PACE UPDATE: Florida Supreme Court Rules To Allow PACE Bond Funding

An important ruling by the Florida Supreme Court will allow Florida municipalities to issue bonds to fund "property assessed clean energy" (PACE) programs, which provide up-front financing to commercial property owners who want to use green energy in their buildings.

The ruling gives local municipalities bonding authority that can make clean-energy projects more financially viable for commercial properties around the state. Giving local municipalities the bonding authority to pay for PACE programs is expected to help expand the use of the program in Florida, where it has only been used on a limited basis for commercial properties.

The PACE program is entirely voluntary. Commercial property owners who choose to participate enter financing agreements with a local municipality, agreeing to repay the improvement costs over the long-term through special assessments added to their property tax bills. The bonds are repaid with the assessment revenues, and there is no personal liability for the property owner.

Commercial property owners could tap into this financing source for green energy-related improvements such as doing energy-efficiency retrofits to buildings or adding solar structures.

The decision, announced Oct. 1, was the outcome of an appeal of a bond validation judgment in the Leon County Energy Improvement District's favor. The District has been seeking the authority to issue $200 million in bonds to fund a PACE program, and appeals of validation hearing judgments go directly to the Florida Supreme Court.

Around the state, the Florida Supreme Court's decision is an important step in achieving the state's energy conservation objectives, as outlined in Florida Statute, said Leon County Attorney Herb Thiele. [More]
OTHER PACE NEWS:
FHA Moves to Allow Financing Of Properties With PACE Loans

FHA announced anticipated guidelines for two new initiatives that will support borrowers seeking to make energy efficient improvements to their homes, including guidance that will allow borrowers to use Single Family FHA financing for properties with existing Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) loans that meet certain conditions.

FHA also announced its new partnership with the Department of Energy (DOE) helping borrowers using Single Family FHA's Energy Efficient Home (EEH) program to take advantage of energy cost savings when measured by DOE's Home Energy Score. [More]

Green Office Buildings Deliver Higher Income, Value

Improved property performance is strongly correlated to green building certification, according to a recent study of Bentall Kennedy’s North American office portfolio.

The study, which was published in the September 2015 issue of the Journal of Portfolio Management, analyzes 10 years of financial performance data across a Bentall Kennedy-managed office portfolio totaling 58 million square feet, (34 million square feet in the U.S., 24 million square feet in Canada). Overall, the results provide compelling evidence that buildings with sustainable certification outperform similar non-green buildings in terms of rental rates, occupancy levels, tenant satisfaction scores, and the probability of lease renewals.

The study included lease-level data such as rents, rent concessions and lease renewal rates, as well as building-level information such as occupancy rates, tenant satisfaction scores, energy and water consumption, and green building certifications.

Highlights of the findings include:

- Net effective rents, including the cost of tenant incentives, average 3.7 percent higher in LEED certified properties in the U.S. than in similar non-certified buildings.
- Rent concessions, for LEED and BOMA BEST buildings in Canada are on average 4% lower than in similar non-certified buildings.
• Occupancy rates during the period were 18.7 percent higher in Canadian buildings having both LEED and BOMA BEST certification, and 9.5 percent higher in U.S. buildings with ENERGY STAR certification, than in buildings without certifications.

• Tenant renewal rates were 5.6 percent higher in Canadian buildings with BOMA BESt Level 3 certification than in buildings with no BOMA BEST certification.

• Tenant satisfaction scores were 7 percent higher in Canadian buildings with BOMA BESt level 3 and 4 certification than in non-certified buildings.

• Energy consumption per square foot was 14 percent lower in U.S. LEED certified properties than in buildings without certification.

[More]

GreenTrends Conference Speaker Line-Up Brings You Some of Today’s Most Influential Practitioners Around!

Education Opportunities
In Thursday's stakeholders meetings, you'll interact with a broad spectrum of green building enthusiasts as they design the next level of green certification criteria and tackle how to cope with more stringent building codes - all the while turning those challenges into opportunities for your company.

Friday's expert-led sessions will educate, motivate and inspire you. Topics include:

- More Than Just Being Green: Building Your Community's Commitment to a Sustainable Future
- Best Practice Designs for Cost-Effective Approaches to Low-Energy Commercial Building Enclosures
- Deregulating Florida's Solar Energy Market
- Emerging Trends in Sustainable Planning & Development
- The Next Generation of Sustainability
- Zero Energy Ready: The New Level of Expectations
- Affordable Housing - New Initiatives to Finance Green Retrofits
- Rural Development Opportunities

Early-bird registration discount ends in one day. Register Now to Save.

Everyone is invited so bring a green building enthusiast with you.

