

U.S. Green Building Council Federal Summit
The Ronald Reagan Building
April 29, 2003

Introduction: Thank you. It's a pleasure to be here at the 2003 U.S. Green Building Council Federal Summit. Great things are happening, and I'm pleased to see such a nice turnout, a sure sign that great things will continue to happen.

I've now had the privilege of working for President Bush for nearly seven years. I have seen his commitment to improving our quality of life, a strong focus on actually getting better results, a willingness to encourage innovation, and a personal ethic of stewardship – from making sure that the Texas Governor's Mansion was one of the first Austin facilities to sign up for the City's new renewable energy program; to his sustainably designed ranch house, geothermal heating and cooling system, and rainwater cistern; to the recent installation of the White House's first-ever solar electric system.

OFEE: Tomorrow, I will have held this position for one year. It's a great job – most folks have not heard of the Federal Environmental Executive, and when they do, they can't believe such a great position actually exists.

Created a decade ago, the Office of the Federal Environmental Executive was tasked with focusing on promoting recycling and the purchase of recycled content products by the federal government. Over time, that role and our mission have grown. Today, recycling and buying recycled remain a major focus of our office, but we also are looking at several issues that are logical outgrowths of that original mission. Our broader mission now is to promote sustainable environmental stewardship throughout the federal government. We're focusing on improving federal facilities' environmental compliance and performance through the use of environmental management systems, the entire range of green purchasing, industrial ecology, electronics stewardship, and sustainable buildings.

Priority: My office has adopted sustainable building as one of our six key priorities, for three reasons.

First, buildings – in their design, construction, operation, maintenance, use, and removal – affect land use, energy use, communities, and the indoor and outdoor environment. As stewards, we have the opportunity and responsibility to reduce these impacts. Using sustainable principles in buildings can reduce these impacts, as well as improve working conditions and worker productivity, increase energy efficiency, and reduce costs and risks.

Second, sustainable buildings can be showcases to educate people about environmental issues, possible solutions, partnerships and creativity, and opportunities for reducing environmental impacts in our everyday lives.

Hundreds of millions of people visit and work in federal facilities each year. Federal facilities and workers can, and must, use these opportunities to help educate and improve environmental conditions in our communities.

And third, green buildings represent the application in one place of many of the other sustainable concepts our office is working on. Environmental management systems help an organization realize its priority environmental issues and develop objectives to address them – a perfect opportunity for those just sitting down to design, construct, renovate, or operate a building. Recycling and green purchasing are critical elements of any sustainable building. And green buildings can embody industrial ecology concepts that encourage us to emulate how nature can efficiently use and re-use resources and energy and prevent pollution.

Sustainable design is growing around the world, and the Federal government is leading by example. Our December 2002 report to President Bush (see www.ofee.gov) and a recent newsletter highlight some of the Federal government's sustainable building successes to date.

And Ken Sandler from EPA, who will be moderating the next panel, has now prepared the first ever report surveying the federal government's sustainable building policies and practices. Though we don't have time to go into great detail, I'd like to give you the highlights. Some of this you're likely to know – and some of you graciously helped gather this information – but you may not know the full picture.

And, importantly, we'll be getting the final report out soon. We're very interested in your thoughts and comments on what recommendations we should make for moving green buildings even further in the federal government.

Ken's report is critical because, for the first time it answers the question of what exactly is the federal government doing on green buildings. I'd like to highlight several key findings.

First, a few basic facts. Federal buildings account for 0.4% of the nation's energy use and emit about 2% of all U.S. building-related greenhouse gases. The federal government owns about 500,000 buildings covering 3.1 billion square feet. Five agencies account for 95% of all the federal government's square footage: Department of Defense most notably, followed by the Postal Service, the General Services Administration, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Department of Energy.

Policies: Are there any federal policies in place on green buildings? Well, there are several very important ones, which have really helped us achieve some early successes.

