



Date: August 8, 2006
To: Honorable Mayor and City Council
From: Vice Mayor Bonnie Lowenthal, First District *BL*
Councilmember Patrick O'Donnell, Fourth District *PO*
Subject: Green Building Standards for Private Development

Benefits of Green Building

There are more than 76 million residential buildings and nearly 5 million commercial buildings in the U.S. today. These buildings together use one-third of all the energy consumed in the U.S., and two-thirds of all electricity. By the year 2010, another 38 million buildings are expected to be constructed. The challenge will be to build them smart, so they use a minimum of nonrenewable energy, produce a minimum of pollution, and cost a minimum of energy dollars, while increasing the comfort, health, and safety of the people who live and work in them. Building "green" is an opportunity to use our resources efficiently while creating healthier buildings that improve human health, build a better environment, and provide cost savings.

A green building, also known as a sustainable building, is a structure that is designed, built, renovated, operated, or reused in an ecological and resource-efficient manner. Green buildings are designed to achieve resource conservation, including energy efficiency, renewable energy, and water conservation features; consider environmental impacts and waste minimization; create a healthy and comfortable environment; reduce operation and maintenance costs; and address issues such as access to public transportation and other community infrastructure systems.

Green Building in Long Beach

On June 20, 2000, the City Council adopted the Long Beach 2010 Strategic Plan, which made sustainability a basic guiding precept. The 2010 Strategic Plan established an overarching goal of becoming a Sustainable City and made this a main priority for the City of Long Beach. Action steps were identified to reach the goal of becoming a Sustainable City, which included developing Green Building Guidelines, developing baseline data and benchmarks against which program progress would be measured, using financial incentives to motivate participation in sustainability initiatives and establishing a Sustainable City Board.

In June of 2003 the Long Beach City Council adopted a Green Building Policy for Municipal Buildings. Since then, six City building projects are being designed to the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) standard including the Port of Long Beach Administration Building, California Recreation Teen Center and the Watershed Classroom at the Aquarium of the Pacific. The first

August 3, 2006

Page 2

new green project to break ground was the new MacArthur Park Neighborhood Library.

In May of 2006, the City Council unanimously voted to direct the City Attorney's Office to draft an ordinance to create a City Environmental Commission. This commission would address the goals and action steps listed in the 2010 Strategic Plan which include becoming a sustainable city, enhancing open space, improving water resources and restoring wetlands and habitat and improving air quality.

According to SustainLane 2006 City Rankings, Long Beach is currently 30th in overall sustainability among the 50 largest U.S. cities. The 2010 Strategic Plan is the City's commitment to creating a healthy and sustainable city, which is an essential ingredient for the quality of life of Long Beach's residents.

Green Building Standards for Private Development

The City has an opportunity to move closer to becoming a Sustainable City by expanding the current Municipal Green Building Policy to include private development. While the City itself builds new municipal buildings to be green, these buildings are only a small fraction of the development that occurs in the City. For Long Beach to truly see the benefits of green building and to make a significant positive impact on the environment, the City should encourage green building standards in private development. Through a potential Green Building Program, private developers may be required to utilize a number of green building technologies in the design of a new project. The number of green building options required could be dependent upon the size and scope of the project.

Recommendation: Request the City Manager to direct the Department of Planning and Building to explore ways to expand the existing Green Building Program to include private development.