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Business\$ Management

Building A Solid Foundation

Your structure is the first impression of your business. Find out the latest trends in greenhouse and retail construction, as well as what you need to do in preparation for a rebuild or addition.

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 Editor
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The business of building structures is always changing. From building codes to emerging trends in retail and new demands from retailers and customers, structures companies are constantly trying to stay ahead of the game to offer the ultimate in price, aesthetics and function – or all of the above.

We recently asked structures companies about any new requirements in greenhouse and retail building construction, as well as what the new trends are and what retailers should know before they begin planning for a new structure or addition. Here are their answers.

New Construction Issues
 We asked if there are any new regulations or construction issues customers need to be aware of for growing and retail greenhouses. The simple answer is yes. According to Kenneth Beach, sales engineer for [GGS Greenhouse](#), building codes and fire codes are becoming increasingly more stringent, and certain types of materials previously used may now be restricted.

Bill Vietas of [Rough Bros.](#) says retailers should be aware of the time it takes to apply for and receive permits for things such as zoning, setbacks, ADA compliance and fire safety.

Jennifer Sackrider of [Private Garden Greenhouse Systems](#) concurs with Vietas. "The major issue is the time that it



Nexus Corp. named its popular Atrium vented roof system after the garden center in which it originated, Atrium Garden Center in Lake Zurich, Ill.



This greenhouse construction from Ludy Greenhouse Manufacturing Corp. features double roof vents for better natural ventilation, a distinct trend in garden center retailing and greenhouse growing.



takes to attain a permit with the new IBC building code that is now in effect in most of the 50 states," she says. "The local building requirements are now very strict, and take months – and in some cases years – to satisfy. This is the case for garden center structures and some growing ranges. If an owner is planning a new structure for an existing location or building a new facility, they should take these factors into consideration."



The relatively new garden center structure at Barlow Flower Farm, done by X.S. Smith, features natural ventilation properties, as well as colorful accents to give it curb appeal and attract customers.

Jeff Warschauer, vice president of sales at [Nexus](#), adds most building departments require a certain percentage of parking spaces based on square feet of the building. He says fire sprinkler systems will likely be required in a building over 10,000 square feet, though the size could depend on the town.

Hurricane and flood damaged areas have tightened regulations on wind loads and water run off issues, as well, notes Scott Thompson, executive vice president of [X.S. Smith](#). Other issues to consider in certain regions are snow and ice load.

What To Expect

Retailers heading into a project that includes a new building or adding on to an existing structure should keep a couple of things in mind, according to all the structures company representatives:

- Look into engaging a local architect or firm to work with local building requirements.
- Ask your manufacturer to help you in the design and development of the project, especially if you're not sure you know what to plan for.
- Budget for the risk involved, including delays, permitting fees, weather and other variables.
- Have an overall budget in mind before you approach a manufacturer, but be flexible in case you didn't budget for everything you needed to.
- Have an idea of the square footage you need, and be prepared to give details on how the space will be used.
- Either hire a project manager, or plan to spend time on the site to ensure everything remains on schedule.
- Inspect shipments for damages as soon as they arrive on site – leaving this for later could give you little recourse if you find problems.
- If you're including a café, familiarize yourself with your local health department regulations.
- Have an idea in mind for traffic flow inside and outside the store (i.e. in the parking lot and inside the store).
- Know what temperatures you'd like the structures to be at during the summer and the winter, as well as whether you want forced air or natural ventilation.
- If you're adding on, make sure you have a contingency plan for operations while under construction. Include in this plan advertising to the public so they know about any possible changes to traffic flow in the store and in getting to the store.

Trends In Structures

We also asked what new trends structures companies were seeing in garden center design.

"We believe that the garden center owners are becoming more sophisticated retailers and need more than glass greenhouses to compete with the big boxes and specialty home retailers," says Sackrider. "We now build stores that serve multiple needs under one roof."

She adds that Private Garden is seeing two trends – one toward smaller, upscale boutique garden centers with one location but capable of producing high revenue on a small footprint. The other is established garden center owners who are expanding with additional, large locations.

Warschauer, too, is seeing more multi-use structures coming into play. Aesthetics are becoming a big part of retail construction, with fancy facades, masonry, pavers, covered walkways and stained or stamped concrete being requested. "I see a very big trend in 'today's garden center' not being just a garden center," he says. "They are a home and garden place. Plants, nursery, furniture, grills, clothing, café, hardware, pony rides, hay rides and so much more."

Vietas also sees the trends heading toward more painted structures, taller structures and fancier entrances to lure in customers. He also sees a trend toward higher-end retailers, which doesn't always translate into bigger.

One thing [Cravo](#) President Richard Vollebregt is finding is more demand for retractable roof structures for

Exploring The Options

When it comes to building retail garden center structures, there are several new options out there. Here are just a



natural ventilation and more covered shopping. Retailers are finding value in providing more covered shopping for their customers, he says.

few:

- retractable roofs and sidewalls
- hot water radiant floor heat
- heat retention and shade curtain systems
- mixed coverings to accommodate multiple types of materials
- natural ventilation
- alternative energy sources, such as light and wind
- higher sidewalls for a brighter, more comfortable environment

"If you go back to the basics and ask 'what are the big challenges' – it's that the spring sales are contingent on the weather," Vollebregt notes. "When you create an environment that is optimal for the people, it's automatically optimal for the plants. If you have the ability to close the roof and drop the temperature a bit, it also keeps the direct sunlight off the plants."

Bill Rowohlt, the Northeastern/Mid-Atlantic regional sales manager for [Ludy Greenhouse Manufacturing Corp.](#), agrees natural ventilation is becoming more popular. "Customer-pleasing environments and friendly sales areas, such as open, mixed-use greenhouse area and displays (are trendy)," he says. "The goal appears to be one of stimulating or facilitating customer awareness and increased sales."

Peter Rense of [Thermoflor](#) says he gets more requests from his European customers to cover more total sales area with a roof system that can open 100 percent when needed. He also hears more retailers looking into low-energy consumption and alternative energy sources.

Garden center retailers in the United States are looking at increasing the height of the structures, according to Michael Camplin, sales manager at GGS Greenhouse. "Eighteen to 20 feet under gutter height is not uncommon anymore," he says. "The added height is more aesthetically appealing, and draws more attention from the road. It is a brighter and more comfortable environment, which encourages shoppers to stay longer in your garden center."

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