

Rocky Mountain News

To print this page, select **File** then **Print** from your browser

URL: [http://www.rockymountainnews.com/drmn/real\\_estate/article/0,1299,DRMN\\_414\\_5303315,00.html](http://www.rockymountainnews.com/drmn/real_estate/article/0,1299,DRMN_414_5303315,00.html)

Senator pushes energy efficiency  
Greener buildings for state proposed

**By John Rebchook, Rocky Mountain News**  
**January 25, 2007**

One legislator's vision for the future: All state-funded buildings will be built green and an untold amount of money will be funneled to Colorado's coffers in lower utility bills.

The vision of Sen. Ken Gordon, D-Denver, is laid out in a bill he plans to introduce today that would require most new state buildings to meet rigorous energy-efficiency standards.

Gordon, an elected official since 1992, said he wants to do as much as he can about global warming before he leaves office after 2008 because of term limits.

Because a third of emissions come from buildings, he is sponsoring Senate Bill 07-051, which would require all new buildings that are 5,000 square feet or larger and that receive 25 percent or more of their funding from the state to be LEED-certified by the U.S. Green Building Council. LEED stands for Leadership for Energy Environmental Design.

Existing state buildings facing "substantial renovations" also would need to be LEED-certified, although buildings could be exempted for cost or historic reasons.

"I thought if we could reduce the amount of energy used in state buildings, and make them more efficient, it could be a good example to private industry, too," Gordon said.

Denver Mayor John Hickenlooper outlined a similar program as part of his Greenprint Denver plan last July.

Typically, a gold-level LEED building costs 1.8 percent more, or an additional \$3 to \$5 per square foot, to construct, according to the nonprofit Alliance for Sustainable Colorado, which worked with Gordon on the bill.

A gold LEED building typically uses 37 percent less energy and 42 percent less water than a conventional building, according to the alliance.

Sometimes the savings are even greater.

The alliance in 2004 bought the former loading dock portion of the Tattered Cover Book Store at 1536 Wynkoop St. from store owner Joyce Meskis and Hickenlooper and renamed it the Alliance Center.

After the alliance retrofitted the building, which it leases to 30 small nonprofits involved with sustainability, it cut its water consumption by 84 percent, said Aaron Nelson, project manager of the alliance.

"And we're insulated from further increases in energy costs," Nelson said during a tour of the Alliance Center.

The amount of savings per building will vary, but an energy-efficient school in Fort Collins is saving \$90,000 a year in reduced energy bills, said the alliance's Melanie Smith.

Gordon said he expects criticism of his bill.

"People criticize everything here - it doesn't matter whether it is meritorious or not," Gordon said. "Some people in the state, like everywhere else, will object to paying 1 percent or 2 percent more upfront. But I'm trying to get people to think ahead. The energy savings on a building over the next 50 years will be huge."

#### Bill touts benefits

State-funded buildings would have to meet rigorous standards. The bill's sponsor, Sen. Ken Gordon, says doing so would:

- Decrease taxpayer dollars spent on utility bills.
- Decrease wear and tear on utility infrastructure.
- Increase test scores of students and productivity of state workers.
- Increase health and well-being of students, teachers, state employees and visitors.

*Source: Senate Bill 07-051*

Copyright 2007, Rocky Mountain News. All Rights Reserved.