independent organizations, industry groups, and public agencies have created specific guidelines that can be integrated into such mechanisms. They generally provide guidance and tracking for:

- Site planning and management
- Energy performance
- Indoor and outdoor water use
- Resources and building materials
- Indoor environmental quality
- Waste management
- Relationship to transportation infrastructure

Most systems use a point system for certification. Verification methods for performance vary widely, from voluntary reporting to rigorous third-party review.

**The LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design)** system, developed by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), is the most widely used green building guidance and certification system in the U.S. today. Over 8,000 building projects have been registered under LEED, and more than 1,000 have achieved certification. Developed initially for *new commercial* projects, LEED standards are now available for *existing commercial buildings, commercial interiors, and schools*. Standards for homes and neighborhoods are in a pilot phase, and guidelines for other specific building types are in development. Certification is achieved by third party review and testing, and includes levels of Certified, Silver, Gold, and Platinum.

Other significant building standards that promote environmentally responsible building include:

**ENERGY STAR:** a federally sponsored certification and labeling program for energy conservation in *commercial buildings* and homes.

**Green Globes:** a voluntary on-line building assessment tool and rating system for *commercial buildings* sponsored by a cross-sector industry coalition, the Green Building Initiative.

**EarthCraft:** a voluntary, contractor-oriented guidance and certification system for *residential projects and communities*, developed by Southface Institute and partners.

**NAHB Model Green Home Building Guidelines:** developed by the National Association of Home Builders for *new homes*.

**Regional Green Home rating systems:** developed by homebuilder associations, often with state support, such as Colorado Green-Built.

**Green Communities** – a voluntary rating system for affordable housing developed by Enterprise and partners.

The General Services Administration (GSA), like most local and state governments across the nation, has concluded that LEED is currently the most appropriate green building rating system for public projects. The District of Columbia, Gaithersburg, Montgomery County, Alexandria, Arlington County and others use LEED as the primary assessment tool for public and private commercial buildings.

Because certifying single-family homes is still expensive and logistically difficult, several municipalities have developed their own programs. Arlington's Green Home Choice program, for example, is based on EarthCraft guidelines.



*The National Association of Realtors' new Washington headquarters building has been awarded a LEED Silver certification for a high level of environmental performance. The striking, glass-wrapped structure is the first newly constructed building in the District of Columbia to be honored for meeting "green" standards set by the U.S. Green Building Council.*

## **Raising Building Performance in the Region**

COG's member jurisdictions agree that a regionally consistent set of policies and standards for green building will benefit the region. The area is in a good position to adopt rigorous green building standards that will raise building performance and benefit the environment. National development in green building guidelines, green codes, and climate protection can support this effort. However, success-

ful adoption and implementation of such regional policies will require:

- Consensus on widely accepted standards for public and private commercial buildings;
- Verifiable standards for green homes and small-scale residential projects;
- Guidelines for green building management and operations. Much of the environmental impact from buildings in the region comes from existing buildings;
- Integration of selected green building standards with complementary LID, smart growth, community development, and transportation strategies;
- For the longer-term, implementation of consistent building codes across the region, on schedule with international updates.

Guidelines that take these factors into consideration will “level the playing field” for developers and encourage adoption of green building practices.

## **Trends and Best Practices in Green Building**

Local governments across the nation are setting ambitious green building performance goals for their facilities, and are supporting innovation in the private sector through regulatory and incentive programs. In metropolitan Washington, over a dozen COG member jurisdictions have green building policies in place or are in the process of developing them. The District of Columbia, Gaithersburg, Montgomery County, Alexandria, and Arlington County all use LEED as the primary assessment tool for public and private commercial buildings.

With most state and local governments using LEED as the rating system for green building, national trends point toward LEED Silver rating as a standard requirement for public buildings, with many governments moving toward requiring a Gold rating. Many jurisdictions augment LEED requirements with ENERGY STAR to further promote energy conservation.

Nationally, local governments are leading the way with green building practices to:

- Demonstrate commitment to environmental, economic, and social stewardship;

- Yield cost savings to taxpayers through reduced operating costs;
- Provide healthy work environments; and
- Contribute to public goals to protect, conserve, and enhance environmental resources.

