

**Intergovernmental Green Building Group (IGBG) Meeting**  
Washington Metropolitan Council of Governments  
777 North Capitol Street, NE, Washington, DC

July 17, 2007

12:00 noon to 2:00 pm

**Draft Meeting Highlights**

**“Promoting cooperation on green building issues in the  
Metropolitan Washington region”**

**Attendees:**

The Honorable Eric Olsen, Prince George’s County  
Joan Kelsch, Arlington County  
Stella Tarnay, Arlington County  
George Nichols, MWCOG  
Leah Boggs, MWCOG  
Stuart Freudberg, MWCOG  
Jeremy McPike, City of Alexandria  
Eli Golfer, City of Gaithersburg  
Adrian Fremont, City of Fairfax  
Beth Clark, Charles County  
Sandra Batterden, Montgomery County  
Noel Kaplan, Fairfax County  
Brendan Shane, Anacostia Waterfront Corp  
Brian Gault, The Peterson Companies  
Kara Strong, SDC  
Barry Weise, Councilmember Graham’s Office, District of Columbia  
Pat Tallarico, GreenShape  
Doug Fraser, City of Falls Church  
Patty Rose, Greenhome  
Paivi Spoon, Prince George’s County  
Nate Wall, City of Rockville  
Crystal Merlino, Sustain Design  
Erin Shaffer, Green Building Initiative  
Kevin Stover, Green Building Initiative

**1. COG Board Green Building Report Reaction**

Joan Kelsch and Stuart Freudberg presented the IGBG Interim Green Building Report to the COG Board on July 11. The report was well received. Specific comments included:

- § Gerry Connolly, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, noted that Fairfax County is now requiring LEED Silver for new public buildings and renovations of existing public buildings.

- § Roger Berliner, Montgomery County Council, expressed interest in residential green building programs, noting that this interim report does not focus on green building rating systems for single family and low-rise residential construction. He is very interested in developing a rating system for this segment of the building industry.
- § Penny Gross, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, asked that green building data be included in COG's Commercial Construction Report for next year.

The Board action included a vote to send the report out for a 60 day comment period (ending September 10, 2007). COG staff noted that the Chief Elected Official, the Chief Administrative Offices, and the Board Clerk in each jurisdiction will receive a hard copy and a weblink to the report. IGBG members are encouraged to distribute the report to all interested parties (local government, non-profit organizations, developers, builders, etc). The report is featured on:

- The COG Home Page in the right column under Publications [www.mwcog.org](http://www.mwcog.org).
- The Environment Page at <http://www.mwcog.org/environment/> as the top news story
- The Green Building Page at <http://www.mwcog.org/environment/greenbuilding/>
- All links lead to our publications database where the document may be found at [http://www.mwcog.org/store/item.asp?PUBLICATION\\_ID=304](http://www.mwcog.org/store/item.asp?PUBLICATION_ID=304).

## **2. Green Building Initiative Presentation and Discussion**

Erin Shaffer and Kevin Stover of the Green Building Initiative (GBI) presented information on the Green Globes green building rating system. The system started in Canada and there are 8 fully certified buildings in the US. Of these seven have dual LEED and Green Globes certification. GBI is a 501(c) 3 organization with seed money from the building materials, appliances, and insulation industries. The website [www.thegbi.org](http://www.thegbi.org) contains a lot of useful information.

Ms. Shaffer stated that Green Globes is an online rating system that is an alternative to LEED. It includes 1000 points. The online application allows project teams to self-evaluate the project by answering a series of questions. The online tool provides feedback with general suggestions for "greening" a project and includes links to many related WebPages. GBI doesn't support government mandates for green buildings. They have also applied to be an ANSI standard – final ANSI approval is expected in early 2008. They will respond to ANSI comments and adjust the rating system accordingly. Green Globes includes life cycle analysis (LCA) which is not included in LEED.

Green Globes third party verification is now available and includes a document review and a site inspection by one of the verifiers. GBI has a contractual relationship with a consultant to provide the 3<sup>rd</sup> party verification in order to obtain a certified green globe rating . Cost is \$4000-6000 per building.

Noel Kaplan asked about the verification process. Construction documents can be verified remotely. Mr. Stover attended his first site visit and noted that it was "informal

but robust.” Green Globes is a more open process than LEED so there is opportunity to discuss issues with the verifier to clarify issues along the way.

Sandra Batterden asked about the relationship with GBI and the forest products and vinyl industries. Ward Hubbell, the Executive Director of GBI, worked for the Louisiana Pacific Corporation, a forest products company, prior to joining GBI. Some preliminary funding comes from the forest products industry. The potential points awarded for vinyl depends on the life cycle assessment for the products used in a project.

Barry Weise noted that Robert Hall, a lobbyist representing the interests of Green Globes, was involved with the passage of DC’s green building legislation. Mr. Weise was surprised that Mr. Hall did not know of Mr. Hubbell’s relationship to the forest products industry when he lobbied the DC City Council. He also noted that the GSA Report concluded that LEED is the green building rating system most appropriate for federal projects. Ms. Shaffer responded that she believes the report is out of date and GSA was not familiar with the full range of Green Globes potential.

