



The commercial classroom: Green is the future

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We keep hearing the term "green," what is it? With people, the term green really represents a state of mind; a consciousness towards ecology and energy efficiency. Simple initiatives like recycling, using efficient light bulbs, turning off lights, water constricting devices in bathrooms, all help our environment.

With buildings it means a focus on construction or improvements that create energy efficiency and promote environmental sustainability. Sustainability is the concept of using resources wisely to satisfy today's requirements without compromising the ability of future generations to do the same. In buildings the primary areas we can improve upon are energy consumption, heating systems and water usage. Besides helping the environment, when the operating costs of a building can be reduced, this saves the owner money. If any operating expenses that are paid by or passed through to tenants are reduced they save money; making the building more attractive to tenants.

Landlord and tenants today are talking "Green Lease Clauses," working together to promote green principals within the workplace and work space. Our government is also becoming more proactive with concerns for climate changes and carbon emissions. A recent bill was proposed to energy rate homes and buildings.

The U.S. Green Building Council is in the forefront of education and certification of green professionals and buildings with their LEED's (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) building rating system. Points are earned in six categories: materials used, sustainability sites, energy conservation, water efficiency, environmental quality and innovation and design process; buildings are rated LEED Certified, Silver, Gold or Platinum. Certifications are available for new construction, major renovations, existing operations, commercial interiors (fit out by tenants) and homes.

LEED's professional accreditation, demonstrated by education and testing of the understanding of green building practices, is now administered for USGBC by the Green Building Certification Institute. One can become a LEED Green Associate or a LEED AP (Accredited Professional) specializing in Operations and Maintenance, Building Design, Interior Design or Homes.

The National Association of Realtors (NAR) has also created a program to earn a green designation. It requires completion of a two day core course and one elective in either, residential, commercial or property management.

Green is the future out of necessity. Actions must be taken to safeguard our world. From a practical point of view energy saving technology is here now and affordable. Buildings can be designed smarter, water recirculation and conservation is possible.

Non-green building in the future will become obsolete. As real estate agents it is time for us to become green educated and certified.

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