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Press Release

Source: Greenway Group's Counsel

Study Highlights Architects' Widely Diverging Views on Vinyl as a Sustainable Material

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Seen as One of Most "Paradoxical" Building Materials Available Today

ATLANTA, GA--(MARKET WIRE)--Dec 24, 2004 -- Ewire -- A new study indicates that architects working on sustainable design may have more misperceptions about vinyl than about any other building material.

The study, "Paradoxes in Vinyl and Sustainable Design," was conducted for the Design Futures Council, a U.S. think tank for the architecture and design community, by Greenway Consulting, a leading consulting firm for design community professionals.

"Our study found that vinyl has both supporters and foes, including the most informed experts on green and sustainable design," said Jim Cramer, the chairman and principal of Greenway Consulting. "These fears, uncertainties or misconceptions in the marketplace are barriers to understanding vinyl as a sustainable material."

Often criticized as a "non-green" material, vinyl has energy and environmental benefits that can offset its deficits, according to the review. "Our study showed that some architects working on sustainable design felt that 'vinyl is a major source of emissions,' or 'no one is recycling vinyl,'" said Cramer, "but thermal efficiency, lower transportation costs, durability and even health and safety in manufacturing can make it compatible with the goal of green building -- reducing the impact on the environment and human health."

Greenway's study further indicated that much of the controversy surrounding vinyl stems from stakeholder concerns related to its production, disposal and its effect on workers, communities and the environment. This concerns two major topics: dioxin and vinyl chloride monomer. Current studies state that vinyl production is a small contributor of dioxin, less than one-half of one percent of the total emissions. While workplace exposure to vinyl chloride monomer (VCM) was a concern in the 1970's, changes in the vinyl manufacturing industry have virtually eliminated risk of exposure.

"The compatibility of vinyl and sustainable design is not an easy or simple matter. It is a predicament requiring interpretive thinking," said Cramer. "There are, however, credible information channels to address the fears, uncertainties, and misconceptions in the marketplace today."

About the study

In February and March 2004, the Greenway Group's Counsel House Research conducted a study of vinyl in the building industry. They conducted a review of current studies, findings, and literature worldwide with analysis conducted and supervised by Ann Delatte, Ph.D., and James Cramer, Hon AIA, IIDA, CAE.

About Greenway Consulting

James Cramer is a principal and chairman of Greenway Consulting and Adjunct Professor of Architecture at the University of Hawaii. He researches, consults, and gives seminars for leading professional firms around the world. He is the author of several hundred articles and several books and is the Editor of the Almanac of Architecture and Design. Cramer is the former Chief Executive of The American Institute of Architects in Washington DC (1988-'94).