NCEL Fact Sheet

ENERGY EFFICIENCY IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

CLIMATE & ENERGY

Overview

Energy efficiency upgrades and design elements in buildings have the potential to drastically lower U.S. energy demand while providing benefits such as cost savings, carbon pollution reduction, and decreased water use. Buildings currently account for nearly 75% of U.S. electricity demand, and incorporating sustainable design into the built environment can help cities become self-sufficient while increasing affordability of buildings, resilience and promoting job creation.

Nationwide, lawmakers are implementing green infrastructure policies that enable communities to become more resource efficient. One of the most ubiquitous standards is the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification that recognizes best-in-class buildings demonstrating efficiency from construction to operation to disposal. Several states require adherence to or promote LEED standards as they set new protocol for future developments in the public and private sectors.

Legislation

- A Montana (HB464) bill would incentivize state agencies and the university system to opt into energy efficiency upgrades for basic operations and maintenance.
- A bill introduced in Washington State (HB1278) would encourage private investments in efficiency upgrades by mandating building owners publicly disclose their energy use.
- Several states provide financial incentives to residents who incorporate energy efficiency measures in new buildings and retrofits, including New York (A10684).

KEY POINTS

- Buildings in the U.S. currently account for 38% of carbon emissions and 73% of U.S. electricity consumption.
- LEED buildings consume 25-30% less energy and decrease water use by up to 15% compared with a conventional building, while also resulting in higher occupant satisfaction and carbon emission reductions.
- Green buildings cost only marginally more to build, and result in significantly higher sale and rental rates, as well as tremendous savings on energy costs over time.

Other Resources

- The Business Case for Green Buildings--*World Green Building Council* http://www.worldgbc.org/activities/business-case/
- Roadmap to Resilient, Net-Zero Buildings in the Pacific Northwest -- *The Pacific NorthWest Economic Region* http://www.pnwer.org/uploads/2/3/2/9/23295822/netzero_background.pdf
- State and Local Green Building Incentives -- *American Institute of Architects* http://www.aia.org/aiaucmp/groups/aia/documents/pdf/aias076936.pdf

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