



Good evening and welcome, ladies and gentlemen. I'm honored to be with you here tonight in the beautiful city of Toronto. This year at Greenbuild, we celebrate the work you've accomplished as green building professionals, and we celebrate and the work we continue to do to advance our shared mission of sustainability around the world. Thank you all for joining us.

Bonsoir et bienvenue, mesdames et messieurs. J'ai l'honneur d'être ici avec vous ce soir dans cette belle ville de Toronto. Merci de nous avoir rejoints ce soir.

Tonight I'm pleased to report that despite a global economy that continues to affect every aspect of our lives, we come here with optimism and determination. This year, our 10th year is our time to celebrate our growing global movement and I'm thrilled to report that Greenbuild -- and our movement -- is thriving.

We have more than 23,000 registered for our conference from 108 countries, representing the extraordinary international reach of our movement. This is the first Greenbuild ever beyond US borders and our success here is largely due to collaboration with our amazing sister organization the Canada Green Building Council. It's my great pleasure to introduce my counterpart here in Canada, and our hosts for this week, from the Canada GBC, their President and CEO, Thomas Mueller. *[Thomas Mueller takes stage and gives greetings. Rick retakes podium.]*

Greenbuild would not be possible without our engaged and committed sponsors. This year, our opening plenary is sponsored by Kohler. Kohler has been a long-time friend of USGBC, and I'm always grateful for the opportunity to introduce its president and chief operating officer, and my good friend, David Kohler. *[David Kohler takes stage and gives greetings. Rick Fedrizzi retakes podium.]*

Tonight we're focusing on what USGBC has labeled The Resiliency Agenda. We'll come at it from several different angles because a resiliency is not just about buildings or policy or jobs or mechanisms for surviving disaster. It's about all those things.

The tragedy and sorrow associated with recent disasters in Japan and Indonesia, in Joplin, Tuscaloosa, Vermont, and Austin have tested our resiliency. Fires, floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes—they are all horrific and they all dramatically underscore the importance of fashioning this new resiliency agenda.

Resilience is not only the right descriptive word; it is the right paradigm, requiring foresight and broad societal understanding and support. The concept of resilience is especially suitable in a world more interconnected, more urbanized, and yet more fragile than ever.

This agenda is the urgent work before us, and nowhere is it more urgent than in Haiti, the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, shattered by horrible earthquakes a little more than a year ago.

Resilience in Haiti is a 360 degree proposition. It's about rebuilding its structures and infrastructure to be sure, but it's also about education, healthcare and jobs, and about harnessing a culture's spirit to help define how this agenda is put into play.

One remarkable woman has an amazing story to tell about her work to make this agenda come to life. Here is her story. *[Video featuring Joey Adler is screened, then addresses audience. Rick Fedrizzi retakes stage.]*

We know the "NEXT" Industrial Revolution will be a critical part of the world's resiliency agenda for Haiti. You've helped advance this critical agenda in a place where there is no other option. All of us are grateful for your leadership.

The risks that arise from adverse climate change impacts, earthquakes, hurricanes, extreme weather events and security threats are very real. It arises in ways that can stress communities, cities and entire countries to the breaking point. We've seen that play out over and over again -- in the wake of Katrina and Rita in New Orleans and Gulf Coast. In Greensburg, Kansas. In Joplin and Tuscaloosa. In Japan, Indonesia, in the Sudan and in Somalia.

When these tragedies do occur, we need to deploy the world's resources and assistance to help these communities recover. We need strategies to prevent and mitigate disasters to whatever extent possible... We need plans and preparations for the inevitable events that will come, and appropriate tools and resources to rebound safer, smarter, and Greener.

Tonight we have with us a remarkable group of leaders who have strong opinions on this subject of resiliency and deep experience that has shaped those opinions.

To get us started, it's my very great pleasure to introduce Cokie Roberts. Cokie is well known as an Emmy Award-winning journalist and bestselling author. She is a contributing senior news analyst for National Public Radio as well as a regular roundtable analyst for the current "This Week" with Christiane Amanpour. She is a political commentator for ABC News and writes a weekly column syndicated by United Media in newspapers around the United States.

