

Stone and the Green Building Movement

The importance of
getting involved in the

Green

Building





Industry



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This article is the second in a series that began in the November/December 2006 issue of Stone, Sand & Gravel Review.

Green building is arguably the most significant and exciting development in the construction industry over the past decade, thanks in part to the growing alliances of associations, advocacy groups and businesses committing their time, resources and knowledge to support the awareness, design and construction of environmentally friendly structures.

The rapid advance of the green building movement is having a complimentary bandwagon effect on product manufacturers, contractors and trade organizations that see the value of joining and supporting sustainable building initiatives. In fact, according to the November 2005 McGraw-Hill Construction "Green Building Smart Market Report," nonresidential green building market in the U.S. is expected to reach \$10 to \$20 billion by 2010.

Given the growing popularity of the green building movement, it is critical for the aggregates industry, its members and members of the design community to get involved in the sustainable building movement. At this moment, people outside the aggregates industry are researching, developing and

formulating decisions about what products and designs support green building initiatives.

Why is it important for the aggregates industry associations, its members and natural stone advocates to get involved? Foremost, every initiative obtains its strength from the people involved in it. There are many positive benefits to local, regional and national involvement in the green building industry. Involvement expands understanding and knowledge of sustainable

design, strengthens relationships with industry leaders and practitioners, and allows for innovative ideas to flourish. No doubt there is strength in numbers and no matter the skills, talents or even the limitations of time, there is always something important that active participants can help with and encourage. Conversely, in the absence of a voice, representation or awareness in the sustainable building movement, the aggregates industry and its members run the risk of placing a portion

of their future in the hands of others, possibly including competitive and substitutive products of natural stone. It is important to become a part of the process and not let decisions that may adversely affect a company, association, or industry go unchecked or unchallenged.

Getting involved is not only imperative for national associations; it is a must for businesses, contractors and designers who encourage the use of natural stone and believe the sustainable building industry is not a passing craze. The gain from involvement in such activities will support not only individual participants, but the broader industry as well.

Natural stone has been used as a building material for a long time, but a lot more remains to be learned about its impact on the environment and how it supports sustainable building. While education and awareness is essential to achieve the change in attitudes and behaviors needed to reach sustainability, participation in the sustainable building movement is equally important. The greater the variety of people who get involved, the more appealing sustainability becomes for everyone.

Benefits to becoming involved in the sustainable building movement:

To learn and become aware. While the basic premise of environmentally friendly building is easy to comprehend, it is difficult for outsiders to understand the integration of all the components and design criteria that go into constructing such structures. There are plenty of opportunities to engage in environmental learning and sustainability. Organizations like Built It Green, The Rocky Mountain Institute, The Green Roundtable and the Southface Energy Institute offer numerous educational and outreach programs to promote awareness of sustainable building. With increased awareness, knowledge and skills, advocates of natural stone can become more ecologically knowledgeable and act competently to support and build a more sustainable future.

Have an impact. Getting involved at any level of this growing global movement can make a difference in the lives

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of many, as members work together to create the changes needed for environmentally friendly and supportive communities. Ultimately, action taken at the local level will provide proof that aggregates products and services support green initiatives and designs. However, national associations, like NSSGA — whose members will be affected by green initiatives — must provide effective national representation on issues critical to the aggregates industry. The association must play an active, vital and influential role in the economic and environmental policies that support the use of stone in sustainable design.

Network. Getting involved allows for the exchange of ideas, exploration of mutually beneficial opportunities and the sharing of common goals with other industry professionals at the local, regional and national levels. Getting involved also affords the opportunity to meet new people from all walks of life who, collectively, can make a huge difference. Through local, regional or national involvement, you can

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gain visibility and prominence in your community with opportunities to showcase and promote how you support green initiatives.

Education. Participation in sustainable building programs will provide personal and professional development and growth. In addition, participation will allow the sharing of skills and the gaining of new ones. The various stone associations should research, develop and promote quick access to

up-to-date information about green topics pertinent to aggregates industry members. Ongoing education plays a crucial role in raising awareness of the benefits of stone and sustainable development among members, giving them the skills they need to put sustainable development into practice.

Leadership. By identifying volunteer opportunities that match your professional goals or strengthen your existing skills, you become a recognized leader by getting involved in programs that benefit your community, region and industry. Associations are funded to lead the industry and help it remain competitive. With their ability to monitor, gather and analyze vital and strategic information from inside and outside the aggregates industry, they are in the best position to provide direction and chart the industry’s future.

Innovation. Sustainable building initiatives have put the design and construction industries in the midst of a revolution where people, ideas and resources are better connected,

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producing innovative products and services. Today, it is imperative for the various stone supporters to look at their methods of operation, methods of marketing and methods of procurement and ask, "How do you make traditional products innovative?" To survive and outlast the competition, stone advocates must become adaptive and flexible to forces that require them to do something different than they have done in the past. Getting involved now in the world of sustainable building is almost mandatory if the aggregates industry is to thrive in the future.

So how does the aggregates industry get involved in the sustainable building industry?

There are many organizations around the country and at all levels that would benefit from your participation. What level of involvement is appropriate? That depends on you. Your expertise and commitment could be of great value to any one of these initiatives, if you have the time and interest.

One of the nation's leading coalitions on sustainable building is the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC). The USGBC, which currently has more than 50 local and regional chapters, is looking for help to create awareness of sustainability and transform the built environment by forming partnerships with key industry and research organizations and government agencies. Generally speaking, the primary mission of the chapters is to support and encourage sustainable building design and practice through educational venues and events, facilitating the exchange of information and drawing from stakeholder experience.

Through the American Institute of Architects (AIA), the Committee on the Environment (COTE) is charged with collecting and circulating information to various design, construction, academic, governmental and public venues on the integration of the built environment and environmental performance. Currently, COTE has 46 local and state chapters that encourage non-AIA members to participate and help them promote the awareness and practice of sustainable design and green building.

The National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) is involved in the green building industry, and it created the NAHB Research Center to help the home building industry understand the sustainable building trend. Through their various local green building programs, they encourage participation and innovation in environmentally friendly construction.

More information about these programs and the Research Center can be found at www.nahbr.org.

The Southface Energy Institute is a non-profit corporation whose mission is to promote sustainable homes, workplaces and communities through education, research, advocacy and technical assistance. The organization has fostered partnerships and developed many programs to help interested people understand and adopt environmentally friendly practices. More information about Southface, including a list of free fact sheets and technical publications on sustainable building, can be found at www.southface.org.

Although the leaders of the aggregates industry recognize and agree that the long-term health of the industry is dependent on its members, it is important to clearly articulate the "green build" opportunity facing the aggregates industry, communicate the need for involvement and provide, through leadership, the direction the industry should take. The members and advocates of the aggregates industry are at the front line. Their involvement in local, regional or national green building initiatives will help and support the efforts to show that the use of aggregates products can contribute to green building.

The next stage in the evolution of sustainable building will require more research, continued education and involvement from all disciplines in the construction and sustainable industries. The advocates of aggregates should avail themselves of every opportunity to get involved. ■



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