

Envision Rating System gaining acceptance

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Maybe you have been following the development of the Envision™ Rating System by the Institute for Sustainable Infrastructure (ISI)? APWA, ASCE and ACEC created a partnership to advance the effort to develop a system by which infrastructure can be rated, just like a building can be rated using LEED™. Many municipalities and states have adopted policies on sustainability and require minimum LEED™ levels for new building construction. Billions of dollars are being spent on the public infrastructure so doesn't it make sense to have a system to encourage sustainable practices in planning, designing, constructing and decommissioning the public works infrastructure.



ISI (www.sustainableinfrastructure.com) continues to develop tools to use to evaluate infrastructure projects. Envision™ grades and gives recognition to infrastructure projects that use transformational, collaborative approaches to assess the sustainability indicators over the course of the project's life cycle in five categories: Quality of Life, Leadership, Resource Allocation, Natural World, and Climate. Two tools are currently available – a checklist and a more robust rating system. Both can add value to the decision making process during the life of a project. The rating system will allow projects to be publicly recognized for high levels of achievement in sustainability.

Membership in ISI is complimentary for government, agency and public utilities. This was an important point for APWA. For this rating system to be successful, the owners need to support the use of Envision™ and should be given the advantage of complimentary access to the rating tool.

Our communities are becoming much more attuned to the need to become more sustainable. The City of Richmond developed “RVA Green – A Roadmap to Sustainability” http://www.richmondgov.com/Sustainability/documents/RVAGreen_ARoadmapToSustainability.pdf, with the help of community members and with consultation by VHB, Inc. This plan sets a framework in five different categories – Economic Development, Environment, Energy, Open Space & Land Use, and transportation. The plan establishes goals and objectives in each category. Under each objective two questions were asked: Where are we now? and How will we reach our goal? Each focus area has a series of success indicators that can be tracked annually. Progress has to be made with the community and the city working in partnership.

It all sounds like a lot more work and most of us don't have the time to do what we already are required to do. Yet, we know we must because it is the right thing to do. Clean

water, recycled material, lower energy use - these are all things we agree are important. It takes a concerted effort to make the right decisions for the good of the project and for the good of the community. Using the Envision™ rating system provides us with a tool to make better decisions but thinking about the bigger picture as it relates to sustainability. As a new Envision™ Sustainability Professional, I am excited about the opportunities to work on projects that are recognized for their consideration of sustainable practices in the planning, design and construction.