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Make Green easy for your tenants

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New state and federal laws, policies and executive orders have the building industry crying for mercy. While the politics of Green can be overwhelming at times, let's face it: Green is the new black, and it's here to stay. Even if you don't believe the world is warming, there are plenty of good reasons to embrace Green building principles. It's been shown, for example, that Green building practices provide a safer and healthier interior environment, which translates into increased productivity. What's more, it's not hard being Green. Here are a few easy steps any business or property owner can take:

Recycle and Reuse. Make it easy on your tenants: Provide conveniently located, clearly marked recycling containers for paper, glass, metals and plastic, at a minimum. Consider aluminum can crushers, recycling bins at individual work stations, and even composting food waste in the cafeteria or lunchroom.

Most public utilities offer recycling services for office furniture, electronics, scrap metal and a wide variety of otherwise disposable materials. Some public utilities go so far as to offer "counseling" on how to implement a recycling program in your business. Contact www.resourceventure.org.

Lighting. Fluorescent is in; incandescent is out. Replace your old standard bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs, which can now be found for almost all applications (and are recyclable). Install photo or motion detectors to turn off lights when they're not in use.

Daylighting can significantly reduce electricity demand. When remodeling, consider the orientation of offices and workspaces to optimize daylight. Have your architect or designer recommend lighting systems that are efficient and nonduplicative of the natural light.

Water Use. Water will be tomorrow what oil is today—an increasingly expensive commodity.

Consider installing low-flow toilets and waterless urinals. One waterless urinal, for example, can save almost 40,000 gallons of water per year. Retrofit faucets and flush valves with sensor-driven mechanisms and/or flow restrictors or aerators. Make sure new appliances are Energy Star-rated.

Outdoors, use drought-tolerant and local species rather than exotic or imported plants. Consider reusing roof runoff for landscape irrigation and other nonpotable applications. When installing new sidewalks or parking areas, consider one of the many porous materials that reduce stormwater runoff.


Transportation. In the Northwest, auto emissions from burning fuel are the principal contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. Reducing single-occupant vehicle trips to and from work directly correlates to a reduction in air pollution.

If you're thinking about a new location for your business, consider areas that are within walking distance of an existing or planned transit facility. Proximity to transit adds value and marketability to a building and attracts employees. Consider charging for parking or offering transit passes or subsidies for employees to encourage non-auto commutes, and providing preferential parking for electric and hybrid vehicles.

Building owners can also provide secure bicycle racks and showers. Make sure employees are familiar with those facilities and are educated about the benefits of bike riding and about local routes to work.

Energy. Energy efficiency makes sense because it reduces a building's carbon footprint while increasing its fiscal performance. Whether you're building a new building or looking to improve the efficiency of an older one, technology is available to help create smarter, more efficient heating and cooling systems. Flow Control Industries, for example, produces and installs pressure independent control

valves that can substantially improve efficiencies in large cooling systems. Another Seattle-area company, Optimum Energy, uses software and variable-speed motors in a building's air conditioning system to moderate temperatures without the sudden fluctuations common to today's systems.

The trick here is to implement best practices that also make a Green contribution. In almost every instance, good Green initiatives are good business initiatives that increase productivity or reduce operating costs. 



GLENN J. AMSTER is a shareholder at the Lane Powell law firm and a LEED Accredited Professional. He focuses his practice on providing advice and assistance to clients in all aspects of real estate development, including feasibility analysis, development strategy, property acquisition, environmental review, permitting, and administrative proceedings and litigation related to these areas. He is a member of the board of the Washington State Chapter of NAIO: The Commercial Real Estate Development Association.

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