



Sustainability saves money. I promise.

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Sustainability for buildings? So what?

It's got a reputation as being the expensive pet project of treehuggers who have more money than sense, and who refuse to take into account the most basic concern of building owners: the bottom line. It can sound like the idealism of architects who don't have to deal with financing, or the day-to-day reality of running a building.

However, sustainability doesn't have to be intimidating, high-concept or expensive. And in many cases, it is just common sense. The most important part of sustainable design for buildings is energy efficiency, and increasing it can only have a positive impact on your bottom line. Here are some ideas on how to incorporate sustainable or energy efficiency into your building:

- * Start small. By now, most of us have heard about the changes to laws regarding the manufacturing of incandescent light bulbs, and how they're being phased out. According to the U.S. Dept. of Energy, based on a 40-hour usage week, switching your light bulbs from incandescent to CFL can save you \$50 per year of electricity costs per bulb, and switching to LED can save you more than \$60 per year per bulb. Occupancy sensors which automatically turn off lights in unused areas can save you hundreds of dollars per year. These inexpensive sensors can be used in bathrooms, mechanical and electrical rooms, service corridors, laundry rooms, gyms, offices, and various other areas.

- * Timing is everything. Knowing when your building systems are running, for how long, and at what temperatures is critical to energy efficient building operations. Even without replacing your HVAC equipment, you can save thousands of dollars per year simply by adjusting settings, keeping track of zones, and making sure that they're turned off when not in use.

- * Explore incentives. Various governmental agencies from the local to the federal offer cash, tax, or rebate incentives for the purchase and installation of new equipment. In N.Y.C., ConEdison and NYPA also offer programs to assist building owners with energy efficient upgrades. Companies such as the New York Grant Co. (full disclosure: I work there), specialize in assisting other firms receive these incentives, and make the application and compliance process vastly easier than attempting it on your own.

There is a wealth of information out there on energy efficiency and sustainability for buildings, starting with the N.Y.C. Greener Greater Buildings plan, and NYSERDA programs for building owners.

These incremental changes can have a massive impact on profit, and your building's future.

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