

## On, and Below, the Surface

BY GEOFF WEISENBERGER

**Sustainability will be front and center at this year's NASCC and Structures Congress—but keep an eye out for subtle references as well.**

**A QUICK LOOK** through the program for the combined NASCC/Structures Congress event reveals several sustainability- and energy efficiency-oriented sessions for audiences ranging from fabricators to professors to structural engineers.

To begin with, green will be the topic of the opening keynote address. You know that LEED system that everyone's talking about? It's administered by an organization called the U.S. Green Building Council. And the USGBC's founding chairman (and current president and CEO), Rick Fedrizzi, just happens to be the speaker for Wednesday's address, "Main Street Green." As the title suggests, the green buildings movement is, well, moving or has already moved into the mainstream, depending on whom you ask. As a matter of fact, at last year's Greenbuild Conference in Phoenix—Greenbuild is USGBC's annual conference dedicated to green buildings—Fedrizzi acknowledged that many attendees and exhibitors might not be fully on board with the movement but recognize its momentum and the business opportunities it presents. (This all goes back to the idea of the sustainable buildings movement being the confluence of environmental, social *and* economic interests.) His address at NASCC no doubt will be insightful, and we're very pleased that he will be addressing the steel construction world specifically.

Several sessions on the fabricator side deal with sustainability. "Practical Energy Management for Your Shop" features a speaker from energy consulting firm Think Energy Management LLC and will focus on technologies and strategies for reducing and managing a fabrication shop's energy usage, which of course has the dual effect of bringing down financial and environmental costs. Energy, like anything else, can be wasted or not used optimally, and this session will focus on how an energy management consultant can help fabricators find energy "leaks" in the system.

"LEED, Follow, or Get Out of the Way! How the Sustainable Building Movement Is Changing the Way We Do Business" approaches green from a different angle. It will touch upon what fabricators can do to make their shops greener and get more business from building teams that have made sustainability a goal for their projects—and also what they should know in terms of documentation for LEED-oriented projects. The 1.5-hour-long session will feature speakers from an AISC member fabricator and a prominent contractor, as well as yours truly.

Teaching both present and future engineers

about steel and sustainability is another important topic that will be covered at NASCC. "Educating Structural Engineers in Sustainability: Professional and Academic Perspectives" is a panel discussion that will explore how sustainability concepts can be taught in both professional and academic settings. The four panelists will discuss both what elements of sustainability are important to teach to structural engineers and how they can be taught.

In "Sustainability in your Steel Design Class/Architecture and Construction Management Curriculums," AISC will introduce a new teaching aid that will help faculty identify and establish a core structural steel curriculum for architecture and construction management undergraduate students. It also will focus on ways to incorporate sustainability into these courses. Speakers include AISC's director of research, a Michigan State University professor and again, me.

"Structures and Energy-Efficient Building Envelopes" follows a more practical design track and will cover topics such as thermal breaks and thermal bridging, a case study on the steel-framed National Renewable Energy Laboratory facility in Golden, Colo. and designing load-bearing shear walls that incorporate rice straw blocks.

In addition, "Steel and Wood: A Dynamic and Sustainable Duo?" which focuses on connections between structural steel and wood elements, will include a sustainability component. And "Integrated Project Delivery: Next-Generation BIM for Structural Engineering" will focus on how coupling early involvement of relevant building team members (such as the steel fabricator) and building information modeling technology can yield savings in time, schedule, energy and materials—in other words, creating a greener structural system and overall construction process.

On top of that, AISC's trade show floor booth will feature a sustainability and BIM station.

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*Rick Fedrizzi is founding chairman, president and CEO of the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC).*



### Listen for the Magic Words

Here's an exercise to consider. It doesn't take much effort and there's no required reading, just observing. During or after the shows—at sessions, in the hallways, on the trade show floor, etc.—keep an eye out for any mention of the topic of sustainability or green buildings. And when those topics come up, here are some questions to ask yourself and others:

- Did any exhibitors market or present their product or service as having green or sustainable attributes?
- If so, are these the same companies that tend to do this sort of thing every year, or are more and more companies doing it?
- In general, are exhibitors willing to talk about sustainability?
- Do people seem scared of the concept of sustainability or excited about it? Do the people that are excited about it seem crazy or smart? Or a little of both?
- Do people seem to like the idea of sustainability but aren't sure what to do? Or are they concerned about the cost?
- Did you hear any realistic—or at least interesting—ideas for accomplishing sustainability goals?
- Did you have any conversations or attend any seminars where sustainability wasn't necessarily brought up by name, but was clearly part of the discussion?

I encourage you to send your answers to any of these questions to me. And enjoy the show!

So in a nutshell, yes, green will be a noticeable element of this year's shows. But I wouldn't be too surprised if the concept of sustainability is touched upon indirectly or even mentioned by name at other sessions and booths as well. We're

used to keeping an eye out for words like green and sustainability, but just because they're not uttered directly doesn't mean they aren't there in spirit.

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