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## **Going Green has made its way into the public spotlight and has become a critical issue**

March 26, 2008 - Spotlights

There is a growing trend nationally and internationally of redesigning the approach that developers, ownerships and property managers conceptualize, develop, construct, reposition, renovate and operate new and existing commercial buildings. The idea of "Going Green" has made its way into the public spotlight and has become a critical issue on many different fronts. Environmentally, whether it is the global warming/carbon emissions concerns, or the degradation of our existing infrastructure and natural environment/resources talk of 'Going Green' has now migrated into today's lexicon and is transforming the next generation of properties under design or has begun to influence the modification of existing buildings. Additionally, the historical price of a barrel of oil, peaking recently at \$109/per, has placed greater challenges on ownerships/property managers to institute methods of reducing utility costs/operating expenses to ensure appropriate actions are being taken to achieve a successful project.

The various approaches of designing green buildings is being set by several methodologies, however, the principals and practices being accepted by most have followed the standards developed and implemented by certification in the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) criteria.

This curriculum has become the national and international standard in achievement for environmentally friendly buildings. There are several similar rating systems, whether it is for homes, new or renovations of office buildings, schools, hospitals etc. Attaining the LEEDS Platinum designation, the highest of achievements, requires that all criteria be met or exceeded with the lowest level, a Bronze designation, still requiring a demanding checklists of standards set by LEED.

Most of these programs, similar in objectives, focus heavily on integrity of materials (i.e glazing, fabrics, hardware, roof, exterior façade) building systems efficiencies (HVAC, re-use of building water with green roofs, water treatment, plumbing, utilities) site selection (urban vs. suburban, improved land use, proximity to water sources) and improved accessibility (distance to: public transportation, major highways, town centers and urban populations) that in total, provide the user and the surrounding environment an enhanced experience of reducing waste and energy while improving the overall positive affect a particular project has on the environment.

Hunneman Management & Development Co. has begun to implement a systematic approach, similar in objective to LEEDS certification. In reviewing our portfolio of existing managed properties we identify building materials and systems which can be converted, renovated and/or replaced with

more operational efficient devices or finishes in an effort to help lower the overall ecological footprint while reducing expenses. At 303 Congress St., Boston, we recently installed hands-free devices on bathroom fixtures and have motion sensitive light detectors in offices.

Overall water consumption is projected to decrease by 5%, as importantly though, is receiving our tenants' comments, which have been overwhelmingly positive and complimentary. These tangible efforts put forth by the ownership, have rightfully empowered our tenants to feel that they too are contributing to the changing tides by making the decision to rent in an ecologically friendly office building

There are many other ways to reduce costs and lower existing non-certified buildings' strain on the environment. Several examples include, using recycled paper products, instituting paper recycle programs with tenants, install computerized programmable HVAC systems, incorporate native plants from the region in the landscape, as non-indigenous plants usually require additional watering, install "no mow" grass species, waterless urinals, dual flush toilets and low flow sinks. Seeing as 65% of all energy consumption in the United States comes from buildings, and they contribute around 36% of total greenhouse gas emissions, there is more than plausible reasons for the extra effort to incorporate these type of programs to slash these numbers.

From a property management perspective, operating an existing non-certified building in an environmentally friendlier manner, is not too big a task to tackle, it just takes more creative thinking. Improvements, as outlined above, can be introduced, even within strict budget constraints. The flip side to this is the added cost to new developments or sizable renovation projects, especially when utilizing eco-friendly materials or installing eco-friendly systems, for example; higher rated glass to offset UV rays for the exterior glazing and/or installing recyclable waste water piping up to the roof to irrigate growing plants of 'green roofs'. Granted these systems increase the green friendly factor, they also increase project costs ranging from 10 to 35%.

These costs need to be analyzed and understood on how they impact the projects rate of returns to investors. Depending upon where the project is, developers today do not even have a voice as to "Going Green" or not, as some states and cities, like Boston, are now making it mandatory to at least achieve Bronze LEED level status, or there projects will not be approved. Tax credits and other incentives have been introduced by various municipalities to offset some off these inherit costs however, since most of the ecological

"Going Green" programs are still relatively new, long term efficiencies and the real lasting impact on the environment have yet to be determined and as any real estate project goes, there is always an element of risk.

Hats off to the developers, ownerships and property management companies who have jump started on "Going Green" as you have made a prolific statement in demonstrating that those in real estate do indeed have moral consciousness. To those more challenged by these guidelines, there will be little choice in the near future, as LEED or other environmental friendly criteria will become mandatory, similar to fire, electrical and plumbing codes - so get use to it and go hug a tree.

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