

GREEN BUILDING

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CONSTRUCTING and operating buildings can take a terrible toll on the environment. Building materials are continually extracted from unsustainable sources and energy is consumed in manufacturing and transporting them.

Construction methods are oftentimes considered inefficient as they produce so much waste and consume a considerable amount of resource. Once operational, buildings consume a lot of energy for heating, lighting, and cooling.

In the US for instance, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) says that buildings account for 39 percent of total energy use, 12 percent of total water consumption, and 68 percent of total electricity consumption. They also emit 38 percent of carbon dioxide, the leading global warming gas.

As the environmental impact of buildings becomes more apparent, a new field called "green building" emerged to address the issue. Green building is defined as the practice of increasing the efficiency with which buildings and their sites use and harvest energy, water, and materials, and reducing building impacts on human health and the environment in the entire construction process.

By adopting green building strategies, both economic and environmental performance can be maximized. It can lead to reduced operating costs and improved occupant productivity. Green construction methods can be integrated into buildings at any stage, from design and construction, to renovation and deconstruction. The most significant benefits can be obtained if the design and construction team takes an integrated approach from the earliest stages of a building project.

I'm glad that the building industry here in Philippines has embraced the green building concept. A group of architects and building industry professionals, along with some environmental advocates helped form the Philippine Green Building Council (PhilGBC). This group will take the lead in promoting green building practices.

Among other things, the PhilGBC aims to form an alliance of building and construction industry leaders from both the public and private sectors to jointly develop a nationally accepted green building rating standard.

At present, there are rating systems in other countries like the BREEAM (BRE Environmental Assessment Method), CASBEE (Comprehensive Assessment System for Building Environmental Efficiency), Green Star and LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design), which is implemented by the US Green Building Council.

PhilGBC's kick-off event is "Building Green 2007", a green building awareness campaign, held on June 26 to 28, 2007 at the Activity Center of Market! Market! in Bonifacio Global City, Taguig. The three-day occasion was packed with activities like contests, workshops, sessions, forums, networking, and a tradeshow.

At the closing program, the Council's officers and members were inducted, with former environment secretary Bebet Gozun as inducting officer and guest speaker. I joined the Council as a founding member. As a civil engineer, I believe I can learn a lot from this group. Also taking his oath on that day as a founding member is our cabalen, Atty. Boyet Andin of the National Solid Waste Management Commission.

The PhilGBC has already expressed interest to join the World Green Building Council, a union of national councils. Current members are GBCAustralia, CanadaGBC, EmiratesGBC, IndiaGBC, JapanSBC, MexicoGBC, New Zealand GBC, TaiwanGBC, the United KingdomGBC and the USGBC.

Collectively, these nations represent over 50 percent of global construction activity, and touch more than eight thousand companies and organizations worldwide.