

BUILDING PERFORMANCE LAB

CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

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NYC Building Performance Consortium

December 12, 2008 Meeting Summary

Our fourth meeting of the NYC Building Performance Consortium began late – itself a reminder of the climate change issues we face. Global warming promises more extreme weather events and this particular morning featured floods that slowed the subways and ice storms further north that prevented our Albany participants from traveling at all. Vulnerability and adaptation are themes lurking in the wings of our agenda and is the subject of an on-going NYSERDA project led by Columbia University and CUNY researchers.

Once our chairs and most of us arrived, we began the meeting with updates on four related on-going efforts.

Green Leasing. (1) *Donna DiCostanzo of NRDC summarized work they are leading to develop a Green Lease Rider.* The objective is a guidance tool that could be used in negotiation by both lessors and leasees. The Green Lease contributes to dialog and collaboration between owners, tenants, and managers, clarifying expectations and responsibilities. The tenant role in energy use has been an ongoing topic of Consortium discussions. While lighting and IT are the most important energy uses controlled by tenants, evidence is beginning to emerge of deeper tenant involvement in building energy decisions – an example was provided of a major tenant who specifically sought major energy-related improvements – in this case a new, tightened curtain wall façade.

Workforce Development. Briefings on “green workforce development” were provided from three on-going local processes.

(2) *Myles Lennon of the non-profit Urban Agenda summarized objectives and status of the NY Apollo Alliance’s Green-Collar Jobs Roundtable.* The goal of this process is to fashion a political agenda with broad institutional support. It is about half-way through a multi-phase collaborative process aimed at policy and platform recommendations for city government and candidates. This work seems especially timely now, with the stated goals of the Obama administration and the likelihood of stimulus funds flowing to the state and city.

(3) *Rebecca Lurie of the Center for Worker Education reported on USGBC-NY’s curriculum development process for the construction and building operating trades.* Modules are being developed to introduce workers to green concepts, practices and technologies specifically relevant to each trade’s work. Subject-matter expert groups have been working on content and modules should be available this spring.

(4) *Nora Sherman of CUNY’s Building Performance Lab demonstrated a 1.0 version of a new website, NYC Building Performance, being developed with support from US-EPA*



Region 2. The website draws together materials, references, and tools to support study by local property managers, especially in connection with courses at the Newman Real Estate Institute. The site can be found here: <http://www.cunyurbansystems.org/pages/building-performance-lab/building-performance.php>. Input is sought from practitioners as to what they would find of value on the site and we will be convening an Advisory Panel for work on the site – please contact Nora_Sherman@baruch.cuny.edu.

The Workforce Development briefings raise a question for the real estate industry: what would the industry’s workforce needs be if they pursue an environmental agenda?

Economic Downturn and Decision-Making

This led into the next segment of the meeting, a consideration of the impact of the economic downturn on planning and decision-making. In a downturn, as space goes into over-supply, how will firms position themselves competitively? Will green high-performance elements become even more important as a means of attracting, delighting, and retaining tenants? Will relatively small projects replace mega-projects? Or will costs be mercilessly pruned for price competition?

Our polling exercise asked four questions, with the following results:

	yes	no
1. Are our organizations thinking and acting differently in recognition of a changed economic climate?	29	2
2. Is there a coherent strategy in your organization about how to navigate the present conditions?	11	20
3. Does your organization’s thinking extend past the downturn towards what is necessary for the eventual upturn?	31	0
4. Does your organization understand the decisions it needs to make and the knowledge it needs to make them?	20	11

One participant commented that the results show that our industry is made up of optimists – focused on a quick turn-around. The responses suggest that it is more attractive to plan for future resurgence than for current retrenchment. Certainly strategic planning during a period of slow-down makes sense. Interestingly, the same number of respondents said that their organizations lack strategy for today’s environment as those who said they believe their organizations understand the strategic needs for the upturn. But what happens if this part of the cycle goes on for longer than anticipated?

Planning for resurgence also implies planning for eventual additions to the workforce, even while the current workforce is constrained and perhaps even reduced. How will organizations address this conundrum? Answers to this question will help the training community provide the right kinds of skills at the right time.

In addition to workforce considerations, any upturn strategy will surely involve projects and technologies. How does the Consortium bring specific technologies and project delivery mechanisms into focus without being swamped by vendors?

It was suggested that a working group of the Consortium might be convened to consider these questions and bring recommendations to the next meeting.