

Public Buildings Must Be More Than Public Art

by Terry Miller

(NAPSA)—Architecture is less about art than it is about community. Like many people, I'm awed by the ancient work of the Greeks and Romans, the shimmering skylines of our cities, and the breathtaking shapes of steel, wood, concrete and glass made possible by today's imaginative designers and computer technology.

But none of that matters if buildings don't work for the people who use them. This is important to remember, because your tax



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dollars subsidize vital public development projects across the country—airports, convention centers, arenas, stadiums, schools and venues for the arts.

These are your buildings. They help define a community, make it more livable and encourage commerce. Public infrastructure represents an investment by the public. That's why building owners—and the architects they engage—must be responsible stewards of the public's investment.

That also means great buildings must offer more than a great design—they must be cost-effective, long-lasting structures with a positive impact on the environment.

Modern infrastructure must be able to cope with real-world complexity and the environmental and financial demands of the 21st century. Sustainability has quickly moved from buzzword, to moral imperative, to economically sound business practice.

This philosophy can be applied in many different ways, from buildings with “living” roofs, filled with plant life, to considering how schools can be designed to accommodate people with disabilities, to rebuilding entirely sustainable towns.

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Studies have shown that using “green” features in a building, such as natural daylighting, can actually improve productivity and reduce absenteeism.

Such projects also must be maintainable throughout their entire life cycle. That means designers and builders must provide the tools communities need to use the structure to its peak advantage and maintain it over time.

So as your community debates and dreams about its next big development project, get involved and learn more by visiting <http://www.aia.org>, and ensure planners and designers are taking a thoughtful approach to creating a building that maximizes your investment and works for you as well as your grandchildren.

Terry Miller is chief executive officer, HNTB Architecture Inc., which designs some of the most complex public buildings in the country, including the new 49ers Stadium, the new Terminal D at Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport and the redevelopment of the Las Vegas Convention Center.