

Glossary of Terms - Building Related Terms

August 11, 2013

The terms in this glossary have been categorized based on their relevance to products or the whole building. 'Building Related Terms' include terms that pertain to the design, construction/assembly, performance, and end-life of a building or building site. The terms in this category apply more to the overall performance of assembled products in satisfying occupants and/or energy/environmental targets than to the performance of a singular product within a building.

Terms from:

The Construction Specification Institute. (July 2011). GreenFormat™. The Construction Specification Institute: Alexandria, VA.

EcoSpecifier. (2014). Glossary. <http://www.ecospecifier.com.au/knowledge-green/glossary.aspx>

Integrated Waste Management Board. (2001). California Sustainable Design Training.

<http://www.calrecycle.ca.gov/greenbuilding/training/StateManual/StateManual.pdf>

Building Related Terms

Ambient lighting: Lighting in an area from any source that produces general illumination, as opposed to task or focused lighting.

Blackwater: Waste water from toilets (and sometimes kitchen sinks) that contains sewage. Because of the presence of pathogens in this water, it must be treated.

Brownfield: Abandoned, idled, or under-used industrial and commercial facilities where expansion or redevelopment is complicated by real or perceived environmental contamination.

Building footprint: The building footprint is the area on a project site that is used by the building structure and is equal to the perimeter of the building plan.

Cogeneration: The joint production and use of electricity and heat. Typically, electricity is the primary output of such large facilities as power plants. As a byproduct, heat can be used in food processing, district heating, or oil recovery. In contrast, industrial or small systems (e.g., laundromats, health clubs, and car washes) may be designed primarily to heat water while the generation of electricity is secondary.

Commissioning: The start-up phase of a new or remodeled building. This phase includes testing and fine-tuning of the HVAC and other systems to assure proper functioning and adherence to design criteria. Commissioning also includes preparation of the system manuals and instruction of the building maintenance personnel.

Construction Waste Management: Diversion of construction, renovation, demolition, and land-clearing debris from disposal in landfills and incinerators; to recover and redirect material that can be used in a secondary function.

Contaminant: An unwanted airborne constituent that may reduce acceptability of the air.

Day lighting: The controlled admission of natural light into space with the intent of reducing or eliminating electric lighting.

Deconstruction: The process of taking apart a structure with the primary goal of preserving the value of all useful building materials, so that they may be reused or recycled.

Design for Disassembly/Deconstruction: Applies to product streams containing distinct components (e.g. furniture, partitions, storage, etc) and implies products are designed so that components are easily disassembled. The processes which are required in product removal from site and component separation must not involve specialist tools so that a future recycler, supplier or another third party, can easily direct the different materials into the appropriate reuse or recycling streams.

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Disposal: The discharge, deposit, injection, dumping, spilling, leaking, or placing of any solid waste or hazardous waste into the environment (land, surface water, ground water, and air).

End of life: The point of time after installation when a building or its parts no longer meet the performance requirements and when physical failure is possible and/or when it is no longer practical or economical to continue with corrective maintenance. End of life may also be reached due to fashion or image related factors (churn).

Energy Conservation Measures: Installations of equipment or systems, or modifications of equipment or systems, for the purpose of reducing energy use and/or costs.

Energy management control system: A control system capable of monitoring environmental and system loads and adjusting HVAC operations accordingly in order to conserve energy while maintaining a comfortable environment.

Erosion: A combination of processes in which the materials of the earth's surface are loosened, dissolved, or worn away, and transported from one place to another by natural agents.

Geothermal energy: Thermal energy stored in the earth's crust.

Glare: Glare occurs when the presence of a bright light impacts the ability of an object to be clearly seen. It may be caused by natural or artificial, direct or reflect light.

Greywater: Wastewater discharged from sinks, bathtubs, showers, clothes washers, and laundry sinks. Unlike blackwater, greywater does not come from toilets and often needs less treatment than blackwater to be safely reused.

