

### Third-Party Opinion | Guest Column



## Different Priorities

*LEED requirements represent a good start, but for the industrial sector, going green requires a more holistic and flexible approach.*

By Barry Hibbard

You can't open a real estate trade journal or attend an industry conference without being barraged with the word "green." The green train has even left the industrial station, and the question now is: Is it headed in the right direction, toward a truly sustainable product? What does sustainability really mean, and how are we measuring it? Does one size really fit all, or must we consider regional and product differences if we want to deliver truly sustainable industrial product?

The U.S. Green Building Council's LEED certification program serves as the standard measure for green building. It has raised awareness of and illustrated a need for sustainable building practices within our industry and among the general public. I commend the council for the initial effort that has made LEED the universal language and premier brand of the green building movement. Still, is the current iteration of LEED the best option for the industrial sector, or is it time for LEED to approach industrial development from a broader and more flexible perspective?

LEED criteria are too narrowly focused for our industrial park at Tejon Ranch. Some of the program's check boxes do not apply to industrial buildings, and the system does not address other features of sustainable industrial buildings at all. LEED certification focuses on the building rather than the connection between a building and its community. Just as a warehouse is one of many links in a supply chain, an industrial building serves as just one segment in the development of a sustainable consumer product.

Jonathan Fenton-Jones, global director of

sustainability and procurement for Gazeley, presented his company's research on building sustainable industrial space at the Development '07 conference, held in October by the National Association of Industrial & Office Properties. Ac-

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cording to research by Gazeley, a leader in Europe's sustainable building movement and a wholly owned subsidiary of Wal-Mart Stores Inc., a mere 8 percent of a building's impact on the environment occurs during construction. The rest, 92 percent, occurs during a building's operational life.

When evaluating an industrial building's sustainability, it is vital to look beyond its four walls and to embrace a more holistic approach. Developers and others measuring progress should, for example, consider the backbone infrastructure of a master-planned industrial park, its proximity to existing infrastructure and its regional transportation patterns. For LEED to truly encourage sustainability in the industrial sector, it should award points for sound site selection.

Sustainable guidelines should also address regional differences like weather and the availability of such natural resources as water. What works in Chicago's extreme winter and plentiful water supply will not necessarily work in the hot and arid Southwest. Reclaimed water irrigation systems and a low-water-use landscape

not only reduce the consumption of water but also save a significant amount of energy by reducing the need for delivery. For every kilowatt consumed, several kilowatts are lost in the generation and transfer of energy, so such reductions can garner compounded benefits.

Additionally, certain standards just are not as effective for industrial buildings as for other property types. LEED rewards buildings that have bike racks, for instance. That makes perfect sense for office buildings, where the goods being moved to and from the office are employees. Industrial warehouses are instead in the business of moving products. Why not give credit for locations that do so efficiently, a more

telling reflection of the facility's environmental impact? Warehouses that are near existing transportation infrastructure, allow trucks to move efficiently and are adjacent to travel centers that offer IdleAire technology—which lets truck drivers heat and cool their cabs during rest periods without idling their engines—should receive credit toward LEED certification, as well.

The Green Building Council has always intended the LEED certification program to function as more than lip service. As time goes on, I sincerely believe that LEED guidelines for the industrial sector will evolve, providing a greater incentive for industrial developers to pursue green initiatives.

In my own attempt to develop a sustainable product, I am not interested in checking off boxes simply to achieve certification. I am, however, passionate about a holistic approach that will positively impact the total environment in which I, along with my family, live and work.

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