



## This Old Green Building

Posted by [Glenn](#) on June 30, 2006 - 12:02pm in [The Oil Drum: Local](#)

Topic: [Environment/Sustainability](#)

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□ *228 East Third Street - A Green Building under Construction by Chris Benedict*

While transportation is the biggest consumer of oil in the US, heating/cooling, lighting and running the appliances in our homes is an enormous user of energy resources. And much of it is crucial to our survival. As we approach the types of infrastructure improvements we need to make in this country, the buildings in which we live are perhaps the most important.

While there are a number of green buildings that have been [completed in NYC](#) and across the country over the last few years, there have only been a few major retrofits of old buildings that I am aware of. Most neighborhoods and cities don't even have any real Green Buildings. But just because it's old and wasn't built with LEED in mind, it doesn't mean it can't be improved. Considering the housing stock of NYC turns over pretty slowly, even if all new buildings are built to LEED gold or platinum standards, it will take over 100 years to make the city's housing stock environmentally friendly on a grand scale. In the short term it is much better to simply retrofit an existing building to be as green as possible for the rest of its useful life rather than tear it down prematurely and built it up from scratch.

How could we differentiate for prospective home buyers or renters which buildings they should choose because of their green features? How could we stimulate recalcitrant real estate companies to invest in retrofitting older buildings to consume less energy and water? What features would be appropriate for a real estate agent or a management company to promote as green?

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Here's some features that are often overlooked while folks are looking for a building with solar panels (which probably only contribute a tiny fraction of the building's electrical demand)

1. Energy Star Appliances which use a fraction of the electricity that other appliances do
2. Fluorescent Lighting in Common Areas...Passive Solar lighting...both save tremendously on lighting costs.
3. Roof Garden with Trees or other vegetation to
4. Bicycle Parking to encourage an environmentally clean form of transportation
5. Conducted an Energy Audit and implemented all the recommendations to improve insulation and heating/lighting efficiency.
6. Buys Con Edison Green Power...or maybe offsets carbon footprint with carbon credits or something like that
7. Low flow toilets, showers and perhaps a solar hot water heater

Any other ideas?

Eventually it would be great to have some kind of grading or point system to help differentiate buildings on something other than sq.ft., price and location. This could be a way to motivate some building owners to make improvements and renters to ask questions about how green the building is.

So here is my challenge to TOD readers: How would you rate buildings in cities on their green attributes? What would be the best way to promote this idea and get some national organization (or a series of local ones?) to take on the challenge of creating a system to rate buildings on their energy efficiency and environmentally friendly attributes.

For the time being, we may run a contest over at the [Upper Green Side](#) to see which is the greenest building in our neighborhood.



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