

Green Is Good

STATS

David Gottfried

Founder, U.S. Green Building Council

Age: 52

Strengths: Synthesis, communication, vision.

Weaknesses: Myself, being a perfectionist, impatient.

Very first job: Sold camping equipment at a sporting goods store.

Most recent purchase: A Nest Learning Thermostat.

Can't live without: Diving into nature.

No. 1 on my "bucket list": To breathe and let go.

Career choice #2: Being a full time writer.

Best advice received: Thinking about "What have we forgotten?" – David Brower.

Every night before bed, David Gottfried asks himself some hard questions: "What are you doing to make the world better? What's your real legacy? Was it just about making money? Are you proud of how you've lived your life?" • Gottfried could certainly give himself a break on the soul-searching, at least for a night or two. At 52, his list of accomplishments could easily fill the resumes of several successful people. But then, this is a man whose To-Do list includes "Transform the world." • His accomplishments include:

- Founding the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), a ground-breaking industry coalition that set the standards for green building practices.
- Developing the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) green building certification system, which rates buildings on energy efficiency, indoor environmental quality, materials selection, sustainable site development and water savings.
- Forming the World Green Building Council (WGBC), the largest and most influential green building organization in the world.
- Founding Regenerative Ventures, a company that works with governments and powerhouse corporations on its mission to "accelerate global transformation through green building profitability."

In his personal life, he and his wife, Dr. Sara Gottfried, Medical Director at the Center for Integrative Medicine, remodeled their Oakland 1915 Craftsman bungalow into a showplace of green living. He's an in-demand speaker and has penned two memoirs, *From Greed to Green* and *Greening My Life*. Somewhere in there, he found the time to take up abstract painting.

Relentless self-evaluation has been part of Gottfried's life since he was a child. "I was raised to become a CEO," says Gottfried. "My father was an adviser to CEOs at Fortune 100 companies. Every dinner was

run like a board meeting. We were reviewed, like you would review an employee." Review topics for David and his two older brothers? "Grades, athletics, cleanliness of your room, degree of completion of chores."

When Gottfried went out into the world on his own, he did what was expected. He got his degree in Engineering and Resource Management at Stanford, then moved to Washington, D.C., where he became a successful real estate developer. It was during the "greed is good" 1980s, and by age 27, Gottfried was wealthy and successful, but something was missing.

In the early 1990s during the beginning of the green movement, he had an epiphany. At the American Institute of Architects annual convention, he attended every program they had on green building, re-sparking an interest he'd developed at Stanford studying under Gil Masters. He decided to dedicate his life to green building. Instead of just taking on a few green projects and, perhaps, remembering to recycle his cans at home, his goal was huge—"to take on the \$3 trillion global building industry—pushing it to embrace sustainability."

Within a couple of years, he'd formed the USGBC and developed the LEED system. The USGBC has become tremendously influential and has over 20,000 members and 80 U.S. Chapters. The WGBC has member organizations in over 90 countries and is the leading global green building organization. The



system has become the industry standard in the U.S. and is used in 117 countries. LEED certification is being used on over 10 billion square feet of projects. The Gottfrieds' renovated Oakland bungalow wasn't just an efficient, green home, it was the greenest home in the country, scoring 106.5 points (out of 136) on the LEED scale.

But there was more to do. Gottfried had a second epiphany. He realized that transforming the world required more than engineering and technology. It would involve changing the way people think.

"We can green this whole world easily. It's simple. The technology exists to generate power and not waste, to capture the water and clean it and re-use it," he says. "So why has that not happened? That question really propelled me. If you really want to transform the world, you have to look at the barriers. And the problem is people."

In pondering questions like, "Why do we make choices that don't value life or aren't life-sustaining?" Gottfried set out to overhaul the concept of "green," expanding it from its most basic meaning of eco-friendly to a wider, more humane way of living. His first step was greening his own life. As is his engineer's way, he developed LEED-Life, a 100-point, 10-category personalized rating system for ranking one's own life, including categories such as health, financial status and social connections.

