

# World Green Building Council: Supporting the Sustainable Transformation of the Global Property Market

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## ABSTRACT

The World Green Building Council (WorldGBC) is a union of national councils whose mission is to accelerate the transformation of the global property industry to sustainability. The WorldGBC supports members' efforts to adopt, implement, and refine market-based transformation tools that meet local needs. At the same time it provides leadership and a global forum that supports the undertaking to provide standardised global information on building performance. This paper will provide an overview of the WorldGBC by examining its mandate, goals, partners and programs.

**KEYWORDS:** World Green Building Council and Green Buildings

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Buildings are the single most important contributors to the greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change. Global awareness of the urgent need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other environmental degradation mandates the rapid formation of green building councils around the world. The WorldGBC is a union of national councils whose mission is to accelerate the transformation of the global property industry towards sustainability. Current members are GBCAustralia, CanadaGBC, EmiratesGBC, IndiaGBC, JapanSBC, MexicoGBC, New Zealand GBC, TaiwanGBC, UKGBC and the USGBC. Collectively, these nations represent over 50% of global construction activity.

The WorldGBC's objective is to rapidly build an international coalition that represents the entire global property industry. As such it seeks to support scientific and market-based, but locally-appropriate rating systems that quantify and promote the benefits of green buildings. Green Building Councils are consensus-based not-for-profit organizations with no private ownership, and diverse and integrated representation from all sectors of the property industry. We see business as a powerful solution-provider, and are working to improve frameworks that harness the ability of business to deliver (See Fig. 1 for a diagram of the market we are changing).

## 2. PARTNERS

An important goal of the WorldGBC is to coordinate our efforts with other international forces to accelerate the green building industry and to optimize everyone's effectiveness. We are partners in the Clinton Climate Initiative (CCI), and we support UNEP's Sustainable Building and Construction Initiative, and the World Business Council on Sustainable Development's Zero-energy Buildings

Project. In addition the WorldGBC has recently affiliated with the International Initiative for a Sustainable Built Environment (iiSBE).

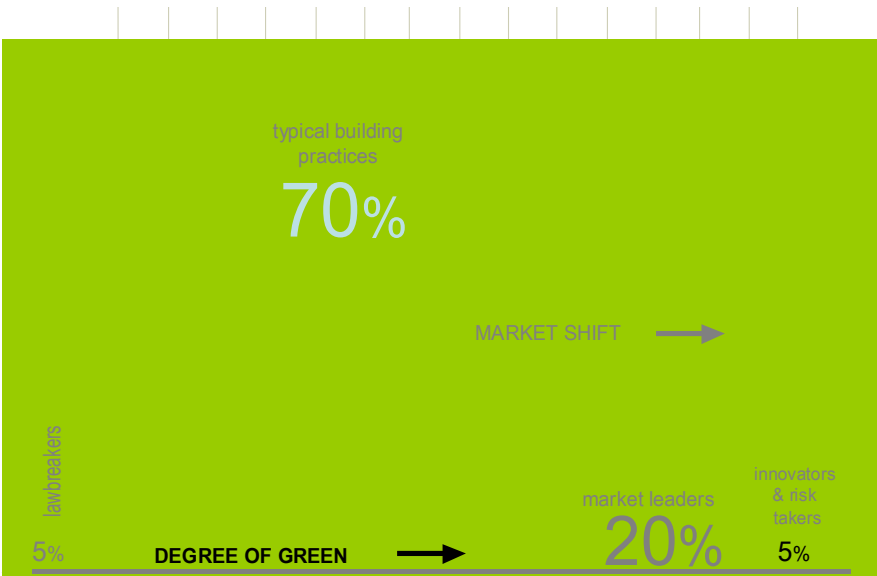
The WorldGBC and iiSBE signed a memorandum of understanding this year, which brings together two key organizations globally that, through their local and global networks, can help accelerate knowledge transfer and techniques for rapid and lasting market transformation through the key intersect of business, academia, professional and government coalitions. Multiple events are being organised and co-ordinated by both groups including arranging reciprocal talks and organisational activities at SB-07 SB-08 and regional, national and international green building gatherings. This partnership is a significant benefit that will increase both our memberships' effectiveness and accelerate the global move toward green building councils.

Our efforts are also being leveraged through our partnership with the Clinton Climate Initiative. CCI is joining with the Large Cities Climate Leadership Group, an organization whose membership comprises of 40 of the largest cities in the world, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. As CCI teams visit member cities, they promote the formation of green building councils and rating tools, and put their contacts in touch with the WorldGBC. We provide expert technical assistance, and common measurement tools and communications systems designed to address the issues.

We are led by respected industry leaders who are widely recognized for their contribution towards furthering sustainable development. Each of them has been deeply involved in the creation of the green building council in their country. This experience gives the WorldGBC a powerful basis for assisting other countries in forming their own councils. The WorldGBC is at a pivotal point in its development. It is actively seeking support of many business partners to catalyze our efforts and allow us to rapidly create iterations of councils and rating systems — powerful tools that meet global demand. A significant business benefit of this support will be rapid development of global markets for environmentally preferable products and processes.