## **Local Government Programs and Policies**

Municipalities establish green building standards through legislation, executive orders, incentive programs, zoning requirements, comprehensive plan policies, and internally developed policies for government facilities. National leaders are distinguished in part by well defined policies, staffed programs with clear lines of authority and communication, and dedicated funding sources. A clear vision on the part of elected leaders, active citizens and businesses has been the hallmark of successful municipal green building programs.

Green building programs in cities such as Seattle and Portland, OR are part of comprehensive agendas that incorporate energy conservation, urban forestry, water and air quality measures, recycling, climate protection efforts, and green infrastructure planning. It is worth noting that most of the government programs making significant progress are in states where legislation, regulations and incentives support green building.

## **Tools for Private Innovation**

Public leaders who have achieved widespread adoption of green building practices in their jurisdictions have done so through a combination of exemplary public buildings and active private sector involvement. Local governments engage with the private sector in many ways to support green building. Tools currently in use include:

- Legislated or mandated guidelines requiring compliance with standards such as LEED for commercial buildings or Green Communities for affordable housing;
- Building codes for both the residential and commercial sectors;
- Performance tracking requirements that are part of the project review process;
- Development density and Floor Area Ratio (FAR) bonuses;

- Tax rebates or abatement for buildings achieving certified green building performance;
- Technical assistance to builders of green projects;
- Educational programs and web resources for homeowners, homebuilders, and others;
- Targeted cross-sector partnerships in support of green building;
- Expedited permitting;
- Grants that support innovation; and
- Competitions and recognition for excellence.

Such programs and incentives have encouraged innovation on the part of developers, builders, and homeowners in Seattle, Portland, Chicago, and Austin. Specialized green businesses have also blossomed in these metropolitan areas. Similar industries are in the early phase of development in the metropolitan Washington region, and will likely benefit from targeted public grants, incentives, and partnerships.



*The Langston-Brown School and Community Center uses extensive interior daylighting with sunshades to control heating from the hot summer sun. Two large cisterns capture rainwater from the roof, which can be used for irrigation around the building. During construction, over 80% of construction debris was recycled.*

### **Leading for Green Building**

A clear vision on the part of elected leaders, active citizens and businesses has been the hallmark of successful municipal green building programs. Program piloting in Chicago, outreach and education in Seattle and Portland, and LEED performance requirements for public buildings in Austin are all examples of how governments are developing and fine tuning their programs.

Private sector leaders in these cities and others have initiated some of the nation's most ambitious green building initiatives. Bank of America's new headquarters building in Manhattan, for instance, was designed with the goal of achieving the LEED platinum designation. In the District of Columbia, the D.C. Building Industry Association was an active partner in developing the city's Green Building Ordinance. Nonprofits, citizen groups, and educational institutions have often served as important advisors and catalysts for both private and public innovation in green building.

According to the Greater Washington Board of Trade, there are now over 480 LEED registered projects in the Washington Metropolitan region, and 35 buildings have achieved LEED certification. A regional green building policy will make it easier for owners, developers, and contractors to follow a consistent set of guidelines and expectations across the region. Establishing this consistency will increase the opportunity for more green buildings and reduced environmental impacts.

National trends point toward the LEED Silver rating as a standard requirement for public buildings, with many governments moving toward requiring a LEED Gold rating.

### **Climate Protection and Green Building**

Cities and counties across the nation are exploring methods for integrating green building with climate protection initiatives to reduce carbon emissions. Several national programs such as the 2030 Challenge, International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives, American Institute of Architects, and the US Conference of Mayors offer models for reduction goals. Early work in this field is focusing on creating consensus for measurement benchmarks and for developing appropriate assessment and implementation tools. COG's Climate Change Initiative will soon be considering options for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Regional adoption of green building policies will figure prominently in this effort.

### **Green Building Costs and Operational Considerations**

A modest green building investment at the early stage of a project can bring performance and cost benefits over its entire lifecycle. Recent studies shed light on initial costs associated with green building.

## Initial Costs of Green Building

Several recent studies have found that green buildings have a modest initial cost premium, but that long-term benefits far exceed the incremental capital costs. A study commissioned by the State of California, *The Costs and Benefits of Green Building*, found a two percent average cost premium for 33 green building projects nationwide. A comparative study conducted for the General Services Administration found that first costs for green buildings range from 0.4 percent below conventional budgets to 8.1 percent above, based on the options selected.

