



End results of green codes and goals: Health and wealth

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Laws, codes, guidelines, benchmarking, incentives, market advantages, increased awareness, new technologies, revised goals. The express train focused on green and sustainability continues to gain momentum. Recently, the city released a new program:

One City: Built to Last

www.nyc.gov/html/builttolast/assets/downloads/pdf/OneCity.pdf

Referencing the dangers of global climate change, the comprehensive plan has numerous, multi-level strategies to achieve a primary goal: reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

GHG is not a catchy term. It is deceptively scientific about something that is profoundly personal, that being that GHG traps heat in the atmosphere and is stated to be the primary contributor to climate change. What that means is rising sea levels, more frequent and intense flooding, increasing heat and droughts and anticipation of more frequent violent storms such as Superstorm Sandy. As we, as humans, are primarily responsible for its existence, we must also be responsible for its reduction. Each of us can reduce greenhouse gas emissions which we create every time we drive a car, take a taxi, use electricity and throw away garbage. But the city's plan hits where the vast amount of GHG derives: the density of public and private, commercial and residential buildings that is responsible for the overwhelming amount of emissions.

The goals of the plan are lofty: reduce GHG by 80% by 2050 (exceeding the 30% by 2030 goal of the Bloomberg administration). Is the goal achievable? Hopefully. It is 35 years hence. But it will require extraordinary planning, effort and dedication and experts say that no matter what we do - even if we could reach the 2050 goal tomorrow - we will not be able to turn back the clock to the 1950s (or even earlier to the industrial age) and eliminate the damage that has already been done.

The goal of reduced GHG emissions ends in both health and wealth. Health is obvious: air quality improvement and reduction of intense, damaging and dangerous extreme weather conditions. There will be new technologies and innovations, new standards for construction, more benchmarking and monitoring to insure a higher quality environment.

The creation of wealth through the reduction of GHG may seem obscure but is far from it. Energy costs are the highest operating expense in a commercial building. Energy savings results in to operational cost savings which, in turn, translates to higher property value and revenue for major capital improvements which, in turn, can create even greater cost savings.

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