



**STATEMENT OF YANCY WRIGHT OF SELLEN SUSTAINABILITY
(ON BEHALF OF THE U.S. GREEN BUILDING COUNCIL)**

**BEFORE
THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND
INFRASTRUCTURE**

**ON
RECOVERY ACT TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS:
IMPACTS ON LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND BUSINESS**

September 29, 2010

On behalf of the U.S. Green Building Council's (USGBC) nearly 17,000 organizational members and nearly 80 local chapters, I would like to thank Chairman Oberstar and Ranking Member Mica for the opportunity to testify about the business and community impact of infrastructure investments as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). My name is Yancy Wright and I am the Director of Sellen Sustainability, a training and consulting group within Sellen Construction created recently to help share lessons learned across the US and evolve the industry.

Introduction

The U.S. Green Building Council is a national nonprofit organization working to address resource limitations and climate change by advancing more environmentally responsible, healthy and profitable buildings.

Sellen Sustainability is a wholly-owned division of Sellen Construction Company, a 66 year old Seattle based company that currently employs over 600 people (464 union trades people) in the Puget Sound Region. As an early practitioner of sustainable construction methods, in the mid-1990s Sellen developed Erosion Control protocols that later became adopted practice by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). In 1997 Sellen became one of the first general contractors to join USGBC, and contributed to the development and implementation of the LEED Rating System. Sellen continues to evolve environmentally-responsible design and construction practices, and has been recognized in the Pacific Northwest region as the top green building contractor with nearly 90% of our project volume pursuing a LEED certification.

As a longstanding partner with the USGBC, we are proud to have been invited to testify on their behalf.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act ARRA and GSA

Over a year ago, ARRA provided GSA with \$5.5 billion, which included \$4.5 billion to convert existing GSA facilities into high-performance green buildings \$1.0 billion for the construction of new high-performance green Federal buildings, U.S. courthouses, and land ports of entry. These ARRA funds have had a tremendous impact on the economy while unemployment in the construction sector remains significant.¹

One of the projects to receive funding is the 12021 Federal Center South (FCS) Building in Seattle Washington. The new FCS Building involves the redevelopment of an existing early 1940s warehouse to provide a modern, high-performance work environment and consolidated headquarters facility for the US Army Corp of Engineers (USACE) on the FCS Campus in Seattle, WA.

¹ Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employment Situation Summary." United States Department of Labor, 2 April 2010 <<http://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.nr0.htm>>

Within an 18 week window to develop the competition submittal—and more importantly to advance the design to a level that allowed the contractor to guarantee a maximum price for delivery—ZGF architects, Sellen Construction and the other design team members developed the concept design for the large-scale, complex project through a tightly controlled, highly-collaborative and integrated design process.

As a result of an integrated, design-build process, the team was able to quickly and efficiently meet the clear expectations set by the GSA for building performance, energy use and LEED Gold certification while keeping it within budget. To address these, the building design incorporates extensive sustainable features including natural light provided to over 90% of the building's floorplate; conversion of the site's existing impervious parking lot to a 64% pervious landscaped site; reuse of 200,000 Board Feet of structural timbers from the decommissioned 1202 warehouse facility; a high-performance envelope with orientation specific sunscreens; water saving fixtures that are 30% more efficient; and design of a high-performance HVAC system utilizing 100% outdoor air. As a result, the building is projected to beat the 2007 ASHRAE energy code by more than 30% with an overall Energy use Intensity (EUI) of 26.5 Kbtu/SF/yr and demonstrates that GSA's aggressive objectives for building performance, energy use and LEED Gold certification are not only obtainable, but can be accomplished within a cost-effective, value-driven framework.

As one of the first design-build projects to be undertaken by GSA within Washington State, the FCS project offers a test case for this delivery method. The heightened level of integration and collaboration inherent in the design process is now reflected in the current design of the USACE workplace; in turn we believe these attributes can be applied to the design and delivery of future large-scale infrastructure and natural restoration projects that the USACE and GSA are responsible for. Further, Sellen believes this will serve as a replicable model for other public and private projects across the US.

