

The Commercial Inspector

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ask the inspector

Q. I've been hearing a lot about "green buildings." What exactly is a green building?

A. While there are different definitions of green building, green building is generally accepted as the planning, design, construction and operation of buildings with a focus on energy use, water use, indoor environmental quality, material selection and the building's effects on its site.

A green building is an environmentally sustainable building that is designed, constructed and operated to minimize environmental impact. The goal of a green building is to reduce energy consumption and to conserve water, and to build with recycled materials or materials produced with a minimal impact to the surrounding environment.



A well-designed green building will save the owner money and create a healthier environment for people to live or work in. The healthier environment is achieved by improving the indoor air quality, increasing the amount of natural lighting and provid-

snapshots from the field

True or False?



True or false? A green roof can be an element of a green building if the roof is designed to support the additional weight of grass and plants.

(answer on the back)

ing greater thermal comfort.

[Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design](#) (LEED) is a green building certification program that recognizes best-in-class building strategies and practices. The LEED program acts as a framework in the design and construction process. LEED rewards best practices and innovation on building projects with different levels of certification.

Any type of building has the potential to become a green or sustainable building. Design and efficiency needs vary depending on the design and function of the building. New buildings may be designed, built and operated to be green buildings. Existing buildings can also become green through remodeling, retrofitting and improved operations. The [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency](#) (EPA) has tools available for improving the environmental performance of new and existing buildings.

for your information

Windows Get Smart

One of the emerging energy-saving concepts for window technology is smart windows. Smart windows can reduce peak electrical use by 20 to 30 percent in many commercial buildings, improve comfort and enhance productivity from the building's occupants.

One promising technology available today is the electrochromic (EC) window. These windows have the ability to change from clear to a colored transparent state. They reflect solar energy while allowing natural light to come through, which reduces the amount of heat buildup in the building.

maintenance matters

Tips for Watering Your Property

Your commercial property's landscape is an important part of your building's look and appeal, so you shouldn't neglect it. Summer has arrived, and that means potential extreme heat and drought conditions for your grass and plants, so if you haven't already turned on the irrigation system on your commercial property, now is the time to get it running. We have some tips for maximum irrigation system effectiveness and water conservation to keep your property beautiful and save money:



- » Install a rain sensor on your irrigation system to prevent the system from running when precipitation is present or when watering is unnecessary.

- » Set the timer on the irrigation system to run the system either very early in the morning or late in the evening so the daytime heat doesn't just evaporate the water.
- » Regularly inspect your irrigation system for leaks and broken heads, and correct these problems as soon as you find them.
- » Ensure that your system is watering enough to reach the roots of grass and plants but that it is not overwatering, which will cause runoff and waste water.
- » Consult an irrigation specialist to determine the best watering plan for your building's landscape.

did you know?

The Social, Economic and Environmental Benefits of a Green Roof

If you want to save energy and add beauty to your building, consider a green roof. Also called rooftop gardens, green roofs are

roofs where plants and vegetation are grown. Green roofs also include additional layers, such as root barriers, filter cloth, drainage systems and even irrigation systems.



There are several benefits to adding a green roof to your building:

- » Reduce energy needed to heat and cool the building by acting as an insulator
- » Prolong the life of the air-conditioning and HVAC systems by decreasing their use
- » Reduce air-conditioning demand, thereby reducing air pollution and greenhouse gas emission
- » Reduce heat transfer through the building to improve the comfort of people inside
- » Reduce storm water runoff and filter storm water pollutants
- » Provide esthetic value and a habitat for many species

Snapshots from the field

The correct answer is True. Green roofs also can help reduce heating and cooling expenses.