

Introduction

Federal buildings not only provide space for Federal activities and workers—they also serve as symbols of the country’s ideals and priorities. Given that these structures and their sites have tremendous impacts on our natural environment, our economy, and worker productivity and health, the Federal government is rethinking how it builds today to enhance the future. Federal building professionals are exploring opportunities to minimize habitat disturbance and optimize energy, water, and materials use during the siting, construction, renovation, and operation of buildings. In addition, the Federal government is striving to create healthier indoor environments by specifying environmentally preferable building products and designing buildings to maximize natural daylighting and ventilation.

The Federal government should provide leadership in environmental design and construction in order to ensure America’s future prosperity and resource independence and lay the foundation for environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable development throughout the U.S. and the world.

Recognizing this opportunity, in 2002, the Office of the Federal Environmental Executive (OFEE), a Task Force of the White House Council on Environmental Quality, adopted sustainable building as one of its six priority areas. Created a decade ago, OFEE was originally tasked with focusing on promoting waste prevention, recycling, and the purchase of recycled content and environmentally preferable products by the Federal government. Today, waste prevention, recycling and green purchasing remain a major focus, and OFEE has expanded its effort to embrace the more holistic mission of promoting *sustainable environmental stewardship* throughout the federal government.

Green buildings represent the application of many stewardship concepts on which our office is working. Environmental management systems help an organization realize its priority environmental issues and develop objectives to address them—a perfect opportunity during the siting, design, construction, renovation, or operation of a building. Recycling and the use of green products are critical elements of any green building. And green buildings can embody industrial ecology concepts that encourage us to emulate nature in efficiently using and re-using resources.

Beyond these environmental imperatives, green Federal buildings can also be showcases to educate the millions of people who visit and work in Federal facilities each year about environmental issues and creative solutions.

With these goals in mind, OFEE developed this report to document for the first time green building practices, policies, and tools currently used by the Federal government; identify barriers to Federal green building; and provide recommendations for overcoming those barriers.