

ARE BUSINESS DISTRICTS FATED TO BE ENERGY INTENSIVE?

EXCESSIVE BUSINESS DISTRICT ENERGY CONSUMPTION? EVERYTHING IS RELATIVE!

Within their confines, business districts bring together services, commercial and industrial businesses that consume large quantities of energy due to their very purpose, and because of the building from which they operate. Therefore, by nature, business districts are energy intensive.

Be that as it may, we should avoid preconceptions and retain a sense of perspective. Actually, in relative terms, their horizontal and vertical density provides business districts with an advantage over sporadic developments that destroy natural carbon wells and increase the negative impact of transportation on the environment.

Nevertheless, business districts' performance in this area can and must be improved at the level of both transport infrastructure and building energy and, more generally, in terms of district planning.

BUILDING ENERGY EFFICIENCY: A COST/BENEFIT RATIO

Excess energy consumption is a non productive expense. Cutting and even eliminating excess consumption will improve the companies' corporate image, the users' comfort, the user-friendliness of spaces open to the public and the real estate value of the built environment. Without counting the positive effects achieved for the environment, chiefly by cutting greenhouse gas emissions.

Energy bill savings of at least 15%-30% can be made via modernising ventilation, heating, hot water production and air conditioning systems and by better business district planning, particularly in terms of the transportation aspects.

Accordingly, there is major potential for improvement but there are also major obstacles to overcome.

FROM GOOD INTENTIONS TO CONCRETE ACHIEVEMENTS

Infrastructure, facilities and the living and working environment must be assessed in terms of energy consumption and obstacles (institutional, structural and individual) to possible measured changes. In respect of the choice of solutions and their implementation, all the stakeholders' concerned must be involved, whether they are owners, tenants or users. Moreover, their concerted action will guarantee the viability of renewable energy initiatives. Support systems have already been developed, such as the Clinton Foundation for Climate Change, to facilitate dialogue, experience and knowledge sharing among experts, banks, the real estate sector and local authorities.

Nevertheless, public bodies also have a vital role to play. Firstly, they must lay down regulations for urban planning and construction and draw up plans for land usage. Then, they should create financial incentives, such as reduced taxes on low energy consuming buildings or introduce consumption standards for vehicles. Finally, by way of their exemplary

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behaviour in terms of building insulation and the creation of energy -efficient facilities and installations, public authorities will prove their feasibility.

Contrary to appearances, business districts do not consume any more energy, in relative terms, than sporadic developments. On the contrary, building density in business districts presents real benefits in this domain.

Nevertheless, progress remains to be achieved, both in the quality of building and infrastructure, their use and in the overall organisation of these districts.