

GLOBAL WARMING SOLUTIONS

Act Now to Save the Planet

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Take Personal Action

Adopt green building practices

The green building movement in Chicago is getting a major shot in the arm from the recent news that the Clinton Foundation will help fund three projects to retrofit buildings and make them more energy-efficient. The innovative ideas under consideration include wind turbines on the Sears Tower and a green roof for the Merchandise Mart.

Cities are in the front lines of the battle to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. That's because energy-intensive, low-efficiency urban areas account for a disproportionate share of global warming pollution. According to C40 Cities, cities consume about 75% of the world's energy and generate 80% of greenhouse gas emissions—most of that from buildings:



Buildings consume 30% of total energy and 60% of electricity generated in the U.S.

Lighting consumes 40% of the electricity used in buildings, with an additional 10% used just to cool the heat generated.

Computers and office-related equipment use almost half of all energy used in buildings

Designing green can reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and their associated air emissions that cause global warming, acid rain and smog. On average, every \$1 invested in energy efficiency prevents the release of 6.7 pounds of carbon dioxide per year

Along with the Clinton-funded projects, a civic task force convened by Chicago's Mayor Richard Daley has proposed a Chicago Climate Action Plan that aims to coordinate large government outlays with private investments to reduce total annual emissions of carbon dioxide in the city by 25% from 1990 levels.

The Environmental Law and Policy Center (ELPC) has actively promoted energy efficient building policies. ELPC waged a two-year public advocacy campaign for an energy efficiency building code in Illinois that came to fruition in 2004. The Illinois General Assembly passed the Illinois Energy Efficient Commercial Building Act, HB 4099, in May, which was then signed by Governor Blagojevich in August. The new law requires all new construction or substantial rehab of existing buildings to meet energy efficiency standards established by the International Energy Conservation Code. It covers all commercial, industrial and multi-unit residential properties, but does not cover single-family home construction.

Adoption of green building standards in the U.S. is accelerating. According to The Wall Street Journal, "2.2 billion square feet of commercial construction have been registered [by The U.S. Green Building Council] in just seven months. That is much less time than the seven years it took the council to register the first one billion square feet."

An American Institute of Architects survey reflects the same trend. The 2007 Autodesk/AIA Green Index—which measures how AIA member architects are practicing sustainable design—shows that green building has "taken a firm hold on the industry and has captured the attention of both architects and their clients."

Residential resources

The U.S. Green Building Council unveiled a LEED-for-Homes program at the Chicago Greenbuild event.

The City of Chicago has two programs aimed at boosting green building practices:

Green Homes encourages residential home owners, builders and developers to use green technologies, products and practices.

Green Remodeling is series of online guides to help plan remodeling projects.

