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### Cities Promote Building 'Green'

by Cherie Duvall

Widespread reports of how climate change is impacting the world is leading many cities to take steps to make their communities more sustainable, including encouraging and facilitating green building.

Green building is a vital tool in fighting climate change, according to the U.S. Green Building Council. The practice of green building increases the efficiency of a structure and its use of energy, water and materials, reducing the impact the building has on health and the environment. Cities such as Chicago and Scottsdale, Ariz., have taken note and are taking action in making their buildings more sustainable and their citizens more aware of the benefits of building green.



"Each of us can make a difference in the health of our families and the health of the planet by the choices we make every day," said Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley.

### Cities Build Green

As an opportunity for Chicago residents to learn more about how green building contributes to a better environment, the city held Green Building Month, October 13 through November 16. During the month, the city hosted workshops, education programs and events related to improving the environment, including the U.S. Green Building Council's Greenbuild International Conference and Exposition.

Daley kicked off his city's Green Building Month by announcing two initiatives — the "Chicago Green Homes" program for builders and developers who are constructing new residential units or renovating existing units, and the "Green Home Remodeling Series" of guides encouraging homeowners to make environmentally conscious choices when rehabbing homes.

"Making Chicago the most environmentally friendly city in the nation means we have to look at every aspect of our daily lives," said Daley. "These two programs will help us work with homeowners, builders and developers to show them how their projects can help improve the quality of life for all residents of Chicago."

In Scottsdale, a two-day Green Building Expo is hosted annually by the Arizona cities of Scottsdale, Phoenix and Tempe. The most recent expo, which was held in October, featured more than 50 programs and workshops and more than 100 exhibits showcasing state-of-the-art products and services that support sustainability and resource efficiency.

All events during the expo, which was recently awarded highest honors in the Environmental Education/Communication category in the Valley Forward Environmental Excellence Awards, were free and open to the public. This year, more than 10,000 people attended, which was a surge from previous years.

"With all the focus on green and climate change and rising energy prices over the last year, we actually anticipated about 10,000," stated Julie Stanton, communication chair for the Green Building Expo. "It's nice to see green going mainstream."

Stanton also pointed out that Arizona Gov. Janet Napolitano presented a statewide proclamation during the opening session of the expo declaring it "Urban Sustainability Day." The governor praised the expo's dedication to educating public and private sectors about the importance of green building and noted the importance of these techniques to protect the environment and provide a healthy place to live.

### Effects and Misconceptions

Having such a profound effect on the environment, buildings in the U.S. alone account for 68 percent of total electricity consumption, 39 percent of total energy use, 38 percent of total carbon dioxide emissions and 12 percent of total water consumption, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

It is predicted that, without action, carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases from human activities will significantly raise global temperatures. The effects of this may include rising sea levels, more frequent floods and

droughts, and increased spread of infectious diseases.

To address the threat of climate change, greenhouse gas emissions must be reversed by using the dramatic advances in technologies and by shifting the way the world economy generates and uses energy. In turn, the average green building that's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certified by the U.S. Green Building Council uses 32 percent less electricity and saves 350 metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions annually.

There is a common misconception that building with the environment in mind is expensive. However, a study by the Sustainable Building Task Force of the California Integrated Waste Management Board shows sustainable design can be incorporated into a structure with little or no increase in construction costs and that a minimal "upfront investment of less than 2 percent of construction costs yields life cycle savings of over 10 times the initial investment."

The Environmental Protection Agency has even found that building green provides economic benefits to cities including reducing operating costs; creating, expanding and shaping markets for green products and services; improving occupant productivity and optimizing life-cycle economic performance.

Daley noted that these economic benefits also very much apply to homeowners.

"In every home where there has been a 'green rehab,' owners are saving money in energy costs and enjoying cleaner air and greater comfort," Daley said. "For some people, that difference in cost can help them stay in their home as well as improve the environment."

**Details:** To learn more about Green Building Month, go to [www.cityofchicago.org/environment](http://www.cityofchicago.org/environment). For more information on the Green Building Expo in Scottsdale, visit [www.greenbuildingexpo.com](http://www.greenbuildingexpo.com).

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