

Treat Green Guidelines as Tool, Not Goal, Say Panelists at Multi-Housing World Green Multifamily Session

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By Anuradha Kher, Online News Editor

Denver--The Multi-Housing World Conference kicked off yesterday in Denver with a series of workshops designed to tackle urgent issues facing the multifamily industry today. Green building, sustainable development, high-performance projects; whatever one's term of preference may be, the issue at hand continues to garner growing interest in the industry.

As four panelists with plenty of green credentials provided an overview of the various standards for green building today, they emphasized that those standards are tools to achieving the goal and not the goal itself.



“Green is quality construction that is well thought out, planned and built-in,” Lynn Russell, CGP, FMI Corp. said. “Things like fresh air and daylight in our homes are quality of life issues. Green is just a label we have stuck on them.”

She (*pictured left*) added that green building can't be effectively painted on as an after-thought. “It can be cost-effective in the long-term for owners and good business for developers. It is no longer a luxury or a fad,” Russell said.

Green building for multifamily developers is easier because multifamily construction has built-in sustainable features such as unit size, density, proximity to public transportation and mixed-use. “So do something! Get your hands and feet wet. Don't wait too much longer to get started,” Russell told multifamily industry executives here yesterday.

Daniel Gehman (*pictured right*), AIA, LEED AP at Thomas P. Cox Architects, who offset his carbon footprint from flying from Los Angeles to Denver, by donating a just \$7, compared LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification to Kleenex. “LEED is the Kleenex of sustainable programs. It has become a generic term but in reality one size does not fit all,” he explained.



“Without assessing where the owner wants to go, you will be left head banging,” Gehman explained to developers.

Another architect, Lisa Henry, ASID, LEED AP of Knoll Inc. explained the REGREEN ASID and USGBC residential remodeling guidelines, which include tips on how to pick a project type, strategies by building system, case studies of different spaces in residential units, and a glossary of terms to help navigate through the world of green building.

At the end of the session, an audience member asked each panel member to share his or her holy grail as it relates to green building. Henry said it was lowering carbon emissions and energy consumption while Russell said she focused on the building envelope. “If there is leakage in the building, all other efforts will go waste,” she explained.

Gehman confessed that he was a right-brain person who had a hard time thinking in a linear fashion and liked to think in terms of the big picture. He said his holy grail was to do anything that decreases America’s dependence on foreign oil. Dana Bourland (*pictured right*), senior director of Green Communities, Enterprise Community Partners Inc. concluded, “We focus on harvesting and generating energy, and on understanding where resources come from and where they go.”



Facts that can help in identifying opportunities in green building—as outlined by Bourland:

30 million existing residential units are home to families earning less than \$25,000. This accounts for 30 percent of all housing. The lowest income groups pay the highest proportions of their income on home energy. Buildings contribute 43 percent of CO₂ emissions from fossil fuel combustion. CO₂ emissions from residential buildings increased much faster than all sectors except commercial operations between 1990 and 2005.