

## In the Dark on Greenhouse Gases

For The Capital Investor

In a recent survey conducted by the American Institute of Architects (AIA), seven percent of those who responded identified buildings as the top contributor to greenhouse gas emissions and forty percent indicated they believed the primary contributor to be cars and trucks.

Those few seven percent had it right. Recent studies have shown that buildings produce forty eight percent of the greenhouse gases which contribute to climate changes. Buildings also consume over seventy percent of the electricity produced at national power plants.

Whereas most respondents didn't realize that buildings (which include multi-family communities) were responsible for almost half of the dangerous greenhouse gas emissions, the majority indicated they were willing to invest in energy-efficient homes. A whopping ninety two percent stated they would pay in excess of \$5,000 for a home that was more energy efficient to protect the environment, even if they would not see financial returns through lower utility bills over the next decade. And another sixty nine percent said they would make an extra investment in an energy efficient home if they would receive a financial return over the next decade.

"The AIA is in a position to educate all owners – both residential and commercial developers – on the need for energy-efficient buildings," says R.K. Stewart, AIA president. "We are working closely with Congress to advocate for the adoption of sustainable design principles

in the final energy bill that will be sent to the President."

AIA is currently advocating for inclusions of its AIA Federal Building policy. This policy requires all new and significantly renovated buildings owned or even leased by the government to be carbon-neutral by 2030. Additionally, the AIA hopes the bill will also include an increase of the energy-efficient commercial building tax deduction by twenty five percent (from \$1.80 to \$2.25 per square foot); the construction of a "Sun Wall" on the Department of Energy's (DOE) headquarters in Washington D.C. that will generate up to 200 kW of electricity; the creation of a Zero-Energy Commercial Buildings Initiative at DOE to focus on carbon neutrality nationally; establish a national energy-efficiency quota or goal for all sectors of the U.S. economy; and establish an Office of Green Buildings with the General Services Administration (GSA) and a consortium that includes architects to advise.

In short, the AIA's goal with their proposed policy is to implement government run awareness of energy usage efficiency and for the government itself to lead the war on reducing greenhouse gasses by example.

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