

Building Performance Toolkit Web Site Launch

Remarks by Jack S. Nyman, Director
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Good morning. My name is Jack Nyman, and I'm the director of the Steven L. Newman Real Estate Institute. We are co-hosting this event with CUNY's Building Performance Lab, which is part of CIUS, the CUNY Institute for Urban Systems. It's a pleasure to welcome you here today. The invitation you received referred to this as a "celebration." And it truly is!

And what we're celebrating is actually more than the official launch of the Building Performance Toolkit, as important as that web site is. We're celebrating the convergence of circumstances that create a unique opportunity: We're now well positioned to significantly accelerate the massive learning that must take place throughout the real estate industry, top to bottom, nationwide, if sustainability goals and energy savings are to be achieved anytime soon.

Probably everybody in this room understands how much rides on these goals environmentally, and why, in a weak economy, the financial savings that energy efficiency delivers are so compelling. Day after day, inefficient building systems and operations are squandering energy. They're also wasting water, which means energy is wasted, because moving and treating water requires energy. All this impacts our carbon footprint, air quality, and utility bills. I won't belabor these points, but I do want to stress them, because they drive an important part of the work that we do.

Reasons to celebrate

Now, to review the many reasons for today's celebration, the very first I want to cite is the partnership between the Newman Real Estate Institute and the Building Performance Lab of CIUS. On the surface we have two different organizations here, but actually our missions are complementary in the area of sustainability. The Lab possesses deep technical knowledge of building performance and workforce development. The Institute operates at the nexus of the real estate industry and public policy, providing education, conducting research, and organizing public events, with sustainability as a dominant focus. The collaborations between the Lab and the Institute are proving extremely productive. The Toolkit web site is a prime example of this.

Another example, also to be celebrated, is the NYC Building Performance Stakeholder Consortium, which the Institute and the Lab cosponsor. It's a unique and influential cross-section of the city's leading property owners and managers, public agencies, NGOs, utilities, and other parties. It now includes over 200 members. The group meets – right here in this room – several times a year to explore issues related to building performance. The Consortium's input grounds the Institute and the Lab in marketplace realities and helps keep us responsive to them. The Consortium guided the creation of the Toolkit web site, and I'm happy to say that some of its members are here today. We salute and thank them!

Yet another cause for celebration today is the role played by the agencies that made the Toolkit possible: the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 2, and the New York State Energy Research & Development Authority (NYSERDA). Without their financial support, we could not have created the web site. But not only is their funding indispensable; their leadership sends a loud signal that reverberates widely. We're proud to be their grantees.

I'm delighted that representatives of those agencies – Rabi Kieber, the Green Building/Sustainability Coordinator for EPA's Region 2, and Clara Voight, an Assistant Project Manager in NYSERDA's New York City office – are with us today and will be speaking later in the program. I'll mention, too, that

NYSERDA's advisory board for energy program outreach, which I'm pleased to serve on, is certain to be a force for good.

The EPA and NYSERDA were shrewd in choosing to support a web site that can help advance sustainability goals in New York City. The City's long-term sustainability plan, PLANYC 2030, and its Greener Greater Buildings Plan, which requires greater energy efficiency in building operations, are nothing short of historic – and are among the most ambitious in the country. Our Toolkit is designed to equip the local commercial real estate sector with the knowledge needed to comply with the Buildings Plan. And as you'll learn from Nora Sherman, the Lab's Deputy Director, the Toolkit also addresses sustainability features other than energy efficiency. By helping the local real estate industry implement the City's goals, our Toolkit web site will contribute to a successful model from which other cities can learn. What happens in New York doesn't stay in New York!

By the way, we know of no other building performance web site tailored to NYC. And while other building performance web sites are valuable – indeed, the Toolkit links to some of them – none holds the potential ours does, for reasons I'll soon explain.

Another City initiative is relevant here: the Urban Technology Innovation Center (UTIC), a partnership announced in January by Mayor Bloomberg. Its participants are the NYC Economic Development Corporation, CUNY, Columbia University, and NYU Poly. Its goals are to increase clean technology innovation in NYC, promote the sharing of best practices among building management stakeholders, and attract clean technology entrepreneurs to the city and support those already here. CUNY's participants are – who else? – the Newman Real Estate Institute and the Building Performance Lab of CIUS. And who will play a key role in connecting UTIC to the city's real estate industry? Our stakeholder consortium. We're now organizing it into working groups that can further UTIC's goals. It seems highly likely that what's learned through UTIC will enrich the Toolkit web site.

Let me add an eye-opening note from a [news story](#) in the June 16th *New York Times* on China's efforts to boost energy efficiency. It reported that, "Chinese estimates show that the country's commercial office buildings use 10 to 20 percent less electricity per square meter than comparable Western buildings. But the savings tend to come not from better designs"; they come from setting thermostats as high as 79 degrees Fahrenheit in the summer and as low as 64 degrees Fahrenheit in the winter.