Joan Kelsch asked about specific standards used in Green Globes. She noted that ENERGY STAR is used but after working through the rating system for a couple hours, other specific standards were not evident. LEED has specific standards that have to be met before credits are approved. Mr. Stover responded that Green Globes uses questions with a yes/no format and it is up to the verifier to determine if the project achieves the Green Globes points. Verifier training helps make sure that points are allotted consistently. Specific standards are used for energy (Energy Star) and to some extent for water efficiency.

Stella Tarnay noted that two potential advantages of the Green Globes system was its educational value and the potential to save money on consultants. She asked Mr. Stover to follow the trail for a moderately experienced user who may want to know about stormwater management or energy efficiency. Beyond indicting a general commitment to conservation, she noted, the tool would be more helpful if it provided guidance on how to achieve it—and what was an acceptable level of performance. Although the site has a rich collection of links, they tend to be general in nature. Joan Kelsch also noted that many of the weblinks included for informational purposes in the online tool are “dead” links. Ms. Shaffer responded that they are not able to update those because the ANSI process does not allow them to make any changes to the online tool during the ANSI review.

At this point, Green Globes does not tell the user how many points are allotted for each item on the checklist. Ms. Shaffer noted that this was designed so as to avoid “point chasing.” An IGBG member noted that this makes it impossible to tell how much each item is emphasized and the user can’t decide what to include in the project in order to achieve Green Globes certification. ANSI will likely require Green Globes to specify how many points are allotted for each item included in the project.

Kara Strong of Sustainable Design Consulting asked whether commissioning is required. Mr. Stover responded that there are not prerequisites for Green Globes. It is possible to achieve certification without commissioning. The Commissioning points do not require a

neutral third party commissioning agent; the owner or anyone on the team may conduct the commissioning.

Ms. Shaffer explained that there are some points that are not applicable. Green Globes does not include these in the final calculation (i.e., the total point score is reduced from 1000 if “N/A” points are reported in the online tool.)

Noel Kaplan noted that the questions are subjective. It isn’t clear how much you have to do to get the points in Green Globes. Ms. Shaffer and Mr. Stover responded that Green Globes is a “framework of guidance” and provides general information on how to improve.

Stuart Freudberg commented that he is surprised at the subjective nature of the tool. He is disappointed that it is not more rigorous and does not include specific standards. He noted that the region needs a consistent approach to green buildings so that it is easy for developers and government staff to understand, apply, and review. It appears that Green Globes allows for negotiating and “finessing” with the third party verifier and that specific standards of achievement are not clear.

Kara Strong noted that \$4,000 - \$6,000 is not enough to provide a thorough third party verification and site inspection. (Ms. Strong is a green building consultant with Sustainable Design Consulting). She noted that travel and the site inspection alone would cost that much. Ms. Sheffer responded that this is the cost of the third party verification now and costs may be adjusted in the future. The ANSI process will offer many improvements and adjustments to the standard, and she asked that IGBG members stay abreast of developments.

Stuart Freudberg stated that based on what he learned from today’s presentation, he would recommend that IGBG focus its attention on making LEED a stronger tool rather than addressing the serious limitations evident from the dialogue on the green globe system. Perhaps at some point in the future these issues will be rectified, but at this time LEED is clearly the mature system that makes sense for our region. Suggestions should be provided to the USGBC on how to make LEED more effective for our members. IGBG should make this a priority for the future.

Stella Tarnay, principal author of the IGBG Report, noted that the information presented and discussed at the meeting would be helpful to updating the standards section of the report, and would be incorporated into that work.

### **3. IGBG Work Plan – FY08**

George Nichols presented a PowerPoint on the work that IGBG needs to focus on in the upcoming months. Primary items include:

- Collecting and addressing comments and finalizing the report;
- following up on rating systems for residential (single family and low-rise multi-family), both affordable and market-rate;
- assessing rating systems for schools;
- Assessing opportunities to “green” existing buildings;

- Develop a green building tracking system;
- Track the relationship between green buildings and climate change;
- Update the Green Building Report as necessary;
- Work to “green” the building codes;
- Plan and implement at green building conference (focus on private sector);
- Green Building Outreach and education (website, tours, educational materials, training, etc);
- Establish a regional recognition system (coordinated with other organization such as AIA-Committee on the Environment);

There was a great deal of interest and discussion from committee members about the follow-up on residential rating system, most notably on the definition of residential, and the inclusion of affordable housing in the updated recommendations. Committee member Paivi Spoon reminded the group that Existing Buildings had to be t on the committee’s radar. Stella Tarnay suggested that Climate Protection through green building be a project on par with work on green building codes, given the national and regional focus on the issue. She suggested that both these projects be listed under the Work header of “Green Building Education, Outreach, and Collaboration” as work on codes implies collaboration and co-education with building officials, and climate protection coincides with work of the COG climate technical committee. She urged IGBG to work collaboratively rather than in parallel with the climate committee. COG staff noted that they are working with both committees, and would assist with maintaining lines of communication.

#### **4. Peer Exchange**

- Fairfax is evaluating incentive programs for private green development
- Several jurisdictions and companies are hiring green building and energy professionals (Alexandria, DC, Arlington, Sustainable Design Consulting)
- Montgomery County is finalizing the regulations that will help implement the new green building ordinance
- The Anacostia Watershed Corporation is making great progress with LEED standards incorporated into the building requirements in the watershed.

Next meeting will be August 2, 2007 from 10 am to 12 noon in the COG Board room, third floor. The meeting adjourned at approximately 2:10 pm.