She is also a native of New Orleans, a city unprepared for the disaster of Katrina, and yet a place where American resiliency is on display every single day. Ladies and Gentlemen, please welcome Cokie Roberts.

[Cokie Roberts takes stage, introduces Thomas Friedman. Following keynote address by Thomas Friedman, Roberts introduces other panelists: Paul Farmer and the Right Honorable Kim Campbell, former prime minister of Canada. Following panel and video presentation Rick Fedrizzi retakes podium.]

My friends, I'd like to do something a little bit different tonight. Instead of giving a speech, I'd like to take the next few minutes to tell you a story, instead. That's right, a story. Throughout history, from generation to generation, we've been hardwired to tell each other stories. Stories are how we relate to one other. They're how we share important information. They're how groups and communities and nations are moved to collective action.

So with that in mind, let me read you an Associated Press news story. One that actually hasn't yet been published yet because the events actually haven't yet happened. Stay with me here! It's a story about a movement – our green building movement – and the individuals whose passion and dedication have sustained it, through the good times, and the bad. It's a story about a future that doesn't yet exist, but it's one that I believe we *must* write together. Simply put, it's a story about what's NEXT. And this is how it goes.

New York Times, Oct. 5, 2036

Headline: The U.S. Green Building Council Closes Its Doors

WASHINGTON, DC – Today, the U.S. Green Building Council – the nonprofit organization that pioneered the LEED rating system and spearheaded the global green building movement of the last four decades – closed its doors and shut down operations.

"We've been looking forward to this moment since 1992," said a USGBC spokesperson. "I can't believe it's finally here."

The closure comes not because of dwindling funds, or scandal, or "creative differences" among leadership. Rather, USGBC believes its milestones have been met, its proof points have been achieved, and its once-unimaginable mission has been accomplished.

It's a bold declaration, USGBC acknowledges. Previously the organization has stated that, "Sustainability isn't about reaching a clear endpoint. It's about an ongoing commitment."

But USGBC's founders started the organization with a clear vision of success: that one day, sustainability would become so deeply embedded in the fabric of society that the phrase "green building" would be redundant and obsolete.

And one day, as a USGBC executive put it in 2011, "We'll wake up to find that our cause is no longer an aspiration, or a rallying cry, but rather a matter of *fact*. That's when we'll know that we have achieved what we set out to do. That's when we'll know that we have put ourselves out of business."

For USGBC, the realization that day had arrived didn't come in the form of a specific breakthrough or a single flash of insight. Instead, it came in the form of a gradual, dawning recognition: that the future they had dreamed about for over forty years no longer had to be imagined – it was in fact real enough to touch.

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LEED specifications, once seen as radically avant-garde, are now standard fare in state, national, and even international building codes. Solar panels and wind turbines, once hailed as cutting-edge, are now ubiquitous sights in small towns, big cities, and everywhere in between.

Living roofs, wastewater recycling systems and locally-sourced building materials—once considered far out of reach for everyone except the most progressive, and well-to-do—are now visible in neighborhoods, business parks and shopping districts across the nation.

In place of a wasteful, worn-out electricity grid, a new smart grid now crisscrosses the country. Hybrid and electric vehicles fill city streets and highways, instead of cars that ran on antiquated gas combustion engines, including the guzzlers once euphemistically known as “sport utility vehicles.”

And in the nation’s capital, where green issues were once dismissed as pet issues, and as a dividing line between partisan principles, sustainability is now central to the agenda of every political leader, candidate, and puffed-up pundit.

But, in the words of one USGBC volunteer, “To really appreciate how far we’ve come, you have to understand where we started. So much of what we take for granted now used to be seen as utterly unrealistic.”

“It’s incredible,” said Dave Johnson, a construction manager from Miami. “It used to be rare to see green building principles actually being implemented. Families lived in homes with inefficient HVAC systems. People went to work in office buildings that left the lights on 24-hours a day. Kids went to school in buildings with hardly any fresh air circulation.”

The no nonsense chairman of General Electric, said, “I vividly remember the day our company announced the last incandescent light bulb had rolled off our assembly lines. But today I don’t think my grandchildren even know there was any other kind of light bulb before LEDs.”

