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Recap of the 2013 Greenbuild International Conference & Expo in Philadelphia

December 27, 2013 - Green Buildings

I had the privilege to attend the 2013 Greenbuild International Conference & Expo in Philadelphia, that took place November 20th - 22nd. Thousands of industry professionals attended to celebrate the USGBC and sustainable building, reflect on where green building has been, and look forward to all that can be done in the next 20 years.

Greenbuild offers sustainable professionals the opportunity to explore LEED, learn green building best practices, experience innovative products, attend educational sessions, and network with sustainable professionals from around the world.

Some of my personal highlights from the 2013 conference are:

* LEED V4: This year marked the USGBC's 20th anniversary, and the long awaited roll out of the LEED rating systems LEED Version 4 (V4). Approved in July, V4 was officially made available to project teams on November 20th. (The older version 2009 will remain available through summer 2015). Major changes were made in the materials and resources categories encouraging materials transparency and the use of verified life cycle assessment (LCA) data to more accurately assess environmental and health impacts. These declarations will help improve transparency in building-product manufacturing, ensure accountability, and create healthier environments where we work, learn, and live.

* The Comcast Center: Liberty Property Trust opened the doors to the Comcast Center during a networking event in its Winter Garden. This 975 foot tall, Robert A.M. Stern designed building features a public plaza with a gorgeous fountain display, a dramatic eight-story "Winter Garden", and a high performance glass facade that stands out in the Philadelphia skyline. Located in the public lobby, "The Comcast Experience," the largest LED screen of it's kind in the world, projected computer-generated images on its 2,000 s/f screen all night. When the Comcast Center opened in 2009, it was the country's tallest green building achieving LEED Gold Certification.

* 2030 Palette: Architecture 2030 CEO, Edward Maznia's session introduced the 2030 Palette. The Palette is a free comprehensive education and planning online tool for professional architects, planners, community advocates and other stakeholders. It aims to encourage planning for resiliency, sustainability, and lowering carbon pollution in local communities. The Palette consists of 55 different design categories like region, city/town, district, site, and building organized into sections called "swatches." Each swatch supplies best practices within that category, recommendations, graphics, and guidelines helping projects align with the Architecture 2030 Challenge's environmental goals.

* New Products & Services: The conference expo floor showcased new and innovative green building products and services in the marketplace too numerous to name. Booths were arranged by Pavilions including Smart Grid, Concrete Solutions, Wood, and the 500 Mile. One product I

especially enjoyed hearing about from a session was the "LEED Dynamic Plaque" explained by senior vice president for LEED, Scot Horst. Presented in 2012 the LEED Dynamic Plaque is the newest development in measurement and verification displaying the buildings LEED rating in real-time. Horst explained that the USGBC Headquarters was piloting the plaque and while it was originally certified as Platinum, it is now functioning as Gold. This innovation will supply a better way to bridge the gap between design and operating high performance buildings. A couple of the many highlights from the floor were UL's boxed water and Toto's display of 1 gpf toilets.

* World USGBC: International news included USGBC's announcement of LEED Earth winners Bahrain, Burundi, Honduras, Haiti, South Sudan, Luxembourg, Tunisia, Serbia and Ukraine. This is a campaign designed to bring LEED to countries where LEED has yet to take root. The Green Building Council Italia (GBC Italia) and Green Building Council Brazil (GBC Brazil) announced that in addition to the U.S. Greenbuild Expo in New Orleans in 2014, they are hosting Greenbuild in their respective countries in Verona (October) and Sao Paulo (August) next year. Rick Fedrizzi also announced the launch of the Global Coalition for Green Schools by the Center for Green Schools at USGBC and the World Green Building Council.

As part of the main celebration at Greenbuild, former secretary of state, Hillary Rodham Clinton inspired attendees with her keynote address and informal Q & A with Rick Fedrizzi. She delivered a global message for more focus on delivering the argument for sustainability, asking attendees to continue to use Greenbuild opportunities to create lasting partnerships to drive our mission of green building further into the future. A Bon Jovi concert followed the former first lady's keynote address to close out the celebration.

This was another year of being inspired by speakers at education sessions, experiencing invaluable networking opportunities, viewing industry showcases, and learning through conversations with colleagues from around the world. I look forward to doing it all again in New Orleans October 2014.

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