The Energy Policy Act of 1992, recent Executive Orders, and Presidential Directives all require Federal buildings to reduce their energy use by 35% by 2010 in comparison to 1985 levels. President Bush's National Energy Policy calls for America to modernize conservation efforts and directs heads of federal agencies to "take appropriate actions to conserve energy use at their facilities."

Executive Order 13123, issued in 1999, requires federal agencies to "apply [sustainable design] principles to the siting, design, and construction of new facilities ... [and to] optimize life-cycle costs, pollution, and other environmental and energy costs associated with the construction, life-cycle operation, and decommissioning of the facility."

OMB's guidance for federal agencies in preparing their budgets, Circular A-11 (in part 2, section 55), was revised in 2002 to encourage agencies to incorporate Energy Star or LEED building standards into up-front design concepts for new construction and building renovations.

The National Park Service requires that, as part of their Design Board's review process, all construction over \$500,000 must use a LEED checklist (although they don't have to register for LEED certification).

The Army has incorporated sustainability into installation planning and infrastructure and has a goal of achieving SpiRiT (a green building rating system similar to LEED) silver ratings on all projects beginning with FY06 and gold ratings after then.

Navy policy now requires LEED to be used as a tool and metric for its buildings.

The Air Force has a policy to apply sustainable development concepts in its facilities and infrastructure projects, with LEED as the Air Force's preferred metric.

The "nation's landlord," the General Services Administration's new Facilities Standards for the Public Building Service requires all newly constructed and renovated buildings, beginning this fiscal year, to be certified through LEED – and LEED silver is encouraged.

And our office, with CEQ and a growing team across the federal government, are focusing on improving our environmental performance through the use of environmental management systems. What better place to start improving performance than the building and site where you operate?

Results: Just about everywhere you look, the federal government is working on green buildings. DOE's Federal Energy Management Program team, EPA, the National Park Service, the GSA, DOD, and others all have information about their green building efforts on their websites. Our office highlighted seven federal buildings in our latest newsletter. The Pentagon renovation has received much

recognition for its green attributes, including winning this year's Presidential Federal Energy Management Award.

And last week, on Earth Day, we announced the four winners of the first White House Closing the Circle awards for Sustainable Design/Green Building: the Washington Navy Yard's adaptive reuse of an older building; the Army's Fort Huachuca garrison in Arizona for its water conservation system; the Department of Energy's Sandia National Laboratories in Albuquerque, New Mexico for using sustainable design principles in a new systems testing center; and the General Services Administration's new Youngstown, Ohio federal building and courthouse, which already has received LEED certification.

More than 100 federal buildings are now Energy Star rated.

More than 60 Federal buildings are undergoing the LEED certification process, and seven federal buildings have been LEED certified to date: the Youngstown courthouse; the Social Security Administration's Child Care Facility in Woodlawn, Maryland; another Social Security Administration building in Baltimore, Maryland; the Bachelor's Enlisted Quarters at the Great Lakes Naval Training Center in Illinois; the Air Combat Command's Physical Fitness Center on Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana (which is rated bronze); and the Argonne National Laboratory's Central Supply Facility in Illinois (rated silver); and, most recently, the US EPA New England Regional Lab in Chemsford, Massachusetts (Gold).

Ten federal facilities are participating in the USGBC pilot to establish LEED criteria for existing building operations and system improvements (three of which are in the Washington, D.C. area). Federal employees participate in several LEED committees, and 19 federal departments, agencies, and facilities are members of the USGBC.

Challenges: In sum, there's a lot going on just in the federal government. But our vision for the future is much bigger than what we've already accomplished. So how do we do more, and do it more effectively, and do it as soon as possible?

Tomorrow, the USGBC will issue a report on its thoughts on what barriers impede further progress. Ken Sandler's survey of the federal government also identified barriers, many of which are the same, and which will be discussed at the end of today's summit – and none of which will come as a shock to you: barriers in our budget rules and insufficient funding; insufficient education and tools; a need for additional research; a lack of unified government standards; and a lack of a single, comprehensive federal policy direction. So the next step for us, and for you, is to truly work together to start overcoming these hurdles.