Greenfield: A Greenfield is defined as undeveloped land or land that has not been impacted by human activity.

Heat Island Effect: Effect that occurs when warmer temperatures are experienced in urban landscapes compared to adjacent rural areas as a result of solar energy retention on constructed surfaces.

Impervious Surfaces: Surfaces that promote runoff of precipitation volumes instead of infiltration into the subsurface.

Indoor Air Quality (IAQ): The nature of air inside the space that affects the health and well being of building occupants.

Indoor Environmental Quality (IEQ): The nature of all aspects of the indoor environmental

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(e.g. air quality, thermal comfort, lighting) conditions that affect the health and well being of building occupants.

Integrated design: A holistic process that considers the many disparate parts of a building project, and examines the interaction between design, construction, and operations, to optimize the energy and environmental performance of the project. The strength of this process is that all relevant issues are considered simultaneously in order to “solve for pattern” or solve many problems with one solution. The goal of integrated design is developments that have the potential to heal damaged environments and become net producers of energy, healthy food, clean water and air, and healthy human and biological communities. A Primer on Sustainable Building, Rocky Mountain Institute.

Light Pollution: Non directed light from building and their site illuminates in all directions. Excessive undirected light illuminates spaces upward toward the sky or off-site that do not benefit from being light.

Masterformat: A standardization system to classify building specifications commonly used in Canada and the U.S created by the Construction Specifications Institute (CSI) and Construction Specifications Canada. It uses a standardized division list to organize information related to building specifications, construction requirements, and corresponding activities.

Microclimate: Localized climate conditions within an urban area or neighborhood.

Passive solar and/or thermal design: Passive solar design refers to the use of the sun's energy for the heating and cooling of living spaces. In this approach, the building itself or some element of it takes advantage of natural energy characteristics in materials and air created by exposure to the sun. Passive systems are simple, have few moving parts, and require minimal maintenance and require no mechanical systems.

Perviousness: The percent of the surface area of a paving material that is open and allows moisture to pass through the material and soak into the earth below the paving system.

Potable Water: Water suitable and safe for drinking, often supplied by wells or municipal systems.

Radon: An odorless, tasteless, radioactive gas that passes from some soil types into buildings and may cause cancer.

Recycling: The collection, reprocessing, marketing, and use of materials that were diverted or recovered from the solid waste stream.

Relative humidity: The ratio of partial density of water vapor in the air to the saturation density of water vapor at the same temperature.

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Renewable Energy: Power derived from solar electric, wind, geothermal, biomass, or low-impact hydroelectric sources.

Service life: The period of time from installation during which a building or its parts meets or exceeds its performance requirements

Sick building syndrome: According to the EPA and NIOSH, Sick Building Syndrome is defined as, "Situations in which building occupants experience acute health and/or comfort effects that appear to be linked to time spent in a particular building, but where no specific illness or cause can be identified. The complaints may be localized in a particular room or zone, or may be spread throughout the building." Occupants experience relief of symptoms shortly after leaving the building.

Stormwater Runoff: Water volumes that are created during precipitation events and flow over surfaces into sewer systems or receiving waters.

Sustainable: The condition of being able to meet the needs of present generations without compromising those needs for future generations. Achieving a balance among extraction and renewal and environmental inputs and outputs, as to cause no overall net environmental burden or deficit. To be truly sustainable, a human community must not decrease biodiversity, must not consume resources faster than they are renewed, must recycle and reuse virtually all materials, and must rely primarily on resources of its own region.

Task lighting: Providing lighting in the immediate area where tasks are performed, i.e., at desks, counter tops, etc.; as opposed to ambient or general lighting.

Thermal comfort: A condition of mind experienced by building occupants expressing satisfaction with the thermal environment.

Unifomat: A well-recognized and standardized classification system for common building elements and components. Unifomat is widely used in Canada and the U.S. for classifying building specifications and costing.

Ventilation: The process of supplying air to or removing air from a space for the purpose of controlling air contaminant levels, humidity, or temperature within the space.

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