

Common Ground, Consensus Building and Continual Improvement: International Standards and Sustainable Building

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***Common Ground, Consensus Building
and Continual Improvement:
Standards and Sustainable Building
First International Symposium***

Alison Kinn Bennett and Dru Meadows, editors

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Foreword

This publication, *Common Ground, Consensus Building, and Continual Improvement: Standards and Sustainable Building*, contains papers presented at the first international symposium of the same name held in Washington, DC, on 19-20 April, 2007. The symposium was sponsored by the ASTM International Committee E06 on Performance of Buildings, Subcommittee E06.71 on Sustainability. The symposium co-chairs were Alison Kinn Bennett, EPA and Dru Meadows, theGreenTeam, Inc.

The symposium, a first of its kind, brought together governments, professional organizations, trade organizations, industry, standard developing organizations, and environmental organizations in a discussion about current and developing sustainable building and product standards. Furthermore, the symposium highlighted opportunities and needs for coordination and consensus in the marketplace. Twenty-three papers were presented at the symposium. This book contains a selection of 13 symposium papers published by the Journal of ASTM International (JAI). JAI is an online, peer-reviewed journal for the international scientific and engineering community. Publication in JAI allows rapid dissemination of the papers as soon as they become available, while publication in this Special Technical Publication (STP) is intended to provide easy access to the condensed information in a single volume for future reference.

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Overview

Environmental protection has evolved. There is a new “movement” afoot. Building on the foundation of governmental programs, both regulatory and voluntary, a new form of governance is defining the “rules of sustainability.” Standards developing organizations offer a unique forum that allows different perspectives to come together and build consensus around the issues of sustainability—defining what it means to be “green” and “sustainable” for manufacturers, designers, retailers, the general public, and the government itself.¹

The April 2007 ASTM International Symposium *Common Ground, Consensus Building, and Continual Improvement: Standards and Sustainable Building* was a first of its kind—setting out to examine the field of standards in the marketplace and discuss their origins and evolution. By engaging governments, professional organizations, trade organizations, industry, standard developing organizations, and environmental organizations, the Symposium highlighted opportunities and needs for coordination and consensus in the marketplace.

The Symposium had superb timing—serving as a prelude to the April 24, 2007 inaugural meeting of the High Performance Building Council. The Council was formed in response to Section 914 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005. Section 914 directed the U.S. Department of Energy to work with the National Institute of Building Sciences (NIBS) to assess current voluntary consensus standards and rating systems for high performance buildings and to recommend steps to fill gaps. The key objectives identified for a high performance building include: accessibility, aesthetics, cost effectiveness, functional/operational, historic preservation, productive, secure/safe, and sustainability.

The ASTM Symposium demonstrated that sustainable building standards are at the forefront of high performance building objectives in many ways: taking a holistic, systems approach to defining environmental preferability; pushing the science of life cycle assessment; asking the tough questions about chemicals of concern; balancing environmental, economic, and social considerations; and responding to consumer demand by communicating the keys to responsible purchasing. Furthermore, the leaders in sustainable building standards development are engaging stakeholders in an open, transparent process—demonstrating that consensus can bring real industry transformation.

This is evident in the success ASTM’s Subcommittee E06.71 on Sustainability has had over the past 10 years in forging standards development in the areas of general principles and terminology of sustainability relative to buildings; data collection for sustainability assessment; environmentally preferable products; green power; vegetative roofing systems; and earthen materials.

As E06.71 publishes this volume, we look forward to a future Symposium on Standards and Sustainable Building to reengage in this all-important and ever-evolving discussion. We encourage all readers to participate in ASTM’s work on sustainability. Your participation and feedback help to advance the industry. Together we will build a strong foundation for a sustainable future.

*In the US, the federal government is largely behind this shift in governance toward voluntary consensus standards and ecolabelling programs. The National Technology Transfer and Advancement Act (NTTAA) (P.L. 104-113: 1996) and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-119 direct federal agencies to make use of voluntary consensus standards rather than government-unique standards in procurement and regulations.

Finally, we would like to gratefully acknowledge the outstanding quality of the contributions made by the authors as well as the dedicated efforts of the peer reviewers and the staff of ASTM and AIP, who all helped to make the 2007 symposium and the publication of the associated papers possible.

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