



Why build green?

THE KRESGE FOUNDATION

Green building

practices can create value
for nonprofit organizations
and those they serve.



Today, many nonprofit organizations and for-profits alike are considering the impact their buildings make on the people who work within them and the environment outside. Many are also finding that, with a little investigation and careful planning, they can build green and fulfill their missions better than ever before.

The practice of building green is one that works with nature and the people who use the building to achieve important efficiencies. Though often described in terms of environmental benefits, positive outcomes of building green can be diverse and many. Green building users have found that their organizations' productivity, community relations, and worker satisfaction have risen and that employee illness and turnover, liability, and operational and energy expenses have dropped.

BUILDING GREEN EMPLOYS ECOLOGICAL THINKING TO CREATE ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE BUILDINGS THAT ARE BENEFICIAL TO THEIR OWNERS, OCCUPANTS, AND COMMUNITIES.

Nonprofits
that go green
reap benefits

LOW OPERATING COSTS • SUPPORT
OF MISSION • EDUCATIONAL VALUE •
BUILDING USER HEALTH • WORKER
SATISFACTION • POSITIVE MEDIA
ATTENTION • COMMUNITY SUPPORT
• FUNDRAISING ADVANTAGE

MISSION

Building green may help you help others

Some organizations have a green mission—they may help preserve endangered species, they may lead clean-up projects, etc. For these organizations, creating a building that is consistent with a green mission is a natural. Others choose to build green because they find connections between green values and the stewardship values of their organizations, supporters, and community. They may find that their missions, though not focused specifically on the environment, would be well-supported by buildings that may facilitate environmental education or provide nontoxic, safe, and natural environments for their occupants.

For example, a nonprofit serving youth may find that a green building presents important health and wellness benefits to the young people who use it. A library may find that a green building's use of daylighting helps reduce the eyestrain of readers, creates an inviting atmosphere, and reduces energy use and expense.

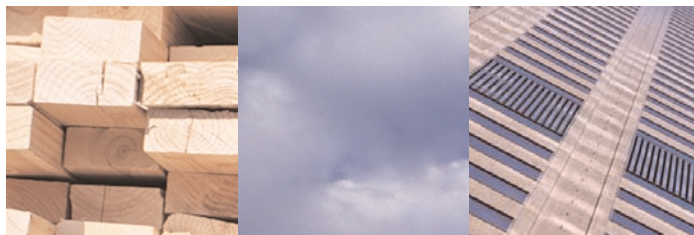


ECONOMICS

Green investments may pay off in the long term

Green buildings use a front-loaded design process, which means that the major investments in time and money happen early on in the design process. What it also implies is that there may be significant savings for an organization that is guided by green principles, plans well, and invests in the appropriate construction products. For example, one principle of green building is to create a structure that does more with fewer resources. An organization that invests early in resource efficiency and chooses complementary efficiency-focused materials is likely to reduce what it spends on lighting, heating, cooling, electricity, waste disposal, and other operating costs over the long run. The U.S. Green Building Council reports that green building techniques can help an organization cut energy and water use (and expense) by half or better.¹

Green buildings are designed holistically, so that each system, natural and human-made, works in tandem with the others.



For example, the size of furnace selected depends on how warm the lighting makes the rooms, how much insulation (or ventilation) the windows provide, and on the regional climate. When systems work together, rather than competing, great efficiencies and savings can result.

Nonprofit organizations tend to own or occupy their buildings for a long time so they are likely to reap the long-term operating benefits of a green building. Some nonprofit organizations even find government and private-sector funding specially designated for green projects.

¹ U.S. Green Building Council, "An Introduction to the U.S. Green Building Council and the LEED™ Green Building Rating System," Presentation, April 2003.

RESOURCE PRESERVATION

Building green is a form of stewardship

According to the Pacific Northwest Pollution Prevention Resource Center, buildings in the United States “use 40 percent of total energy, one-fourth of its timber harvest, and 16 percent of its fresh water. Buildings account for more than one-third of carbon dioxide emissions and 40 percent of municipal solid waste sent to landfills.”² But, a green building that has been carefully designed to suit its environment may use 50 percent less energy; can incorporate a high percentage of recycled materials that do not create harmful emissions; and may have been the result of a building process that restored natural, historical, or cultural features to its site that were disturbed by past land use.

HEALTH

A green building supports your most important asset—people

Building green guards against “sick building syndrome” by making sure that there is fresh air to breathe; natural lighting; and a reduction in the gasses emitted by carpeting, paint, and other finishes. Occupants of green buildings report that employees are healthy and place less strain on attendance and insurance than they did in a traditionally-built environment. Some report fewer headaches and less eyestrain. Morale may be uplifted by pleasant, healthy surroundings, thereby reducing turnover and increasing productivity and creativity. According to William D. Browning, founder of Green Development Services and Senior Associate of the Rocky Mountain Institute, a green building can help increase occupant performance by six to 26 percent.³ Other building users—for example, those the organization serves—are likely to enjoy similar benefits.

POSITIVE ATTENTION

Green can get you noticed

Many organizations that pursue green objectives leverage this in the fundraising for their building project and, later on, for other kinds of programmatic support. Organizations promote their green values and the value that their green buildings present to the community using public relations, and they also do so when reaching out to prospective donors or collaborators. Any positive attention for the work you do, either in the creation of your building, or in the services you provide, is an opportunity to attract supporters who may help you further your mission.

² The Pacific Northwest Pollution Prevention Resource Center, “Topical Reports: Green Construction,” 2003, www.pprc.org.

³ U.S. Green Building Council, “Making the Business Case for High Performance Green Buildings,” 2002, www.usgbc.org.

considering green

Deciding to build green means making an early investment in planning time and resources. Though not all nonprofit organizations are ready to invest in this way, it may be worthwhile to at least consider green next time a capital project is on the horizon. Nonprofits that do build green may enjoy reduced lifecycle costs, positive publicity, and the health and satisfaction of building users. And more important, nonprofits that are able to build green may find that they become better stewards of their resources and are better able to fulfill their missions.



