

Green Building Standards Come to Portland 1/10/01 -

Green building proponents scored another victory today in City Hall with the unanimous passage of Commissioner Dan Saltzman's comprehensive Green Building Standard and Policy. The standard and policy, which promotes resource efficient and healthy design and construction practices, applies to all facilities built or funded by the City of Portland. The Council vote culminated almost two years of input and review by the City's Office of Sustainable Development (OSD), City agencies and building industry leaders.

"This policy is the City of Portland's emphatic statement that it will not contribute to the environmental degradation associated with traditional building practices or construct inefficient, resource-depleting facilities that threaten people's health and productivity," said Saltzman. "In addition, by adopting a green building standard for our public facilities and those financed through the Portland Development Commission, we are matching the efforts of our private sector development partners while ensuring that the benefits of green building remain accessible to every citizen of Portland."

Soaring energy prices and electricity shortages make adoption of this policy timely, since facilities built to the policy's standards will use significantly less energy than conventional structures. While studies show an increase of one to five percent in the initial construction costs of a typical green building, they also show impressive utility and other operational cost savings over the life of such buildings. And these savings will increase substantially as energy bills continue to rise. The City's goal of adopting green practices in 600 units of housing and 3 million square feet of government, commercial, and mixed-use space expect to reap the following annual resource savings.

8 million gallons of water saved

10 million kWh of electricity saved

170,000 therms of natural gas saved

\$1,000,000 in utility bill savings

30 million gallons of stormwater managed

5900 metric tons of CO2 reduced

A cornerstone of the policy is to make the City a leader in environmental building practices. To accomplish this, the policy directs new and major retrofitted City facilities to meet the certified level of the Portland LEED Green Building Rating System. Portland LEED, developed by the City, is based on the US Green Building Council's national Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) system. This green building standard requires a baseline facility performance derived from a set of criteria to maximize energy and water efficiency, construction reuse and recycling, use of low toxic paints and sealants, certified wood, recycled building materials, and on-site stormwater and erosion control. Use of the LEED-based standard will ensure that the City's facilities can be third-party certified as "green" and compared to similar facilities around the nation.

The policy applies in four major areas:

City facilities - In addition to meeting the Portland LEED Standard on new and major

retrofit projects, the City will incorporate green building practices into all facilities projects constructed, owned, managed or financed by the City.

City-funded projects - The Portland Development Commission (PDC) will adopt the Portland LEED® Green Building Rating System, the City of Portland Green Building Policy goals and incorporate green building practices into each of its ongoing and future program areas.

Infrastructure - The construction, operation, and maintenance of public infrastructure that serves building development will be studied to determine the opportunity and need for a sustainability rating system for infrastructure similar to the Portland LEED® Green Building Rating System. The results of this study will be reported to Council in December 2001.

Private sector development - The City will promote the voluntary application of the Green Building Guidelines in private sector building design, construction and operations. Private sector developments that meet the Portland LEED standard and are certified by the USGBC will be able to market their projects as green by both the Portland and national standards.

Another major component of the policy directs the Portland Development Commission (PDC) to incorporate green building practices into all of its program areas. PDC will report in September 2001 on how the agency will incorporate Portland LEED and other green building practices into its development loans, urban renewal projects, affordable housing and other development projects.

“I have, for some time, been calling for improved design and quality of the construction projects resulting from all of the City’s program areas,” said Mayor Vera Katz.

“Adopting the green building practices described in the City’s policy will move us in the right direction regarding this goal. In addition, by ensuring that all City development is green, we will increase the long-term performance and cost effectiveness of our facilities and make them safer and more affordable to inhabitants.”

The development of the Green Building Policy is the first major accomplishment of the newly formed Office of Sustainable Development, created in September 2000.

“Just as the City has protected the Urban Growth Boundary and invested in light rail and affordable housing, it is now leading the way in promoting sustainable development,” said OSD Director Susan Anderson. “As the City grows and issues such as the Endangered Species Act, the Superfund designation of the Portland Harbor, and rising utility costs become important factors in growth management, the City’s Green Building Policy provides clear direction to minimize the negative impacts of development. This policy signals that Portland continues to have leadership that is seriously invested in protecting the region’s environment and citizens’ health and well being.”

For more information about the Office of Sustainable Development Green Building Services, visit the their website at <http://www.ci.portland.or.us/energy/greenbuilding.htm>. For additional assistance contact Rob Bennett, Green Building Services Program Manager at 503-823-7082.