



Tall and Sustainable Is Not an Easy Fix



Way back in 2009, I discussed the interaction between [taller and taller buildings and sustainable \("green"\) building](#). Back then, the reference was to the construction of skyscrapers in the Middle East and Europe. The [initially referenced ENR article](#) was written in the context of an urban retrofit of some of Chicago's taller buildings to make them more sustainable.

Just this week, ENR [published another article](#) relating to sustainability and super tall buildings. The gist of the article is that while many see taller (rather than wider) as the trend to meld an urban population explosion with more [sustainable building](#) practices, this goal is not an easy one to meet.

For one, according to the article, energy performance metrics are hard to obtain, both due to the relative newness of these buildings and the seeming reluctance of certain owners to provide the data. Bob Pratt, a managing director in the Shanghai office of developer Tishman Speyer Properties, is quoted in the article, stating

Once we have measuring sticks about performance, we will know what to do" to make buildings sustainable.

In short, without this performance data, it will be difficult to evaluate, and therefore perfect certain energy saving techniques.

Interestingly, another area that causes concern is the amount of space that is taken up in these buildings because of elevator necessity. The article states this concern and goes on to discuss certain potential fixes that would take up less space and keep these large energy sapping shafts to a minimum.

My take on all of this? As one who is a strong, [yet cautious](#), supporter of true "green" building, I applaud both the tone and content of the article. The tone outlines that we have a long way to go to make taller buildings an earth saving panacea. On the other hand, the trend toward sustainability and the minds seeking to create a more sustainable building stock give me hope that this will all work out.

What are your thoughts? Please read the article and let me know.

Image via [Wikipedia](#)

Please check out my [Construction Law Musings Blog](#) for more on Virginia construction law and other topics.