Gottfried's own score goes up and down. In February, after putting a lot of thought into the matter, Gottfried, his wife, and two tween daughters moved out of their uber-green, but tiny bungalow into a bigger, more comfortable house with such perks as a separate bathroom for the parents.

"It was hard in terms of being a green person. Can a green person live in a place that's luxurious?" he asks. "Part of me just absolutely loves it because it's gorgeous and the other part wants it to be super-efficient. I want to find the middle ground."

Finding the middle ground has been a theme of Gottfried's life—between profit and green, comfort and efficiency, capitalism and humanism. And he's making it work. His green way of living includes both using resources wisely and making a profit. His current business, Regenerative

Ventures, emphasizes "triple bottom line profitability (economic, environmental and social)."

Gottfried, who serves on the Stanford Profession in Real Estate Board of Governors and is a founding member of its Real Estate Council, offered this for REALTORS® interested in greening their lives and businesses.

"Do you really understand the homes you're selling and representing? Do you know the energy bills, the water consumption, the penetration of daylight and natural ventilation? What's the walk score? How does the equipment operate? Is it efficient? Do the walls have insulation? What kind? Do the windows leak and have infiltration problems? Are the old toilets at 5 gallon flush, 3.5, or new dual flush? Are there filters on showerheads and faucets? What's the plant and irrigation system?"

"Now why should a REALTOR® care?" Gottfried asks. "Good question. Well, it's not yet hitting commissions, but appraisers are assessing green homes a little higher. In the commercial buildings, an economic study just showed that green buildings rent for higher rents, have lower operating expenses, and sell for a highvalue."

"It's also part of being professional and knowledgeable and good at what you do," he continues. "You want an efficient machine that you're representing. You want it to corner well, and zero to 60 fast just like your car. And when it gets in a crash, you want to survive. Why wouldn't you want an efficient home? It's just a good product," he says, noting the rising prevalence of water shortages, blackouts and higher utility bills. Plus there's the whole matter of being a good citizen of the Earth.

"At a bigger level, I think it's about each of us," he says. "I do believe the atom of change is each of us. When you put your head down on the pillow at the end of the day, ask yourself some deeper questions and then ask if you're aligned with the answers you want to hear."

You can be sure that tonight Gottfried will be asking himself the same questions. ♦

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The Problem with Appraisals

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days. The home—the only one for sale in the entire neighborhood—drew 50 offers and went to contract at approximately \$170,000—about \$5,000 more than her buyer's offer. That may be enough of a difference to raise red flags for an appraiser accustomed to comparables on distressed properties purchased for cash below the listing price.

"They [appraisers] still seem really conservative with their values," says Joan Bang of Dilbeck REALTORS® in South Pasadena. "It's an issue for my first-time buyers and those with financing who already have to compete with all-cash buyers who are able to bid over the market value if they really want a house, because there is no appraisal. Usually, we can negotiate the difference with the seller in escrow, but sometimes sellers are very aggressive if they have multiple offers."

Are Appraisers Too Conservative?

"This market is really challenging to interpret, and I think it's important for both REALTORS® and appraisers to be humble about that," advises Ryan Lundquist, a Sacramento certified residential appraiser whose blog (www.SacramentoAppraisalBlog.com) offers opinions, tips and information about appraisal practices and issues.

"Appraisers face a lot of the blame, but real estate agents also know when they are playing a game and working a strategy," Lundquist says. For example, buyers and agents sometimes submit unrealistically high offers just to have a "horse" in the race. "It's unfair to blame the appraiser when the buyer offered \$20,000 higher than anything else on the market. At the same time, if there are 10 or 20 offers at list price and above, that definitely says something, and appraisers really need to pay attention to that, because supply and demand are an important consideration for the market. Theoretically, it should move things up."

"It's not the job of the appraiser to be conservative or liberal; it's up to the