“Green building used to be seen as wildly unconventional,” recalled the former mayor of Newark. “It was something people did in rich cities, at Ivy League universities, in affluent neighborhoods. It was unimaginable in Newark forty years ago that we’d have a high school built from reclaimed lumber, a courthouse with a rooftop rain collection system, a hockey rink lit by solar-powered lights.”

In so many ways, this is precisely the world that USGBC’s founders envisioned in 1992, when they started an organization dedicated to the promotion of sustainable building. Yet, back then, realization of this vision was anything but certain.

USGBC was founded with little fanfare, and even less support. Few in the public sector, much less the general population, paid much attention to the little group with the big name. In the mid-nineties, the fledgling organization struggled to recruit staff and enlist corporate members. At the time, the very idea of “green building” seemed to be blue-sky thinking, like putting a man on the moon or connecting people all across the globe via a new invention called the World Wide Web.

But in 1998, USGBC established LEED as a U.S.-centric green building certification system, and steadily built it into an international standard. In time, tens of thousands of architects, construction managers, and OEM suppliers embraced LEED as their own.

As one former USGBC executive said, “We built an open-source model that disrupted the old way of doing things, spurred innovation, and created a revolutionary new marketplace.”

Over the years, USGBC grew in numbers, and marked key milestones – from the first Greenbuild conference in 2002, in Austin, Texas; to the announcement in 2004 that the 100th LEED project had been certified; to the US Army’s adoption of LEED in 2006.

USGBC successfully weathered the economic downturn of 2008 and 2009. In 2010, the first LEED certified skyscrapers appeared in skylines across America. By 2011, USGBC had 17,000 members and helped establish a major emissions reduction target for public buildings. The organization was healthy, growing, and making an impact.

Even then, however, the fact remained: they had influenced only a fraction of the marketplace, a fraction of society, at a time when the world desperately needed a dramatic sustainability revolution. By 2011, LEED had transformed an astounding \$100 billion worth of commercial and residential space. Dauntingly, however, another \$10 *trillion* in inefficient, carbon-hungry real estate around the world was waiting to be retrofitted.

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As 2011 drew to a close, the future of the sustainability movement seemed at best uncertain. Green campaigns that had been picking up speed seemed to be stalling. The economic crisis took a toll on green construction and retrofit projects everywhere. The much-anticipated Copenhagen climate conference was a full-blown letdown.

Industry leaders and environmentalists alike wrung their hands over the absence of a national energy strategy. Government efforts to prop-up green companies and industries were deemed to be failing more than they were succeeding. Sustainability had become a trendy phrase, but how many people truly understood what it meant in practice? How many people were willing to invest in it, work for it, fight for it?

“It’s not that we weren’t getting anything done,” said a long-time USGBC board chair. “It’s that we weren’t getting enough done *fast* enough. We had barely scratched the surface of all that needed to be transformed. And when we stepped back and looked at the big picture, a lot of us wondered whether history would see our work as little more than a drop in the bucket.”

If there was a turning point, a year in which the green building movement became reenergized and redoubled its transformational efforts, it was 2012. That year, and in the decades to follow, USGBC’s efforts began to yield a cascade of results.

First came the embedding of LEED standards into building codes around the world, as well as state and national commitments to retrofitting and sustainability projects of all kinds. But the impact went deeper than newly transformed infrastructure. The green building movement jumpstarted what was, at the time, a fragile and struggling economy.

Noting the emergent economic benefits of green building, the federal government shifted tactics. Instead of cherry picking countless “green” pet projects and industries for special subsidies, Congress simply laid the groundwork for a nationwide surge in retrofits.

In 2012, as part of a second economic stimulus to jolt the economy out of a potential double-dip recession, green building tax incentives were finally signed into law. In 2015, the adoption of a new National Energy Policy reduced the nation’s reliance on foreign oil and encouraged energy conservation which saved consumers an estimated \$100 billion over the following decade, and bolstered consumer spending in other sectors, providing additional stimulus to the rebounding economy.

In the following years, as more energy efficiency retrofits were ordered and more LEED certified projects entered the pipeline, there was a ripple effect through the building trades, manufacturing, and design sectors.

