

Green Practice Advice

Adapted from an article by Joe Snider, LEED AP, originally published in *SPP Journal*, the newsletter of AIA Small Project Practitioners August 2006

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SUMMARY

Joe Snider, LEED AP, explains six fundamentals to building a successful green project. Whether building a house with sustainability in mind or reaching for LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification, these steps form the building blocks of a sustainable project.

ADJUST CONTRACTS

Current owner-architect-contractor agreements do not contain language specific to green projects. To encourage subcontractors to be conscious of sustainability goals, set penalties for spoiling or incentives for meeting LEED certification. A contractor or subcontractor can adversely affect the sustainability of a project. Unless penalties are set, there is little recourse against a subcontractor that accidentally negatively affects the health of occupants—for example, by erroneously using a high-VOC adhesive.

DECIDE SUSTAINABILITY GOALS EARLY

Decide what level of sustainability the project will try to meet as early as possible. Many of the decisions made in the beginning phases have the greatest impact on the environment. To help achieve sustainability goals, define green strategies with all project participants prior to starting.

PROVIDE TRAINING

Require all members of the project team to be adequately trained in the concepts and techniques associated with the sustainable elements of your project. I met an architect who required his consultants to attend a LEED workshop before he would sign construction contracts with them; he even offered to pay their workshop fees. If pursuing a LEED certification, encourage everyone involved to have a LEED Reference Guide on hand.

EMPHASIZE COMMUNICATION AND TEAMWORK

Success depends upon the contractor's, owner's, and architect's joint commitment to teamwork.

Communication breakdowns can cause setbacks. For example, on one job we struggled with on-site recycling. Eventually, the contractor and owner worked together to solve the problem: They split the cost of magnetic, bilingual recycling signs for the dumpsters.

EMBRACE IN-HOUSE GREEN

We learned that what we thought were negligible decisions on the job site could affect the sustainability of the project. Green design is not just an application or a coating applied to a building. It should be a driving force in the design and construction process—as important as, function, structure, and aesthetics.

TAKE CONTROL

Never underestimate the importance of design-phase energy modeling. Energy modeling on our project became an after-the-fact evaluation of a design we couldn't change because it was too late. Many of our general assumptions proved to be wrong based on energy modeling after the project started. For example, the type of low-e coating we chose turned out to have infinitely more impact on heat gain than increasing our wall R-value by 30 percent. Design-phase energy analysis will also help maximize cost-effectiveness.

The LEED® (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Green Rating System™ is a registered trademark of the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC). For more information, go to www.usgbc.org/.

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTOR

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RESOURCES

More Best Practices

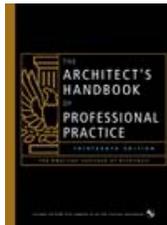
The following AIA Best Practices provide additional information related to this topic:

- 16.02.04 Basic, No-Cost Green Building Principles
- 16.02.04 Watch Out for Potential Pitfalls of Green Design
- 16.01.02 Green Roofs

For More Information on This Topic

“Selecting Environmentally Preferable Products” by Nadav Malin, LEED AP in *the Architect’s Handbook of Professional Practice*, 2005 Update page 81.

See also the 14th edition of the *Handbook*, which can be ordered from the AIA Bookstore by calling 800-242-3837 (option 4) or by email at bookstore@aia.org.



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Key Terms

- Building performance
- Sustainability
- Sustainable practices