

## **Nation's Oldest Buildings Ripe For "Green" Initiatives**

November 12, 2009. Hackettstown, NJ. Washington politicians should not have far to look when deciding where to dole out "green building" funds.

The District Of Columbia has, on average, the oldest commercial buildings among the states, according to a new study of the age of the U.S. commercial building stock, done by SMR Research Corp. Older buildings are those most likely to be energy inefficient.

As for buildings by type, the oldest in the U.S. are mixed-use buildings, such as apartment buildings with stores on the first floor. Funeral homes are the second oldest type of commercial building, followed by churches.

SMR's study of building construction dates used public property records from local tax assessors. The firm studied 4.61 million commercial buildings where the tax records included the year in which the structure was built. The study spanned the entire nation except for Vermont, Louisiana, and Illinois, due to insufficient available data.

Buildings in the Northeastern states have the oldest average age. Nevada has the newest buildings, followed by South Dakota, Alaska, and Arizona.

In D.C., SMR tallied 31,855 buildings and calculated an average age of 69.8 years. In Nevada, looking at 67,532 buildings, the average age is only 20.5 years.

Nationally, SMR found, the average age of U.S. commercial buildings is 41.7 years. Of the 4.61 million buildings studied, 14.3% were built within the last 10 years. But 15% were more than 75 years old.

Looking at buildings by use, medical services buildings (other than hospitals) were the newest, with an average age of 34.3 years. Fully 32% of all medical buildings in the U.S. were built within the last 20 years.

The second newest building category was warehouse/storage facilities, no doubt because of the recent growth of personal storage units. The average age was 34.8 years.

Mixed-use buildings, by contrast, had an average age of 66.6 years. Funeral homes were 61.7 years old, on average, and churches averaged 55 years old.

Despite frequent allegations that the U.S. has a crumbling industrial base, SMR found that industrial facilities were slightly newer than most other buildings, with an average age of 40.7 years. SMR looked at 292,087 of these properties.

The study was designed to help focus the marketing programs of suppliers of energy-efficient building materials, equipment, solar panels, and construction services. It includes average ages and a percentage distribution of buildings by age group for 24 categories of buildings, plus data on buildings in 47 states, D.C., and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The tax data include additional information on individual buildings, including assessed values, square footage, names and addresses of owners, current owners' purchase dates, and whether the building is occupied by the owner. There are more than 9 million commercial buildings in the United States. About half had ages disclosed in the tax records.

The study results – by building type and by state – span two spreadsheets and are available for \$29. The study can be ordered through SMR's website, [www.SMRresearch.com](http://www.SMRresearch.com), under the Other Research subject button.

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SMR Research Corp. is a provider of data and analysis on residential and commercial real estate and financial subjects.