

## A Change of Seasons



This is the second Quarter, 2007 Edition of the MDC Advisor. Spring has sprung in fits throughout much of the East Coast. Weather was 70 °F on April 2<sup>nd</sup> and 30°F by April 8<sup>th</sup>.

Much like the weather, there are issues afoot in the building industry which are moving in a herky jerky fashion but seem to be moving toward an inevitable conclusion. These are the issues of greenhouse gases and sustainability, and some sort of rational response to same. While the political world is still a bit topsy-turvy with debate on the subject, the building industry has been keen to push forward on a number of fronts – some driven by climate change and others driven by a desire to deliver better buildings for their owners and occupants. Unless you have been living in a cave (which actually would be pretty 'green') you have heard of the LEED® Green Building Rating System™ from the US Green Building Council and 'green' buildings. Green buildings and the LEED Building Certification have moved from the edges of the design and construction industry to the head of the pack. Design to achieve LEED Certification or equivalent is now a requirement in multiple states and municipalities as well as for new construction projects for the US General Services Administration which is the single largest owner of property in the United States. Another more broad reaching effort has been launched in the way of 'carbon footprint reduction'. The concept of an environmental 'footprint' has been around for some time, since the original Kyoto Protocols which addressed the overall aspects of greenhouse gases, the issue of carbon emissions (as a function of CO<sub>2</sub>). Since the UN's recent report, the pace of change and intensity of focus on the issue has heightened. While typically thought of on the 'macro' scale level, the carbon issue has found its way directly into the building industry in the form of the 2030 Challenge and the 2010 Initiative. In short form, the objective of the 2030 Challenge to the design and construction industry is to produce 'carbon neutral' buildings (using no fossil-fuel GHG-emitting energy to operate) by the year 2030. This is an ambitious goal and the impact of same will be large on design, construction and operations. It will require innovative thinking and a commitment to 'better buildings' from design professionals, contractors, manufacturers and owners – yes, owners. Another initiative taking hold in the industry is the "Net Zero" Building which focuses more on the housing marketplace and strives to deliver buildings which have a 'net zero' energy consumption from customary utility grids using conservation, green design and on-site generation.

These initiatives, both formal and informal, herald a focus on the quality of design and construction which has not been had on an industry wide basis since the late 70s/early 80s. And that's a good thing. To achieve these objectives requires an integration of the design and construction effort that may feel a little uncomfortable at first, but will prove itself to be the only rational approach to take.

Some may think "well this is all good, but if I don't want to 'go green' I don't have too" and while that is true in general, many municipalities are mandating green buildings

for any buildings which they will occupy and in some locales (Boston) green design is mandated for both public and private projects meeting certain criteria. In addition, there are tax incentives, permitting incentives and marketplace pressures which look to promote green buildings so the drivers for green buildings are no longer restricted to environmental aficionados, but have pushed the concept into the mainstream. Whether you are a design professional, contractor, developer or owner, getting a firm understanding of green buildings and carbon limit management is going to become more and more essential to your business.

During the next several months MDC will be bringing you more on the issue of green buildings, carbon footprint reduction and energy conservation. We will attempt to keep you informed as to industry developments, bring you the opinions and experiences of professionals in the field and touch upon technologies and techniques that can help you become more efficient and tread lightly on our blue-green jewel in space.

For more information on:

Kyoto Protocol go to <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/convkp/kpeng.html>

The 2030 Challenge go to <http://www.architecture2030.org>

"Net Zero" Buildings go to <http://www.eere.energy.gov/buildings/> and [http://www.eere.energy.gov/buildings/building\\_america/about.html](http://www.eere.energy.gov/buildings/building_america/about.html)