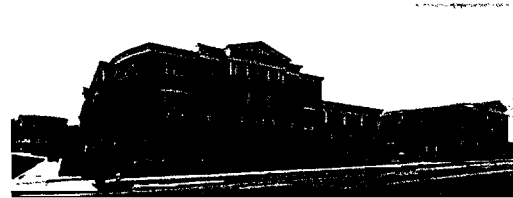
Final costs for green building development and construction depend on several factors including scale and location of the project, environmental goals, quality of project management, certification fees, unexpected events unrelated to green features, energy modeling, commissioning, and testing costs. Expenses are becoming competitive with standard practices.

Project developers and builders are still learning how to produce green buildings in the most cost-effective manner, but experience shows that the most successful projects are managed by experienced teams or have expert consulting, and incorporate green features early in the design phase. Feedback from local developers at COG's 2006 conference *Regional Leadership Conference on Green Building* indicate that initial costs of green projects are reduced with experience.

**Lifecycle Performance and Cost Benefits**  
Improved building operations, occupant productivity and wellbeing are all long-term benefits of green building. Specific benefits may include:

- Measurable reductions in energy and water bills in public buildings;
- Reduced maintenance and repair costs due to high-performing materials and systems;
- Less waste as a result of improved durability and recycling;
- Reduced employee and student health costs, fewer sick days and improved productivity due to healthier indoor environments;
- Fewer incidents of insurance risk, sick building syndrome, and mold and water damage.

When applied on a broader scale, green building practices can reduce the fiscal burden on jurisdictions throughout metropolitan Washington. In Montgomery County, for instance, the public school system expects to save \$60,000 annually in utilities at the recently completed Great Seneca Elementary School. Applied region wide, green building practices can help decrease burdens on public water, energy and other public utility systems while protecting the environment.



*TC Williams High School in Alexandria adheres to LEED standards, and was recently awarded a Green Innovation Award for Best Institutional Project from the Virginia Sustainable Building Network. Its environmentally friendly features include a rooftop garden to provide stormwater management, waterless urinals, a 450,000-gallon underground cistern to collect and store rainwater for use in toilet flushing, and a system for tracking water and energy use.*

## Local Government Operational Issues

Implementing green building policies will require:

- Budget and facilities planning that incorporates lifecycle assessment and operations costs;
- Procurement and RFP practices, as well as incentives, that support green building;
- Improved communications across departments regarding green building;
- Shared organizational understanding of green building, selected rating system, and the integrated design and development process;
- Familiarity with green building management and improvement practices among facilities managers;
- Functional understanding of green building techniques, technology, and codes among permitting and inspections staff;
- Understanding of green building and related community planning, stormwater, LID, smart growth, and waste management issues among relevant planning and environmental staff.

Education of staff and executives will be very important as programs are developed. Local and regional workshops, rating systems, and implementation tools can be very helpful. Senior level leaders who set priorities for green building and demonstrate a willingness to innovate throughout the organization will facilitate successful adoption of green building.

## **Economic Opportunities for the Region**

Green businesses and industries are still in the formative stages in the metropolitan Washington region, but this new sector is growing. Opportunities for economic growth through green building fall generally into the following areas:

- Project opportunities for developers and builders with green expertise;
- Consulting and design services;
- Sales of green products and building materials;
- Contracting for green construction and other services such as utilities installation, plumbing, carpentry, and green roof installation;
- Education and research.

Together, these areas create the potential for new job opportunities – from trades jobs to specialized knowledge sector niches – that promote economic development and a healthier regional environment. With its highly educated population and informed leadership, the metropolitan Washington region is well positioned to take advantage of these emerging opportunities and become a national model of interjurisdictional cooperation on green building. The Greater Washington Board of Trade's Potomac Conference, *Green as a Competitive Advantage*, focused on promoting green development and green business in the Washington region. This is a significant step toward accelerating progress in green building implementation and other environmental protection activities.

