

Another Shade of Green



By *Keith Lindemulder*



This week we're going to begin a discussion on the various Green Building Programs that are in use today. This topic alone will take several weeks to cover just the basics. Currently there's at least 70 different Green Building Programs that have been adopted by various jurisdictions around the country. As you can imagine, keeping up with all of them would be virtually impossible (and it is!) but it's a bit less daunting because they are all derived from the same basic goals.

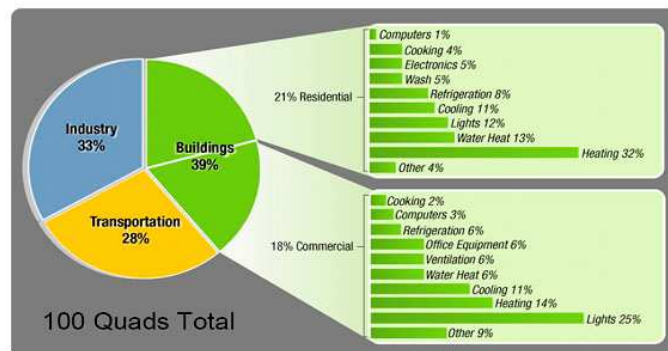
In the 1970's and 80's there was some attention paid to energy conservation by some forward thinking architects, ecologists and environmentalists but it never gained enough momentum to gain a foothold – remember the first Earth Day was April 1970, the OPEC oil embargo of 1973, and CAFÉ standards for cars and trucks. When energy prices relaxed somewhat during the Reagan years, the urgency waned but effort continued to try and define green building and 'eco-friendly' design.

The Green Building movement began in earnest in the early 1990's as various environmental groups and architects began to get the attention from government agencies and companies interested in improving their buildings efficiency. In 1992, shortly after Clinton was elected President, there was a decision to "Green the White House". This effort gave the movement the public exposure it needed to gain some traction.

While the definition of "Green" was still developing, it did become clear that what was needed was a way to assess, or "score" the performance of a building – much like MPG for a car or truck. It's more complicated than determining how far you can do on a gallon of gas but the programs still work the same basic way by estimating the required energy and resulting environmental impact of a building both in the construction phase and the completed, or in-service, stage. The programs help with the design process and verify that the building is actually built according to that design.

Today 39% of all the energy consumed in the US is used by 'buildings'. That compares to 33% for industrial uses and 28% for the entire transportation sectors. Lighting, heating, cooling and water heating make up the majority of the energy use regardless of building use. The graphic below helps illustrate the potential impact in energy use if we pay attention to the efficiency of our buildings. Of course the decisions you make at design time – including using cold-formed steel – can have a huge, long lasting impact for years over the life-span of the building.

Next week – A look at LEED, Green Globes and the NAHB Green Building Programs. Have a SAFE and Sustainable week!



Reduce!

Reuse!

Recycle!



STEEL
IS THE NEW GREEN.



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