Building Green Asia

Good basic design plus some simple solutions can yield a big payback

The World’s most advanced green buildings offer energy savings of 50% or more compared with ordinary buildings, but none of the efficiency gains do not stem from cutting-edge technology. Rather, they are the result of good basic design and different use of standard materials. The buildings are constructed out of wood, from the Pearl River Tower in Guangzhou, and the Bahia World Trade Center, made up of advanced wind-turbine technology, those scenarios are expensive, and not yet widely available. In Asia, where few green buildings are yet in place, architects and regulators could acquire green gains by employing inexpensive, cost-effective techniques. “What China needs is a very fundamental, very low-tech sustainable building,” says James Burrell, manager of Shanghai-based Broadleaf Architecture and Urbanism. “With the highest sustainable buildings, you need a maintenance man with a PhD in computer science and radar to run it.” With green buildings, even a small improvement in the construction process can bring major savings. After a certain point, the technology becomes complex and expensive. The steeper, more cost-effective solution is to build well and make buildings as efficient as possible, using solar panels and minimizing cooling and heating needs. The new builds are built with a focus on sustainability, and the designs are based on the characteristics of the site. The buildings are designed to be self-sufficient, with energy generated on-site and stored for use when needed. The buildings are also designed to be easy to maintain, with regular cleaning and inspection. Many offices buildings in Asia still exist on their own, and this may be the future of green building. The green features must be included in the beginning, not as an afterthought. To achieve optimum results, the green features must be included from the beginning.

The January 2008 Citigroup's investment in the January 2008 Citigroup of-offering, but China’s senior govern-ment leadership rejected the plan. The U.S. Treasury adjusted the terms of the Citigroup’s stake in the U.S. government as part of a bailout package negotiated in February 2009. GIC and other sovereign investors gave up their 7% annual coupon payment on the preferred shares and moved their Citigroup’s capital struc-ture. In exchange, Citigroup reduced the conversion price of GIC and other sovereign investors to $32.25 a share from the $40.25 conversion price in March 2009.

That move carried its risks as Citigroup’s stock trended around the $1 mark in early March of this year and GIC’s holdings fell in value to just $2 billion. The stock has resonated strongly since hitting those lows to reach $4.61 a share on Sept. 11 when the conversion of GIC’s stake to ordinary shares took place. GIC sold the rest of the Citigroup stock in the conversion for shares in the open market. It now is sitting on a further $1.5 billion paper profit on its remaining stake. GIC’s Chief Investment Officer Ng Kok Song said in a statement: “GIC plans to keep its stake in Citigroup because it is ‘confident of [Citigroup’s] long-term prospects,’ the statement said. ‘At today’s share price, we continue to hold our shares in Citigroup to be a portfolio investment.’

The test of this Special Advertising Section was written by Brent Hamen, a business journalist.