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ARCHITECTURE INSIGHTS

- By Robby R. Joshi, AIA, RA, NCARB

The Green Wave – emerging trends of the next Decade !

Did you know that Fresh Kills (the largest landfill in New York's Staten Island), until recently, took in 13,000 tons per day or nearly four million tons per year in only residential waste? Beginning in 1997, four of the City's five boroughs secured long-term contracts to send their residential garbage to out-of-state landfills in Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina and Virginia. Thousands of tons of waste per day being shipped via diesel chugging trucks that add pollution to our environment. We are talking about one city's waste disposal problems, what about the rest of our country? Cloaked in our manicured, well landscaped, nicely appointed communities, are we subconsciously converting the US into a big giant pile of trash for our future generations to remember us with? Think of what would happen to Planet Earth if every nation in the east and far east, emerging giants such as China and India, are emulating the US lifestyle as a model for living life with ample amounts of gadgetries, consumer products (from TVs and automobiles to mobile phones), and likewise generating trash. We are talking about a billion people in each of these two countries – six times the population of USA – enjoying a more relaxed development and industry guidelines not governed by a stringent authority such as EPA in the US. When is enough is enough? We need to change our mindset and our lifestyles to set a precedent that the world can follow. Do you have to think twice before you wipe off your hands with that plush paper towel and throw it in a trash can? I don't have to as I always carry my fabric, re-washable handkerchief in my pocket the old fashion way.

The nineties saw the rise of the dot.com, the worldwide web and the wireless industry boom. The first decade of the twenty-first century saw an urgency to re-build America after the 9-11 crisis, aided by the super low interest rates, resulting in a real estate industry boom. And now . . . here comes the Green Building Wave to rule the next decade. The Green Building or Sustainable Architecture is a common term that describes environmentally conscious design and engineering techniques in the field of architecture and building technology. For the common end users of facilities, Green building is the practice of increasing the efficiency with which buildings use resources such as energy, water, and materials. Green building reduces the impacts of the built forms on human health and the environment through better situating the building on site, designing with energy conservation on mind, using new construction materials and techniques, and

finally employing environment friendly operations, maintenance, and disposal/reuse of existing facilities without the creation of large landfills. A green building may cost more up front, but saves money through lower operating costs over the life of the building. Research indicates various benefits when Green Buildings are professionally designed to meet certain objectives such as protecting occupant health; improving employee productivity; using energy, water, and other resources more efficiently; and reducing the overall impact to the environment.

Green Buildings may sound Greek buildings to a few, but sustainable building methods are here to stay. The real estate industry will soon be redefining the classification of office facilities. If a business facility is not identified or certified as Green, then it will not be marketed as "Class A" Building Space. Likewise, every client in whatever field you service will adjudge your business as to "How Green is it?" or "Is this just a 'Green-wash'?" prior to selecting a service or vendor. Businesses and medical offices may have to practice sensitivity to the changing demands of the community by upgrading their facilities to a more "Green Friendly" outlook or run with the risk of losing business or clients. Simple changes such as using programmable thermostats and low energy consuming lighting, recycling waste, reducing waste generation by reuse of resources, providing such things as reusable fabric napkins, ceramic coffee cups versus the paper products, opening doors and windows to allow fresh air in lieu of using fans are a few of the things easily adopted to align with the emerging trends of tomorrow. If budget permits, more expenses to allow for replacement of old building systems with energy efficient HVAC systems, additional building insulation, solar water heating, installation of Low emissivity (Low-E) insulated windows, planting of Deciduous trees to buffer solar heat gain, rain water harvesting and waste composting are some other aggressive methods of going Green.

As an inference, many developers, business owners, and office users see Green Building as an opportunity to expand or grow their business. They are taking advantage of the current market conditions where costs of new developments or improvements are viable due to availability of labor and "green" materials including land as a resource. Since design engineering and permit acquisition are time consuming efforts, business savvy entrepreneurs are casting their seeds now, while it is the buyer's market, with new office projects or commercial developments so as to reap the benefits of the Green wave when this emerging market trend will lead all business industries as we turn the decade. Are you ready to ride the Green Wave?!