

# THE ORIGINAL "GREEN" BUILDING MATERIAL BRICK

by Art Young

One of the hottest topics in the construction industry today is "green buildings." This is a catch-all phrase that describes construction materials and building techniques which are environmentally friendly. These buildings require less energy to heat and cool and save their owners thousands of dollars over the life of the building. They can withstand the ravages of elements for generations, and they are most likely constructed of materials that come from the earth. These include the oldest manufacturing building material of all: brick.

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Building with Brick continued

## Going Green

Ceramic products such as brick are derived from natural earth elements and are manufactured to span the test of time.

When used for interior walls, brick can also make significant contribution to indoor environmental quality. Being chemically inert, they emit no chemicals into the air: a claim that no paint can make. When properly selected and installed, they will often last as long as the rest of the building, with minimal maintenance and regular cleaning.

As occupants and uses change, a brick building adapts easily, and—at the end of the building's life—the brick can be reclaimed and recycled. These two factors lighten a building's environmental impact and reduce its total life-cycle cost.

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## An Authentic Building Material

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As a forty year veteran of the industry, Jay Cox knows a thing or two about the benefits of brick construction. As the Midwest Regional Sales Manager for Acme Brick, he has helped hundreds of customers who are interested in energy efficient, green building construction realize their dreams. "When we think about green buildings, sustainability, and the availability of raw materials to manufacture these building materials, we naturally focus on brick," Cox states. "When I go back to my early days in this company and think about jobs that I sold back then, it's very rewarding when I see those buildings now. They still have the same finish and are still very attractive.

Cox continues, "As far as 'green' is concerned, those buildings never had to be painted and they have not required any further maintenance. I would say brick is one of the original green building materials and this goes back thousands of years."

## How Does Brick Compare to Synthetic Building Materials?

Institutions and their architects have many choices for building materials, including synthetic materials. What makes brick superior from an environmental and sustainable standpoint?

"Because of its mass and the air space behind it, brick is one of the best performing walls for commercial structures," Cox notes. "Because of the mass of brick, the heat on the outside of the building during a hot summer day takes a substantial amount of time to work its way into the building. By the time this has happened, it is typically the evening and the air is cooling down. It acts as an

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insulating barrier due to the nature of the product itself. When the weather turns colder, this insulation barrier of brick works the opposite way. When the sunshine hits a brick wall, the mass of the brick stores the heat from the sunlight, which helps keep the building warm."

Walls constructed of brick require almost no maintenance, whether exterior or interior. "With a synthetic wall, there is a constant need to paint and/or caulk to maintain its integrity," Cox adds. "This is not necessary with brick construction. Plus, unlike brick, where the moisture is returned outside, synthetic materials absorb that moisture, resulting in a weakening of the structure."

### The Other Green—The Folding Kind

The economics of brick construction account for another green advantage and this is the folding kind—money saved. Cox concludes, "If you think about the long-term aspect of a building, brick offers a much better return on investment. As we have noted, no painting will ever be required, the costs for maintenance are very low, and the energy saving aspects of brick construction are far superior to others."



**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** Over the past 35 years, Art Young has interviewed some of the most interesting people in the world and used these conversations to develop a diverse catalog of facts and articles. He is a writer, blogger, podcaster, broadcaster, and frequent speaker on subjects ranging from construction to technology to healthcare to music to outdoor sports and many other subjects.

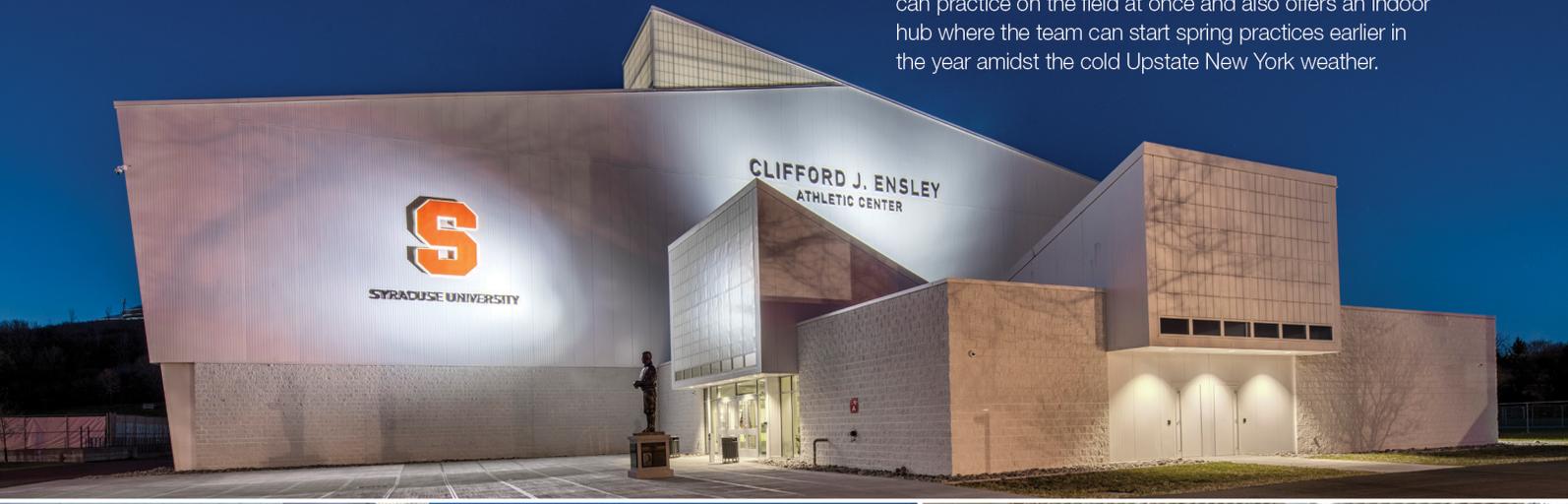
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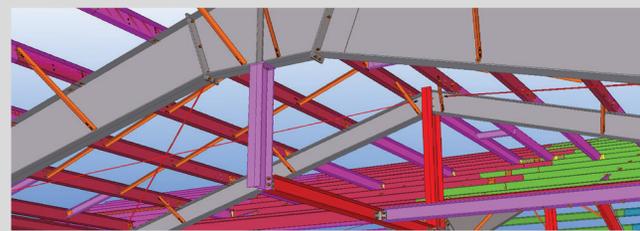
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