



Local Issue Brief

The American Institute of Architects • Government Advocacy • Current Issue Position and Analysis

Green Building Key Points:

- *Portland offers income tax credits for green buildings and projects for energy conservation, recycling, renewable energy, and cleaner fuels. Municipal buildings must also meet LEED® Gold standards.*
- *Chicago has more LEED registered projects than any other U.S. city. The city's green roof grant program offers \$5,000 grants, and Chicago's green permitting program rates projects on their greenness. Those achieving the top level covers all consultant fees and moves a project through in 15 days.*
- *Austin had the first green building program in the country. The city's climate protection program will require all city buildings to run on 100 percent renewable energy by 2012 and be completely carbon neutral by 2020. New single family homes will also be zero net energy capable by 2015.*
- *San Francisco offers fast-track permitting on green commercial projects, instituted impressive affordable green housing policies, and is looking towards the future with effective long-range sustainability planning.*

Green Building Programs

AIA Position

The American Institute of Architects (AIA) supports green building. The AIA believes that green building programs in cities and counties across the country promote energy savings, effect positive environmental change, improve health, and limit American dependence on foreign fuel sources.

Action Sought

The AIA urges local government officials to support ordinances and programs that promote the design and construction of green buildings. Well designed green buildings have the potential to curb America's rampant energy use and promote sustainable, healthy living.

Explanation and Justification

Local officials across the country are leading the way on sustainability, with at least 92 cities, and countless small towns and counties, already implementing green building programs. Currently, buildings account for the largest source of energy consumption in America, an estimated 43 percent of all greenhouse emissions compared to 32 percent for transportation and 25 percent for industry. In light of these numbers, the design and construction of green buildings clearly offers an opportunity to rectify this imbalance.

Local initiatives that advocate for community-wide green building programs should be encouraged. Bonus density, tax abatement, expedited permitting, and other similar, positive incentives promote green buildings because they offset the perceived initial cost premium associated with green design and construction. Furthermore, the Davis-Langdon study, *Costing Green Revisited*, has reported that there is no substantial difference in average green construction costs compared to non-green construction costs.

In taking all of these matters into consideration, it is imperative that communities continue to lead the way on green building policy by implementing holistic, effective sustainability policies. Green building is flourishing now and the future looks bright for sustainable design. By developing and implementing green building policies local communities can display to other levels of government a clear path towards a sustainable future.

The following recommendations can help local communities as they begin or enhance their green building programs.

- Be inclusive
- Use architects as a resource
- Hire a director of sustainability
- Train and accredit municipal employees
- Keep the policy simple
- Implement additional sustainability initiatives

For more information on green building programs throughout the country, visit www.aia.org/localleaders.