



Green Building Pages

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Green Building Pages, <http://www.greenbuildingpages.com>, a recently-launched public web-based resource guide for green building materials is providing freely accessible, complete, current and totally transparent information to the general public as well as professional architects, construction managers, interior designers, developers, landscape architects and engineers. The **Green Building Pages** was conceived as an informational database for sustainable, green and healthy design as well as a market transformation tool. Walking the talk, Habitat Studio, Architecture and Planning designed and constructed the **Green Building Pages** exhibition booth using recycled, nontoxic materials. The booth premiered at the USGBC GreenBuild Conference & expo.

<http://www.habitatdesigns.com>. Marilyn Miller Farmer, AIA, LEED A.P., Principal of Habitat Studio, and Director of **Green Building Pages, Inc.** has been focusing on sustainable design for over fifteen years, integrating research for the **Green Building Pages** as part of architectural practice as well as the focus for teaching design in architecture degree programs in San Luis Obispo, California.

The **Green Building Pages** has been in the research stage for over ten years with a number of contributing experts from various fields within the building professions, according to Farmer. Farmer initially planned to publish a printed binder of information in 1992. “The initial materials resource guide was a compilation of information on approximately 250 known green products, mainly recycled content, for use by local AIA members and colleagues. Due to the growth and volatility of the green

building materials market at that time, the binder information was out-of-date even before it was printed. Since that time, the market for environmentally friendly and sustainable design has grown exponentially, particularly in the past 5 years. Professionals and consumers are beginning to understand the connections between healthy sustainable design and the material choices. The criteria for selection of sustainable building materials is no longer simply recycled content, but has expanded to include information on the entire life cycle of a product including the production and manufacturing processes, the installation and uses, off-gassing, and the reuse and disposal." Today Farmer and her research assistants have identified over 3000 products with claims to green. "Currently there is an abundance of new green products with piecemeal information from a variety of sources. The architects, construction managers, and building professionals do not have the time to research and dig through the many sources to put those pieces together. For the general public it is even a more daunting task to make an informed decision in choosing a single building material, such as carpet or paint."

The ***Green Building Pages*** has been designed to assist the building professional as well as the general public with easily accessible, free, comprehensive, consolidated, transparent and up-to-date information, including links to the manufacturer's web site, local distributors, and basic product information. The ***GBP*** has developed a comprehensive set of 58 sustainable criteria categories in the **Production & Manufacturing, Installation & Use, Demolition & Disposal, Testing & Certifications**, and in **Company Environmental & Social Policies**, and is the first resource guide to use this comprehensive a list of criteria including social sustainability criteria regarding the product manufacturer.

The ***Green Building Pages*** enables users to identify **Environmentally Preferable Products (EPP)** and **LEED Credit Opportunities** for the

growing number of green building projects now on the boards or being planned by increasing numbers of federal, state and local government agencies and organizations now requiring 'green' design and/or LEED certification.

For example, professionals seeking LEED certification for their building projects will be able to identify products that might help achieve LEED Credits by searching the Green Products database according to the particular LEED Credit. Using the **Green Building Pages** will enable professionals or consumers to identify a local carpet manufacturer (using the project site zip code to locate manufacturers within 500 miles also leads to LEED Credit); a manufacturer which produces carpet with natural fibers and no VOC's (VOC's create indoor health problems for occupants); one which creates no pollutants during the manufacturing process; one which reuses waste scrap; uses dyes manufactured without release of carcinogens, persistent toxic chemicals, heavy metals or other toxic substances; uses non-toxic glues and adhesives; is recyclable in a company take-back program; is biodegradable; has a strong commitment to an environmental policy and has upgraded manufacturing facilities to be energy and resource efficient; one which has a strong social commitment to its employees in terms of benefits and education programs; and a company that reinvests a portion of its profits back into the community; all with one, easily accessible web resource.