Another important advantage of the WorldGBC is the strong support of our member councils, and in particular the USGBC which has the largest membership and great visibility around the world. When countries contact them about forming a chapter, the USGBC refers them to the WorldGBC.

**Figure 1. The Market We Are Changing.**



**3. MEMBER COUNCILS**

The WorldGBC is calling for the creation of councils at an accelerated pace. The “build-out target” is to have 100 councils within the next 5 years, by 2011. The WorldGBC would like to see a doubling of the number of green building councils from nine at the end of 2006, to eighteen at the end of 2007, with the remaining councils created over the next 3 years. There are a finite number of councils to launch, however. As our organization matures our focus will turn primarily to serving the membership created in the preceding years.

Members must be consensus-based not-for-profit organisations with no private ownership, and diverse and integrated representation. Only one organization is allowed full membership for each country and/or major economic zone, and each member has one vote. Since full membership in the WorldGBC is limited to national green building councils, we have created a program of partners and alliances to encourage involvement and interaction with a plethora of other players in the field.

To date four generations of national green building councils have emerged. The first generation of national councils, which includes the USGBC established in 1993 and AustraliaGBC in 2002, were the early leaders in national council formation. The second generation of councils were founded post-2000 and include groups from Canada, New Zealand and India. These groups modified the existing GBC models and leapfrogged the initial stages of development. The third generation councils are emerging or recently formed groups including those from the UK, China and Brazil. This generation of councils was formed in countries with a good understanding of sustainable issues, significant levels of activity in the green building industry and with advocacy groups already beginning to emerge. These councils benefited from their relationship with the WorldGBC, which aided the transfer of knowledge between councils in order to expedite the start-up process. In contrast to the preceding three generations, the fourth generation councils will develop in countries where the building industry is relatively undeveloped and WorldGBC will need to focus more effort on seeding council development and the green building industry.

**4. SERVICES OFFERED**

The WorldGBC works in many ways to support members and to accelerate the development of emerging councils (See Table 1 for a summary of services provided). We provide organisational tools, advocacy, facilitation, information, and other resources that help people to take highly effective action locally.

<p><b><i>Table 1. Summary of services provided:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support for existing councils</li> <li>• Support for emerging councils</li> <li>• Support for development of market-based environmental rating systems</li> <li>• A global voice</li> <li>• A non-partisan forum</li> <li>• Common principals and framework</li> <li>• A vehicle for education</li> <li>• Facilitation for knowledge transfer</li> <li>• Recognition of global leadership</li> </ul>
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*4.1 Due Diligence:*

Before offering help, the WorldGBC need to know who we are working with. We have an obligation to the global community to perform due diligence to check out the organizations that request our support. Once we have assured ourselves that we are backing a winner, our initial aim is to help them leapfrog over the usual hurdles and reach operational status as quickly as possible. Organizing groups need at least three things: advocacy and facilitation, tools, and funding.

*4.2 Advocacy and Facilitation:*

A board member is assigned to each emerging country to provide support and respond to their requests for information. When funding allows, we send experienced people to work directly with emerging councils in their own country.

#### *4.3 Tools:*

Organizing groups always want to hear stories about how other councils “did it”, and to get copies of all the documents required to “do it”. We have assembled an Emerging Council Toolkit that provides a detailed roadmap, rating system and organization case studies, together with examples of all the organisational documents needed (such as organisational structures, business plan, bylaws, officer and board responsibilities, funding opportunities, chapters, programs, and green building rating systems).

#### *4.4 Funding:*

Every discussion with a new GBC begins with, "First go out and raise some money." Once we are confident that we are backing a winner, one of the most effective ways to accelerate the process of establishing a council is to provide seed funding for their startup. Awards are determined based on merit, need, and due-diligence on the ground.

#### *4.5 Rating Systems*

The WorldGBC supports our members’ adoption and implementation of market-based transformation tools that meet local needs. Green building rating systems stimulate market demand for buildings with improved environmental performance, and provide “branding” for high performance buildings. Green building rating systems must be appropriate to each country’s situation—culturally, climatically and economically. Thus the WorldGBC does not prescribe any particular green building rating system or methodology; our network facilitates access to a wealth of rating system resources.

#### *4.6 Support for Member’s Conferences*

This program provides speakers and other resources to member council’s national conferences. National conferences are important milestones in a council’s development. WorldGBC membership connects member councils to a global network of speakers that can add significant and important legitimacy and enthusiasm to their local efforts. For 2007 this program anticipates 3-day trips by various WorldGBC principals to each of four conferences.

## **5. CONCLUSIONS**

The WorldGBC is uniquely poised to transform the global property market towards sustainability. Our business-led coalition supports the development of green building councils and rating systems around the world. In the next 5 years the WorldGBC aims to increase the number of national councils from the existing 10 to a total of 100 worldwide. In addition, we provide a forum for the international green building community, and we champion proven tools that significantly accelerate market transformation from traditional, inefficient building practices to new generation high-performance buildings and systems. This is a critical response strategy for cities and countries worldwide to their national and international commitments to reduce carbon emissions and redress other environmental impacts.