

Why Build Green in Virginia? It Just Makes Sense

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Lately terms such as LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) and Green Building have been thrown about in the press, by politicians, and by local zoning and building officials in Virginia.

Nationally, the Obama administration has shown support for green building. Locally, the Richmond City Council recently passed Resolution 2008 R 152 that will require all new city buildings to meet the LEED Silver Rating (defined by the U. S. Green Building Council (“USGBC”)) by 2010. Tim Kaine, the Governor of Virginia, issued Executive Order 48 indicating his support for green building and the LEED standards and has recently shown support for the use of green related job creation in the face of the recent recession. Other localities, notably Arlington, Virginia, have passed building code standards or zoning ordinances requiring green certification. In short, green building is here to stay.

Aside from the governmental impetus to learn green building techniques, two factors require that Virginia contractors learn to build green. These two factors are simply 1. project owners want green buildings and 2. those contractors that do not keep up with the “greening” of construction are likely to fall behind and struggle to stay afloat in today’s economy.

Project owners want green buildings for many reasons. Owners want to be seen as environmentally friendly and civic minded. Additionally, and possibly more importantly, owners save money (both initially and over time) by building green. As an example, use of integrated green building methods requires less up front costs for irrigation piping and the like and leads to use of less than one quarter of the water that a non-green building uses according to a recent study. Lower water usage means lower operating costs. Couple these factors with tax incentives and the like provided by the government and the benefits of green building to owners are obvious.

Because of the environmental benefits and cost savings inherent in a green building approach, contractors versed in green building can sell their services more readily than those that do not. First of all, a “green” contractor will be among a limited set of contractors to whom an owner seeking green certification for its building will look. Second of all, if an owner asks you for input, you can sell him or her on the benefits of your services over a comparable non-“green” contractor. In both of these instances, being knowledgeable in green construction and its benefits will serve your business well.

As always, be sure to consult with a legal professional regarding the contract requirements on such a project *before* bidding on the job to avoid headaches at the end of the project. As with any new area of business, you are better off anticipating issues rather than responding to them.

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