



CHAngemaker
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Living More Productive, Healthier Lives: How Low Energy Design Directly Benefits the End-User

Smart, well-planned commercial development is known to responsibly improve our communities and our lives. When developments are built with energy efficiency in mind, the result goes beyond the long-term financial benefits. It is beneficial for the environment to use fewer fossil fuels, and it promotes healthier lifestyle choices for residents.

Americans spend most of their days indoors, whether in the homes they live and sleep in or the workplaces where they spend 40-60 hours per week. Improving energy efficiency leads to better health, improved productivity, and generally a successful and happier quality of life.

Improved Indoor Air Quality

Opening a window does not always provide adequate fresh air. In urban settings, opening windows can invite unwanted allergens and pollutants to your space. Indoor spaces designed to building standards that specifically address reduced energy usage, such as [Passive House](#), incorporate continuously filtered air to improve indoor air quality and provide a healthier built environment.

Lower Noise Levels

Background noise and street-level noise has become a growing problem in urban and suburban environments in recent decades. From vehicular traffic to construction noise, minimizing outdoor noise is a byproduct of a well-built, energy-efficient building. These lower noise levels allow end-users to enjoy more restful sleep at night and more productivity during the day.

Energy Cost Reduction

Perhaps more than anything else, improvements in energy efficiency have shown a dramatic reduction in a building's energy costs. For a nominal increase in up-front fees, a building's overall energy use can be reduced tremendously. This cost reduction in energy expenses goes directly to the bottom-line profitability of a building, and residents can share in the savings. Additionally, low energy buildings are simply built better and result in lower maintenance costs and a more extended facility's lifespan.

Responsibly Improving
the World We Live In



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Quality of Life

In addition to reducing health risks and discomfort, low energy, sustainable design can also create positive psychological and social experiences. Emerging evidence shows that certain sustainable building features, including increased personal control over indoor environmental conditions, access to daylight and views, and connection to nature, are likely to generate positive states of well-being and health.

Those of us involved in the design and construction industry have vital roles in the promotion and education of enhancing energy efficiency. It all starts with the ownership, design, and construction leaders being committed to the idea of creating a low energy building. Decisions are made along the building's life cycle (design, construction, occupancy, and maintenance) that all must align with the underlying idea that energy efficiency is critical to success.

As project managers and owner's representatives, we work with our clients to plan and budget their projects to determine feasibility. If the client accepts the feasibility of an energy efficient design, we turn our focus to the building's design and planning, whether it be a new project out of the ground or an adaptive re-use of an existing building. Once we have designed and received an authorization on the project, we collaborate with the construction team to ensure proper execution.

From the project executives to the subcontractor's field staff implementing the project's plans, the entire team must be reaching for a common goal. Continuous testing, inspections, and incremental field verifications throughout the process are critical for the project's overall success. Upon final commissioning, testing, and signoffs, we work with the property management team to provide complete training and familiarization with building systems, on-going maintenance protocols, and end-user manuals. This end-to-end project management service supports continuity and a successful project from concept through to occupancy and allows property managers to fully utilize the building systems and features as designed.

About the Author: Ben Igoe is Commercial Development National Market Director at CHA Consulting, Inc. (CHA), where he is responsible for project management from design to project completion. With two decades of experience in real estate development as a builder, project manager, and principal developer, he is passionate about energy-efficient design and has played an active role in developing projects in NYC. Ben is an active member of Passive House (PH) in NYC and developed one of the first multi-family residential projects to the PH standard in Brooklyn, completing approximately 200 units to date. Previously, Ben was owner of JBS Project Management, a boutique project management and owner's representative firm. You can reach Ben at BIgoe@chacompanies.com.



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