BUILDERS, ARCHITECTS & DESIGNERS take advantage of our partnership with EEBA, which will be offering one of its most popular training programs at GreenTrends:

Thursday, November 12:
Going Zero Energy for Builders & Designers: Building Science for Cost-Effective Approaches to Zero Energy Homes
States have a unique stake in disaster preparedness and recovery. Disasters can cost states billions of dollars, and they are always a crucial player in post-disaster clean up and recovery efforts. Yet the states vary widely in their readiness to face disasters. States could save a lot of time, money, and lives by being better prepared. Rather than focusing solely on disaster recovery, states can and should plan for long-term resilience to natural disasters and adapt to a changing environment.

**Building Resilient States: A Framework for Agencies** lays out seven key steps state administrations can take to become more resilient. Disaster preparedness professionals can use it to understand how decisions about land use and transportation can support their efforts to protect people, property, and infrastructure across their state.

- Play a significant role in deciding how and where development occurs;
- Establish guidelines for local land use plans;
- Design, build, and fund critical infrastructure, such as roads, utilities, and water systems;
- Fund and approve the siting of hospitals, schools, and state government buildings and facilities;
- Set guidelines for construction of state-subsidized housing;
- Control conservation funding and oversee environmental remediation;
- Provide tools and expertise, such as hazard mapping and long-term planning capacities, to local governments;
- Disburse federal resources; and
- Build local capacity and commitment to disaster resilience.
Green Magic Homes: This is SO COOL

You've seen green roofs and berm structures. Well, this is the next generation of living structures.

Green Magic Homes is a prefabricated modular building system, with structural elements in FRP (Fiber Reinforced Polymer), which contains pieces carefully designed to generate multiple possibilities of spaces, access, lighting, ventilation and connection.

Each component has perforated flaps to screw and seal each other, and then anchoring them to the Foundation, which allows fast installation. Composite ducts and channels for electrical wiring and water pipes as well as mechanical ventilation ducts, can be added to the shell at any point necessary.

Multi-Family Efficiency Report Highlights
Retrofit Opportunities for Substantial ROI

The Florida Multifamily Efficiency Opportunities Study documents the amount of energy and water savings that could be achieved from improvements to multifamily rental housing in Florida. It also identifies policy options and programs that Florida may consider adopting and implementing to encourage landlords to make needed improvements. The report finds:

The majority of Florida's renter households have low incomes and face high housing cost burdens, with trends showing that housing costs are consuming an increasing share of low-income families' take-home pay. About one million rental households in the state are considered to be low income, defined as those who make no more than 60% of the area's median income. Of these households, about 71% paid more than 40% of their total income in housing expenses (rent plus utilities) in 2011. Efficiency retrofits are an important strategy to reduce utility bills.
and ease housing cost burdens.

Based on modeled per-unit energy and water savings potential and depending on the age of the units and level of retrofit, a 10,000 unit efficiency retrofit project could yield total annual savings of between $2.1 million and $8.1 million. If scaled to reach the state's 1.3 million existing multifamily rental units, combined energy and water improvements could lead to annual energy savings of 3,286 GWh—enough to provide electricity to over 300,000 Florida homes for one year—and water savings of 87.7 million gallons per day (MGD)—enough to fill over 48,000 Olympic-sized swimming pools. This scenario assumes shallow retrofits to newer units (those built since 1983) and deep retrofits to older units (those built prior to 1983). Efficiency improvements of this scale could save Florida’s multifamily property owners and renters an estimated $714 million in annual utility bills. [More]

**Insulation Green Seal Standard Coming Soon**

Green Seal is developing a new environmental leadership standard for architectural insulation materials, which will include the product categories of fiberglass, mineral wool, polystyrene and polyisocyanurate foam, polyurethane, cellulose, cotton/recycled denim, and possibly reflective insulation and radiant barriers.

Green Seal has released a scoping document and is seeking public comment until Nov. 23. The scoping document covers an initial review of several types of insulation, the impacts of those products and draft requirements for performance and protection of health and the environment.

Green Seal plans to propose a full draft standard for public comment in early 2016. [More]

**ACEEE Issues State Energy Efficiency Scorecard; Florida Advances Despite Lower Investments**

Florida ranked 27th in the 2015 State Energy Efficiency Scorecard, rising one spot compared to 2014. Despite the increase in rank, the state actually earned one less point than it did last year due to lower investments in energy efficiency, scoring 15.5 points out of a possible 50. [US Summary] [Florida Report]

**The Legal Consequences of Ignoring Climate Change**
As our largely ill-prepared cities and towns confront an uncertain and changing climate, those decision-makers may be held accountable for development that puts people in harm's way.

Here's why. The law, in theory if not always in practice, encourages responsible behavior based on a "standard of care" as exercised by an individual, agency or corporation. People with special capabilities, such as engineers or architects, are held to an even higher standard of care.

