

## BUILDING CODE COMPLIANCE IN CALIFORNIA JUST BECAME HARDER

All new buildings in California will for the first time be required to comply with sustainable standards to win Planning Department approvals and to satisfy building inspectors. Before January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011, building green was optional for the construction industry. Notwithstanding it was optional developers jumped on the sustainable construction waive with installation of energy efficient features and low pollutant materials while diverting demolition waste away from landfills. California's new building standards raise the issue whether the struggling real estate market will absorb the costs of Green Building requirements.

The building standards were adopted in January 2010 by the California Building Standards Commission, and they require that developers of all new commercial buildings reduce water use by twenty percent and install separate water meters for indoor and outdoor use. All projects for buildings of more than 10,000 square feet must divert 50% of construction trash from landfills, submit to inspections of heating and air-conditioning systems as well as other building mechanical equipment for maximum efficiency; and comply with more stringent light reduction and site grading requirements.

Those in pursuit of residential project approval must require contractors to cover duct openings during construction to minimize dust collection; ensure paints comply with rigorous emission standards for indoor air quality; and follow storm water diversion plans which include installation of retention basins and barrier systems that filter water and allow for onsite absorption to conserve storm water runoff for irrigation.

These building standards are integral to California for meeting its goals under AB 32 that requires statewide greenhouse gas reductions to 1990 levels by 2020, and for SB 375 which requires sustainable land use and transportation planning intended to cut emissions. CalGreen becomes effective at a time of surging popularity of specialized rating systems for sustainable and environmental construction. These include the USGBC's Leadership in Energy and Design (LEED) system which rates projects as "Certified," "Silver," "Gold," or "Platinum," according to how many points they achieve in satisfaction of prerequisites and green categories. Additionally, the International Green Construction Code (IGCC) sets forth numerous recommendations for sustainable building in new and existing commercial projects. However, CalGreen sets a benchmark in California that cities and counties can build upon. This code creates an additional layer for developers to satisfy during the design process as they apply for governmental approvals for their entitlements, and CalGreen will push developers toward satisfaction of the more extensive LEED and IGCC standards. The satisfaction of LEED criteria will follow from design based upon the CalGreen standards as a benchmark.