When completed, the new 175,000 SF Federal Center South office building, which is aiming to meet or exceed LEED Gold certification, will provide a cost-effective, resource-efficient, high-performance, healthy and functional work environment for USACE employees. The new facility will incorporate a large amount of materials from the existing building, and will significantly improve the current parking lot runoff into the Duwamish River located adjacent to the site.

This project is one of many other projects utilizing GSA recovery funds. As of March 31, 2010, GSA obligated over \$4.3 billion in ARRA funds, including \$4 billion for Federal buildings. GSA has awarded construction contracts to more than 500 companies in 50 States, 2 U.S. territories, and the District of Columbia.²

² Johnson, Martha. Statement to the House Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government. *GSA FY2011 Budget*, Hearing, April 28, 2010
<http://appropriations.house.gov/images/stories/pdf/fsdc/Martha_Johnson.4.28.10.pdf>.

On behalf of USGBC and Sellen I would like to commend this committee and the Administration for your leadership in including these provisions in ARRA. These programs are putting Americans back to work and sending a clear signal that building sustainably is an essential element in reducing the federal government's environmental and operational footprint – and an essential strategy for this country's recovery. This project also provides a strong example for how green buildings can be delivered at a lower cost by developers in the private sector

Government and Green Building

Governments at all levels have been highly influential in the growth of green building, both by requiring LEED for their own buildings and by creating incentives for LEED for the private sector. Currently, 14 federal agencies or departments, 35 states, 400+ local governments, numerous public school jurisdictions and institutions of higher education across the United States have made various policy commitments to use or encourage LEED. Indeed, Government-owned or occupied LEED buildings make up 29% of all LEED projects. The federal government has 282 certified projects and another 3527 pursuing certification. State governments have 469 certified projects and 2009 pursuing certification. Local governments have 695 certified projects and 3201 pursuing certification.

In 2006, the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA)—the nation's largest civilian landlord—submitted a report to Congress evaluating the applicability, stability, objectivity, and availability of five different sustainable building rating systems.³ Based on this study, GSA concluded that LEED “continues to be the most appropriate and credible sustainable building rating system available for evaluation of GSA projects.”⁴ In particular, GSA noted that LEED “[i]s applicable to all GSA project types; [t]racks the quantifiable aspects of sustainable design and building performance; [i]s verified by trained professionals; [h]as a well-defined system for incorporating updates; and [i]s the most widely used rating system in the U.S. market.”⁵ GSA currently requires its new construction projects and substantial renovations to achieve LEED certification.⁶ All new construction and major building

³ Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (operated for the U.S. Department of Energy by Battelle), *Sustainable Building Rating Systems Summary* (July 2006), completed for General Services Administration under Contract DE-AC05-76RL061830, available at <https://www.usgbc.org/ShowFile.aspx?DocumentID=1915>.

⁴ Letter dated Sept. 15, 2006 from GSA Administrator Lurita Doan to Sen. Christopher Bond, Chairman, Subcommittee on Transportation, Treasury, the Judiciary, HUD, and Related Agencies, Committee on Appropriations (accompanying report), available at <https://www.usgbc.org/ShowFile.aspx?DocumentID=1916>; see also Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (operated for the U.S. Department of Energy by Battelle), *Sustainable Building Rating Systems Summary* (July 2006), completed for General Services Administration under Contract DE-AC05-76RL061830, available at <https://www.usgbc.org/ShowFile.aspx?DocumentID=1915>.

⁵ Letter dated Sept. 15, 2006 from GSA Administrator Lurita Doan to Sen. Christopher Bond, Chairman, Subcommittee on Transportation, Treasury, the Judiciary, HUD, and Related Agencies, Committee on Appropriations (accompanying report), available at <https://www.usgbc.org/ShowFile.aspx?DocumentID=1916>.

