



CALIFORNIA:

Duany Predicts Decline of LEED Standards

Charlotte, N.C.—Decrying the high cost of “optimization” of development in a lean time, Andres Duany called for a return to common sense development principals that harken back to the 19th Century and predicted declining use of the LEED standards for building efficiency.

Speaking at the New Partners for Smart Growth Conference here, Duany took aim at one of the banes of the modern developer’s existence—excessive regulation of development, particularly the high cost of certification of buildings under the U.S. Green Building Council’s LEED rating system.

The Miami-based new urbanist architect said infrastructure and permitting are “fantastically expensive.” He blamed this primarily on “optimization,” that is, the practice of imposing increasingly detailed and strict regulations in an effort to take development from merely good to nearly perfect.

He took a swipe at city emergency services officials for wanting too much optimization of roads. But he saved his strongest words for green building certifiers.

He criticized green building standards that don’t give points for low cost approaches like passive solar heating, but encourage developers to buy expensive windows to make sure that “not an atom of air escapes.”

“Environmentalism got addicted to optimization and we can’t afford it,” Duany said.

“It’s absurd what you have to go through to get LEED certified. It will crash on its own. It already is.”

“It costs more to get a project certified under the LEED for neighborhoods (LEED-ND) program than it does for me to design it,” he said.



Andres Duany is saying what many developers undoubtedly believe: The increasing demands of meeting LEED and other standards and certifications for green buildings has become way too expensive.

Duany believes current green building certifications are too focused on expensive, over-engineered measures and don't give fair value to low-cost and traditional techniques, like those in evidence at Seaside, Florida, designed by Duany Plater-Zyberk & Co.



Top 10 States for LEED Green Buildings

Washington D.C. leads the country, with 25.15 square feet of LEED-certified commercial and institutional green building space per person, according to the U.S. Green Building Council's (USGBC) report. USGBC compiled the top 10 states for LEED certified buildings per capita based on the 2010 census.

"Using per capita, versus the more traditional numbers of projects, or pure square footage, is a reminder to all of us that the people who live and work, learn and play in buildings should be what we care about most," said Scot Horst, USGBC senior vice president of LEED. "2010 was a difficult year for most of the building industry, but in many areas, the hunger for sustainable development kept the markets moving."

The top states, including Washington D.C.:

- Washington D.C.: 25.15 sq. ft. per person
- Nevada: 10.92 sq. ft.
- New Mexico: 6.35 sq. ft.
- New Hampshire: 4.49 sq. ft.
- Oregon: 4.07 sq. ft.
- South Carolina: 3.19 sq. ft.
- Washington: 3.16 sq. ft.
- Illinois: 3.09 sq. ft.
- Arkansas: 2.9 sq. ft.
- Colorado: 2.85 sq. ft.
- Minnesota: 2.77 sq. ft.

Duany is a principal of the firm Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company (DPZ), and was co-founder of the Congress for New Urbanism with his partner Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk.

He called on the green building movement to adopt a dual approach, with one set of low tech standards and one set of high tech standards.

"There are many low costs ways to get 85% of the benefit of today's standards. We need \$45 windows, not \$250 to \$300 windows," he said.

Duany half-jokingly called for creation of a "LEED Brown" rating, in addition to the current silver, gold and



International Monetary Fund Headquarters in D.C., Gold LEED Certified

platinum ratings. He suggested this could give builders credit for using traditional but low cost measures that are not easy to quantify or certify. He described these steps as "the original green," and "what we did when we didn't have money."

He said that high-density development in urban locations which entails less reliance on private cars should get a free pass on any green building standards. "Don't make apartment dwellers install solar power," he said. They are doing their part just by living densely and driving less."

He ridiculed the notion that single-family homes would ever lose popularity or that they should be squeezed out by public policy. But he did suggest that they be subject to more efficiency requirements to compensate for the inherent inefficiency of this use of land.

Duany also had choice words for government land use and building officials.

In New Orleans, he said that government standards for rebuilding added costs that just about exactly offset the amount of assistance the government was going to provide, so "no one can rebuild."

What does Duany like these days? "Slow development," which he defined as working up to appropriate density in a gradual way, likening it to how towns were developed in the 1800s. He spoke of the benefits of one-floor retail, with no housing above it, and of walk-up apartments, both of which he said are highly efficient. 🏡