The **Green Building Pages'** unique format and criteria were designed to provide several levels of detailed information to enable consumers easy access to product information in a comparable, comprehensive format. The GBP format is publicly accessible and completely transparent, meaning that all GBP company/product profile questions and responses, criteria and credit evaluation are accessible on-line for public review. "The underlying belief," says Farmer, "is that we all want to create a sustainable society and environment. One of the great stumbling blocks has been accessing the appropriate information regarding the life cycle of

building materials as well as the company social and environmental information. This information has not been available either to the building professional or the general public. Without that information it is difficult, if not impossible, to make intelligent and informed choices regarding sustainable design. Sustainable design is no longer simply about recycled content. It requires complete economic, environmental and social information as well as a holistic understanding of the context and the appropriate applications.”

“The **GBP** is uniquely designed to fill that niche,” Farmer adds. “We certainly do not claim to currently know all the answers to this very complex topic, and that is most likely what has prevented others from tackling this enormous task. However, we believe that we need to begin to disseminate that which we do know, while anticipating a continual fine-tuning and evolution as more complete information such as life cycle analysis and embodied energy information studies become common place business assessment tools. The **GBP** web framework was designed to accommodate this continued evolution as our understanding of these complex issues becomes more refined and additional information becomes available”.

Currently the **GBP** sustainability criteria credits are organized as follows:

- **Production & Manufacturing** categories which comprise 55% of the credits corresponding to the greater impacts of this phase of product life;
- **Installation, Use & Maintenance** categories which comprise 9% of **GBP** credits;
- **End of Product Life** which comprise 11% of **GBP** credits;
- **Social** criteria categories which comprise 19% **GBP** credits, an area that has been greatly ignored up until now as contributing to a sustainable environment, economy and society; and

- **Certification, Testing & Achievement** credits which comprise 6% providing incentives for continuing improved performance in all areas of a product life cycle.

In the works for the **Green Building Pages** is programming to allow more user control in product selection by allowing users to apply their own weighted priorities to the **Green Building Pages** criteria to create a very specific product search based on the circumstances of a particular project. Making contextual design decisions at the earliest design stage will greatly facilitate sustainable design as it becomes considerably more costly to integrate materials, systems and processes in later design stages. Typically clients have not been willing to subsidize the extensive research necessary for this type of design. With the increasing flow of new materials and processes making this task even more difficult and complex, the **Green Building Pages** makes product evaluation and early selection process easy for not only professionals, but with public web accessibility, for the general consumer who is interested in the daily sustainable, healthy design decisions regarding their personal environment as well as the greater environment we all share.

In addition to promoting green products to the widest audience via the web, the **Green Building Pages** rewards product manufacturers for improving their product, their manufacturing processes and their commitment to customers, employees and their communities. Another **Green Building Pages** bonus is the **Manufacturer's Log-in** site, allowing product manufacturers to conveniently log into their **Green Building Pages** account to provide or update information online, ensuring that the most up-to-date and current information is publicly available.

In addition, the **Green Building Pages** links to over **100 Case Studies** cross-linked to products on the **Green Product** database, and to over **1500 additional links** including LEED-mandating agencies, professional

organizations, government agencies, consultants, funding resources, web literature, green investment information, research labs, conferences and expos, and educational institutions focusing on sustainable design. These links enable users to increase their connections, exposure and underlying sustainable knowledge base in addition to identifying product specific information.

Currently Farmer is soliciting the 3,000 companies in her database for complete product information to be listed on the ***Green Building Pages*** and has over 100 companies registered and in the ‘information pipeline’. “The USGBC GreenBuild International Conference and Expo last year was our first public exposure. The reception was extremely enthusiastic, from both the user and producer segments of the building industry.” Annually the ***Green Building Pages*** will be promoting green building products at the following events: **Green Festivals in Washington, DC and San Francisco, CA**, the **USGBC GreenBuild Conference**, the **National Association of Home Builders International Builder’s Show**, **ENVIRONDESIGN**, **NeoCon Conferences in Los Angeles and Chicago**, and the **AIA National Convention** with a total exposure of over 250,000 attendees. “We expect that the public will continue to increase their demand for healthier, more sustainable design as they become more informed and the ***Green Building Pages*** is ready to facilitate that process.”

“We can’t begin to evolve into a sustainable, healthy society until we learn to make better, more informed decisions regarding the materials we use and the processes of production and resourcing of those materials. The ***Green Building Pages*** provides users with information needed to make informed decisions and thus the voice to create the demand as well.”

For more information call Marilyn Miller Farmer, (805) 782-9431.