

GREEN FROM 'GREEN'

DEVELOPERS AREN'T WAITING FOR GOVERNMENT TO TELL THEM TO ADOPT MONEY-SAVING SUSTAINABLE BUILDING PRACTICES.

by Curt Hazlett

THE WORLD IS GETTING GREENER, ONE CENTER AT A TIME

Designing Istanbul's Istinye Park shopping center was no walk along the Bosphorus. Upwards of 60 percent of the project, which was to nestle in a natural bowl on the hilly European side of Turkey's largest city, would be up against earth — a challenge for the architects, Development Design Group, but also an unusual opportunity. "The goal was to make the design energy-efficient," said Ahsin Rasheed, CEO of Baltimore-based DDG, which has designed centers in Africa, Asia, the Americas and Europe. "A lot of times we create earth berms or natural insulation by bringing a building into a shaded area, but this project already had that going for it." So DDG let the site inspire the design.

Istinye Park opened in 2007, and the awards quickly followed, including being named one of the best large shopping centers in Europe by ICSC in 2009. The designers succeeded in creating not only a successful and visually stunning mall, but also one that used every available tool to reduce its environmental impact.

The world's shopping centers are going "green" at a fast clip, not only in developed markets, but also in emerging regions like Southeast Asia and Africa. They are being designed to generate their own power, use as little water as possible, take advantage of natural heating and cooling, and reuse or recycle



materials and trash. Guiding the shift is a burgeoning number of green building councils around the world. As of May, there were active councils in 25 countries, and an additional 43 countries were in the process of creating their own. For the present, though, green building efforts worldwide are typically done on a voluntary basis and not to satisfy a government mandate, says Rasheed. In the fastest-growing markets, including China, Indonesia, Turkey and the Middle East, this is still generally up to the developers, he says.

“Developers want to come across as sensitive and aware, and they want to make their projects more competitive and marketable and more intelligent,” Rasheed said. “So it is a market-driven need in those societies where it is not mandated. A lot of time we have seen that market-driven initiatives have more power and longevity than government-driven laws.”

Governments are gradually ratcheting up their efforts to require green building, however. The EU, for instance, has announced new standards starting in 2020 that will require all buildings to be carbon-neutral.

Green building has come a long way from its roots in the 1970s. The term has come to mean many things, including technical matters such as window design and lighting, and the availability of alternative transportation. Taken together, such measures contribute to sustainability, defined by British architect Sir Norman Foster as achieving the maximum return with the minimum use of resources.

But sustainability, too, can mean different things to different people. “Discussions about sustainability are usually about energy, materials and these kinds of things,” said Arno Ruigrok, associate director of Netherlands-based developer Multi Corp. and head of its research operation. “We think sustainability in a shopping center should be about creating spaces that people really love, that are where they want to be, where they want to spend time, places that have such quality and attract so many people that they will survive their normal economic life span.”

Multi Corp. has had sustainability policies in place since the early 1990s, a reflection of the Dutch government’s support for green building practices. Soon after the OPEC oil embargo in 1973, the government began creating policies to encourage energy-use reduction in commercial buildings, some of them voluntary and others required by code. “There are increasingly strict rules coming from authorities on technical sustainability issues,” Ruigrok said. “The Netherlands is one of the most demanding countries. We are constantly improving our technical standards and knowledge, and that knowledge we can bring to other countries where we have development offices. We are forced to innovate, and that’s something we can export to other countries.”

The costs associated with green construction have to be recouped in some fashion. But these buildings bear 30 percent lower energy costs than conventional buildings, on average, according to RREEF, the real estate division of Deutsche Bank, and they use less water and have lower maintenance costs.

The goal of sustainability has indeed spread around the world, as evidenced by the increased use of LEED certification (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design), the program run by the U.S. Green Building Council. “Even as recently as five or six years ago, we used to ask our clients in China if they intended to make it a green building or have it LEED-certified when it was completed, and they looked at us like we were speaking a foreign language,” said Rasheed. “Now they are experts on the subject, and even before we walk in, they know what they are looking for.”

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