



Centro Mario Molina

Green Building in Mexico Rating Systems Workshop

**Recommendations from the Cocoyoc Workshop
for the Establishment of Green Building Rating Systems in Mexico**

Cocoyoc, Morelos, México

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RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE COCOYOC WORKSHOP FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF GREEN BUILDING RATING SYSTEMS IN MEXICO

With the support of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation of North America and the participation of just over 90 citizens from Canada, Mexico and the United States, a workshop on green building rating systems was held on 24 and 25 October 2007, in Cocoyoc, Morelos. The event brought together specialists from different architectural and building engineering disciplines, building technicians and businesses, financiers, and federal and local government authorities. At the workshop, they shared experiences and analyzed the process expected in the coming years that will change how buildings are built in Mexico in order to reduce harm to the environment and achieve higher quality for residents.

Twenty-four presentations were made in five sessions during the first day. On the second day, participants broke out into work groups as follows:

- Group 1. Law, standards, public policy and zoning
- Group 2. Rating system management
- Group 3. Market instruments

To guide the dialogue, each group was given a discussion document prepared by the Centro Mario Molina, with the background and key issues for each topic.

In general, participants agreed that rating systems are a way to promote better environmental and energy performance, through building standards and incentives. Their implementation requires the broad involvement of and collaboration between various construction sectors. The development of such systems may take several years, and include stages ranging from awareness and training programs to developing complex market instruments.

Each group reached consensus on a series of conclusions and recommendations.

Group 1. Law, Standards, Public Policy and Zoning

1. The group found that the deficiencies and barriers in the Mexican political system preventing or limiting green building rating systems include:
 - the regulatory building code in Mexico, proper compliance with which would require the compilation, grouping, review and improvement of regulations and standards;
 - the system of standard rating for construction, which would have to consider the levels of competence and the degree or extent to which building issues require regulation; and
 - the absence of a historical record of building information, to document and update an information system on efficiency and savings.

2. The group pointed to the following consequences that could affect the country if public or private institutions do not regulate the environmental effects of buildings:
 - anarchy and chaos, or if the current situation continues, environmental impairment, pollution and harm to public health and ecosystems; and
 - noncompliance with the law.
3. As regards green building rating systems in Mexico, the group found that:
 - it is necessary to clearly define the different green criteria and bring them into line with Mexico's reality—such as the preliminary proposal for green housing criteria developed by the National Housing Commission (*Comisión Nacional de la Vivienda*—Conavi);
 - an ideal scenario is not necessary to begin the promotion of green building and rating processes;
 - rating systems should respond to actual conditions in Mexico, including not only Mexican experiences but also those from North America and other parts of the world; and
 - a “National Green Building Advisory Board” (*Consejo Consultivo Nacional sobre Edificación Sustentable*) should be created.
4. Regarding the role of government agencies in rating systems, the group proposed a focus on:
 - stressing green building awareness (rules, concepts, etc.), with the involvement of professional groups, colleges and associations, as well as universities and research institutes; and
 - establishing rating frameworks that do not entail certification, as certification carries legal and administrative implications that could inhibit or complicate green building promotion.
5. With respect to the role of state and municipal governments in green building programs, regulations and standards, the group stated the need for:
 - promoting greater coordination between the federal government and local authorities so that urban development plans reflect the general public policy in favor of green buildings; and
 - defining greater and clearer state and municipal competencies with respect to green buildings.

Group 2. Rating System Management

1. The group found that the proper management of green building rating systems should rely on the momentum gained since such systems have appeared in the country and elsewhere. For this, they suggest:
 - identifying and weighting the factors—environmental, social, economic, competitive and political—that foster green building in Mexico;
 - using rating systems to take advantage of economic and financial benefits offered in the real estate market (subsidies, loans and market forces); and
 - specifying the scope of the term *green building* in the Mexican context, using it as a symbol of quality to be differentiated from other products.

2. The group proposed the following issues for the Mexican rating system:
 - Energy
 - Water
 - Waste
 - Materials, equipment and technological systems
 - Indoor air quality
 - Comfort
 - Location
 - Infrastructure
 - Urban and social features
 - Biodiversity
 - Land use
3. Regarding the scope or goals to be set for a building rating system, the group suggested:
 - concentrating initial efforts on housing and new and older buildings in the service sector (including the public sector); and
 - including all built space over the long term.
4. To implement the rating system, inertia and certain obstacles must be overcome. Here the group recommended:
 - strengthening the system of laws, regulations and related standards;
 - establishing a system of incentives;
 - drafting complementary standards to set rating benchmarks;
 - assuming governmental leadership in the application of principles and approaches backing “green” logic;
 - actively involving municipal authorities, given their role as key protagonists;
 - bringing municipal, state and federal authorities together;
 - involving project managers, inspectors, experts in different disciplines and certification agencies to certify and validate green buildings;
 - integrating the opinion of all interested and affected parties; and
 - establishing a reference database for purposes of comparison.
5. Lastly, the group recommended assessing and validating current techniques, “tropicalizing” or adapting them as necessary to local conditions, and adopting best practices. It also advised continuing to work in concert on the activities begun at the workshop, working closely on the development of the following rating system issues:
 - Prescriptive or performance-based?
 - What is being measured?
 - How is it measured?
 - Who does the measuring?
 - Who certifies?
 - Who gives the rating?

Group 3. Market Instruments

Recommendations:

- 1) Identify tax incentives offered by federal, state and municipal governments.
- 2) Create an awareness campaign on the economic benefits of green buildings, aimed at real estate developers and new home buyers.
- 3) Encourage financial institutions to offer preferential access to mortgages, commercial and industrial building loans, and loans to acquire territorial reserves.
- 4) Promote acknowledgements and awards for real estate projects that include green building criteria.
- 5) Identify windows of opportunity for municipal and state governments to offer better regulatory and administrative conditions with respect to green building.
- 6) Create a working group to identify the barriers and disincentives to access to mechanisms on financial markets for green building carbon credits.
- 7) Define reporting mechanisms that enable persons with interests in the building to recognize and apply the economic values associated with green building.
- 8) Encourage educational institutions to address their individual and collective responsibilities for environmental protection and the need for green buildings.
- 9) Promote the application of monies accruing from penalties levied on real estate projects not meeting environmental rules to projects that do meet green criteria.