

Color Your Bottom Line Green

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Thinking green can help you increase your bottom line and decrease your expenses by increasing the efficiency of your health care facilities. The word “green” is often considered an academic concept with no basis in reality – particularly where health care construction is considered.

Operators of health care facilities have more significant day-to-day priorities than “thinking green” – maintaining profitability to meet payroll and pay expenses; infection control; navigating an ever-increasingly litigious business environment; recruiting and keeping the best medical staff possible;

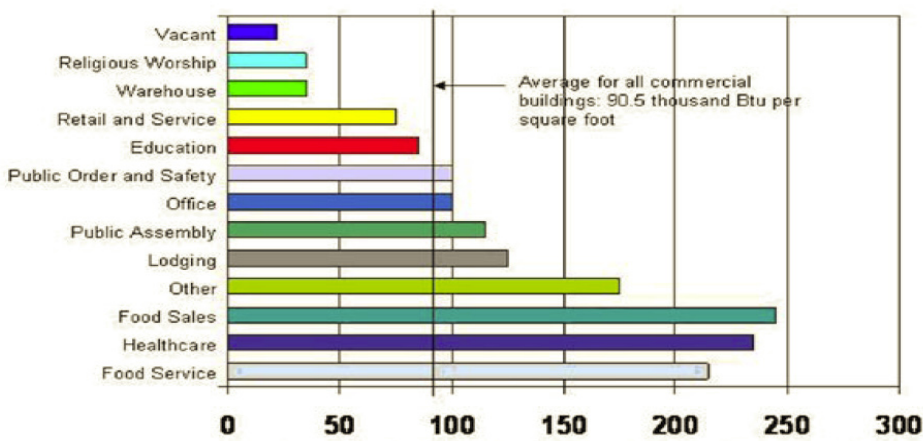
anticipating Congress’ next health care initiative, etc. Green design needs to be an important consideration in each of these priorities. Green design can affect day-to-day issues and make a difference in the bottom line.

Why should our administrators embrace green design? In the context of the construction industry, green implies higher performance buildings – thinking differently about conceiving our built environment in a manner which:

- use less land area;
- consume less energy to heat, cool, operate equipment;
- minimize consumption and waste of water;
- provide natural light and ventilation in lieu of mechanical means;
- use construction materials that use less energy to manufacture, deliver and pollute our interior work environment less than conventional materials do.

What are the first steps in thinking green? Borrowing a credo from the medical industry coined by Hippocrates in the fourth century B.C. – “. . . first, do no harm”. A phrase originally coined to govern professional conduct among our medical professionals, by extension, should dictate the manner in which planning, design, construction and operation of our healthcare facilities should be developed. Incorporating green thinking daily and long-term

Total Energy per Square Foot (thousand Btu)



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strategic planning is not only environmentally, sociologically and financially responsible, but has been shown to positively influence those traditional day-to-day operational strains plaguing most health care facilities.

It's Time to Pencil Green in Health Care

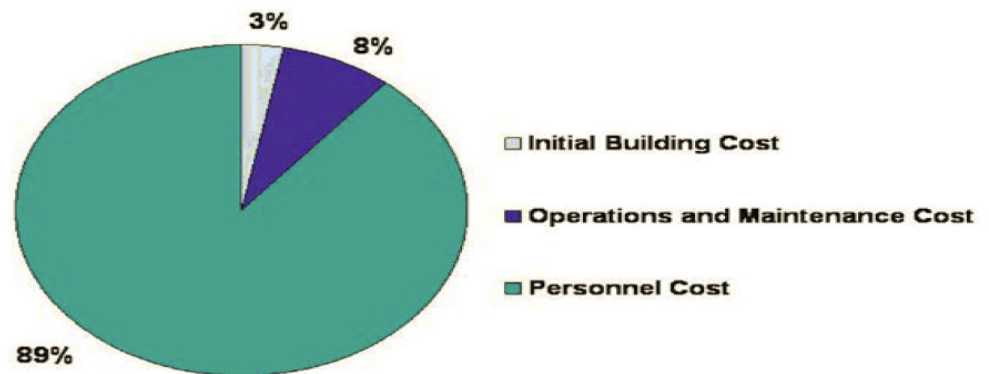
The Health care industry is in an expanding era of construction and the boom should continue into the foreseeable future. The numerous facilities, many of them Hill-Burton facilities built after the Second World War, are reaching the end of their practical life. The demographic bubble of the retiring baby boomers will put pressure on the existing capacities of health care facilities, presenting a need for construction. Healthcare facilities have been large consumers of energy and water because of their nature of operations. On average, health care facilities use twice the amount of energy per square foot as typical office buildings. With new construction and major renovation opportunities presenting themselves, it is the best time to introduce green design in strategic plans to reduce this demand on Hospital operations.

Today's Green Picture

The need for building green hospital facilities sooner, rather than later is indicated by two main factors: (1) the projected boom in health care construction and (2) industry pressure toward green buildings.

Health care demands from baby boomers will begin to impose special needs on hospitals, both in increased utilization and higher acuity levels. Health care demands from baby boomers will begin to impose special needs on hospitals, both in increased utilization and higher

30 Year Building Life Cycle Cost



If a new health care facility was designed to reduce energy consumption by 30%. The amount of savings to the bottom line could possibly pay for the initial cost of construction for the facility over an estimated 30 year design life span.

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acuity levels. The statistics available regarding patient bed count, percentage of GNP, and hospital spending, all point to a need for more and larger health care facilities. To help the health care bottom line and the overall effect on the environment, green design should be introduced into these additional facilities.

Guidelines introduced by national organizations are also influencing the move to greener buildings. The concept of "patient-centered care" addresses many factors responsible for increasing the likelihood of good outcomes for patients. These factors include family interaction, private rooms, healing gardens and access to natural daylight and views. Many of these concepts are echoed in the new American Institute of Architects'

Guidelines for Healthcare and the United States Green Building Council (USGBC) LEED® for Healthcare. It is highly likely that these guidelines will eventually be incorporated into State regulations, as has happened with the American with Disabilities Act guidelines.

This is a time of tremendous opportunity for health care organizations to be leaders in the drive to build greener buildings. The health care industry has always been at the cutting edge when it comes to tools for patient treatment, it is now time to reflect that same attitude in the design of their new facilities.

Learn More About Green

For general information and guidelines, please visit the please visit the following sites:

The US Green Building Council:
<https://www.usgbc.org>

Health Care Without Harm:
<https://www.noharm.org>

Green Guide for Health Care:
<https://www.gghc.org>

Department of Energy:
<https://www.doe.gov>

Energy Star:
<https://www.energystar.gov>

Healthy Building Network:
<https://www.healthybuilding.net>