



## Going green for Earth Month and every month after that

April 11, 2011 - Design / Build

By Margaret Castillo, AIAAs you may know, April is Earth Month. It's a big month for me, personally, as I have been committed to environmental causes ever since attending the first Earth Day celebration in Washington on April 22, 1970. It's also a big month for architects. As a profession, we have to take charge of environmental stewardship of our cities, namely by designing and maintaining buildings that are responsible consumers of energy.

Energy consumption in buildings has been on the tongues of many in recent weeks. The Department of Buildings is poised to adopt rules pursuant to Local Law 84, which requires buildings over 50,000 s/f to be benchmarked by May 1. This is the latest initiative of the 2009 Greener, Greater Buildings Plan, whose goal is to achieve a 30% reduction of global warming emissions in NYC by 2030.

What is benchmarking? It involves gathering information on a number of fuel types: fuel oil, natural gas, district steam, electricity and renewables, and combining them into one number: the energy use intensity (EUI). It also collects information on greenhouse gas emissions and water usage. It may be data entry at this early point, but I'm a proponent of Mayor Bloomberg's mantra of "what gets measured gets managed." It's important to see what kind of numbers your building produces, and look at how it compares to other buildings.

As an architect, I think measuring energy use is an important first step towards our goal, which is to see reporting lead to upgrades and retrofits that will not only improve energy performance and lower greenhouse gas emissions, but also garner benefits through decreased operating costs for both the owner, the user, and the City of New York. Better efficiency and decreased energy usage mean less load on our city-wide infrastructure, less pollution and ultimately a healthier and sustainable NYC.

That's why we should benchmark. But how? There's no shortage of green consultants and engineers standing at the ready to take your measurements, but I believe that architects can and should be employed to benchmark New York's buildings. Not only can they measure energy use, they can respond with energy-saving design solutions. No one knows buildings better than design professionals, and they can make sure your calculations are correct and advise as to next steps, taking whole building life-cycle costs into account.

While the rules go into effect May 1, an "effective extension" was put into place to August 1 for compliance. This just means that there is a grace period for late filers but the time to act is now.

Earth Month is also a good opportunity to learn more about the environment and how our buildings affect it. Our Committee on the Environment (COTE) is offering three "Earth Month" programs - a 4/13 lecture at the Center for Architecture on high performance building skins with leaders from Woods Bagot and the Center for Architecture, Science & Ecology (CASE). On 4/27, the Center will also host the latest installment of our Integration series, Integration 201: Blackwater at the Helena, which will look at the design, implementation and operations of on-site water treatment systems. The

biggest COTE program of the month will actually be at Cooper Union's Great Hall (7 East 7th St.) on 4/20, when we host Ed Mazria, founder and chief executive of Architecture 2030. Architecture 2030's mission is to "rapidly transform the U.S. and global Building Sector from the major contributor of greenhouse gas emissions to a central part of the solution to the climate change, energy consumption, and economic crises." It's a noble mission, and one that we should stand behind for Earth Month, and every month after that.

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