Innovative Poland: attainments and prospects

Cutting edge medical research

Professor Henryk Skarżyński: Trail-blazing treatment of partial hearing loss
AGNES VORBRODT-SCHURMA is the founder of the Polish Green Building Council (PLGBC), which examines directions in which construction in Poland should develop in line with the sustainable building concept.

In 2008 sustainable construction was growing at a rate of 30% – it was the only sector not affected by the starting recession. After just 10 years, the LEED rating system has become the most popular tool used worldwide to assess the sustainability of buildings. Currently there are almost 20 thousand registered projects, in 114 countries, pursuing one of the certifications in the LEED family. Less than 500 are in Europe, 20 are in Poland. Because the system requires fulfilling a number of stringent prerequisites and credits, only a small percentage is actually receiving a certification.

In Poland there are currently 3 projects, which have successfully gone through this process. The first building in the country is the office and production facility for BorgWarner Turbo Systems Poland. The certification (at Silver level) was made possible by VvS | Architects & Consultants. There are also 2 interior fit out projects, awarded with LEED-CI certificate: Silver office of Skanska Property Poland as well as Gold – a Warsaw branch of Deutsche Bank, in cooperation with ARUP Poland.

According to a survey conducted by the PLGBC in the summer of 2009, only a very small percentage of buildings are built green, even less is undergoing the certification. This situation is due to the fact that there is not enough knowledge about the “green building” movement.

It is perceived as new and innovative – and it should! Green buildings are using innovative technologies and the newest design solutions. But they also give attention to the user and go back to the old, proven passive design rules.

There is no single definition of a sustainable building. Borrowing from the Brundtland Commission definition of Sustainable Development, we can define Green Building as one, which meets the needs of the current occupant, without sacrificing the chance of the future generations to meet their needs. For me, a sustainable building needs to be designed and constructed with the triple bottom line in mind. It has to be comfortable and healthy, it has to fit well the neighborhood – this is the social aspect of the.

 triple bottom line. It also should be constructed of durable, environmentally (and occupant) friendly materials – including recycled content, rapidly growing and sustainable harvested wood. The materials should be reusable and recyclable. And the designer should select them in such a manner so as to reduce CO₂ emissions related to transportation. In order to make them SUSTAINABLE, green buildings also have to be economically feasible, to allow for a wide spread use. It’s not 1 or 2 class “A” office buildings that make a difference, but the entire population adopting some green design guidelines. And not only for new construction – but also for the entire existing building stock.

The innovation of green buildings lies in the overall market transformation and change of mind set, to look at all aspects of life – environmental, social and economic ones. The reward is quite tangible – construction and operational cost savings due to an integrated design process, less liability (due to indoor air quality issues contributing to the sick building syndrome or building related illness) hence reduced insurance rates, faster sales decreasing the investment cost, increased building value and occupant satisfaction – translating into increased productivity in employees, better test scores among students, faster healing and quicker discharge in hospitals, better sales in stores, higher occupancy in hotels, and higher rents.

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