

Green Building Summit Speech Notes

From New Mexico Lieutenant Governor Diane Denish

- Greetings and acknowledgments. Thank you for the chance to join you this evening.
- Advancing the Green Building movement is an excellent goal and the development of a “blueprint” for how we can develop a sustainable society is both timely and urgent.
- Across the country we are seeing a growing interest in all things green.
- In the past two weeks I have personally been to two different conferences dealing with either renewable energy or environmentally sustainable building. My staff has handled several other environmental or “green” requests and meetings.
- Five years ago when I first took office, we did not see nearly this interest in the subjects. We are witnessing what amounts to an awakening of the public consciousness to a variety of environmental issues.
- There are many reasons for this but a combination of irrefutable evidence proving that climate change is real and happening now, along with \$110 barrel of oil has really brought the majority of Americans to the conclusion that living and building in a sustainable fashion makes sense.
- This interest and energy in living in an environmentally responsible fashion is an opportunity that we have never seen before. Yet it is not a guaranteed opportunity.
- People are interested in building and living green right now, but currently, the cost of doing so is prohibitive.
- Of the several brilliantly designed and beautifully constructed Green homes, libraries, and buildings that I have visited, every one has been considerably more expensive than a comparable non-green building.
- This is something that must be addressed if we are ever going to see Green Building in New Mexico become the norm rather than the exception.
- Governor Richardson and I have done much over the last five years to encourage sustainable living and building.
- In 2006, our Administration signed a “Lead by Example” executive order requiring all major new state building construction and renovations to achieve LEED-Silver status, with significant energy savings.
- The Construction Industries Division (CID) recently completed an effort to update New Mexico’s building codes and to add mandatory green building components to the code.
- CID also has established a Green Building Bureau and will seek additional funding in the next legislative session to support their work, including professional training.
- In the 2007 legislative session, we established a tax credit for green building projects that meet LEED standards or Build Green New Mexico’s Gold standard.

- The Higher Education Department has instituted a “green screen” for new building projects to ensure that sustainable design is being incorporated in new university facilities.
- Every State-funded building from here on out will be an environmentally friendly building. This is an essential start in bringing these techniques to New Mexico and for also spreading the mindset that this is something we should aspire to.
- But now it is time to take the next leap. The only way that Green Building will become the norm is if it is adopted by the construction industry as THE way to build.
- To do this we need to address the factors of cost. Customers will not buy Green unless it is cost effective. I have a few ideas on how to address this barrier.
- **COST OF CONSTRUCTION:** Until the market for Green expands the cost-saving advantages of economies-of-scale shall not be fully realized. This means that we need to find cost-saving methods and designs to make Green construction more.
- I have seen some examples of what this will take. Homewise, the non-profit housing service in Santa Fe has begun building simple entry-level homes that utilize a variety of Green technologies within simple designs to keep costs down. The result is a more affordable home that will also conserve both energy and water.
- We should find ways to expand on these efforts and develop construction techniques that will be more competitive with traditional construction.
- We also need to bring the lenders to the table. Lenders need to see the advantages of financing Green Building. One way is to clearly demonstrate that over the lifetime of a loan the borrower will save money on a Green-built home and therefore be a safer credit risk.
- Loans for Green building should be made more accessible AND more affordable.
- I know I don’t need to preach to the choir but I’ll say it again. New Mexico is a strikingly beautiful state with abundant resources and amazing people. Yet we are also a state with limited water, fragile ecosystems, and abundant poverty.
- We don’t only need to persuade the builders and lenders that Green Building is a competitive method. We also have to educate the consumers to the long-term cost saving advantages of building and buying Green.
- We live in a State with a higher rate of poverty than the national average. Yet we also have a higher rate of home ownership than the national average.
- Part of the reason for this is the tendency for families to inherit their parent or grandparents house. For people who live in older homes we must make Green retrofits and remodeling a cost effective option.
- Another factor in our high rates of home ownership is our reliance on mobile homes. Although we have made great progress in growing a high-wage economy in New Mexico, many of us still are not making enough to buy even a conventionally constructed home, let alone a Green Home.
- The result is a large percentage of the home market is made up of relatively inexpensive mobile homes.

- These homes are good alternatives to many of our fellow citizens, but they also tend to be energy inefficient and not as long-lasting.
- The result is more energy consumed, and homes that lose value rather than appreciate over time.
- This is a segment of the building universe in New Mexico that we must not forget. Soon, the very first Energy Star-certified manufactured homes will begin rolling off an assembly line in Deming. This is a big deal. Not only is Solitaire Homes providing an inexpensive, Green option, but it's already employing 200 people in a community that welcomes every job it can get.
- We must also attempt to find ways to make all Green Homes in New Mexico affordable so that ALL New Mexicans will have the option of living sustainably and building up assets within the home.
- These are a few ideas that I hope you touch on during your workshop discussions on Saturday.
- As a state with scarce water resources and abundant natural resources that we want to protect, green building will be critical to New Mexico's future.
- Governor Richardson and I are always seeking new ways to promote sustainable design. "Green" homes and businesses are better spaces where we can live and work, and they often save consumers money on utility bills.
- We look forward to the conclusions that will come from this Summit. In order for New Mexico to meet our environmental and energy needs we need for Green Building to become THE standard building method.
- For this to happen we need to bring government and the private sector together to educate the public to the advantages of living Green and find ways to make Green building economically affordable for all of us.
- Green Building cannot remain a niche market for the wealthy.
- Thank you all for attending this summit. Your dedication to these issues is our greatest hope in pursuing these goals.