## **Policy Goals**

The IGBG has identified several recommendations that will position the region's local governments as leaders in innovation and environmental stewardship. While green building innovations are evolving, there are some key policy directions that warrant priority while

other recommendations are prioritized in the yearly program review and performance evaluation. It is essential to have a consistent region wide minimum green building standard. There must be continued integration of green building techniques into practical applications throughout the region. Finally, education and capacity must be built into the overall performance. Thus, key policy recommendations are:

- Establish a widely understood and rigorous region-wide standard for green building;
- Increase knowledge and capacity to implement green building throughout the region;
- Make facilities developed and built by COG member jurisdictions models of best green building practice;
- Promote and support green building innovation in the private sector through incentives, regulatory mechanisms, and information sharing;
- Promote cross-sector collaboration that supports regional goals for green building, environmental conservation, climate protection, and the growth of a regional green economy.

## **KEY RECOMMENDATIONS AND RATIONALE**

### **Recommendation 1: Preferred Green-building Rating Standards**

**Establish LEED as the region's preferred green building rating system for new commercial construction and high-rise residential projects. LEED includes several green building rating systems that apply to specific building types, including, but not limited to, LEED for New Construction (LEED-NC), LEED for Core and Shell (LEED-CS), and LEED for Commercial Interior (LEED-CI) rating systems. LEED building guidelines are also available or are in development for specific commercial project types (schools, health care, retail, existing buildings, neighborhoods, etc.) and should be evaluated for applicability as appropriate. In the future, the Intergovernmental Green Building Group will provide formal recommendations for green building standards in these sectors, but in the interim local governments are encouraged to consider available standards for these building types.**

The following jurisdictions in the COG region use LEED as a guide and rating system for public and/or private projects: Arlington County, City of Alexandria, District of Columbia, Fairfax County, City of Gaithersburg, City of Greenbelt, Montgomery County, Prince George's County, City of Leesburg, Prince William County, City of Rockville, Takoma Park, and Falls Church.

#### Rationale

- **LEED is the most recognizable and recognized green building guidance and rating system in use nation-wide.**
- **LEED is the system preferred by metropolitan Washington industry representatives.**
- **LEED is currently being used by many local governments in the metropolitan Washington region for public and private construction.**
- **There are about 487 LEED registered buildings in the metropolitan Washington region.**
- **GSA finds that the "USGBC's LEED rating system continues to be the most appropriate and credible sustainable building rating system available for evaluation of GSA projects."**
- **LEED has clearly defined standards and outlines specific requirements for compliance.**
- **LEED provides a rigorous, third-party certification process.**
- **LEED provides on-going training as well as local technical support.**

The policy rationale behind **Recommendation 1** is that the region will benefit from a consistent, rigorous, and widely understood standard for green building.

#### **Recommendation 2: Green Building Standard for Local Government Public Projects**

**Establish LEED Silver certification as the goal for all local government facilities constructed in the Washington Metropolitan Region.** The appropriate LEED rating system should be used for each specific type of public project, and should incorporate at least 4 credits as outlined by the COG Regional LEED Certified standard (see Recommendation 3) for private commercial and high-rise residential development. Public buildings should

also pursue the Energy Star label as part of their ongoing performance.

#### Rationale

- **LEED Silver is the entry level green building high performance standard among municipal leaders in the nation. Cutting edge municipalities are moving toward LEED Gold for public buildings.**
- **There are nearly 40 projects in the DC region that have achieved LEED ratings of Certified or higher.**
- **According to industry representatives, the LEED Certified rating – the baseline LEED ranking -- can easily be achieved in the Metropolitan Washington region.**
- **A growing number of builders in the region strive for LEED Silver as part of their competitive strategy.**
- **Local government should set a higher bar for building sustainability as an example of their commitment to achieving a sustainable and energy efficiency environment.**
- **Currently about 10 COG member governments participate in EPA's ENERGY STAR program.**
- **Energy Star and LEED programs complement one another. Energy Star products can be used in LEED buildings. Energy Star tools, such as Portfolio Manager, can be used to measure a LEED rated building's ongoing energy performance.**
- **LEED recently enhanced the energy performance requirements. (Two Energy Optimization credits are now required on all projects).**

The policy rationale behind **Recommendation 2** is that programs with strong energy conservation and energy efficiency components provide the region with the greatest opportunities for overall economic and environmental sustainability. Recommendation 2 supports making public facilities models for best green building practices.