We're not looking at cutting-edge technology fixes here; we're looking at behavioral change.

Online curriculum for the U.S. Department of Energy

We'll address this, along with many other energy-efficiency measures, through work we're pursuing under a major grant from the U.S. Department of Energy (US DOE), which NYSERDA has augmented with a grant of its own. At present, the courses that the Institute and Lab offer are classroom-based. For the DOE we're developing an online certificate program for commercial building operators and property and portfolio asset managers that will equip them to significantly reduce energy consumption.

The Toolkit web site will eventually serve as a portal to that curriculum. This connection isn't one we'd planned on: we began work on the Toolkit before the DOE issued its RFP. But it's an example of the synergies that can emerge among initiatives, and it's those synergies that can scale up our efforts.

Because our work for the DOE will expand the Toolkit's significance, I want to tell you more about it. To tailor our online curriculum to what students actually need to learn, one of the first things we did was conduct a comprehensive, nationwide survey of commercial property owners and managers to identify knowledge gaps. Together, our survey respondents control 1.3 billion – that's *billion* – square feet of space, in buildings ranging from 50,000 square feet to skyscraper in scale. Crucially, we found that, while formal training on energy efficiency is plentiful, it's largely limited – to either introductory courses that stop short of developing certifiable skills, or to narrowly focused certifications. Energy efficiency per se has been slow to emerge as a major topic in its own right.

In conducting our survey, we were gratified to learn that real estate professionals embraced our curriculum project. Time and again they confirmed the need for training in energy efficiency. They confirmed their desire to hire accredited professionals with expertise in the core competencies our education modules will deliver. Again, the reality out there is that transformation of the building industry is needed nationwide, and to achieve it, hundreds of thousands of people need to learn how to save energy.

We're now developing training modules to fill knowledge gaps. We're also developing the delivery system – an advanced web portal that will facilitate timely instructor-student interaction. Besides helping students learn, this interaction will continuously refine course content. For the portal, we're partnering with a leading developer of online education and apps, whose clients include Apple, Google, and Yahoo.

While online courses will be the primary delivery vehicle, we're also exploring academic and professional partnerships, American National Standards Institute certification, and coordination with emerging standards such as those of the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE). You can see the potential here.

Our curriculum won't launch until 2012, but it's already clear that it will constitute a national resource, and indeed its significance has already been recognized: a number of parties have approached us to learn how we might adapt our content to meet their needs.

Continuous feedback & learning

This brings me back to the subject of the Toolkit: the DOE project will deliver the formal training that, we hope, many visitors to the Toolkit web site will seek. And some DOE curriculum content can feed into the Toolkit, and vice-versa.

Crucially, the DOE curriculum and Toolkit are both conceived of as dynamic, not static. One reason is that user feedback is an important feature of both. Another is simply that building performance is itself a dynamic field: new technologies will emerge; best practices and the regulatory framework for energy use will evolve. As Michael and Nora have stressed many times, the Toolkit will always be a work in progress, and this is true of the DOE curriculum, as well.

Yet another source of fresh content will be the insights generated through the Institute's and the Lab's other activities. For the Newman Institute, this takes the form of research into sustainability issues and our Sustainability Shoptalk series of public events. Among the topics that series has explored are compliance with New York City's green building code, the energy-water nexus, creating sustainable interiors, green leasing, and financing energy efficiency savings. Our next Shoptalk event will be a conference titled "On Air: Reducing the Risk of Indoor Environments," an issue that we think warrants much more attention. We'll welcome your suggestions for future Shoptalk agendas.

A portfolio of sustainability assets

So, to sum up, what we have before us might be termed a substantial portfolio of sustainability assets for the real estate industry. It consists of

- the productive partnership between the Newman Real Estate Institute and the Building Performance Lab
- the support and leadership of EPA, NYSERDA, and the DOE
- our Stakeholder Consortium
- NYC's bold sustainability plan and green buildings plan
- NYC's Urban Technology Innovation Center
- our Toolkit web site
- our forthcoming DOE energy efficiency curriculum, and

- the steady stream of insights furnished by the many hundreds of talented people who contribute to the Newman Institute's research projects and Shoptalk events and to the Lab's work

And what are the core constituents of this portfolio? They are

- an ever-expanding knowledge base,
- an ever-expanding network of relationships,
- growing visibility,
- the capacity to learn, and
- the willingness to work like hell, as Michael, Nora, and I can attest!

Managed strategically, this portfolio constitutes a unique resource that will only grow in value. I'm convinced it can make all of us – the Lab, the Newman Institute, the agencies that support us, the City, and our many collaborators – a national powerhouse on the building performance front, for many years to come.

Deep thanks go out to all of you for what you contribute to this mission, and for joining us today in this celebration of past accomplishments and future opportunities. And now, it's my honor to turn the floor over to Rabi Kieber, Green Building/Sustainability Coordinator for EPA's Region 2, our Grant Administrator, and a veteran of EPA's green buildings programs.