

["Green" Expectations. . . or Just Expectations \("green" is not a specification; it's a paint color\)](#)



I was having a discussion regarding "green" building with my friend and [recent guest poster here at Musings](#), Nick Pacella (@[nmpacella](#)) this past week and (as often happens when I chat with the great folks in the construction world) it got me to thinking. Is "Green" its own separate category of construction, or just another sub-set of possible specifications for a construction project with its own set of challenges?

Much has been made of [sustainable construction](#) from a [risk management](#), [marketing](#), [governmental](#) and about every other standpoint that I can think of. Much has been made in the news and in the blogosphere about the [safety of "Green" buildings](#) and the cost. One question I haven't seen dealt with is whether we really need to be talking about "green" construction in the first place.

Think about it, the word green means many things to many people. Certain owners want nothing but energy savings and see the pure environmental benefits as secondary. Others see it the other way around. Some want air quality. Some want it all. Some just think it's cool, but don't really know what that means. If you say "I want a green building" to me, I will pull out a color wheel.

Many owners think that they know what they want, they just may or may not know how to express it. This is where architects, engineers, contractors and (yes) [construction attorneys](#) come in. The key to any construction project is [proper expectations that are regularly updated throughout the project](#). The earlier the owner is educated as to the cost, materials, feasibility and time frame of the project, the better. This starts with the initial meeting and a definition of what "green" means for the owner. Once this meeting occurs, the rest of the process is the same whether the project is "green" or "regular" (with the possibility of certification as an overlay). Plans need to be drawn, detailed specifications need to be written, contractors and subcontractors need to be hired and consulted to figure out the practical avenues of completion, change order procedures need to be followed and the project needs to get to the finish line.

In short, if you take the word "green" out of the above scenario, you have a set of good construction practices for *any project*. This is why I think that construction is construction and expectations vary for that construction from owner to owner regardless of if you call it "green" or otherwise. While being "fluent" in the sustainable construction field can help an architect or contractor meet an owner's expectations, it does not mean that "green" construction is all that different from traditional construction.

What do you think? Am I off base in thinking that construction (green or otherwise) follows the same rules and is not all that different? Let me know.

Image via [Wikipedia](#).

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