There are many options and opportunities, of course, and in the coming weeks we will be addressing which recommendations to proceed with. But we know we at least need to develop robust federal green building case studies – do we really

save money, and over what time period? Are workers really more productive? How much pollution is reduced? How much energy really is saved? And more. Thankfully, DOE and the interagency sustainability working group they lead are now developing a High Performance Buildings Case Study Database and a “Business Case for Sustainable Design,” which are beginning to reveal the answers. We need your help to ensure we have strong data.

We know we need to improve the use of life-cycle costing, so that the traditional focus on just the upfront construction costs is balanced with the benefits and reduced costs of high performance green buildings over time. The Navy is one example of an agency working to do just that. But we need more of these examples and case studies documenting them to convince the funders that this approach really works.

As I’ve worked on green product issues this past year, the program folks all say that it’s up to the procurement folks to take the programs’ information, do the right thing, and figure out what green products to buy. The procurement folks say they’re happy to buy green products if the program folks could just tell them exactly what to buy. That’s the magic of the LEED rating system – it pretty much tells you what you need to do – and it’s also why product analysis models like BEES are tougher to use in actual procurement. That’s why EPA’s Alison Kinn is working on model green construction specifications, which she will talk more about later today and on which she needs your input.

We do a great job of “silo-hugging” in the federal government. We need to do a better job of coming up out of those silos and working together – within agencies (yes, that’s still an issue), with other agencies, and certainly with the private sector, with organizations, and with state and local governments. That’s why the work of the current interagency sustainability working group and the Federal Network for Sustainability is so important – and why still other partnerships are needed. Only by really working together can we truly overcome these barriers.

USGBC and LEED: And that brings me to the USGBC and its LEED rating system.

The USGBC is an incredible story of a private/public partnership and of the power of a voluntary market transformation tool in LEED. This is what many see as a model for advancing environmental progress and economic benefits.

The USGBC has done a remarkable job in weaving together into one standard a myriad of issues, materials, and policies – so that today, we all can talk the same language and push toward the same goal, while being able to doing things differently to reflect individual building, owner, and location differences.

As LEED continues to spread like wildfire, let us – the federal community, the USGBC, and all the stakeholders – work together to make sure that LEED works

and does not become a victim of its own success. As the Federal government increasingly embraces LEED, we also increasingly hear concerns about some of the imperfections of the system – concerns about cost, about whether the LEED development process is inclusive and transparent enough, and about whether that development process effectively utilizes the emerging science of life-cycle assessment.

While this does not detract from the success of LEED and USGBC in helping to green government buildings, it does point to issues that together we need to address – by the USGBC, as it must show leadership, transparency, and inclusiveness in establishing such important rating systems and as it explores whether to be certified formally as a voluntary consensus standard setting body by ANSI or others – by those with concerns about the current system, as they must express their concerns directly and effectively – and by the federal government, as it pursues greener buildings, decides which tools to use, seeks to ensure it complies with the standards requirements in the National Technology Transfer and Advancement Act, and answers how willing and able it is to truly lead by example.

And we all have to recognize that there will be, and should be, other approaches to addressing some of the same issues that the USGBC is working on. LEED, the Building for Environmental and Economic Sustainability, or BEES, model, and many other useful tools and standards that are being developed and improved are all needed to make this endeavor successful.

The federal government strongly believes that green buildings play a role in the important work we are doing to be better environmental stewards and to improve our environmental performance. We also believe that recognition and rating systems, such as LEED, help catalyze the market place to perform.

Conclusion: So that's where the federal government is. We've made huge strides in policy and practice. But we recognize that we have more to do to make sustainable building the way of doing business throughout the federal government.

My hope is that these initial successes and strong efforts will serve as the foundation for others to build greater, more sustainable progress. For this, we need your help – to partner, to be innovative, to be persistent.

Buildings today offer us the opportunity to truly live sustainably. I look forward to helping construct a more sustainable world, one building at a time, with all of you.