⁶ U.S. General Services Administration, Sustainable Design Program, available at <http://www.gsa.gov/Portal/gsa/ep/channelView.do?pageTypeId=8195&channelPage=%252Fep%252Fchannel%252FgsaOverview.jsp&channelId=-12894>.

modernization projects utilizing ARRA funds will achieve at least a LEED Silver certification.⁷

Recommendations for Further Action

While not the subject of this hearing USGBC encourages Congress to take action in the following areas to help GSA operate more effectively.

Power Purchasing Agreements

Under current authority, GSA may enter into contracts for public utility services for a period of ten years. Without changes to the length of contracts, however, cannot enter into energy agreements with renewable power developers, who often require longer contract periods to deliver increased capacity. Allowing GSA to enter into contracts for renewable energy utility services for longer periods would enable GSA to benefit from continuous, local power and would help to insulate the agency from fluctuations in energy costs. Such a change would assist GSA's compliance with the Energy Policy Act of 2005, which requires at least 7.5% of federal agency energy consumption to be from renewable sources in 2013, the 2030 net-zero building goals of the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 and Executive Order 13514, and the government-wide greenhouse gas emission reduction target of 28% by 2020.

Legislation introduced in the House of Representatives, H.R.175, and the Senate, S.3251, would allow GSA to extend the length of renewable energy contracts beyond 10 years. Similar language is contained in H.R. 2454, the "American Clean Energy and Security Act." USGBC recommends the adoption of such policies as a powerful means of jumpstarting the renewable energy sector and leveraging the significant purchasing power of the federal government.

Expanded Education and Training

The investments being made as a part of ARRA are significant. To leverage effectiveness there must be a continuous effort to ensure these assets are operated and maintained after construction.

USGBC commends the recent passage of H.R. 5112, the "Federal Buildings Personnel Training Act of 2010" the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. This bipartisan legislation introduced by Rep. Russ Carnahan (D-MO) and Rep. Judy Biggert (R-IL) will ensure that GSA, identifies competencies that federal buildings personnel should possess and ensure that they demonstrate them. The Senate has approved companion legislation. USGBC encourages the House to follow action from the Senate.

⁷ Johnson, Martha. Statement to the House Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government. *GSA FY2011 Budget*, Hearing, April 28, 2010
<http://appropriations.house.gov/images/stories/pdf/fsdc/Martha_Johnson.4.28.10.pdf>.

About the U.S. Green Building Council and LEED

USGBC is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit membership organization working to transform the way buildings and communities are designed, built and operated, enabling an environmentally and socially responsible, healthy, and prosperous environment that improves the quality of life. Our nearly 17,000 member organizations and 91,000 active volunteers include leading corporations and real estate developers, architects, engineers, builders, schools and universities, nonprofits, trade associations and government agencies at the federal, state and local levels.

The organization is governed by a diverse Board of Directors that is elected by the USGBC membership. Volunteer committees representing users, service providers, manufacturers, and other stakeholders steward and develop all USGBC programs, including the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) rating system, through well-documented consensus processes. A staff of more than 200 professionals administers an extensive roster of educational and informational programs that support the LEED Rating System in addition to broad-based support of green building.

USGBC's LEED Professional Accreditation program, workshops, green building publications, and the annual Greenbuild conference provide green building education for professionals and consumers worldwide. USGBC has trained more than 150,000 professionals through its green building workshops, and attracted nearly 30,000 attendees from around the globe to its most recent Greenbuild conference.

Educational programs are delivered locally through USGBC's Chapters and Affiliates, through the Web, and at conferences and events all over the world.

Biography:

Yancy Wright has a decade of experience in the building industry. He has helped identify strategies to achieve sustainability goals on over 30 LEED projects for world-class clients including The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Microsoft, Vulcan, Inc. for Amazon.com, University of Washington, and Children's Hospital.

His passion and talent for teaching has helped shape Community College curriculum on green collar workforce training, and increased interest in and commitment to building green.

He serves as a Board Member of the Cascadia Region Green Building Council, and an advisor to the Seattle Vocational Institute and the local building and construction trades council.

Yancy holds an M.A. in Architecture from the University of Idaho, & Pennsylvania State University in Rome, Italy and a B.A. in Architecture from the University of Idaho.

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