This ripple built into a wave that began to erode the national unemployment rate, which then stood at 9 percent. Then, a virtuous cycle was triggered: as the number of green jobs that were available increased, the number of people who obtained training in retrofitting and who become certified by the Green Building Certification Institute increased as well, widening the talent pool and resulting in further green job creation. The end result was an economic boom that by 2017 had created 4.7 million new jobs.

By the late teens, the benefits of sustainability began to spread outward from the economy, to education, and even to health care. In 2017, the President, who had been a huge champion of green building since his time as Mayor and then Governor announced that his signature legislative initiative during his first one hundred days in office would be to “green” every school in America. The “Stroke of a Pen” ladies and gentlemen!!

Republicans, Democrats and Independents alike sponsored legislation for a bipartisan Green Schools Initiative, which was enacted by Congress. By 2021, the Initiative led to the successful retrofitting of all 99,000 elementary, primary, and secondary schools in the United States.

In the mid-2020s, the CDC began to report noticeable declines in pediatric respiratory illnesses, including rates of asthma, nationwide. A subsequent study in the Journal of the American Medical Association confirmed the Green Schools Initiative as having directly resulted in this dramatic reduction, saving billions in health care costs, and improving millions of lives. Other legislative successes furthered the impact of the sustainability movement and its widespread benefits.

By 2021, energy efficiency measures adopted by the Pentagon trimmed military spending and saved lives by reducing the number of fuel convoy targets in American theaters of operations. Progress was not only made in the United States, but also abroad. In 2019, the World Green Building Council and its 127 member countries led a joint campaign with UN

Secretary General to pass, at long last, an international climate convention that set a price for carbon, as well as global greenhouse gas reduction targets, to be achieved by mid-century.

By the early 2030s, the full transformation to a sustainable society was irreversibly underway. According to USGBC, it became increasingly clear that their hard work, which began on the margins, had gone mainstream. The time had come to close their doors.

At USGBC headquarters, maintenance workers took down artwork, hefted furniture onto waiting trucks, scrubbed out corners seeing daylight for the first time in years. Staff congregated in break rooms and hallways, exchanging embraces, memories, and shedding a few tears. Committee and Chapter volunteers used social media to feel connected to the moment.

One of them confided, “I’ve never thought I would be excited to declare victory on something that I had worked this hard on for most of my adult life. Sure, I’m crying, but these are tears of joy.”

We’re celebrating a two-decade economic boom that stemmed directly from the work that we all set out to do. On the last day, a steady stream of staff carried out boxes of supplies and personal effects. One of the staffers was overheard talking with a coworker.

“Nothing is ever going to be the same,” she said. And with a thousand-watt grin, she added, “We changed the world.”

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My friends, one day, when I’m old and gray, I want to wake up in the morning, sit down with a cup of coffee, turn on my iPad—Eleven—and read this story. I want to read this story and smile, knowing that we wrote it together. I want to read this story to my grandchildren, and tell them how WE made history.

We’re now entering the most important, the most difficult, the most critical, and the most exciting days of our movement. Now is the moment when we look around and find we’re halfway up the mountainside. We look down with pride to see how far we’ve come. We look up with trepidation to see how far we have to go.

This is the time, RIGHT NOW, to lead with purpose and passion, not *despite* the odds we face but *BECAUSE* of the odds we face.

As you’ve heard from Tom this evening when he shared the title of his new book with people, they would regretfully ask, “Does this story have a happy ending?”

And his answer — and ours — is clear, “It’s up to all of us—to determine whether this is fiction or nonfiction. We need to study harder, save more, spend less, invest wisely, and get back to the formula that made us successful as a country, in every previous historical turn.”

The authors go on, “What we need is not novel or foreign, but values, priorities and practices embedded in our history and culture, applied time and time again to propel us forward as a country. That is all part of our past. That used to be us, and it can be again, if we will it.”

We started down that path a long time ago folks. We have what it takes. And I believe our dedication and our passion will continue to disrupt and transform the world in the best possible way. This will be our legacy and our future. And that legacy begins right here. Right now.