#### **Recommendation 3: Develop "COG Regional Green Standard" for Private Development**

Establish the *COG Regional LEED Certified* standard for **private commercial and high-rise residential development.\***

**COG Regional LEED Certified** is defined as achieving a LEED Certified rating with at least 4 credits from the following:

- (1) Additional EA1 credits -- (Energy Optimization) credits
- (2) SS7.1 – Heat Island, Non-Roof
- (3) SS7.2 – Heat Island, Roof
- (4) EA 2 – On-site Renewable Energy
- (5) EA6 – Green Power
- (6) MR2.2 – 75% Construction Waste Management
- (7) SS 6.1 Stormwater Design – Quantity Control
- (8) SS 6.1 Stormwater Design – Quality Control

Focusing the LEED certification using these credits directly addresses the critical environmental issues facing the Metropolitan Region including energy efficiency, global warming, heat island impacts, solid waste management, stormwater management, and Chesapeake Bay protection.

\*Review and revise COG Regional LEED Certified recommendation no later than 2012 with the goal of increasing the standard in future years.

#### Rationale

- **The metropolitan Washington region is diverse, with urban and non urban environments.**
- **A LEED Certified rating is easily attained in the region due to local expertise and services.**
- **The USGBC is currently developing criteria to make documentation less onerous in recognition of concerns regarding commissioning and documentation costs.**
- **The LEED Certified rating allows maximum flexibility in choosing environmental components for cost effective implementation.**
- **There are nearly 40 buildings in the region that have achieved LEED ratings of Certified or higher.**

The policy rationale behind **Recommendation 3** is that the region will benefit from establishing a region specific standard that focuses on environmental issues of regional concern (Chesapeake Bay protection, greenhouse gas emission reduction, and waste management) and respects the diversity of the region's urban and non-urban environments.

#### Recommendation 4: Education

COG shall collaborate and partner with **the private development community, non-profit organizations, federal programs, educational institutions, financial institutions, and other interested parties** to ensure green building goals are achieved to maximize opportunities for innovation in the region, and to optimize outreach and educational opportunities. One means of implementing this goal is an annual regional green building conference that includes all stakeholders – public, private, and community.

#### Rationale

- **Jurisdictions have successfully pioneered green building programs. They have actively involved the public and private sectors, nonprofit organizations, and financial institutions in the development and implementation of green building activities. Community action and market development create jobs and are vital to the success of green building.**

The policy rationale behind **Recommendation 4** is to promote and support green building innovation in the private sector through incentives, regulatory mechanisms, and information sharing.

#### Recommendation 5: Implement Actions to Insure the Success of the Regional Green Building Policy

- Local governments should use the IGBG Summary Report and Technical Report as a reference guide in developing and implementing Green Building initiatives;
- Continue further work to streamline the implementation of LEED, including working with the USGBC on a regional portfolio standard and other ways to helping implementation of LEED to be more efficient.
- Develop efforts to train local government staff and facility managers in green building design and management, including a monitoring and tracking recommendation on the numbers, types and certification level of green buildings.

- Develop quantification of the benefits of wide-spread implementation of the green building policy on energy use, greenhouse gas reduction, and other measures between now and 2030.
- Develop regional guidance for green building standard for the residential sector, schools, hospitals, existing buildings, and major renovations.
- Develop regional guidance on Energy Star as a performance measure for Green Building.
- COG should formalize a **Green Building Program within the Department of Environmental Programs** to support green building policy development, education, and regional coordination. The Green Building Program should coordinate with existing COG programs (Energy, Climate Change, Water Quality, Air Quality, Regional Growth and Development, Housing, Procurement, etc).

#### Rationale

- **Widespread regional implementation will insure a level playing field for the private sector.**
- **Collaboration with the US Green Building Council on streamlining implementation of the LEED certification process should help insure wider acceptance of green building policies and promote efficient implementation.**
- **Education and training are essential for local government personnel to help speed implementation of green building policies, including those for local government facilities.**
- **Computation of the benefits of green building will provide reinforcing data supporting the regional green building policy.**
- **COG's Department of Environmental Programs has the lead responsibility for environmental issues including air, water, energy, climate change, green building and solid waste. The key feature of green buildings is the integration of the various environmental media and sustainability practices in combination with traditional development policies, housing and procurement.**

The policy rationale behind **Recommendation 5** is to promote cross-sector collaboration that supports regional goals for green building, environmental conservation, climate protection, and growth of a regional green economy.