Could local officials be held accountable if they fail to protect their citizens from climate disaster? Recent federal rulings suggest that they could. Notably, in May of this year, the Court of Federal Claims found the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers liable for damage caused by flooding from Katrina and other storms. [More]

**Florida Cities Top Auction.com's List Of Fall's Hottest Single Family Housing Markets**

Auction.com, LLC, the nation's leading online real estate marketplace, released its Top Single-Family Housing Markets Report for Fall 2015, which ranks the nation's 50 largest housing markets according to current and forecasted housing fundamentals.

Among the 50 largest U.S. markets, the top five were Seattle, Fort Lauderdale, Orlando, Palm Beach County, Fla., and Portland. These markets had the best combination of rising home prices, favorable affordability and strong housing demand, combined with strong economic and demographic conditions that point to future demand.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Market</th>
<th>Home Price Growth, Year over Year</th>
<th>Home Sales Growth, Year over Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seattle</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Lauderdale</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orlando</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palm Beach County</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portland</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the five markets highlighted in Auction.com's Spring 2015 single family market rankings issued on April 15, only Fort Lauderdale remains in the top five - moving up from fourth to second place. [More]
Portland Adopts Affordable Housing Requirement For New Developments

New housing developments in Portland with at least 10 residential units will now be required to make 10% of the housing units affordable to middle-income earners.

Developers can receive incentives, including increased heights and density, and be eligible for tax breaks to offset the costs for the new rule, or developers can avoid the requirement by paying the city $100,000 for every required affordable unit not built. [More]

More Home Builders Catering to Pet Owners

Last year, when Standard Pacific, a builder based in Irvine, Calif., offered pet rooms as an option at a new community in Brea, Calif., prospective buyers and their pets lined up for the grand opening.

Since then, Standard Pacific has expanded such rooms and other pet amenities to all 27 of its communities. Besides the in-home features, many developments offer dog parks, exercise stations, drinking fountains, wash areas, and group picnic areas for four-legged companions.

Although baby boomers were the ones who really set the pet-pampering trend in motion, millennials are expected to dote even more on their pets, which means that in future years the term "pet amenities" might take on an entirely different meaning.

"Whatever people want for their pets, they are going to get," says Rhona Sutter, a real estate agent in Naples, Fla., who founded the Pet Realty Network, which helps prospective buyers find pet-friendly properties. "Pets are something buyers definitely take into consideration now."

Flooring is one concern for homeowners with pets. Many prefer hard surfaces or even some specialized floors marketed as pet friendly. Kitchens and mudrooms also are places where consumers want to accommodate pets. For the past couple of years, pets have cropped up on the National Kitchen and Bath Association's annual state of the industry report.
Communities of Excellence Award Entries Now Open

The Florida Communities of Excellence Awards recognizes condominiums, homeowners associations and cooperatives and their volunteer leaders across Florida for sustainability and quality of life positive initiatives taking place in these private communities. Deadline for submitting entries is January 31, 2016.

Entry categories include:

- Water Conservation (Indoor and Outdoor) - Water management and conservation programs
- Energy Efficiency - Energy management and conservation programs
- Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ - Environmentally sound landscape, wetland, preserve, and lake management policies
- Disaster Preparedness - Protecting lives and property, as well as restoration in the aftermath of an emergency
- Safety & Security - Presented by ADT Community Association Program - Deterring crime and ensuring the safety of residents and property within the community
- Civic Volunteerism & Advocacy - Supporting local and regional non-profit and charitable causes
- Communications & Community - Promoting positive community relations
- Family Friendly Programs & Initiatives - Promoting family participation and well-being.
- Financial Innovation - Policies and procedures to ease financial burdens during challenging economic times
- "The Comeback Kid" - Recognizing communities that developed and implemented successful turnaround programs by revitalizing distressed properties
- Trendsetter Awards - Innovation in any area not covered in the existing categories
- Community Video Showcase (Special deadline is March 15, 2016)
The Florida Home Builders Association honored Cindy Hall of Eco Solutions Marketing in Jensen Beach, as its 2015 Associate Member of the Year recently during its 2015 Fall Leadership Conference. Selected by a council of industry leaders, the award encourages best practices, expertise, and exceptional leadership qualities. Associate members are suppliers, service providers, and product manufacturers that support the building industry in many different capacities.

Hall served as FHBA 2nd Vice President in 2013-2014 and was awarded the FHBA Women of Distinction award in 2013. She is active in her local home building association, the National Association of Home Builders, the Florida Nursery Growers & Landscape Association, and served on the Florida Green Building Coalition Board of Directors from 2009 to 2015.