

Brokers Can— and Should— Help Tenants Go Green



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By Ralph Benzakein, LEED® AP, SIOR

Do you think that this whole Green thing is just a passing fad? Could it just be some giant miscalculation? Maybe a decimal point in the wrong spot or something (has anybody checked the math?). Well, think again. The evidence is overwhelming. Environmental issues are a part of life now and they will not be going away like yesterday's fads. They will be with us for a lifetime and beyond.

There is no shortage of good reasons to "go Green." You've heard them all; melting polar ice caps and rising water levels, air and water pollution, disappearing green spaces and rain forests, energy shortages, sick building syndrome, a clean place for your kids and grandchildren to grow up in... just pick one... whatever moves you. There are no wrong reasons to do the right thing.

Many tenants (and brokers) believe that creating a Green working environment isn't their problem, "We'll let the landlords

figure it out; after all, it's not our building, we just rent." But there is a lot that tenants can and should be doing.

To begin with, many of us need a paradigm shift. There's an old proverb: "**We don't own the land, we are just borrowing it from our grandchildren**" So, in real estate parlance, "We're all just tenants here."

As employee salaries are often the single greatest cost associated with running a business, it just makes sense to invest in an interior space that maximizes the employees' comfort and productivity. Before very long, employees will be demanding healthier working environments.

The U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) has developed the LEED® Rating System specifically for tenants who don't have control of their entire building. Even if you don't locate your business in a LEED® Certified Building, your tenant space can

still be LEED® Certified and you will enjoy many of the tangible and intangible benefits of “going Green.”

The role of broker or real estate advisor is critical to the success of achieving LEED® Certified tenant space. Many LEED® Credits require significant landlord/tenant negotiations. And some buildings, regardless of the landlord’s willingness to cooperate, will never qualify because they cannot meet the prerequisites. You wouldn’t want to be the broker who put those buildings on your client’s short list.

When brokers I speak to tell me they just haven’t had the demand from tenants for Green space, two things strike me right away. First, their response is very passive—brokers should be proactive not reactive. They should be making the Green recommendations themselves. It is a big differentiator and provides your tenant/client with added value. Second, if you have not had those requests yet, you will, and you had better be equipped to handle them or be prepared to lose the business.

The USGBC offers the credential of LEED® Accredited Professional to individuals who have demonstrated a thorough understanding of Green building practices and principles and of the LEED® Rating System. Most who have achieved the designation are architects and engineers or are otherwise involved in the building industry. Only a few are licensed real estate practitioners. In the same way that the letters SIOR create value in attracting clients, so will the LEED® AP credential.

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process and will be instrumental in negotiating lease terms that can incorporate additional credit-earning strategies, especially where the workletter is concerned. Specification of lighting and lighting controls, paint, carpet, existing conditions and required build-out are also critical factors in earning the LEED® Certification.

As I said, there are many excellent reasons to have an environmental conscience; everyone is motivated by their own personal experience and philosophy. Find your own reason to act responsibly.