#### Conclusion

Metropolitan Washington faces an unprecedented period of opportunity for developing green building practices and markets. As the region faces many challenges related to air and water quality and climate change, coordinated public policies that promote green building will help overcome those issues while enabling innovators to take advantage of emerging economic opportunities.

LEED currently offers the most reliable and widely understood system for guiding and certifying green commercial projects. ENERGY STAR energy performance guidelines and measurement tools are a valuable accompaniment. National green building codes, currently in development, will offer a viable option for raising base environmental performance of all buildings, while LEED will continue to push toward high performance. Regional leaders face the unenviable task of coordinating such standards in a tri-state area with varying policies. The District of Columbia has already stepped up to this challenge by establishing a process for reviewing and updating codes to support green building. In-depth analysis and evaluation will help determine how green building standards should be applied to small-scale residential projects, affordable housing, schools and existing and historic projects.

As green building guidelines and incentives evolve nationally, COG members will need to follow developments closely. Unlike cities such as Seattle, Portland, and Austin, utilities in metropolitan Washington are privately owned, meaning the region's leaders will need to explore alternative options for funding-related incentive tools.

Green building policies and initiatives will be most effective when they are applied with complementary LID, smart growth, and community development practices, and in coordination with COG's existing environmental initiatives. Green building is a vital part of an integrated, coordinated approach to regional sustainable development and environmental stewardship. Most notably, opportunities for integration of green building policies with the region's new climate change initiative remain to be explored.



Building construction, management, and disposal practices have not been well tracked or analyzed at the regional scale. A quantitative tracking and evaluation system for green building in the region will help COG members measure progress and meet goals for improving the region's water, air, and land resources. Further analysis can also assist in creating targets for energy conservation and carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emission reductions.

National experience indicates that the best and strongest municipal efforts for green building

involve strong leadership, empowered staff, and strong engagement on the part of the private sector, education institutions, and non-profit organizations. As the metropolitan Washington region moves from public policy toward an integrated regional approach, such partners will have to be a vital part of the regional conversation. All will have to be engaged in an ongoing process of education and information sharing as we move toward best green building practices in the region.

Copies of this executive summary, as well as the full report, are available for download at [www.mwcog.org](http://www.mwcog.org).



*A legacy of regional cooperation, a commitment to a vibrant future*

December 18, 2007

The Honorable William Euille  
Mayor  
City of Alexandria  
City Hall  
301 King Street  
Alexandria, VA 22314-3211

- District of Columbia
- Bladensburg\*
- Bowie
- College Park
- Frederick
- Frederick County
- Gaithersburg
- Greenbelt
- Montgomery County
- Prince George's County
- Rockville
- Takoma Park
- Alexandria
- Arlington County
- Fairfax
- Fairfax County
- Falls Church
- Loudoun County
- Manassas
- Manassas Park
- Prince William County

\*Adjunct member

Dear Mayor Euille:

At the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) Board of Directors meeting on December 12, 2007, the Board unanimously adopted R71-07, approving the report, "Greening the Metropolitan Washington Region's Built Environment".

The Green Building Report contains recommendations that support COG's vision of making the region a national leader in green building, with local governments leading in innovation and stewardship. Development of a regional green building policy was identified as a 2007 priority by COG's Board of Directors. The adopted policy identifies the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) as the region's preferred green building rating system for new local government construction, and private sector commercial construction and high-rise residential projects. LEED "Silver" is recommended for new government projects and LEED certified with certain energy and stormwater management prerequisites for the private sector. Additional report recommendations include assisting COG's members with training and other support to facilitate implementation of the new standards. Over the coming year, COG will be considering additional regional standards for existing buildings, residential construction, and existing buildings.

Enclosed you will find the resolution and summary report. If you have any questions concerning the resolution, or would like further information, please contact Stuart Freudberg at [sfreudberg@mwkog.org](mailto:sfreudberg@mwkog.org) or George Nichols at [gnichols@mwkog.org](mailto:gnichols@mwkog.org). Copies of the technical report may also be obtained at [www.mwkog.org/environment/greenbuilding](http://www.mwkog.org/environment/greenbuilding).

Sincerely,

David J. Robertson  
Executive Director

cc: James Hartman, City Manager

Enclosure: Green Building Summary Report, December 12, 2007

CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE  
ALEXANDRIA, VA  
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