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BRICK'S UNMATCHED 100+ YEAR LIFE EXPECTANCY BOOSTS ITS GREEN RATING

Most of us would consider ourselves lucky to live to be 100 years old. For one time-tested building product that is a modest goal. With brick on the Great Wall of China dating back to 300 BC, today's business owners can feel confident that their brick structures will outlive them.

The tremendous environmental benefit of such a life cycle is not always taken into account when establishing green standards and sustainable building codes – or in layman's term's, deciding which building materials are considered environmentally friendly. While much of the green dialogue has revolved around issues such as energy efficiency, water conservation and indoor air quality, one issue at the heart of sustainability has been significantly downplayed. The question -- "How long will the material last?" -- needs to be asked and answered in regard to any material we are going to label "green."

The answer with brick is at least 100 years, during which virtually no maintenance (i.e., repainting or repairing) will be needed. One of the country's preeminent architects of educational facilities, Christopher Huckabee, sees this issue as key to the future identification of green building materials. According to Huckabee, "Sustainability, by definition, cannot be evaluated unless you consider the fundamental issue of how long the materials use can be 'sustained' without repair or replacement. A material which uses a modest amount of energy and is highly efficient on a building is still not 'green' if it needs to be painted with toxic products every few years and replaced every ten. In the case of the nations mold epidemic in schools, untold millions of dollars are being spent to replace new buildings which were not built with the right materials to start with."

So how does all this green talk help owners interested in minimizing their businesses impact on the environment? Here are the facts in a nutshell:

- Made of the most abundant materials on the planet, clay and shale, brick is "of the earth" in the most basic way.
- Brick manufacturers harvest clay and shale from the earth's surface by a process that has minimal long-term environmental effects on the land and often use one site for more than a century. Exceeding federal requirements which govern this process, many manufacturers have initiated aggressive reclamation programs that convert all involved land to a desirable natural state, such as lakes and wildlife preserves.
- According to the AIA's Environmental Resource Guide, the actual "embodied energy" of brick (the energy required to mine, manufacture and transport it) is 4,000 BTUs per pound – less than concrete, glass, steel, aluminum or even wood and far below the embodied energy levels of EIFS (synthetic stucco) and fiber cement board.

BRICK - - - THE SOLID INVESTMENT

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ACME BRICK & SUPPLY

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CLAY PRODUCTS, INC.

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