

Green Building Series: Part 3



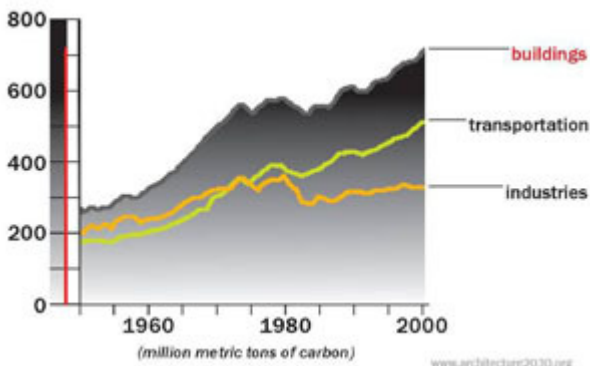
TOP TEN GREEN BUILDING TRENDS FOR 2010 SELECTED BY EARTH ADVANTAGE INSTITUTE

PORTLAND, Ore., January 6, 2010 - Earth Advantage Institute, a leading nonprofit green building resource that has certified more than 11,000 sustainable homes, today announced its selections for top ten green building trends to watch in 2010.

The trends, which range from energy "scores" for homes to web-based displays that track energy usage in real time, were identified by Earth Advantage Institute based on discussions and transactions with a range of audiences over the latter part of 2009, including builders, architects, real estate brokers, appraisers, lenders, and homeowners.

"While we know the building industry had a rough year in 2009, not all of the industry has been in the doldrums," said Sean Penrith, executive director, Earth Advantage Institute. "Green building has been a bright spot in an otherwise lackluster year, and Northwest design and building communities have been at the forefront." The appeal of sustainable housing is highlighted in the 2009 McGraw Hill Construction report on the Green Home Consumer, which shows that green homes are generally secure from price erosion.

The smart grid and connected home. While utilities will continue to make upgrades to the grid for more effective generation, storage and distribution of power, the big news is in the home. The development of custom and web-based display panels that show real-time home energy use, and even real-time energy use broken out by individual appliance, will go a long way towards helping change homeowners' energy behavior and drive energy conservation.



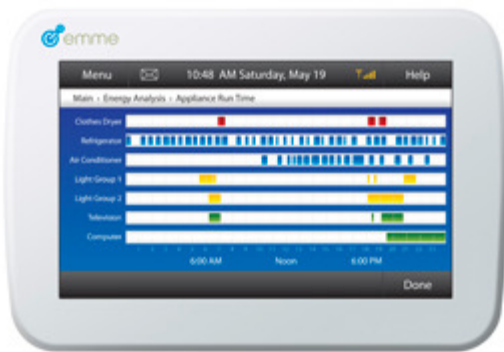
Energy labeling for homes and office buildings. The advent of more accurate energy rating systems for homes and office spaces - similar to the miles-per-gallon sticker on your car - has caught the attention of energy agencies and legislators around the country. Not only can it make a building-to-building or home-to-home comparison easier, but a publicly available score on the multiple listing service could

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galvanize owners to make needed energy improvements while adding value to their building.

Building information modeling (BIM) software. The continued evolution of CAD software for building design has produced new add-on tools with increasingly accurate algorithms for energy modeling as well as embedded energy properties for many materials and features. This will prove instrumental in predicting building performance. BIM developers will soon be offering more affordable packages aimed at smaller firms and individual builders.

Financial community buy-in to green building. Lenders and insurers have come to see green homes and buildings as better for their bottom line and are working to get new reduced-rate loan products, insurance packages, and metrics into place. Lenders and insurers are realizing green home and building owners are more responsible, place higher value on maintenance and lower operating costs, and are less likely to default.



"Rightsizing" of homes. A larger home no longer translates into greater equity. Given that the forecast for home valuation remains conservative, that energy prices are expected to rise over time, and the Federal Reserve is expected to raise interest rates mid-year, homeowners will likely feel more comfortable building smaller homes and smaller add-ons.

Eco-districts. Portland is already on the bandwagon with this one, encouraging the creation of greener communities where residents have access to most services and supplies within walking or biking distance. The creation of walkable, low-impact communities in the suburban setting is also gaining steam.

Water conservation. Because indoor and outdoor residential water use accounts for more than half of the publicly supplied water in the United States, the EPA finalized the voluntary WaterSense specification for new homes in December of 2009, which reduces water use by about 20 percent compared to a conventional new home. Water will be the essential resource in the next decade.

Carbon Calculation. With buildings contributing roughly half the carbon emissions in the environment, the progressive elements in the building industry are looking at ways to document, measure, and reduce greenhouse gas creation in building materials and processes. This effort will be heightened once a federal cap-and-trade mechanism is launched in this country.

Net Zero Buildings. A net zero building is a building that generates more energy than it uses over the

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course of a year, as a result of relatively small size, extreme efficiencies and onsite renewable energy sources. While the Architecture 2030 Challenge sets forth net zero as the goal for all new buildings by 2030, we are already within striking distance on energy efficiency know-how.

Sustainable building education. The continued demand for greener buildings, especially in progressive cities, will supply new learning opportunities, not just for designers and builders but for the entire chain of professionals involved in the building industry, from real estate to finance, and insurance.

An expanded version of this article is available at www.earthadvantage.org.

About Earth Advantage Institute



Earth Advantage Institute works with the building and design industry to help implement sustainable building practices. Its nonprofit mission is to create an immediate, practical and cost-effective path to sustainability and carbon reduction in the built environment. The organization achieves its objectives through a range of innovative certification, education and technical services programs.

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