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Greg Kats favourably reviews breakthrough Cascadia Code Report by Eisenberg and Persram

Media release:

Buildings are getting greener but building codes and regulations often stall progress

Breakthrough report from the Cascadia Region Green Building Council tackles building regulations

Tucson, AZ, USA & Toronto, ON Canada – The enthusiasm for Living Buildings continues unabated, but a key stumbling block in the shift toward truly sustainable projects is the existing set of codes and regulations. Federal stimulus funds for green building and infrastructure projects are important drivers of the shift in how buildings are designed and constructed, but there needs to be a “greening” of the regulatory systems to fully meet sustainability goals.

Stepping in to help resolve the impasse is a new report published by the Cascadia Region Green Building Council entitled Code, Regulatory and Systemic Barriers Affecting Living Building Projects, which presents a case for fundamental reassessment of the regulatory sphere related to the built environment.

“This report will reframe the conversation about building regulation and what is required to safeguard public health, safety and welfare,” says Jason F. McLennan, CEO of Cascadia and the creator of the Living Building Challenge. The Challenge is a call to those in the design and construction industries to create buildings that function like plants and are net-zero in energy, water and waste.

Greg Kats, Managing Director of Good Energies, notes, “This report is both timely and important. There are widespread obstacles to adopting green design. This report maps out these obstacles in detail and provides a series of integrated recommendations to eliminate them and replace them with a regulatory environment that supports smarter, greener healthier design.”

Report authors David Eisenberg of the Development Center for Appropriate Technology and Sonja Persram of Sustainable Alternative Consulting researched the issues surrounding regulatory barriers in the US and Canada. These included examining the range of regulatory and other approvals required for leading-edge projects, as well as surveying Living Building project teams and interviewing experts throughout North America.

According to lead author David Eisenberg, “Though people speak of the building regulatory system, it isn’t a system. It was never designed as one, and so it is not based on over-arching societal goals or system principles. Instead, what we have today emerged from thousands of reactions to problems serious enough to require a

regulatory response. We need a comprehensive regulatory system that enables best practices, instead of simply preventing the worst from happening.”

Recommendations also include the creation of an integrated regulatory process that would embrace Living Building goals, explicitly considering human and ecosystem health today and tomorrow. This process would formalize regulatory relationships between the traditional regulatory spheres for the built environment and those in the finance, real estate, investment and insurance sectors.

“Green building has reached a tipping point,” notes Sonja Persram. “There is a growing recognition in the insurance and investment communities that organizations have a fiduciary responsibility to address climate change. An increasing body of research links specific green building practices with mitigating these ecological risks and adding enormous triple-bottom-line benefits. This means money now spent on conventional projects rather than on these green measures could be seen as money at risk.”

Kats concurs: “The gravity of climate change requires that we move quickly to embrace deep improvements in energy efficiency and in use of renewables to achieve zero net CO2 buildings. Building green is cost effective and provides both financial returns and a reduction of risk for owners and tenants. This report provides an important roadmap toward buildings that cut costs, cut risk, improve health and allow us to live within our earth’s increasingly imperiled environmental means.”

The project was made possible through funding to Cascadia from the Summit Foundation and King County.

Access the report from any of these weblinks:

Development Center for Appropriate Technology:
www.dcat.net/about_dcat/announcements.php

Sustainable Alternatives Consulting Inc.: www.sustainable-alternatives.ca/Cascadia_Code_Report_Eisenberg_Persram.pdf

Cascadia Region Green Building Council:
<http://ilbi.org/resources/research/CodeStudies/09-0729%20code%20paper%20Eisenberg.pdf>

About the Authors:

David Eisenberg, Co-founder and Director of the non-profit Development Center for Appropriate Technology (DCAT), has pioneered efforts to create a sustainable context for building regulation since 1995. He served two terms on the Board of Directors of the U.S. Green Building Council where he founded and chairs the USGBC Code Committee. He has written and presented extensively on sustainability and

building regulation in the U.S. and abroad. He was recently selected to serve on the new International Code Council Sustainable Building Technology Committee. David and DCAT were recipients of the International Code Council 2007 Affiliate of the Year Award and the 2007 USGBC Leadership Award in the category of Organizational Excellence.

Sonja Persram, BSc, MBA, LEED® AP is President of Sustainable Alternatives Consulting Inc., a policy and market research firm that aims to catalyze green building sector expansion, focusing on triple-bottom-line alternatives. Sonja's publication credits include: Green Buildings: A Strategic Analysis of the North American Markets for Frost & Sullivan; the USA segment of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's International Sustainable Building Policy Initiatives; and lead author of two Canada Green Building Council projects, Marketing Green Buildings for Owners/Tenants of Leased Properties. She is a Corresponding Committee member of the USGBC's Code Committee and served on the USGBC Social Equity Task Force.

About Cascadia

The Cascadia Region Green Building Council is a non-profit organization in both the US and Canada. Cascadia promotes the design, construction and operation of buildings in Alaska, British Columbia, Washington and Oregon that are environmentally-responsible, profitable and healthy places to live, work and learn. Cascadia is one of the first chapters of the US and Canada Green Building Councils, and is the only international chapter in North America. It is also the originator of the Living Building Challenge. For more information, please visit www.cascadiagbc.org.

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